



ATHENS CITY COUNCIL MINUTES OF REGULAR SESSION

The Athens City Council met in regular session on **Tuesday, July 21, 2026**, at 6:00 p.m. in the Athens City Hall Council Chambers, with Mayor Eaton presiding. Councilmember Sherlin led the invocation. Councilmember McCowan led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll call:

PRESENT: McCowan, Duggan, Sherlin, Curtis, Eaton

ABSENT: None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Tuesday, June 16, 2026 – Regular Session

Council approved the minutes of the June 16, 2026, Regular Session as presented on a motion by Vice Mayor Curtis, seconded by Councilmember McCowan.

APPROVED

Roll call vote:

YEAS: McCowan, Duggan, Sherlin, Curtis, Eaton

NAYS: None

COMMUNICATIONS AND SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

- A. Interim City Manager Bridget Roberts introduced new Executive Assistant Missy White and announced the groundbreaking ceremony Athens Fire Station #3 would be held on Tuesday, August 11th at 1:30 p.m.
- B. Representatives of the Patriot Memorial Project presented a proposed World War II – themed mural to be placed in downtown Athens. They requested that City Council consider making a financial contribution and partnering with the Patriot Memorial Project to help move the project forward.
- C. Athens Police Chief Fred Schultz presented a Chief's Award to Povey Carter. Povey received the award after being nominated by her School Resource Officer for upstanding actions both inside and outside the classroom.
- D. Athens Parks and Recreation Director Matt Siniard provided a recap of the July 4th Celebration at Athens Regional Park which featured Athens First-Ever Patriotic Drone Show and the Buddy Liner Memorial Fireworks. An estimated 7,000 to 8,000 people attended the event inside the park, with many others viewing the show from various locations outside the park. Friendly City Festivals Sounds of Summer Concert Series will be hosting a Confederate Railroad Concert on Saturday, August 15th at 7:00 p.m.

CITIZENS COMMENTS GERMANE TO THE AGENDA

- Glenn Whiting commented on his podcast, the recommendation letter for former City Manager Dowling and rumors regarding the reason for his termination.

CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approve Resolution 2026-19, a Resolution Authorizing the City of Athens, Tennessee to Participate in the 2026-2027 Judy Housley Safety Partners Matching Grant Program Through Public Entity Partners.
- B. Award Bid 26-04 to Wilson Construction Group, LLC for View Street Roadway Improvements and North Jackson Street Repairs Project (Bid Amount: \$571,954.55).
- C. Approve Professional Services Agreement with Kimley-Horn and Associates to update the Parks Masterplan in the amount of \$87,950 and authorize an additional \$4,500 for reimbursable expenses, if needed.
- D. Approve Professional Services Agreement with Kimley-Horn and Associates for the design and bidding services for the additional parking and lighting improvements at Cook Park in the amount of \$41,500.
- E. Approve Professional Services Agreement with Kimley-Horn and Associates for engineering and design services for the Lee Erwin Road and Decatur Pike intersection improvements in the amount of \$294,300.
- F. Approve the Proposal for Construction Materials Testing and Special Inspection Services submitted by UES Professional Solutions 18, LLC for the construction of Fire Station #3 in the estimated amount of \$48,475.
- G. Approve Purchase of New Municipal Court Case Management Software from Tyler Technologies in the amount of \$41,480
- H. Approve Purchase of Police Vehicles and Revised Pricing for Animal Control Trucks from Ford of Murfreesboro in total amount of \$237,670.
- I. Approve Purchase and Installation of Equipment for Police Vehicles from Truckers Lighthouse, LLC in total amount of \$81,465.25.
- J. Declare the 2008 Ford Expedition (Asset #3704) as Surplus Property and Authorize it to be sold on GovDeals.
- K. Approve the City of Athens to Participate as a Plaintiff in the Fire Equipment Antitrust Litigation Class Action Lawsuit and execute the Employment and Contingency Agreement.

Council approved the Consent Agenda as read on a motion by Vice Mayor Curtis, seconded by Councilmember McCowan.

PASSED

Roll call vote:

YEAS: McCowan, Duggan, Sherlin, Curtis, Eaton

NAYS: None

ORDINANCES

-None-

OLD BUSINESS

-None-

NEW BUSINESS

- A. Resolution 2026-18, a Resolution Declaring the Intent of the City of Athens, Tennessee to Reimburse Itself for Certain Expenditures in the Aggregate Principal Amount of Not to Exceed Fifteen Million Dollars (\$15,000,000) Relating to Municipal Projects of the City and the Athens Utilities Board with the Proceeds of Bonds or Other Debt Obligations to Be Issued by the City of Athens, Tennessee.

Council approved Resolution 2026-18 on a motion by Vice Mayor Curtis, seconded by Councilmember Duggan.

Points raised during discussion included the difference between the Twelve Million Dollars (\$12,000,000) discussed during the work session and the Fifteen Million Dollars (\$15,000,000) being presented. It was clarified that the original amount included Six Million Dollars (\$6,000,000) for Athens City Projects and Six Million Dollars (\$6,000,000) for Athens Utilities Board Projects. Following the work session, Athens Utilities Board requested an additional Three Million Dollars (\$3,000,000) to be added so that all projects could be included under the same resolution. Athens Utilities Board projects include a water tower and sewer improvements, and they would be responsible for repaying any funds borrowed on their behalf.

