MINUTES

The Athens Borough Council met in regular session on August 10, 2026, Council Chambers, Athens Borough Municipal Building.

Present: President Matthew Patton, Vice-President Joanne Polzella, Council members Walter Chaykosky, Patrick Cotton, Scott Riley and Mayor Todd Babcock.

Absent: President Pro Tem Robert Williams and Council member Sharon Sporn.

President Matthew Patton led in the Salute to the Flag.

President Matthew Patton called the meeting to order 7:00PM.

President Matthew Patton stated that this meeting is being tape recorded to assist the Borough Secretary in the preparation of the Minutes. When approved by Council the tapes will be reused and not preserved. If you have a recording device, please announce so at this time.

PRESS

The Morning Times announced they were recording the meeting.

PUBLIC HEARING

President Patton opened the Public Hearing with a request to receive public comments on the Solar Panel Ordinance Amendment.

No one present wished to address Council regarding the Solar Panel Ordinance Amendment.

CALL FOR AN EXECUTIVE SESSION

President Patton called for an Executive Session to discuss litigation – Second Street Sidewalk.

PUBLIC

Carl Sutton addressed Council with his concern over a missing Hometown Hero Banner. Mr. Sutton explained he had reached out to Borough representatives over his father's banner that seemed damaged and partially hanging off the pole it had been assigned to. Mr. Sutton stated that the Borough failed to remove the flag before it finally came down and is now missing. Mr. Sutton would appreciate the flag being replaced and a solution to the issue in case this happens again.

President Patton took a moment to apologize that the Borough wasn't more proactive in ensuring the flag was removed before seeing more damage or before it ended up coming down on its own. President Patton stated the Borough unfortunately does not have the right equipment to hang up or take banners down. President Patton stated the plan to remove the banner was to request help from a Contractor doing work in town with a bucket truck.

Mr. Sutton asked who is responsible for replacing the flag, him or the Borough? Mr. Sutton stated a Veteran deserves more than having their flag ruined.

President Patton stated Council will discuss a solution.

Dale Bowen, 203 Bridge Street, stated that he has been present at numerous meetings and Council has not discussed his concerns, two of them being, 611 S Main Street and 216 Central Avenue. Mr. Bowen is wondering if Council is holding private sessions to discuss his concerns and then not getting back to him with the answers he is seeking. Mr. Bowen wants fairness, honesty and accountability from Council.

Mr. Bowen is wondering who has the power to come to Council to request a change in an ordinance as he referenced the proposed change in zoning to allow the construction of apartments above garages. Mr. Bowen stated Council jumped like little goldfish out of the bowl to make this change happen. Mr. Bowen stated his house is 200 feet out of the commercial zone and when he requested it be put in commercial, Council refused. Mr. Bowen stated his house was commercial once, with a beauty shop in it, and he had a letter from Beverly Bleiler stating it would remain commercial. Mr. Bowen is wondering why other requests brought to Council are looked into but every time he brings a request to Council, he is told no. Mr. Bowen thinks it's a private thing against him and that he had high hopes for certain Council members he voted for. Mr. Bowen stated the Ordinance states you can't build over 30% but the new garage that went up, the Vanderpool property, does not appear to be at the 30%.

President Patton explained Mr. Bowen's time of three minutes has ended and that Council appreciates the concerns he has brought forward. Patton stated that every concern has been addressed and investigated. Patton advised that concerns do not get addressed or discussed at Council meetings because this isn't the place for that, but the concerns do go to the respected department to be investigated. Patton explained the facts Mr. Bowen presented to Council were not accurate, that everything is okay.

President Patton further stated that multiple board members, including the Mayor have had conversation with Mr. Bowen regarding the properties in question. Patton explained that 611 S Main Street has been investigated, addressed and Mr. Bowen's information is incomplete. Mr. Patton stated as a Borough/Municipality, Council cannot share all the details concerning someone else's property.

Mr. Bowen questioned that 611 S Main Street was not overbuilt and that if he looked it up on google from 2020, it won't show that it is now overbuilt? President Patton restated that Mr. Bowen's information is incomplete and that's the only information to give at this time.

President Patton stated the concern regarding the garage at 216 Central Avenue has been addressed and has been done the right way. Mr. Bowen stated the garage is four feet off the property line. Mayor Babcock spoke up stating he had talked to Mr. Bowen previously, explaining Borough Officials/Employees looked into this and had found a property pin. Mayor further explained that the picture Mr. Bowen presented to Council showed a shed on a neighboring property so that was checked into and found to have been placed without a permit which has since been resolved.

Mayor Babcock stated the concerns being brought to the Municipality and Code Department are being looked into, not by Council as a whole at a meeting but rather by the employees who are doing their jobs. Mayor stated that not every concern or Code Violation is brought to a Council meeting for discussion nor will the details or resolutions of other Residents' properties be discussed out in the Public or with Mr. Bowen. Mayor stated that Mr. Bowen is consistently trying to show that Borough Officials/Employees are not doing their jobs but that he cannot find that they're not in fact doing their jobs. Mayor stated that Mr. Bowen has previously brought in pictures of properties that are not his but that he thinks are in violation of code and it's frustrating because the Borough hasn't found any supporting evidence of the violations. Mayor stated he appreciates Borough citizens bringing concerns to Council's attention, but that Mr. Bowen's concerns are unfounded.

