



FRIENDLY CITY
GUIDE
TO
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

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ATHENIAN OATH

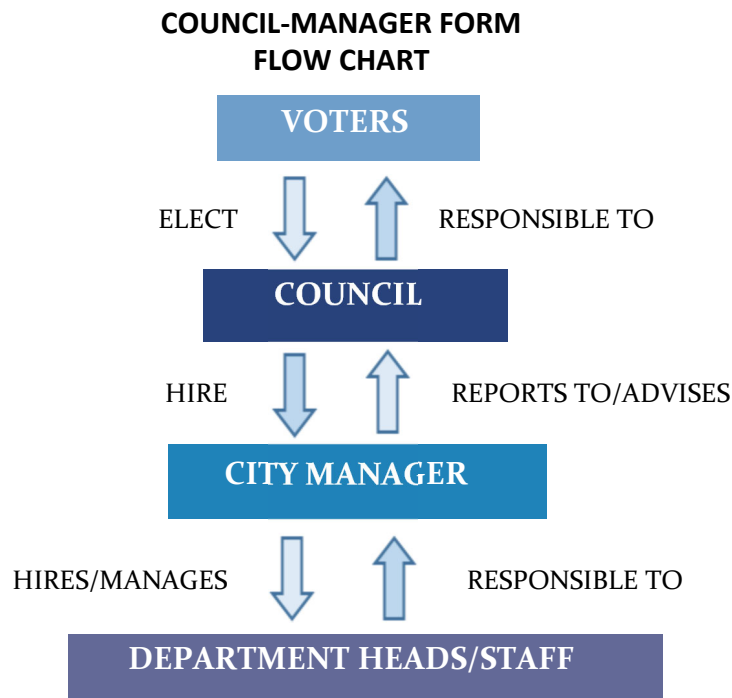
“We will never bring disgrace on this our City by an act of dishonesty or cowardice. We will fight for the ideals and Sacred Things of the City both alone and with many. We will revere and obey the City's laws, and will do our best to incite a like reverence and respect in those above us who are prone to annul them or set them at naught. We will strive unceasingly to quicken the public's sense of civic duty. Thus, in all these ways, we will transmit this City not only, not less, but greater and more beautiful than it was transmitted to us.” - *Based on the Ephebic Oath, an oath once sworn by the young men of classical Athens, Greece, as required in order to attain status as citizens. Today's use of the oath was revived for use in educational institutions as a statement of civic virtue.*



ABOUT OUR FORM OF GOVERNMENT

Athens is a council-manager form of local government, chartered by the Tennessee General Assembly. The council-manager form is the most popular structure of government in the United States among municipalities with populations of 2,500 or more. It is one of several ways U.S. municipalities and counties can organize. Under this form,

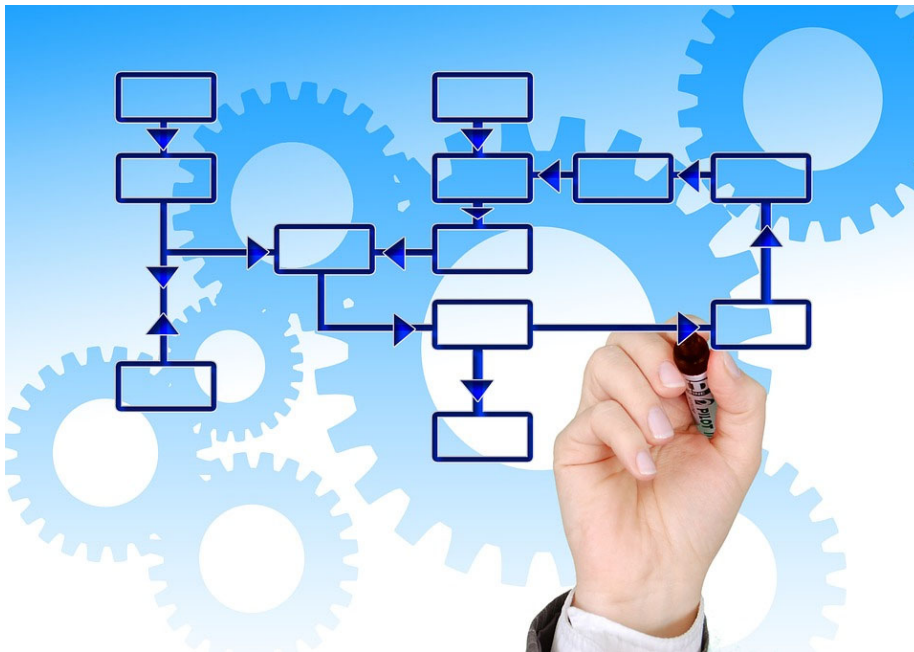
residents elect a governing body to adopt legislation and set policy. The members of the governing body select from among themselves the mayor, the chief elected official, to serve as the board chairperson. The governing body hires a professional manager with broad executive authority to carry out those policies and oversee the local government's day-to-day operations. The governing body is precluded from intervening in the day-to-day operations and management of the city. The city manager serves as the chief executive or chief administrative officer of the corporate entity of the city and employs staff to deliver public services to all people, effectively removing politics from service delivery.



