



ATHENS CITY COUNCIL MINUTES OF REGULAR SESSION

The Athens City Council met in regular session on **Tuesday, June 16, 2026**, at 6:00 p.m. in the Athens City Hall Council Chambers, with Mayor Eaton presiding. Councilmember McCowan led the invocation. Councilmember Duggan led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll call:

PRESENT: McCowan, Duggan, Sherlin, Curtis, Eaton

ABSENT: None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- A. Tuesday, May 19, 2026 – Regular Session, as corrected
- B. Thursday, June 4, 2026 – 5:30 P.M. Special Called Session
- C. Thursday, June 4, 2026 – 6:00 P.M. Special Called Session

Vice Mayor Curtis moved to approve the minutes. Councilmember Duggan noted that a correction was needed to Item C under New Business to reflect the vote as 5-0, all ayes, rather than 3-2. Vice Mayor Curtis amended his motion to approve the minutes as corrected, and Councilmember Duggan seconded the motion.

APPROVED

Roll call vote:

YEAS: McCowan, Duggan, Sherlin, Curtis, Eaton

NAYS: None

COMMUNICATIONS AND SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

- A. Main Street Athens Interim Director, Amy Sullins announced the Downtown Community Celebration scheduled for June 25th.
- B. Athens Parks & Recreation Director, Matt Siniard announced the Buddy Liner Memorial Fireworks and Drone Show at Athens Regional Park scheduled for July 4th.

CITIZENS COMMENTS GERMANE TO THE AGENDA

- Glenn Whiting commented on the city manager's position.
- Elise Howell requested consideration for funding for Mid-East Tennessee Community Chorus.
- Lisa Dotson commented on additional parking at Cook Park.
- Videla Miller advocated for METCC funding as a young member of the children's choir.
- Kelly Kauss, a mother of children who participates in the kids' choir spoke in support of a budget amendment to include funding for METCC in the City's FY '27 budget.
- Cynthia McCowan questioned the auto allowance for certain employees, and reason for dismissal of the City Manager.
- Junita McClure-Lewis requested consideration of funding for the additional parking at Cook Park and road crossing improvements.

CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approve Athens City Schools General Purpose Budget Amendment #2.
- B. Approve Athens City Schools Resolution 2026-1 – Authority to Commit and Assign Fund Balance.
- C. Approve Athens City Schools Resolution 2026-2 – Federal Projects Fund Budget.
- D. Approve Athens Utilities Board Fiscal Year 2027 Budget and Five-Year Budget Plan.
- E. Approve FY 2026-27 Purchase of a New Fire Engine for the Fire Department.
- F. Approve FY 2026-27 Purchase of Two Animal Control Trucks for the Police Department.
- G. Approve FY 2026-27 Purchase of Duty Weapons for the Police Department and Declare the Current Glock .40 Caliber Pistols as Surplus Property for Trade-in.
- H. Approve Resolution 2026-17, a Resolution Authorizing the Submission of a Grant Application with the State of Tennessee for Funding Through the Statewide School Resource Officer (SRO) Program Grant.
- I. Approve an Increase of \$16,453.78 to the Contract with Wilson Construction Group, LLC for the Heritage Park LPRF Grant Project.
- J. Reappoint Jona McKeehan-Garrett to the Athens Municipal Regional Planning Commission, term will expire in August 2029.

Council approved the Consent Agenda as presented on motion by Vice Mayor Curtis and second by Councilmember Duggan.

APPROVED

Roll call vote:

YEAS: McCowan, Duggan, Sherlin, Curtis, Eaton

NAYS: None

ORDINANCES

- A. Public Hearing and Second Reading for Ordinance 1156, an Ordinance to Amend Title 9, Chapter V of the Athens City Code by deleting the existing Chapter V, “Wrecker and Towing Service,” in its Entirety and Replacing it with a New Chapter V, “Towing Services”; to Establish Regulations, Permitting Requirements, Rotation Procedures, Insurance Requirements, Fee Limitations, Recordkeeping Requirements, and Enforcement Procedures for Towing Services Requested by the Athens Police Department.

A public hearing was opened at 6:31 p.m. One citizen spoke, and the hearing was closed at 6:34 p.m.

Motion to approve Ordinance 1156 as presented was made by Vice Mayor Curtis and seconded by Councilmember Duggan.

APPROVED

Roll call vote:

YEAS: McCowan, Duggan, Sherlin, Curtis, Eaton

NAYS: None

ATHENS CITY COUNCIL
MINUTES OF REGULAR SESSION
Tuesday, June 16, 2026

- B. Public Hearing and Second Reading for Ordinance 1157, an Ordinance to Amend ‘The Zoning Ordinance of The City of Athens, Tennessee, so as to Amend The Official Zoning Map to Rezone a 3-Acre Parcel Created from the 50-Acre Developed Parent Tract Shown as Tax Map 046 Parcel 049.00 Located on Denso Drive and George R. Price Boulevard from I-2 (Heavy Industrial District) to B-3 (Intensive Business District), Said Area Being Located within The Corporate Limits of Athens, Tennessee.

