

# ATHENS CITY COUNCIL MINUTES OF MEETING

August 17, 2021

The Athens City Council met in regular session on Tuesday, August 17, 2021, at 6:00 p.m. with Mayor Perkinson presiding. The invocation was given by Council Member Pelley; and upon roll call, the following members were present:

Curtis, Pelley, Witt-McMahan, Lockmiller, Perkinson

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

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## APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Minutes of the July 20, 2021 regularly scheduled meeting were submitted and approved by unanimous consent.

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## COMMUNICATIONS AND SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

### PRESENTATION OF SOAP BOX DERBY PROCLAMATIONS

Council Member Curtis presented a proclamation honoring Madison Woods (Super Kids Champion) for her participation in the 26<sup>th</sup> annual All-American Soap Box Derby, Council Member Pelley presented a proclamation honoring Zeke Hembree (Local Super Stock Car Champion) and Vice Mayor Lockmiller presented a proclamation honoring Juliette Couch (Local Stock Car Champion) for their participation in the 2021 All-American World Championship Soap Box Derby in Akron, Ohio.

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### PRESENTATION OF PROCLAMATION – PURKEY FAMILY DAY

Mayor Perkinson presented a proclamation honoring Purkey's Office Supply and the Purkey family for their many contributions made to the community.

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### PRESENTATION OF VIVID AWARD

This month's recipient of the VIVID Award, Pastor Larry W. Saunders, was unable to attend the meeting. Arrangements are being made to schedule presentation of the award at a later date.

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### CITY PARK SCHOOL UPDATES

Kristine Walden, Principal at City Park School, attended the meeting but did not provide an update.

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### MISCELLANEOUS CORRESPONDENCE

None

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## CONSENT AGENDA

Mayor Perkinson advised that the following items were discussed during the recent study session and are presented as part of the Consent Agenda. The recording clerk read the following items into the record:

- a.) Reappoint Amy Goodin to the Athens Regional Planning Commission, term expires September 21, 2024.
- b.) Reappoint Jennifer Hardison to the Health & Educational Facilities Board, term expires September 21, 2027.

- c.) Approve bid as submitted by Total Lawn Care for on-call mowing and property cleanup for mowing of high-grass violation properties.
- d.) Approve purchase of slope mower and attachments.
- e.) Approve Resolution No. 2021-29 authorizing City Manager to apply for a 2021-22 PEP Property Conservation Grant (50/50 match).
- f.) Approve Resolution No. 2021-30 authorizing participation in the BlueCross Healthy Places Grant.
- g.) Approve Resolution No. 2021-31 authorizing Allen & Hoshall to proceed with the design phase for Animal Shelter.
- h.) Approve City of Athens Budget Amendment No. 1 for Fiscal Year 2021-2022.
- i.) Approve Initial Resolution No. 2021-32 authorizing issuance of not to exceed Seven Million Seven Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$7,700,000) of General Obligation Bonds of the City of Athens, Tennessee.
- j.) Approve Resolution No. 2021-33 authorizing issuance of General Obligation Bonds of the City of Athens, Tennessee in the aggregate principal amount of not to exceed Seven Million Seven Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$7,700,000).

Mayor Perkinson asked for a motion. **Council Member Witt-McMahan moved, Council Member Curtis seconded, that the Consent Agenda as stated above be approved.** Roll call vote:

**AYES:** Curtis, Pelley, Witt-McMahan, Lockmiller, Perkinson  
**NAYS:** None

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ORDINANCES

HOTEL/MOTEL TAX

ORDINANCE NO. 1104 – SECOND READING

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING TITLE 5 OF THE ATHENS MUNICIPAL CODE BY ADDING CHAPTER 6, HOTEL/MOTEL TAX.