ABOUT CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

“Engagement” can mean many things. As used in this publication it means “to work together so as to move forward,” just as two gears engage in a mechanical process to move production forward.

Why engage? When governments and citizens work well together, better and more sustainable decisions get made. Many folks are all too aware of the times that the gears do not mesh smoothly, conflict flares, and elected officials and citizens become frustrated or angry.



The fact is, successful public engagement doesn’t “just happen.” As with any process or project, preparation and planning make for a better result. And like other processes, effective public engagement requires a system—one that takes into account the people, values, information, and issues involved; careful choice of the structure for interaction; and planned maintenance or follow up. That system needs to be integrated in a coherent way with the other systems

used for decisions within the community. Citizens, staff, and elected officials all need to understand how “the engagement system” is intended to work.

Civic engagement means working to make a difference in the life of our community and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes.

The basis of all city processes begins with engaged citizens serving on committees, commissions, and boards. Please see the section titled **CITIZEN COMMITTEES, COMMISSIONS, AND BOARDS** for more information about these opportunities to serve.



Local government is purposefully a deliberate process that provides structure and time for issues and solutions to be studied, discussed, and enacted in legal form before impacting our daily lives. Local government does not serve our community well when protocols are not followed and quick reactions are allowed to take place in response to short-term issues. The community should seek the best long-term solutions and implement proper planning to address our major impediments and ensure that this city will be transmitted greater and more beautiful than it was transmitted to us. The council and staff of the city must be considerate of the impact of their actions and

decisions in regard to delivering the best possible service to ALL people.

Citizens may address their council members with concerns or compliments at any time and in any appropriate manner to have their voices heard. The only limitation to this is when the council members convene as the governing body to transact the business of the city (council meetings). City council members are elected at-large and are therefore responsible to all city voters.



MEETINGS OF THE COUNCIL

Adequate public notice for all meetings of the council, with the exception of executive sessions, are provided to allow the public to attend and observe. The council adopted Robert's Rules of Order to be utilized during council meetings. Robert's Rules of Order are not the most appropriate rules for a legislative body; however, they are widely recognized as a common standard for conducting efficient meetings and are used to provide a more easily understood structure to council's proceedings.

Regular Council Meetings: On the third Tuesday of every month at 6:00 P.M., unless otherwise noted, the city council meets to trans-

act the business of the city. The business is performed by a set agenda of pre-determined ordinances, resolutions, and motions. A consent agenda is utilized to abbreviate the time needed on common, typical, or non-controversial business. A citizen may present a petition or a request at the appropriate time on the agenda during the meeting. The public may be heard prior to the second reading of an ordinance, but only in relation to the ordinance. This is the only time that the council has to transact the business of the city, and therefore it must be conducted in the most formal and efficient manner possible; rules of order and limits on discussion serve as aids to increase the effectiveness of this process.

