

ATHENS CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING

October 15, 2024

The Athens City Council met in regular session on Tuesday, October 15, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. in the Athens City Hall Council Chambers with Mayor Sherlin presiding. Councilmember Witt-McMahan led the invocation. Councilmember Pelley led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Upon roll call, the following members were present:

Curtis, Witt-McMahan, Pelley, Eaton, Sherlin

The following decisions were made and ordered to be part of the records of the Athens City Council.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- 1 -

Councilmember Curtis moved to approve the minutes of September 17, 2024; Councilmember Pelley seconded. Minutes approved.

Roll call vote:

YEAS: Curtis, Witt-McMahan, Pelley, Eaton, Sherlin

NAYS: None

COMMUNICATIONS AND SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

- 2 -

1. Mayor Sherlin presented Mitchell Moore with an appreciation plaque.
2. Vice Mayor Eaton presented a Proclamation to the Meridian Sun Lodge 50 commemorating their 200th anniversary.
3. Police Chief Fred Schultz presented Officer Ryan Anthony with the Chiefs' Award for his dedication to the City of Athens, its citizens, and the police department.

CITIZEN'S COMMENTS

- 3 -

Citizens:

1. Glenn Whiting
2. Kathryn Hunter
3. Dick Pelley

CONSENT AGENDA

- 4 -

The following items were read into the record by the recording clerk:

- a. Mayor Sherlin requested that item (a) be moved from the consent agenda; Vice Mayor Eaton agreed. No council member was opposed.*

- b. Approve bid from Stansell Electric Co. Inc. for High Mast Preventative Maintenance & Repair
- c. Approve bid from Stansell Electric Co. Inc. for Traffic Signals Maintenance & Repair
- d. Approve Resolution 2024-22
A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE CITY OF ATHENS, TENNESSEE, TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PUBLIC ENTITY PARTNERS' JAMES L. RICHARDSON "DRIVER TRAINING" MATCHING GRANT PROGRAM.

Councilmember Curtis moved to approve consent agenda items b, c, and d as read; Vice Mayor Eaton seconded. No discussion. Motion approved.

Roll call vote:

YEAS: Curtis, Witt-McMahan, Pelley, Eaton, Sherlin

NAYS: None

- 5 -

Reduction of speed on Ingleside Avenue

Vice Mayor Eaton moved that the speed limit be 30 miles per hour between the downtown five-point intersection to Tellico Avenue and 40 miles per hour between Tellico Avenue and Highway 11; Councilmember Witt-McMahan seconded. No discussion. Motion approved.

Roll call vote:

YEAS: Curtis, Witt-McMahan, Pelley, Eaton, Sherlin

NAYS: None

ORDINANCES

- 6 -

Second reading of: ORDINANCE NO. 1133

AN ORDINANCE TO REGULATE CAMPING WITHIN THE CITY LIMITS OF THE CITY OF ATHENS IN ORDER TO PROVIDE FOR THE CONTINUED SAFETY, HEALTH AND WELFARE OF THE CITIZENS OF THE CITY OF ATHENS, TENNESSEE

Public Hearing Opened

Discussion: Multiple citizens shared their opinions, both for and against the ordinance.

Public Hearing Closed

Vice Mayor Eaton moved to approve Ordinance No. 1133; Councilmember Curtis seconded. Motion approved. Ordinance Passed.

Roll call vote:

YEAS: Curtis, Witt-McMahan, Eaton, Sherlin

NAYS: Pelley

OLD BUSINESS

- 7 -

Motion for minimum and maximum amount to be allowed per entity for the tourism funds request applications.

Councilmember Curtis moved to increase the maximum amount from \$10,000 to \$15,000 per entity for the tourism funds request applications for Fiscal Year 2025; Councilmember Witt-McMahan seconded. No discussion. Motion approved.

Roll call vote:

YEAS: Curtis, Witt-McMahan, Pelley, Eaton, Sherlin

NAYS:

- 8 -

Motion for a designated time to review submitted applications for tourism funds.

