

**ATHENS CITY COUNCIL: SPECIAL SESSION, MONDAY, JUNE 14, 2021,  
9:00 P.M.**

Athens City Council met in Special Session at the above hour. Due to concerns with COVID-19 the following members met via videoconference: Crowl, Fahl, Grace, McCarey, Risner, Smedley, and Ziff.

Also present via videoconference: President Knisely, Mayor Patterson, Auditor Hecht, and Law Director Eliason.

**ORDINANCE FOR THIRD READING:**

**0-65-21**

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE 2021 APPROPRIATION ORDINANCE; AND AUTHORIZING THE AUDITOR TO MAKE AN INTERFUND TRANSFER.

Crowl moved for Adoption; Fahl seconded. Adoption was approved unanimously.

**ORDINANCES FOR SECOND READING:**

**0-70-21**

AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE DISPOSAL OF CERTAIN FIRE DEPARTMENT EQUIPMENT NO LONGER NEEDED FOR A MUNICIPAL PURPOSE.

**0-74-21**

AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE CREATION OF AN ATHENS UPTOWN DESIGNATED OUTDOOR REFRESHMENT AREA (DORA).

**0-75-21**

AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE DISPOSAL OF A TRACKHOE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGINEERING AND PUBLIC WORKS THAT IS NO LONGER NEEDED FOR A MUNICIPAL PURPOSE.

**0-76-21**

AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE PURCHASE OF A REPLACEMENT TRACKHOE FOR THE ENGINEERING & PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT.

**0-77-21**

AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE SERVICE-SAFETY DIRECTOR TO ACCEPT BIDS, WHERE NECESSARY, AND ENTER INTO CONTRACT FOR REPLACEMENT OF THE ROOF ON THE CITY BUILDING; AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY. Crowl moved to Amend to change the fund lines for both the appropriation and expenditure of \$200,000 from the Capital Improvements Fund to the General Fund, City Council; Grace seconded. Discussion: Grace asked for clarification regarding the need for the change.

Auditor Hecht explained that the Mayor has been protecting the Capital Improvements Fund over the last five years, so she requested the change since there is money in the General Fund to cover these expenses.

Smedley asked about the current balance in the Capital Improvements Fund, and if there are plans for using it.

Auditor believes the Mayor would like to use it for Armory renovations, a major capital expense. There is approximately \$1.2 million in that fund at this time.

Mayor Patterson confirmed that the Armory Project is at the forefront for the Capital Improvements Fund. He noted that a couple of tries for State funding to preserve the Armory have failed, and there is a current attempt to earmark Federal funding. If the City is successful in landing other funding, these Capital Improvements monies can be used for any required match.

Amendment was approved unanimously.

**0-78-21**

AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO PAY A ONE-YEAR MEMBERSHIP FEE TO THE OUTDOOR RECREATION COUNCIL OF APPALACHIA (ORCA) TO PROVIDE FINANCIAL SUPPORT FROM THE CITY'S TRANSIENT GUEST TAX FOR THE BAILEYS TRAIL SYSTEM ALONG WITH OTHER RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES. Discussion: Smedley asked if the County is planning to move forward with the one-year membership fee.

Mayor understands that the County has already approved the expenditure.

**0-79-21**

AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING ALL ACTIONS NECESSARY TO ACCEPT A NORTHEAST OHIO PUBLIC ENERGY COUNCIL (NOPEC) 2021 ENERGIZED COMMUNITY GRANT(S) FUNDS; AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

**0-80-21**

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE 2021 APPROPRIATION ORDINANCE; AND AUTHORIZING THE AUDITOR TO MAKE AN INTERFUND TRANSFER. Crowl moved to Amend Section I to include \$6,000 for meter reader equipment with half appropriated to the Water Fund and half to the Sewer Fund; and \$6,000 for new furniture for the Utilities Billing Office with a third appropriated to the Water Fund, a third to the Sewer Fund, and a third to the Garbage Fund; Smedley seconded. Amendment was approved unanimously.