Study Sessions: Once per month, prior to the regular council meeting, an agenda-setting meeting may be held for management to better coordinate, plan, and advise for the benefit of an efficient council meeting. Reports and informational items may be placed on the study session agenda. No official business may be transacted at study sessions. Council attendance at study sessions is voluntary.



Called Meetings: For emergency or highly irregular situations, the Mayor or any two or more members of the council may request to call a special meeting. Called meetings may be held at a time of the council's choosing but may only address the issue identified in the notice of the meeting. No other business may be discussed or transacted at a called meeting. Only in the case of a public hearing may the public be heard during a called meeting.



Executive Session Meetings: These are closed sessions, i.e. exempt from the Tennessee Open Meetings Act, for limited reasons. In order to protect commercial trade secrets or financial information of private businesses, discussion and consideration may be conducted in closed sessions. Additionally, discussion between council and the city attorney concerning pending litigation when the council is named a party in a lawsuit may be conducted in a closed session. However, in this case, attorney-client privilege extends only to receiving the advice of counsel from the city attorney. Actual decisions on matters of litigation are subject to the requirement that the meetings be open.

CITIZEN INTERACTION DURING COUNCIL MEETINGS

Citizens are always welcome and encouraged to attend meetings of the city council to observe the local governing body in action. These meetings are the only time that the governing body can meet to transact the legislation or set the policy of the city and, therefore, must be conducted in the most effective and efficient manner possible. Residents of the City of Athens may be heard at particular times during council meetings.

Each item on council meeting agendas indicates a specific time for a specific purpose. Petitions, requests, and public hearings are citizens' opportunities to either make a formal request of the city or have their opinion heard during a public hearing. Both opportunities are discussed in the following sections:



Petitions and Requests – If a citizen has previously requested something be done by the city through the proper chain of command and has not been satisfied, they may bring a petition with other citizens or their own request asking the council to intervene. The council has no obligation to respond to petitions, but may, at its discretion, properly place the petition in queue for an upcoming study

session to allow for research and exploration of the facts of the matter.

The council may hear a citizen's request when properly presented. Unless declared an emergency by the council, no action shall be taken on a petition or request during the council meeting when it is presented. The council may place an actionable item in relation to a request in queue for a future study session, to allow management and staff time to fact-find or research toward a proper solution.



Public Hearings — The public is invited to be heard during the second reading of an ordinance in relation to the proposed ordinance. The Mayor shall invite the public to be heard prior to the second reading of an ordinance.

In accordance to Robert's Rules of Order, a pro – con order should be followed with no one repeating a statement that has already been made.

During council meetings, the mayor may also interrupt or call out of order those who do not abide by the following rules of decorum:

- ◆ Requestor or Petitioner must state their name and address for the record.
- ◆ Council members are not to be addressed individually.
- ◆ Time may not be yielded to another.
- ◆ Requestors or petitioners must speak from the podium in a civil, non-argumentative, and respectful manner.

The mayor may establish time limits for petitions, requests, and public hearings; three (3) minutes is a standard amount of time typically allowed per person for many cities. Non-residents may be heard with the mayor's approval.

The council shall not address or respond to the speaker, other than the mayor acknowledging the message has been received. If the request calls for further discussion or action of the council, council members may properly ask for an actionable item to be placed on a future study session agenda.

Citizens do not have to wait for a council meeting to make a request of the city. Citizens are always welcome to contact staff with questions, requests, or compliments. Please see pages 21 for more information on how to do so and page 22 for the staff directory.





CITIZEN COMMITTEES, COMMISSIONS, AND BOARDS

To apply for or volunteer with any of the below committees, commissions, or boards, please visit the city website at <http://www.cityofathensstn.com/citizeninvolve.html> and download the "Committee Application Form." Applications may also be picked up at City Hall. When completely filled out, return the form or mail it to the Office of the City Manager in the Athens Municipal Building, 815 North Jackson Street, Athens, TN, 37303. Should you have any questions or need assistance, please call (423) 744-2702.

