



ATHENS CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF SPECIAL CALLED SESSION

The Athens City Council met in special called session on **Thursday, June 4, 2026**, at 6:09 p.m. in the Athens City Hall Council Chambers, with Mayor Eaton presiding. Councilmember Duggan led the invocation. Vice Mayor Curtis led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll call:

PRESENT: McCowan, Duggan, Sherlin, Curtis, Eaton

ABSENT: None

PUBLIC NOTICE

SPECIAL CALLED SESSION

Notice is hereby given to all residents of Athens, Tennessee, and to all interested persons, that a Special Called Session of the Athens City Council will be held at Athens City Hall, 815 North Jackson Street, Athens, Tennessee, beginning at 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, June 4, 2026.

The purpose of this meeting is to:

- A. Consider and take action upon any personnel or other matters relating to the City Manager position.

Citizens will have the opportunity to provide public comments. Prior to the start of the meeting, all persons wishing to address the City Council must sign in on the sheet provided at the entrance to the Council Chambers. Speakers are required to comply with the adopted Public Comment Rules. For additional information, please contact the Office of the City Manager at (423) 744-2702.

/s/

Vice Mayor Curtis

/s/

Councilmember Sherlin

/s/

Councilmember McCowan

POSTED: 6/1/2026, 8:00 A.M.

CITIZENS COMMENTS GERMANE TO THE AGENDA

The following citizens addressed the City Council during the Citizens Comments Germane to the Agenda portion of the special-called session. Speakers expressed varying opinions regarding the City Manager position, including questions about the purpose of the special-called meeting, concerns regarding the City's history of City Manager turnover, and support for Dr. Dowling.

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|
| • Tyler Boyd | • Linda Long |
| • Glenn Whiting | • Cynthia McCowan |
| • Juanita McClure Lewis | • Lisa Mayfield |
| • Art Kimball | |

NEW BUSINESS

A. Consider and take action upon any personnel or other matters relating to the City Manager position.

Mayor Eaton moved to postpone any action until after the November 2026 election to allow time for citizens to be made aware of the issues regarding the City Manager, seconded by Councilmember Duggan.

Councilmember Duggan moved to amend the motion to include an attempt at reconciliation, seconded by Mayor Eaton.

Mayor Eaton further amended the motion to require that each councilmember provide the City Manager with a written statement of any concerns regarding his job performance, seconded by Councilmember Duggan.

FAILED

Roll call vote:

YEAS: Duggan, Eaton

NAYS: McCowan, Sherlin, Curtis

Vice Mayor Curtis moved that the Employer (City of Athens) invoke item 11, “Termination By Either Party Without Cause”, of the Employment Agreement dated October 7, 2024 and that City Manager Randall Dowling be relieved of his duties at the conclusion of the meeting, seconded by Councilmember Sherlin.

Councilmember Duggan moved to amend Vice Mayor Curtis’ motion by postponing the decision to relieve the City Manager of his duties until an attempt at reconciliation is made, seconded by Mayor Eaton.

Dr. Dowling requested that the 30-day written notice requirement be waived and that he receive compensation in lieu of the written notice, as well as the six months of pay and benefits provided under the Employment Agreement, including the anticipated cost-of-living adjustment.

Councilmember Sherlin moved to amend the original motion by including suspension during the 30-day written notice period. The motion died for lack of a second.

Councilmember Duggan’s amendment to Vice Mayor Curtis’ motion.

FAILED

Roll call vote:

YEAS: Duggan, Eaton

NAYS: McCowan, Sherlin, Curtis

Mayor Eaton moved to amend the main motion to provide Dr. Dowling with a letter of recommendation from the Athens City Council, seconded by Councilmember Duggan.

APPROVED

Roll call vote:

YEAS: McCowan, Duggan, Sherlin, Curtis

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: Eaton

Mayor Eaton moved to amend Vice Mayor Curtis’ motion by adding that Dr. Dowling receive a lump-sum payment of \$30,000 by 5:00 p.m. on June 5, 2026, in lieu of the 30-day written notice required under item 11 of the Employment Agreement, by means of an amendment to the Employment Agreement prepared by the City Attorney. The motion was seconded by Councilmember McCowan.

APPROVED

Roll call vote:

YEAS: McCowan, Duggan, Sherlin, Curtis

NAYS: Eaton

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Vice Mayor Curtis’ main motion, as amended by Mayor Eaton.

APPROVED

Roll call vote:

YEAS: McCowan, Sherlin, Curtis
NAYS: Duggan, Eaton

Mayor Eaton moved to appoint Executive Assistant Bridget Roberts as Interim City Manager effective upon Dr. Dowling’s departure and continuing until the regular City Council meeting on June 15, 2026, at which time the position would be further considered. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Duggan.

APPROVED

Roll call vote:

YEAS: McCowan, Duggan, Curtis, Eaton, Sherlin
NAYS: None

ADJOURNNMENT

Mayor Eaton moved to adjourn the meeting.

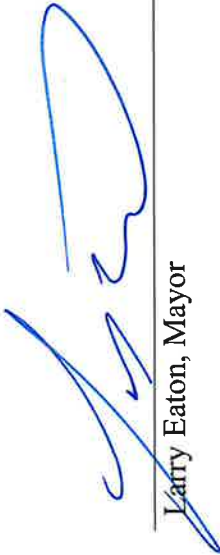
Roll call vote:

YEAS: McCowan, Duggan, Sherlin, Curtis, Eaton
NAYS: None

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



Bridget Roberts, Interim City Manager



Larry Eaton, Mayor