**0-81-21**

AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE SERVICE-SAFETY DIRECTOR TO EXECUTE SUPPLEMENTAL ELECTRIC LINE EASEMENTS AND RIGHTS OF WAY FOR THE STROUDS RUN-CLARK LINE WITH THE OHIO POWER COMPANY (AEP); AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

**ORDINANCES FOR FIRST READING:**

**0-82-21**

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ATHENS CITY CODE TITLE 3, ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISIONS, CHAPTER 3.03, EXECUTIVE; OTHER OFFICIALS, SECTION 3.03.07, DEPUTY AUDITOR.

**0-83-21**

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE 2021 STAFFING LEVELS AUTHORIZED BY ORDINANCE 141-20.

**0-84-21**

AN ORDINANCE DECLARING A REAL AND PRESENT EMERGENCY, THUS OBTIATING THE FORMAL BIDDING PROCEDURE, FOR STRUCTURAL REPAIRS TO THE ATHENS FIRE DEPARTMENT HEADQUARTERS, PROJECT #343.

At approximately 9:20 p.m. Fahl moved to adjourn the meeting; Grace seconded. Motion was approved unanimously.

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President of Council

ATTEST:

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Clerk of Council

**MINUTES**  
**CITY & SAFETY SERVICES COMMITTEE**  
**JUNE 14, 2021**  
**7:00 p.m.**

Members in Attendance via Videoconference: Sarah Grace, Chair  
Chris Fahl, Vice-Chair  
Micah McCarey, Member

Administrators and  
Other Elected Officials via Videoconference: President Knisely  
Mayor Patterson  
Auditor Hecht  
Law Director Eliason  
Fire Chief Rymer

**ITEMS DISCUSSED:**

- New Emergency Response Initiative
  - Diane Pfaff, Director of the 317 Board – explained that the 317 Board contracts with Hopewell Health Centers (HHC) to respond to persons who are in a mental health crisis, in collaboration with other community partners, most notably law enforcement who are often the first on the scene – for many years, protocol has been to direct people to the local emergency room (ER) where a mental health evaluation takes place – while this is useful in many situations, it is not necessary for all crisis situations – 2019 data, of the nearly 3000 crisis episodes, only about ¼ were acute enough to require in-patient hospitalization – a mobile outreach team is being created that will include an HHC clinician and a paramedic from Athens County EMS – the team will be dispatched from an enhanced crisis call line at HHC and will travel by car to the location of the crisis, no longer requiring everyone to go to the ER – this will be more efficient and cost effective for both the ER and law enforcement – this new service will begin later this summer (early August) and will be available M-F during regular business hours – hope is that funding will continue in order to provide this program 24/7
  - Smedley – this is a very innovative approach and will be a great benefit to our community
  - Ziff – agrees, this program will lessen the trauma of an ER visit – will be much more efficient for all involved

- Fire Department Headquarters (structural repairs)
  - Grace – is in serious need of repairs – this building was not built to hold the weight of the fire vehicles/equipment – hopefully these repairs can get us through until a new fire station can be built
  
  - Rymer – noticed additional movement of the building – the engineer’s evaluation cites structural beams that show cracking – the building was built on stilts on the side of a hill in 1965 when the trucks were much smaller – today those trucks can weigh as much as 30 tons and the building is no longer conducive for a fire station – immediate repairs have been recommended to stabilize the structure – end report indicates that the building is not safe for this use – the equipment alone is worth \$3-4 million, which is half the department – major repairs were made in 2005 and again in 2008, at an approximate cost of \$500,000 – this repair will cost about \$50,000 to stabilize – stressed that these are temporary repairs for the next couple of years until a new station can be funded
  
  - Grace – pointed out that the engineer’s report states that the building is out of plumb in two directions
  
  - McCarey – asked about the timeliness of the repairs to strengthen the structure
  - Rymer – he will be in touch with the engineer upon adoption of the ordinance
  
  - Risner – asked if the report addresses catastrophic failure of the structure
  - Grace – it is the engineer’s opinion that the building is at the end of its service life for the intended occupancy – the original design, coupled with the added load of modern equipment has created a situation that has allowed the building to move and deflect – added loading is resulting in the slow degradation of the building’s structure – the previous repairs along with the repairs now being recommended, and the proposed periodic observations are intended to keep this station operable for a duration of time sufficient to construct a new fire station – it is anticipated that this process will take between 2-3 years
  