Vice Mayor Eaton moved to review all applications by July 1st; Councilmember Witt-McMahan seconded.

Mayor Sherlin began the discussion by reminding the council that they discussed allowing the current applicants for Fiscal Year 2025 to reapply for additional funding up to the new maximum amount, but no new applicants may apply until next fiscal year.

Vice Mayor Eaton withdraws the original motion; Councilmember Witt-McMahan seconded.

Vice Mayor Eaton moved to review all applications by July 1st and allow current applicants to apply for additional funding up to the maximum amount; Councilmember Witt-McMahan seconded.

Councilmember Curtis moved to amend the previous motion to allow current applicants to reapply for additional funding not to exceed the maximum amount for fiscal year 2025 until June 30, 2025 and begin new fiscal year applications on July 1, 2025; Councilmember Witt-McMahan seconded.

The Finance Director, Mike Keith, was asked for his opinion on the best date to review applications. Mr. Keith recommended an earlier date, such as April 30th. This will give enough time to discuss the current applications before the fiscal year end.

Councilmember Curtis moved to amend the previous motion to allow current applicants to reapply for additional funding not to exceed the \$15,000 maximum amount for fiscal year 2025 until April 30, 2025 and begin new fiscal year applications on July 1, 2025; Councilmember Witt-McMahan seconded. Amendment passes. Motion approved.

Amendment

Roll call vote:

YEAS: Curtis, Witt-McMahan, Pelley, Eaton, Sherlin

NAYS:

Motion

Roll call vote:

YEAS: Curtis, Witt-McMahan, Pelley, Eaton, Sherlin

NAYS:

- 9 -

Motion for the allocation of FY '25 funds to each application or entity.

Councilmember Curtis moved to approve a total of \$15,000 to the Athens Area Council for the Arts, a total of \$15,000 to Friendly City Festivals, a total of \$8,200 to Main Street Athens, and a total of \$10,000 to McMinn County Living Heritage Museum; Councilmember Witt-McMahan seconded. No discussion. Motion Approved.

Roll call vote:

YEAS: Curtis, Witt-McMahan, Pelley, Eaton, Sherlin

NAYS:

NEW BUSINESS

- 10 -

Motion to reallocate funds between Main Street Athens and LITE House

Councilmember Witt-McMahan moved to allocate \$35,000 to Main Street and \$15,000 to LITE House; Vice-Mayor Eaton second. Finance Director, Mike Keith explained the misunderstanding of the original request and provided clarification. Motion Approved.

Roll call vote:

YEAS: Curtis, Witt-McMahan, Pelley, Eaton, Sherlin

NAYS:

- 11 -

Motion concerning landowner request for annexation of property located on County Road 126 (Milton Road) by George Andrew Hodges

Councilmember Curtis moved to deny annexation request; Councilmember Witt-McMahan seconded.

Discussion: Councilmember Curtis stated that this area is reserved for commercial development because that is what is deemed appropriate from a planning perspective. **Motion Approved.**

Roll call vote:

YEAS: Curtis, Witt-McMahan, Eaton, Sherlin

NAYS: Pelley

- 12 -

Motion regarding the revisions to Tennessee Wesleyan University & City of Athens Lease Agreement

Vice Mayor Eaton moved to approve the revised lease agreement between Tennessee Wesleyan University and the City of Athens; Councilmember Pelley seconded. Motion Approved.

Roll call vote:

YEAS: Curtis, Witt-McMahan, Pelley, Eaton, Sherlin

NAYS:

- 13 -

Motion to update the Decorum and Rules of Engagement to limit the time of citizens comments to three (3) minutes instead of five (5) minutes.

Councilmember Curtis moved to approve changing the time of citizens' comments from five (5) minutes to three (3) minutes; Councilmember Witt-McMahan seconded.