Athens Housing Authority

Purpose: To provide safe and sanitary housing as it may deem advisable. Meets on the second Wednesday of each month at 11:30 A.M. Consists of five commissioners approved by the mayor who must reside within the corporate limits of the City of Athens; no commissioner may be a city official. The term of office shall be five years.

Athens Regional Planning Commission

Purpose: To enforce local and state regulations for regional planning, zoning, and development. Meets on the first Monday of each month at noon. Consists of seven members; two shall be the mayor or designee and a council member selected by city council; one shall be the general manager of the Athens Utilities Board (AUB); the other four shall be appointed by the mayor and must be residents of the city or its regional planning boundary. The four members appointed by the mayor shall serve for a term of three years each.



Athens Utilities Board

Purpose: To exercise control over the management and operations of the utilities systems. Meets on the fourth Tuesday of each month at 5:00 P.M. Consists of five commissioners appointed by the city council to serve four-year terms, and one city council member who serves a two-year term. Must be a resident of Athens for at least three years and at least twenty-five years of age.

Board of Adjustments and Appeals

Purpose: Process whereby a property owner or a duly authorized agent may appeal the decision of the building inspector to the Board of Adjustments and Appeals. Notice of appeal shall be in writing and filed within 90 days after the decision is rendered by the building inspector.

Meets in called sessions, normally scheduled at noon through the week. Consists of five members, including one architect, one general contractor or engineer, and three members at-large from the building industry. They shall be appointed by the mayor for four years. Continued absence of any member shall, at the discretion of the chief appointing authority, render such member liable to immediate removal.



Board of Zoning Appeals

Purpose: A judicial board whose purpose is to hear appeals to decisions of the building inspector concerning matters of zoning or building code. Meets on the third Wednesday of each month at 9:00 A.M. Consists of five members appointed by the city council who must be residents of the city or reside in the regional planning boundary. Members consist of one designated member of the Planning Commission (the mayor or a council member), one appointed member of the Planning Commission, and three members appointed at-large for terms of five years.



Council Advisory Committee

Purpose: To advise the city council on matters relating to city government; to review all aspects of city government, listing both positive and negative; to review city organization, including departmental goals, needs assessments, Five-Year Plan, etc.; list priorities on needs in city for council's review; study and review any issue requested by council; and become an advocate for promoting initiatives implemented by the council. Meets on the third Monday of January, April, July, and October at 6:00 P.M. Consists of 27 members (each council member selects five representatives, along with the chairman of the Recreation Advisory Board and a Tennessee Wesleyan University representative), all of whom must be residents of the City of Athens.

Tax Equalization Board

Purpose: Administer regulations to assure that the assessments of all properties within its jurisdiction conform to laws of the state and rules and regulations of the State Board of Equalization. Meetings are scheduled through the McMinn County Tax Assessor's Office during the first two weeks of June each year during office hours. Appointees must be a resident of Athens and will serve for a term of two years.

Keep McMinn Beautiful

Purpose: To promote and encourage beautification and educate residents on the benefits of recycling. Meets on the first Tuesday of each month at noon. Consists of nine city residents appointed by city council for terms of three years and the mayor; McMinn County Commission appoints nine individuals with the County Executive; City



of Etowah appoints three members with its mayor; City of Calhoun appoints one member with its mayor; City of Niota appoints one member with its mayor; City of Englewood appoints one member with its mayor; and ex-officio members include the president of both the Athens and Etowah Chambers of Commerce.

Health and Education Facilities

Purpose: To authorize the incorporation in the several municipalities in this state of public corporations to acquire, own, lease, and dispose of properties to the end that such corporations may be able to promote the health and higher education of the people of this state and to vest such corporations with all powers that may be necessary to enable them to accomplish such purposes. Meets in called sessions. Consists of seven members appointed by city council for terms of three years.