A public hearing was opened at 6:37 p.m. No one spoke, and the hearing was closed at 6:37 p.m.

Motion to approve Ordinance 1157 as presented was made by Vice Mayor Curtis and seconded by Councilmember McCowan.

APPROVED

Roll call vote:

YEAS: McCowan, Duggan, Sherlin, Curtis, Eaton

NAYS: None

- C. Public Hearing and Second Reading for Ordinance 1158, an Ordinance to Adopt a Budget and Set the Tax Rate on Taxable Property Located Within the Corporate Limits of the City of Athens, Tennessee, for the Fiscal Year July 1, 2026 Through June 30, 2027.

A public hearing was opened at 6:38 p.m. Five citizens spoke, and the hearing was closed at 6:55 p.m.

Motion to approve Ordinance 1158 was made by Vice Mayor Curtis and seconded by Councilmember Sherlin.

Motion to amend Ordinance 1158 was made by Vice Mayor Curtis and seconded by Councilmember Sherlin to:

- **Add Humane Society Utility Reimbursement Revenue - \$11,000**
- **Reduce Demolition Costs for Condemned Houses by - \$50,000**
- **Increase Transfer to Debt Service by - \$100,000**
- **Restore the 10% Reduction to the Library - \$17,800**
- **Include Funding for**
 - **Lite House - \$13,500**
 - **Mid-East TN Community Chorus - \$3,000**
 - **Tri-County Center - \$9,000**
- **Restore Soap Box Derby Expenses - \$16,000**
- **Restore the Employee Auto Allowances - \$16,800**
- **Increase to Council Salaries - \$4,200 (later amendment to decrease to \$0)**
- **City Manager Contingency - \$1,200 (later amendment to increase to \$5,400)**

Discussion followed regarding employee auto allowances.

Councilmember Sherlin moved the previous question, seconded by Vice Mayor Curtis.

FAILED

Roll call vote:

YEAS: McCowan, Sherlin, Curtis

NAYS: Duggan, Eaton

Discussion continued regarding the proposed increase to City Council salaries.

Following discussion, Vice Mayor Curtis moved to amend the pending amendment by removing the proposed increase to City Council salaries in the amount of \$4,200 and transferring those funds to the City Manager Contingency line item for budget balancing purposes, increasing the City Manager Contingency line item from \$1,200 to \$5,400. As the seconder of the original amendment, Councilmember Sherlin agreed to the modification.

ATHENS CITY COUNCIL
MINUTES OF REGULAR SESSION
Tuesday, June 16, 2026

Mayor Eaton moved to amend the original amendment made by Vice Mayor Curtis for Ordinance 1158 to not restore the \$16,800 employee auto allowance seconded by Councilmember Duggan.

FAILED

Roll call vote:

YEAS: Duggan, Eaton

NAYS: McCowan, Sherlin, Curtis

Mayor Eaton moved to amend the original amendment made by Vice Mayor Curtis for Ordinance 1158 to remove the reduction of \$50,000 for condemned housing seconded by Councilmember Duggan.

FAILED

Roll call vote:

YEAS: Duggan, Eaton

NAYS: McCowan, Sherlin, Curtis

The motion to adopt Ordinance No. 1158, as amended, was approved.

APPROVED

Roll call vote:

YEAS: McCowan, Sherlin, Curtis

NAYS: Duggan, Eaton

OLD BUSINESS

-None-

NEW BUSINESS

A. Bid Award for RFB 26-03 Athens Fire Station No. 3

Councilmember Sherlin moved to award the bid to KTM Builders, LLC in the amount of \$5,985,590 from the Capital Improvement Fund seconded by Vice Mayor Curtis.

Mayor Eaton moved to fund the project with a \$3,000,000 loan or other debt issuance, with the remaining project costs to be funded from the Capital Improvement Fund. Councilmember McCowan seconded the motion. Before the motion was put to a vote, the motion was withdrawn.

During discussion, Vice Mayor Curtis stated that he would like to discuss options for reimbursing the Capital Improvement Fund for a portion of the project costs during upcoming work sessions.

APPROVED

Roll call vote:

YEAS: McCowan, Duggan, Sherlin, Curtis, Eaton

NAYS: None

B. Additional Parking at Cook Park

Councilmember McCowan moved to award the project for additional parking at Cook Park. Councilmember Sherlin seconded the motion. The motion was subsequently withdrawn.

Councilmember McCowan moved to proceed with obtaining a proposal from the engineer currently working on the Parks Master Plan for the additional parking project. Councilmember Sherlin seconded the motion.

APPROVED

Roll call vote:

YEAS: McCowan, Duggan, Sherlin, Curtis, Eaton

NAYS: None

ATHENS CITY COUNCIL
MINUTES OF REGULAR SESSION
Tuesday, June 16, 2026

- C. Proposed Ordinance 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.

Vice Mayor Curtis moved approval, seconded by Councilmember Sherlin. The motion was withdrawn.