Discussion: Councilmember Pelley stated that he is opposed followed by Councilmember Witt-McMahan stating she is in favor of the time limit decrease. **Motion Approved.**

Roll call vote:

YEAS: Curtis, Witt-McMahan, Sherlin

NAYS: Pelley, Eaton

- 14 -

Motion to amend, by ordinance, the meeting start time for Beer Board from 6:00pm (following the regular city council meeting) to 5:30pm (preceding the regular city council meeting).

Councilmember Curtis moved to approve amending the start time for Beer Board from following each regular meeting of the city council to 5:30pm preceding the regular city council meeting; Vice Mayor Eaton seconded.

Discussion: Councilmember Pelley voicing his opposition to the change time followed by Vice Mayor Eaton stating his reasons for the change. Councilmember Pelley responded by saying the applicants need to . Councilmember Curtis gave examples of prolonged meetings that caused beer permit applicants to sit for hours before the Beer Board commenced. Councilmember Witt-McMahan responded to Councilmembers Pelley opposition saying that if any of the applicants wanted to listen to the city council meeting, they can stay.

Motion Approved.

Councilmember Witt-McMahan moved to call the question; Vice Mayor Eaton seconded.

Roll call vote:

YEAS: Curtis, Witt-McMahan, Eaton, Sherlin

NAYS: Pelley

Motion

Roll call vote:

YEAS: Curtis, Witt-McMahan, Eaton, Sherlin

NAYS: Pelley

- 15 -

Motion to amend, by ordinance, the order of business of regular city council meetings by moving "Citizens Comments" from #7 to #13.

Councilmember Curtis moved to amend, by ordinance, the order of business of regular city council meetings by renaming number 7 to Citizens Comments Regarding Agenda Items and move Citizens Comments to number 13; Councilmember Witt-McMahan seconded.

Councilmember Curtis moved to withdraw the original motion; Councilmember Witt-McMahan seconded.

Councilmember Curtis moved to amend the original motion with the following: to amend, by ordinance, the order of business of regular city council meetings by renaming Citizens Comments to Citizens Comments Germane to the Agenda Items and add Citizens Comments after Report from the City Manager; Councilmember Witt-McMahan seconded.

Roll call vote:

YEAS: Curtis, Witt-McMahan, Pelley, Eaton, Sherlin

NAYS:

- 16 -

Vice Mayor Eaton moved to allocate \$50,000 in the Hotel/Motel Tax Fund for a civic center at Athens Regional Park; Councilmember Witt-McMahan seconded.

Discussion: Councilmember Curtis wants to research options and discuss further at the 2025 Strategic Summit. Councilmember Pelley wants to come up with a plan before allocating money. Finance Director, Mike Keith, stated that any amount approved by the council can be designated for a capital project within the Hotel/Motel Tax Fund. **Motion Approved.**

Roll call vote:

YEAS: Curtis, Witt-McMahan, Pelley, Eaton, Sherlin

NAYS:

REPORTS

- 17 -

- I. Athens City Middle School
presented by **Principal, Mike Simmons**
- II. 3rd Quarter Building Report
presented by **Community Development Director, Anthony Casteel**
- III. Finance Department Monthly Report
presented by **Director of Finance, Mike Keith**
- IV. Fire Department Monthly Report
presented by **Fire Chief, Brandon Ainsworth**
- V. Police Department Monthly Report
presented by **Police Chief, Fred Schultz**

REPORT FROM THE CITY MANAGER

- 18 -

City Manager, Randall Dowling, highlighted some of the events and meetings he participated in over the first week of his employment, and added that he looks forward to learning more about the city.

ADJOURNMENT

- 19 -

Vice Mayor Eaton moved to adjourn; Councilmember Witt-McMahan seconded. The meeting adjourned at 8:01 p.m.

Roll call vote:

YEAS: Curtis, Witt-McMahan, Pelley, Eaton, Sherlin

NAYS:



RANDALL DOWLING, City Manager


STEVEN S. SHERLIN, Mayor