  - Smedley – asked if the report indicated that the building is unsafe now – can the City continue to use it safely – is concerned about collapse
  - Rymer – the report does not state that the building should be vacated immediately
  
  - Mayor – bottom line, these repairs are necessary at this time, and the fire headquarters needs to be replaced soon
  
  - McCarey – asked about any other deferred maintenance issues in the City
  - Mayor – nothing of this magnitude – the City does a pretty good job of keeping track of the life cycle of our bricks and mortar assets as well as street assets

**MINUTES: JUNE 14, 2021**  
**FINANCE & PERSONNEL COMMITTEE**  
**7:00 p.m.**

Members in Attendance via Videoconference: Sam Crowl, Chair  
Jeff Risner, Vice-Chair  
Arian Smedley, Member

Administrators and/or  
Other Elected Officials via Videoconference: President Knisely  
Mayor Patterson  
Auditor Hecht  
Law Director Eliason

**ITEMS DISCUSSED:**

- Appropriations
  - Crowl – proposes to amend 0-80-21 to include: a \$6,000 appropriation for Water Meter Reading equipment; and a \$6,000 appropriation to purchase new furniture for the Utilities Billing Office to replace 15 - 20-year old furniture as part of an ongoing office renovation project
- 2022 Rate Increases (review)
  - Crowl – information is being finalized by the Administration and Council's review will take place in August
- American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA update)
  - Mayor – shared that no ARPA dollars have yet been received
  - Auditor – a new fund will be required to handle the ARPA dollars – upon receipt the funds will be deposited and City Council will then need to appropriate prior to expending
  - Smedley – since Council will be on recess during the month of July, asked if there is any urgency to have the monies appropriated
  - Mayor – no urgency – first half of ARPA funds will be received this summer, with second half during the summer of 2022 – the City has up to four years to use the money for eligible COVID-19 related expenses
  - Auditor – the requirements for ARPA funds is slightly different from last year's CARES Act funding, specifics are still being sorted out

**MINUTES**  
**PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**  
**JUNE 14, 2021**  
**7:00 p.m.**

Members in Attendance via Videoconference: Chris Fahl, Chair  
Jeff Risner, Vice-Chair  
Sarah Grace, Member  
Arian Smedley, Member

Administrators and/or Other Elected Officials  
via Videoconference: President Knisely  
Mayor Patterson  
Auditor Hecht  
Law Director Eliason

**Items Discussed:**

- Remote Works for Athens
  - Zach Reizes, Vice-President of Sunday Creek Horizons, a mission driven company focusing on advancing southeast Ohio, Appalachian region – introduced a proposal for a new economic opportunity for remote work (see attached) – he presented to Athens City Council from a remote work site in Salt Lake City, Utah – vision is to put together an organization that can become a hub for managing remote work on behalf of the City of Athens – this is a partnership-based initiative that includes Mary Nally, Ohio University’s Center of Campus Community Engagement; the Athens Foundation; and the Economic Development Council (EDC) – would like to create an entity that can unify the various elements of remote work – there is an identified need for this kind of work space – the Ohio University Voinovich School is doing an economic analysis, to be released in the next couple of weeks, about the possibilities that remote work presents from an economic perspective – “Ascend WV” is a comprehensive inventive package to attract remote workers to work and live in several West Virginia Cities – from a community culture perspective, the City of Athens can and should be at the forefront of attracting remote workers to our economy – understands the City would like to make an investment in the Armory to become a used community asset – remote worker attraction is actually a COVID response – many communities nationwide are looking at how they can use their dollars by boosting local economy after the pandemic – once off the ground, this remote work system should be self-sustaining – he believes the market and time is right for this effort
  - Fahl – anticipates State roadblocks to include taxing issues

-Smedley – believes remote work is absolutely an opportunity for Athens – a good area for growth – suggested using existing space now, and to scale up to the costly Armory renovation as the ultimate goal – asked about the City's \$35,000 financial investment

-Reizes – the investment would be a retainer to cover Sunday Creek Horizons' staff time to include legal fees, incorporation of documents, stakeholder engagement for project development, etc.