Mr. Bowen stated he had brought in pictures of a curb that was eight inches high instead of sixteen or eighteen inches high. Mayor Babcock said that none of the pictures had addresses with them and that no one knew when the curb was put in or the circumstances surrounding it. Mayor Babcock stated he appreciates Mr. Bowen bringing concerns to the Borough but he thinks he is here fishing because every meeting Mr. Bowen is trying to find something that isn't being done right and making accusations that the Borough Manager isn't doing his job or that council members are lying. Mayor explained that this is getting frustrating. Mr. Bowen stated that he is looking for accountability. Mayor stated he has had conversations with employees, and everyone is doing their job and that the accusations are unfair.

President Patton stated the concern with ordinance changes/requests comes from employees doing their job. Patton stated things are constantly changing, Ordinances are constantly being reviewed and a lot of times the Borough must keep up with these changes as some come from neighboring municipalities, in example the E-Scooter/E-Bike Ordinance. Patton restated that he appreciates the concerns brought to Council to be addressed accordingly.

Mayor Babcock explained that Mr. Bowen wanting his property rezoned is not the proper way to make changes. Mayor stated the Borough cannot change one property as it is considered spot zoning and that there is a process to follow when making a zoning change. Mayor stated that Pennsylvania House approved House Bill 2186 on June 01, 2026 which addresses the use of apartments above garages in residential areas. Mayor stated this is a prime example of something that was brought to Council and Code Enforcement's attention that has the Borough looking into the current zoning ordinance.

Mayor Babcock again stated he appreciates concerns brought to the Borough but that he believes Mr. Bowen is on a fishing expedition. Mayor stated it appears that Council and all employees are doing their job.

PRESIDENT PATTON

INFORMATION ONLY

The Borough held executive sessions on July 30, 2026 and August 07, 2026 to discuss personnel regarding the Public Works Department contract negotiations.

MONTHLY BILLS

It was moved by Chaykosky and seconded by Riley that the August 2026 monthly bills be approved as follows:

General Fund **$151,374.23**
Sewer Fund **$69,916.53**
Fire Fund **$312.17** – Loan Payment #86

AYES: Chaykosky, Cotton, Polzella, Riley, Patton
NAYES: None
ABSENT: Sporn, Williams
Motion carried.

MINUTES

It was moved by Chaykosky and seconded by Cotton that the minutes of the regular meeting on July 13, 2026 be approved as written. Motion carried.

CODE ENFORCEMENT COMMITTEE

Vice-President Polzella stated:

The Zoning Officer's monthly report was made available to Council on August 06, 2026.

Zoning Permits Issued: 6
Zoning Permits Denied: 0
Zoning Permits to Date: 21

Customer Requests: 39

Property Maintenance Violation Notices Issued:

Total to Date (2026): 184

Contractor Permits:

Issued: 67 Pending: 4 Void: 0

P&Z MEETING

The Planning and Zoning Commission will meet on October 14, 2026 at 6:00PM at the Athens Borough Municipal Building.

R1 ZONING

Solicitor Foster presented the draft ordinance amendment to Council, allowing the construction of apartments above garages in all zoning districts. The draft ordinance amendment will be presented to the Planning and Zoning Commission for discussion and recommendations at the October 14, 2026 meeting. Mayor Babcock request that the Borough review the new House Bill before adopting the change in the ordinance.

ORDINANCE NO. 742 – SOLAR PANELS

It was moved by Riley and seconded by Cotton that Ordinance No. 742, Solar Panels Zoning Ordinance Amendment be adopted as advertised on July 23, 2026 and July 31, 2026. Motion carried.

ZONING SECTION 540-62: FENCES

Council held a discussion to possibly amend the current language in the Zoning Ordinance regarding Fences, for better clarification. Council member Polzella stated there is conflicting wording for the height of fences. Council member Cotton stated there is no clear definition for height for side, back, and front yards. Solicitor Foster stated he can clear up the language for all districts.

It was moved by Cotton and seconded by Polzella that Solicitor Foster be authorized to draft the ordinance amendment to Zoning Section 540-62, Fences. Motion carried.

PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE

President Patton stated:

The Public Work's Department report was made available to Council on August 04, 2026.

POLICE COMMITTEE

President Patton stated:

The Police Chief's monthly report for July was not made available to Council.

E-SCOOTERS / E-BIKES ENFORCEMENT

Solicitor Foster presented the draft Ordinance to Council for review and possible authorization for advertisement at the September 14, 2026 meeting.

COMMUNITY AND DEVELOPMENT

Council member Riley stated:

SHADE TREE

The Shade Tree Commission met on July 20, 2026 at 6:00PM at the Athens Borough Municipal Building. Their next meeting is scheduled for August 17, 2026 at 6:00PM at the Athens Borough Municipal Building.

ROAD CLOSURE REQUEST

It was moved by Polzella and seconded by Cotton that Maple Street from Susquehanna Street to Public Street be closed from 1:00PM to 5:00PM on August 29, 2026 at the request of Sheephill Farm Market and Café due to their Grand Opening Celebration. Motion carried.

FIRE COMMITTEE

Council member Cotton stated:

The Fire Department's monthly report for July was made available to Council on August 07, 2026.

SOLICITOR

The Solicitor's report for July was made available to Council on August 07, 2026.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

START: 7:36PM
STOP: 8:12PM

ADJOURN

It was moved by Cotton and seconded by Riley that the meeting be adjourned at 8:12PM. Motion carried.

ATTEST:

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Tara R. Campbell, Secretary