Historic Preservation Commission

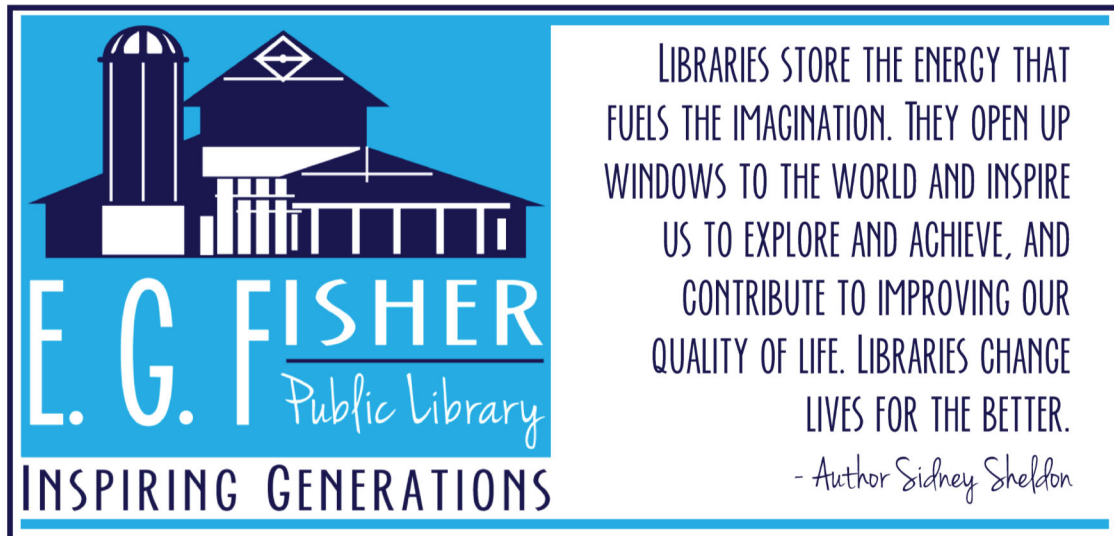
Purpose: To preserve, promote, and develop the city's historic resources and to advise the city on the designation of Local Historic Overlay Districts, Local Conservation Overlay Districts, and Local Landmarks and to perform such other functions as may be provided by law. Meets on the first Thursday of each month at 3:30 P.M. Consists of seven members, a representative of a local patriotic or historical organization, an architect if available, a city council member, and a current member of the Athens Regional Planning Commission. The remaining members to be appointed shall all be city residents. Appointments are five year terms with a maximum of two successive terms.



McMinn County Library Board

Purpose: To foster and promote library development in McMinn County. The libraries under the auspices of the board are Calhoun, E. G. Fisher (located in Athens), Englewood, Etowah, and Niota. Meets on the fourth Monday of January, March, May, July, September, and November at 6:00 P.M. Consists of seven members, four appointed by

the McMinn County Commission and three appointed by the city council in accordance with the county library laws of the State of Tennessee. Members may be reappointed for not more than two terms of three years each. Any member absent from four consecutive meetings may be asked to resign.



Recreation Advisory Board

Purpose: The advisory board shall, in concert, with the Department of Recreation Director: 1) Develop and implement a broad and comprehensive recreation program for the city; 2) Interpret the recreation and parks services of the department to the community; and 3.) Interpret the needs and desires of the community to the department. Meets on the third Thursday of February, April, June, August, October, and December at noon. City council appoints seven members for terms of four years not to exceed two successive terms. Members must be city residents and are required to attend all board meetings or, if absent, give just and reasonable cause for their absence, and to give notice to the board chairman and recreation director if known in advance that absence will be unavoidable.

Friendly City Sister Cities Committee

Purpose: To promote and develop educational, cultural, and economic opportunities among participating communities, uniting community and volunteer resources for the joint advantage of providing citizens with an active role in public diplomacy to further international cooperation and understanding. The sister city to the City of Athens is Isahaya, Japan. Meetings are to be no less than once per year. Membership is open to any individual or organization possessing good moral character, as determined by the sole discretion of the board of directors. The board shall consist of seven (7) members: a citizen of the City of Athens appointed by the mayor, a representative of the McMinn County Economic Development Authority, a representative of Tennessee Wesleyan University, a representative of local schools appointed by the mayor, a member of the Athens City Council, the city manager of Athens, and an at-large industry representative appointed by the other members of the Board. A representative of the Athens Parks Foundation shall serve as a non-voting ex officio member.



