

**MINUTES**  
**MARCH 14, 2022**  
**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**  
**7:00 P.M.**

Council Members in Attendance:

Sam Crowl  
Sarah Grace  
Solveig Spjeldnes  
Alan Swank  
Ben Ziff

Administrators and/or  
Other Elected Officials:

President Pro Tem Risner  
Acting Mayor Knisely  
Auditor Hecht  
Service-Safety Director Stone

**Items Discussed:**

- Solid Waste (fee adjustment)
  - Swank – the proposed changes will base all fees on the number of containers instead of residency classification – these changes will not affect the City’s budget in a negative way – there will be an increase of \$.20 per month for all customers – rental units will have an opportunity to request a one container rate for a May through April term, that resets annually – in order to remain revenue neutral, should a significant number of customers move from the two to one container rate, for every 100 customers that switch all residential rates will increase by an additional \$.20 per month
  - S-S Director – once the City’s solid waste services contract is rebid next year, the Administration will return to Council with recommendations on rates across the board – in the meantime, this proposed increase will govern
  - Crowl – questioned that there is no flexibility for renters in the 4-6 occupant category to move to the one container rate, so it doesn’t solve all equity problems – however, understands this is in place just for a year, and it shows progress
  - Swank – this is a good first step to provide equity during the last year of our current contract
  - S-S Director – if a request is received from a dwelling with more than three occupants, the Administration can return to Council with a recommendation for further change, noting that the current billing language has been in place since

2002 – important to note that the tipping fee is about \$1.00 of the cost of one container of generated waste – the rest of the fee is for the actual service provided by the collection agency

-Crowl – asked how the additional \$0.20 rate increase for every 100 new customers added to the single container rate will be announced to the public  
-S-S Director – an announcement will be made on the utility bill – doesn't think there will be a big change during the life of the current contract

-Rob Delach, Morris Avenue – asked for clarification that rental accounts are held in the name of the landlord, and not the tenant – concerned that a landlord could opt to put all rentals on the one container rate  
-Grace – all utility accounts are required to be held in the name, and are the responsibility of the property owner – it would be unlikely that the landlord would make the change to a one container rate because if the household continues to generate more than one container of waste there will be a significant cost added for extra bags

-Auditor Hecht – understands there will be a review of those requesting the one container rate and accounts will be monitored for a May through April term that resets annually as the tenants' change

-Spjeldnes – what happens if a customer opts for the one container rate, but puts out more  
-S-S Director – customer will be charged an additional \$5.25 for each extra bag at the curb

-President – the legislation still references a 32-gallon container – asked if there are any plans to move to uniform containers  
-Swank – standardized containers will be discussed in the City & Safety Services Committee next fall as part of the bid specs for the next contract, along with composting and updated technology

-Crowl – while most leases are May to April, some students don't return to Athens until August – questioned whether landlords may opt for the one container rate over the summer months  
-S-S Director – the Administration will consider accommodating that if such a request is made

-Tony Farion, Lavelle Road, representing Bobcat Rentals – oversees about 70 units – appreciates this change

-Grace – questioned whether tenants can switch to the one container rate, or if the property owner would have to make that request, and if the May through April term is set for the year

-S-S Director – believes change could be made by the tenant if the bill is being sent to that address – can change rate at any time – reset is there to protect the City

-Ziff – clarified that the renter will be required to request the one container rate annually

-S-S Director – correct – currently the City has 2,452 accounts on the two container rate, and 882 on the one container rate

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

1. Solid Waste

# MINUTES: MARCH 14, 2022

## FINANCE & PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Members in Attendance:

Sam Crowl, Chair  
Jeff Risner, Member  
Solveig Spjeldnes, Member  
Ben Ziff, Member

Administrators and/or  
Other Elected Officials:

Acting Mayor Knisely  
Service-Safety Director Stone  
Auditor Hecht

### ITEMS DISCUSSED:

- Staffing Updates
  - Crowl – Fire Department reorganization – currently have firefighters, lieutenants, (3) captains, and the Chief – would like to move to (1) captain (two captains will be retiring at relatively the same time in a couple of months) – this organizational structure will be similar to that of the Athens Police Department (APD) – there will also need to be a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Union
  - S-S Director – believes the time is right to make this change – this is a collective effort, working with the Fire Department, and the Union that represents the firefighters and the lieutenants – it is an interesting challenge in that currently (3) captains are in charge of the shifts (working a unique 2496 hour schedule in non-union supervisory positions) – lieutenants (part of the Union) don't generally opt to become captains as they would take a pay/benefit cut, so what occurs is that junior firefighters end up testing to become captains and become the leaders – they are not the most experienced personnel within the department – he believes a better structure would be to have lieutenants lead the shifts – the remaining captain will become a 40-hour administrative position, again similar to APD – this change will grow the department by one additional lieutenant, so will be an additional expense – does not want this structure change to be contentious, but one that everyone feels good about – this structure will accommodate for any upcoming increase in population, with very little expense – legislation will be needed to reduce the non-union staffing from (3) captains to (1) captain, modify the benefits, and an MOU, that would have financial implications, would accompany the current collective bargaining agreement
  - Ziff – asked about general response from current staff
  - S-S Director – has held a couple of labor-management meetings – has met with the remaining captain – the senior lieutenants would be in charge – thinks the plan has been accepted, and is a reasonable way to proceed
  - Swank – asked if both captains and lieutenants are both part of the Union
  - S-S Director – captains are Non-Union and lieutenants are Union
  - Crowl – Law Director would like to change the title of one of her prosecutor positions from prosecutor to Assistant Law Director/Part Time Prosecutor to assist her with civil matters, and to step in when the Law Director is not available