-Grace – if there is a possibility that funding could be acquired to renovate the Armory building through a remote work system, she would like to take that opportunity

-Mayor – feels strongly that this share work space proposal would be a good use of the Armory

-Crowl – asked about participation by Athens County

-Reizes – for the time being, Athens County has decided this isn't a priority expenditure, so the focus has narrowed to a City effort

-McCarey – asked if there are any compelling statistics on remote workers

-Reizes – the remote worker attraction programs that have been created in Maine, West Virginia, and Kansas have all seen applications 10 times higher than the space available – the Ohio University Voinovich School report mentioned earlier will be able to provide more locally rooted data

-Mayor – along with the Voinovich School white paper, the EDC is working on a survey – as soon as this information is available he will provide it to the Council

-Fahl – asked about a timeline

-Reizes – understands the decision-making process is necessary, clarifying that the opportunity is now – would like to begin as soon as possible

-Mayor – looking at early Fall approval by Council

- Amend Zoning Code, Off-Street Parking

-Fahl – pointed out that many hours of outreach were spent during the most recent Comprehensive Plan review on the City's parking concerns (need to shift development focus from cars to people by converting parking minimums to parking maximums) – parking is a major factor in our community – parking regulations impact land uses, cost of development – our current parking requirements have been in place for some time and no longer follow best management practices – is proposing City Council approve a one-reading resolution to update our parking codes and to request the City Planning Commission review and consider said changes for recommendation back to City Council – believes we currently have a mismatch in the parking that is needed and what is actually on the ground, likely too much parking of one type and not enough of another – considerations under review are reducing the parking space dimensions; move from minimum to maximum number of parking spaces

allowed; and shared use space – updated Table B requirements – changes will provide flexibility for development – exemptions have been added to include availability of transit service; certain project areas; and ability to add more bicycle parking to offset vehicular spaces

-Planner Logue – believes the City’s parking runs counter to making Athens a better place to live – our parking requirements are based on everyone driving to every destination, never walking, biking or taking the bus – noted that you can walk from a parking lot on the eastern edge of Lowe’s and continue through parking lots all the way to the front door of the Community Center (almost a mile), with only 25’ actually on landscaped earth – parking reform is needed to have viable neighborhoods, and to encourage other more sustainable opportunities

-Mayor – agrees, it is time to rethink parking reform

-Grace – it is time to shift the focus away from accommodating cars – time to move forward with alternate forms of transportation

-Ziff – questioned Section 23.08.01(D), that parking may be provided within a radius of 1000 feet of the property – does that mean that a landlord could tell a tenant that there is available parking ¼ mile away

-Fahl – yes, it is called walkable parking

-Ziff – concerned that not all renters are students, and he would not like his car to be parked ¼ mile from his residence; it would be very inconvenient

-Ziff – Section 23.08.06, Exceptions, 1(A), spaces may be reduced to zero if the site is located 1500 feet or less from a public transit service – questioned whether that is 1500 feet from a stop, or just along the right

-Fahl – it’s a linear overlay

-Ziff – questioned Section 23.08.06, Exceptions, 2(a), that non-transit site parking spaces may be reduced up to 75% for low income housing tax credit projects

-Fahl – this will offer the developer more flexibility to identify the right number of parking spaces needed for the project

-Ziff – asked whether this change of focus is mainly for new development as opposed to existing

-Fahl – yes

-Smedley – echoes Ziff’s concerns about balancing out what we’re trying to do while protecting the folks who still need that parking space – possibly allowing for a gradual shift by possibly grandfathering locations – understands that changes are needed, while recognizing any unintended consequences that may be created for those already living in our City and want to continue doing so – make sure the quality of life remains what they want it to be

-Grace – pointed out that this is not a requirement to reduce spaces; it is simply an option – this will allow the demand for parking to much more closely drive the supply of parking spaces – if not needed, unused parking spaces can then be

converted to other uses – business owners (commercial or rental) will have a vested interest in providing the spaces needed – this will lead to a better balance by allowing things to shift easily over time to match changes and demands – appreciates the flexibility that these changes will allow for our future landscape

- Athens City Code (amend Title 9, Regulations)  
-Fahl – need language incorporated into our City Code to add Section 9.06.04(C), an exception to allow possession of an open container, for the Designated Outdoor Recreation Area (DORA)

## **ITEMS NEEDED ON AN UPCOMING CITY COUNCIL AGENDA:**

1. Zoning Code (resolution)
2. Title 9 (amendment)