The caption of the above-described Ordinance was read by the recording clerk. Mayor Perkinson asked for a motion. **Vice Mayor Lockmiller moved, Council Member Witt-McMahan seconded, to approve Ordinance No. 1104 on Second and Final Reading.** Council Member Pelley stated that research shows that if they implement this tax, it will be a deterrent to people wanting to stay in Athens and will hurt the hotels and motels in the city. In his opinion, the Council did not need to implement this tax. Council Member Witt-McMahan inquired as to whether Council Member Pelley had brought a copy of the research that he had referenced for the Council to review. Council Member Pelley stated he had not. Council Member Curtis referenced a Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (TACIR) report published in 2015 or 2016 that evaluated these concerns. One of the quotes suggested that small tax increases had little effect on hotels performance. Before the legislature enacted the law allowing cities to implement this lodging tax, they did their due diligence to address these concerns and make sure they were not valid. He rebuked Council Member Pelley's comments and expressed his support for the ordinance. Vice Mayor Lockmiller and Mayor Perkinson addressed the concerns raised at last month's meeting concerning the homeless. The individual that raised those concerns submitted a letter to the Council stating he can now support the ordinance. He noted that while he may not like some of the immediate impacts, he can see the vision of the council looking into the future. Roll call vote:

**AYES:** Curtis, Witt-McMahan, Lockmiller, Perkinson  
**NAYS:** Pelley

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OLD BUSINESS

None

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NEW BUSINESS

None

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REPORTS

FINANCE DEPARTMENT REPORT

Mr. Mike Keith, Finance Director, presented the Finance Department Report for the month of July 2021. The report was accepted as presented.

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FIRE DEPARTMENT REPORT

Fire Chief Brandon Ainsworth presented the Fire Department Report for the month of July 2021. The report was accepted as presented.

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POLICE DEPARTMENT REPORT

Police Chief Cliff Couch presented the Police Department Report for the month of July 2021. The report was accepted as presented.

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REQUESTS FROM CITIZENS

Ellen Kimball, 1008 Woodward Park, shared her concerns regarding the Called Meeting of August 10, 2021. In her opinion, this was a personnel problem and not one that needs to be arbitrated in a court of public opinion. She requested that they be spared any further exposition of the kind they endured last week as that display did not reflect well on the Council, our professionals in government, or our citizens. Her second request was to implore City Council members to cease and desist from engaging with local conspiracy theorists on social media. Nothing is accomplished and our city is harmed in the process. She felt Council members should be forbidden from texting during any meeting. Glenn Whiting, 249 County Road 655, stated that for several months he had been asking the City Council to do something about the attacks and the discrimination against him by both the Mayor and City Manager and nothing has been done. He did not make any additional requests. Austin Sauerbri, 1406 Dossett Street, stated he felt the Tuesday night Called Meeting was particularly painful and disappointing. He was 100% in favor of investigating real concerns of impropriety of leadership, making the facts and findings public, and ensuring that elected leaders work together to deliberate the appropriate action and to keep our city moving forward but that was not what happened Tuesday. In his opinion, what he witnessed bore little resemblance to accountability or transparency. With the mountain of challenges facing Athens and so many communities in East Tennessee, we need citizen engagement on meaningful issues. The bigger consequences of meetings like last Tuesday are that it reinforces the idea of engaging in the public sphere is more about drama and petty squabbles than engaging in principled debate about the issues that actually matter. He is eternally optimistic about the possibilities for citizen engagement in local government and is hopeful that as elected leaders of Athens and as citizens they can do better than they did Tuesday night. Whitney Kimball Coe, 1111 Guille Street, stated she was deeply disturbed by what happened last week. She had written emails to our leadership to that effect. Ms. Coe stated she was really disturbed by some of the displays of non-leadership. Her first request was that the Council not subject everyone to another trial by public opinion. Her second request was to reiterate that they do not need to be engaging with the public on social media on matters that require serious, contemplative, thoughtful, mature conversation because that is not where it is going to happen. She asked the City Council to consider only interacting on their own pages or maybe on the City's government page but not to go to these original Facebook groups where real policy is not being made and constructive conversations are not being had.

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REPORT FROM THE CITY MANAGER

City Manager Sumner reviewed his monthly report including the various Parks and Recreation and Public Works projects and activities going on throughout the city.

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ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the meeting and upon motion duly made and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 7:10 p.m.



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C. SETH SUMNER, City Manager



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WILLIAM BO PERKINSON, Mayor