PASSED

Roll call vote:

YEAS: McCowan, Duggan, Curtis, Eaton

NAYS: Sherlin

- B. Funding TDOT Entrance Improvement – Congress Parkway and Lee Drive

Council approved entering into a cost-sharing agreement with River Stone Construction for the entrance improvement at Congress Parkway and Lee Drive, estimated total project cost of Two Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$200,000) and the City of Athens funding one-half of the cost, estimated at One Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$100,000), on a motion by Councilmember Duggan, seconded by Councilmember McCowan.

During discussion, it was explained that the proposed improvements are intended to address the existing median configuration at the Congress Parkway and Lee Drive entrance, which currently requires some drivers to make unsafe movements into traffic.

PASSED

Roll call vote:

YEAS: McCowan, Duggan, Sherlin, Curtis, Eaton

NAYS: None

- C. First Reading of an Ordinance 1159 to amend Title 1, Chapter 1-II of the Athens City Code by Adding Section 1-46 Establishing Compensation for the Mayor and Councilmembers Pursuant to Article V, Section 4 of the Charter of the City of Athens, Tennessee

Councilmember Sherlin made a motion to approve the first reading of Ordinance 1159, seconded by Councilmember McCowan.

Councilmember Sherlin moved to amend the original motion to include annual cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) in the ordinance, as discussed in the work session. The motion to amend died for lack of a second.

During discussion, it was explained that the new charter prohibits any increase in compensation during a councilmember's term of office, and that a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) would be considered an increase in compensation. While the previous City Charter allowed COLA adjustments, the new Charter does not permit such adjustments during a councilmember's term of office but does allow compensation adjustments to be made by ordinance, provided that no increase takes effect during the current term of office.

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Following discussion, Council voted on the original motion to approve the first reading of Ordinance 1159.

PASSED

Roll call vote:

YEAS: McCowan, Sherlin, Curtis

NAYS: Eaton

ABSTAIN: Duggan

D. First Reading of an Ordinance 1160 to Amend the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Athens, Tennessee, so as to Amend the Official Zoning Map to Rezone the Property Located off Spruce Street from I-1 (Light Industrial District) to R-2 (Medium Density Residential).

Council approved the first reading of Ordinance 1160 on a motion by Vice Mayor Curtis, seconded by Councilmember Sherlin.

PASSED

Roll call vote:

YEAS: McCowan, Duggan, Sherlin, Curtis, Eaton

NAYS: None

E. Letter of Recommendation for Dr. Randall Dowling

Motion to approve letter presented in the packet by Vice Mayor Curtis, seconded by Councilmember McCowan.

During discussion, concern was expressed that rumors of wrongdoing would continue if there was not an amendment to the letter stating such had not occurred. Points raised included that they had agreed to write him a letter of recommendation and that he was dismissed without cause.

Councilmember Duggan moved to amend the letter to include a statement addressing the fact that there was no wrongdoing concerning those topics alleged in the rumors, seconded by Mayor Eaton. The amendment failed.

FAILED

Roll call vote:

YEAS: Duggan, Eaton

NAYS: McCowan, Sherlin, Curtis

After further discussion, Council voted on the original motion by Vice Mayor Curtis to approve draft of the letter presented in the packet, seconded by Councilmember McCowan. The motion passed.

PASSED

Roll call vote:

YEAS: McCowan, Curtis, Eaton

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: Duggan, Sherlin

F. Review Travel Policy

Councilmember Duggan said there was no need for any action as this would be discussed in August.

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G. Special Called Session Scheduled

By unanimous consent, Council agreed to hold a special called session regarding the Patriot Memorial Project, due to the time-sensitive nature of the matter, on Friday, July 31, 2026, at 5:00 p.m.

REPORTS

- A. Community Development Quarterly Report
- B. Finance Department Monthly Report
- C. Fire Department Monthly Report
- D. Police Department Monthly Report

REPORT FROM THE CITY MANAGER

- A. Japanese Students from Chinzei Gakuin High School will be visiting City Hall on July 22, 2026, and City Officials from Isahaya, Japan, our Sister City, will be visiting the City of Athens during the week of October 18th through 23rd.

CITIZENS COMMENTS

- Glenn Whiting commented on the use of called meetings and executive meetings, the letter of recommendation of the former City Manager, and lack of transparency of the city.
- Everett Gillespie, a member of SOCM (Statewide Organizing for Community eMpowerment), commented on the needs of North City residents, particularly youth and families, and requested that consideration of designating property in North City as a public park be placed on the August agenda.
- Reed Clayton advocated for the designation of the North City School property as a public park.
- Jeff Eastman advocated for the designation of the North City School property as a public park.
- Jane Chastain advocated for the designation of the North City School property as a public park and asked for it to be added to the August agenda.
- Austin Sauerbrei advocated for the designation of the North City School property as a public park and for a community center and requested that the discussion be added to the August agenda.

ADJOURNMENT

Councilmember McCowan moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Councilmember Duggan.

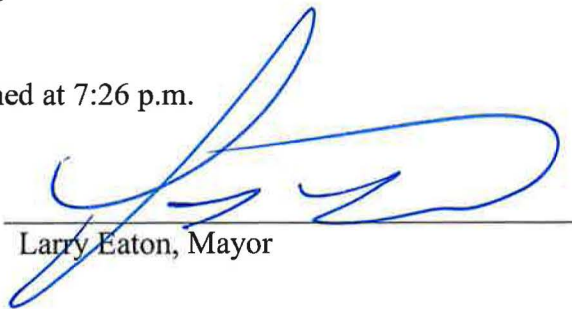
Roll call vote:

YEAS: McCowan, Duggan, Sherlin, Curtis

NAYS: Eaton

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:26 p.m.


Bridget Roberts, Interim City Manager


Larry Eaton, Mayor