STONE BRIDGE AT ISAHALA.

HAVE SERVICE COMPLIMENTS OR COMPLAINTS?

As citizens have concerns, compliments, or ideas to share, the most appropriate avenue is to direct those to the staff, citizen committee, or council members closest to the issue to be researched or addressed by staff:



Do you have a
compliment,
suggestion or
complaint?

- ◆ Identify and address the appropriate department or staff personnel;
- ◆ If still unsatisfied, speak to the director of the department;
- ◆ If still unsatisfied, set an appointment to speak with the city manager;
- ◆ If still unsatisfied, speak individually with your city council members who can then bring the matter to the city manager's attention;
- ◆ If complimenting, and wish it to become record, it can be addressed to the Office of the City Manager and placed under "Miscellaneous Communications" on a future city council meeting agenda;
- ◆ Sometimes, unfortunately, the role and scope of service or ability to solve certain complaints is limited by law and procedural regulations.



CITY DEPARTMENT DIRECTORY

Public Works

(423) 744-2745

Police Department

(423) 744-2730

Fire Department

(423) 744-2760

Community Development

(423) 744-2753

Parks & Recreation

(423) 744-2704

Office of the City Manager

(423) 744-2702

Finance

(423) 744-2710

Human Resources

(423) 744-2719

Purchasing

(423) 744-2780

Technology

TBA

Thank you for choosing to make Athens your home and to be involved with the continual improvement of our community.

Together, we will move Athens forward!

THE OFFICIAL CITY OF ATHENS FLAG



The official flag has the City's logo standing upon a field of three equal vertical columns. The eastern and western columns are azure, while the central column is argent in color.

The logo incorporates the Parthenon, representing the ancient Athenian city-state, for which Athens, Tennessee, is named; due to its resemblance of the Athens, Greece, landscape with its rolling hills, knobs, and mounts in the distance. Shaking hands signify the true character of the "Friendly City:" the hands are purposefully abstruse as to gender and race, representing the strength that lies in the diversity and inclusiveness of our community. The motto, "Progress since 1821," has been included on all previous logos and has characterized the forward thinking of the community since its inception. The blue field represents a clear, open sky; open to fresh, innovative ideas and speaks to the aspiration and courage of citizens and public servants to affect a cause greater than themselves. The green field represents a lush, bountiful land full of fruitful, natural resources whereby the significance of proper stewardship of resources is paramount.

The argent column is symbolic of purity and peace: Purity of our spirit and our cause to achieve, ultimately, the egalitarian virtues of justice and liberty, as well as our intentions as a citizen-led government to work tirelessly to transmit the city greater and more beautiful than it was transmitted heretofore. The single argent column is placed in the center of the field, representing the heart, or core, of the community, wherein resides an inherent desire to achieve peace, in our time, as a community that works together to accomplish unified goals.

The pale azure columns hearken to the city's past. Historically referred to as Athens city blue, it distinctly recalls a period of time when all city vehicles were branded with the color, with the exception of the city manager's vehicle and the fire apparatus. Azure also represents freedom, and with that freedom, the responsibility and duty of citizens to revere and obey the City's laws; and, to that end, the fortitude of citizens to fight for the ideals of the City, both alone and as many.

STAY CONNECTED

Please continue to share your hopes and dreams for a brighter future with City staff and the City Council.



[FACEBOOK.COM/CITYOFATHENSTN](https://www.facebook.com/cityofathensTN)



[TWITTER.COM/CITYOFATHENSTN](https://twitter.com/cityofathensTN)



[INSTAGRAM.COM/CITYOFATHENSTN](https://www.instagram.com/cityofathensTN)



[CITY OF ATHENS, TENNESSEE](https://www.youtube.com/c/cityofathensTN)

[WWW.CITYOFATHENSTN.COM](http://www.cityofathensTN.com)



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