Councilmember Duggan moved to lay the motion on the table. Although the motion did not receive a second, the Chair called for a vote.

FAILED

Roll call vote:

YEAS: McCowan, Duggan

NAYS: Sherlin, Curtis, Eaton

No action was taken on the proposed ordinance. The matter will be discussed at the next work session.

D. City Manager Position

Before any motion was made, City Attorney Caldwell was asked to address questions regarding the City's nepotism policy as it relates to Interim City Manager Bridget Roberts and her husband, who is employed by the Athens Police Department. Mr. Caldwell advised that Mrs. Roberts does not directly supervise her husband and that the arrangement does not violate the City's nepotism policy. He further stated that, should a personnel matter arise requiring approval or review beyond the Police Chief, Mrs. Roberts would recuse herself, and the responsibility may be delegated to the Human Resources Director or independently reviewed.

Mayor Eaton moved to appoint Bridget Roberts to Interim City Manager until after the November 2026 election; Councilmember McCowan seconded the motion.

During discussion, Councilmember Sherlin requested that it be noted that the current City Council would not select the permanent City Manager.

APPROVED

Roll call vote:

YEAS: McCowan, Duggan, Curtis, Eaton

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: Sherlin

Mayor Eaton introduced Item E for consideration:

- E. Time Capsule Ceremony on July 4, 2026 prior to the fireworks and drone show at Athens Regional Park.

APPROVED

Roll call vote:

YEAS: Duggan, Sherlin, Curtis, Eaton

NAYS: None

Councilmember McCowan was absent for the vote.

F. Proposed Motion for City Council Consideration

City Attorney Caldwell advised that the proposed written motion regarding the appointment of Bridget Roberts as Interim City Manager, which had been distributed to the City Council prior to the meeting, should be formally considered by the Council.

“Motion to appoint Bridget Roberts to serve as Interim City Manager effective June 5, 2026.

During the interim appointment, Mrs. Roberts will perform the duties of City Manager under the City Charter, City ordinances, City policies, and direction of the City Council.

I further move that, while serving as Interim City Manager, Mrs. Roberts be compensated at the minimum salary established for the City Manager position, which is currently \$120,051.00 annually, or \$57.717 per hour. If the minimum salary for the City Manager position is adjusted during the interim appointment, her compensation will be adjusted accordingly.

Mrs. Roberts will continue to receive all benefits available to full-time City employees and will not lose any accrued leave, seniority, longevity credit, retirement benefits, or other employment benefits as a result of accepting the interim appointment.

Upon the appointment and start date of a permanent City Manager, or upon the end of the interim appointment by the City Council, Mrs. Roberts will return to her position as Executive Assistant. Her acceptance of the interim appointment will not be considered a resignation from or forfeiture of that position.

The Executive Assistant position will be held for Mrs. Roberts during the interim appointment and will not be permanently filled during that time. Upon returning to the Executive Assistant position, Ms. Roberts will be paid at a rate not less than what she would have received had she remained continuously in that position, including any approved cost-of-living or other pay adjustments.

This appointment will remain in effect until a permanent City Manager assumes office, Mrs. Roberts resigns from City employment, or the City Council ends the interim appointment.”

Mayor Eaton moved to approve the proposed motion as presented, seconded by Councilmember McCowan.

APPROVED

Roll call vote:

YEAS: McCowan, Duggan, Sherlin, Curtis, Eaton

NAYS: None

REPORTS

- A. Finance Department Monthly Report
- B. Fire Department Monthly Report
- C. Police Department Monthly Report

REPORT FROM THE CITY MANAGER

- A. No report.

CITIZENS COMMENTS

- Glenn Whiting commented on the dismissal of City Manager Dowling
- Elise Howell thanked the Council for supporting the Mid-East Tennessee Community Chorus
- Cynthia McCowan commented on the decrease in funding for The Arts Council and the dismissal of the City Manager
- Juanita McClure-Lewis commented on the former North City School property and using it as a park.

ATHENS CITY COUNCIL
MINUTES OF REGULAR SESSION
Tuesday, June 16, 2026

ADJOURNMENT

Councilmember McCowan moved to adjourn the meeting. Vice Mayor Curtis seconded.

Roll call vote:

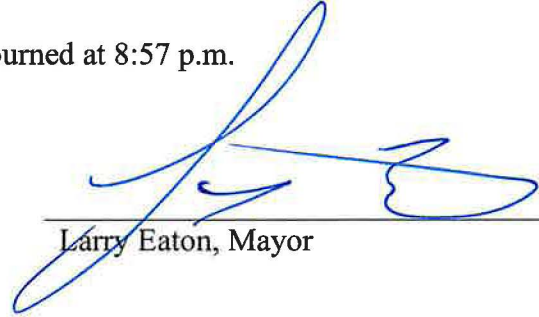
YEAS: McCowan, Duggan, Sherlin, Curtis, Eaton

NAYS: None

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:57 p.m.



Bridget Roberts, Interim City Manager



Larry Eaton, Mayor