–reminded Council that the Law Director’s position is a 30-hour per week,  $\frac{3}{4}$  time position – the newly titled position will continue in the same Pay Grade 9 since it is not supervisory in nature – will be hiring an experienced person who has both civil and prosecutorial expertise and requests that the beginning pay rate be higher than the 25% that is allowed without Council approval

-Risner – questioned how much more than 25% through the pay grade

-Crowl – recommendation is for \$36.06 – midway is \$36.77

- Outdoor Recreation Council of Appalachia (ORCA) – (annual membership fee)

-Crowl – renewal of annual \$90,000 membership fee to (ORCA)

-Spjeldnes – would be helpful to have a better understanding about what the City receives for this membership fee

-Swank – agrees, would like to see: 1) how much money each of the other public entities contributed in 2020 and 2021 that are a part of ORCA; 2) a document showing what progress has been made to date in addition to just building “x” number of miles of trail; and 3) clarification that this \$90,000 is being used for operation, not for trail building

-Auditor – explained that 50% of the transient guest tax is placed in the General Fund, and this membership would be paid from that

-S-S Director – speaking of transient guest tax, reported that there are (16) advertised short-term rentals operating in the City, with only (4) of those being permitted and paying transient guest tax – enforcement actions will be taken on the 12 non-permitted short-term rentals

- ART/West (accept monetary grant)

-Crowl – received a \$4,000 grant from the Kleinpenny Educational Fund to be used for After School Arts and Musical Lending Library supplies – the City thanks the Kleinpenny Education Fund

- Prior Year Bill

-Crowl – payment of a 2019 invoice was made, but the payment was applied to a different bill – Suspension of the Rules is recommended, as it is a bill that is long past due

-Auditor — this prior year payment to Sedgwick/CareWorks Comp (BWC plan management for claims) is for approximately (\$5800) – is owed and must be paid out of this year’s budget

-Risner – questioned the need for Suspension of the Rules

-President – wouldn’t want to risk a suspension of the policy

-Auditor – the City owes the money, it is a past due bill, and it should be handled as soon as possible

-Swank – if the City is current with payment on our present coverage, he concurs with Risner that there is no reason to rush legislation to make this 2019 payment

-Crowl – sees no reason to hold up a past due payment for several weeks

- Appropriations
  - (\$35,000.00) to the Wastewater Treatment Plant (repairs to Oakmont Lift Station)
    - Crowl – approximately (\$11,000) has already been expended – it has been determined that this additional amount is needed to complete a more substantial repair than was initially anticipated
    - Risner – asked for clarification about the problem with the lift station
    - S-S Director – was built in 2004 and has gradually been sinking – the building is having structural problems – there is some separating of concrete that needs repair – noted that the project will remain under \$50,000, the threshold for bidding
  - (\$4,000.00) to Recreation Fund, ARTS/West (grant from Kleinpenny Educational Fund)
  - (\$100,000.00) to General Fund, Auditor (for income tax refunds)
    - Hecht – typically \$250,000 is appropriated annually for these refunds – \$350,000 was requested for the refund line in this year’s budget, anticipating refunds to remote workers – to date \$212,000 has already been processed for refunds, leaving \$138,000, with an additional \$77,000-\$80,000 received and ready to be processed – reminded Council that this is all prior to the April 15<sup>th</sup> tax deadline
    - Swank – asked about the amount expended due to remote workers
    - Auditor – about \$95,000

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

1. Staffing – Law Director
2. ORCA Membership Fee
3. ARTS/West Grant
4. Prior Year Bill
5. Appropriations

**MINUTES  
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE  
MARCH 14, 2022**

Members in Attendance: Jeff Risner, Chair  
Sarah Grace, Member  
Alan Swank, Member  
Ben Ziff, Member

Administrators and/or

Other Elected Officials: Acting Mayor Knisely  
Service-Safety Director Stone  
Auditor Hecht

- Disposition of Vehicles (Municipal Court)
  - Risner – Municipal Court has asked to dispose of (2) vehicles – a 2007 Ford Expedition, and a 1999 Ford Taurus
  
  - Swank – asked if these vehicles will be replaced with Enterprise vehicles, and questioned whether the City has received any Enterprise vehicles to date
  - S-S Director – believes one Enterprise vehicle is now part of the City fleet, and anticipates several more throughout the year
  
  - Risner – there are no plans to replace the Municipal Court vehicles at this time

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

1. Disposition of Vehicles