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Monday, May 11, 2026

Page 1

Athens, Tennessee

Athens Officials Review Proposed \$38.5 Million Budget During Four-Hour Hearing

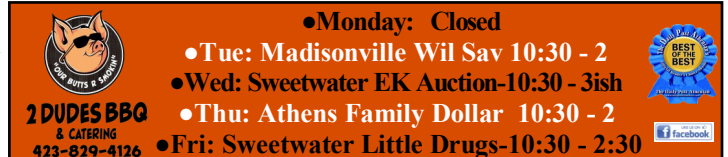
The Athens City Council held a lengthy budget hearing Thursday evening to review the city's proposed fiscal year 2026-27 budget, with discussions focusing heavily on fire protection needs and staffing priorities. The meeting began at 5 p.m. and lasted more than four hours, ending around 9:20 p.m. The proposed budget covers the fiscal year running from July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027.

According to city officials, the proposed all-fund budget totals approximately \$38.6 million, a decrease of about \$2.66 million, or 6.45%, from the previous fiscal year.

The proposal includes a 3% cost-of-living adjustment for city employees beginning July 1, at an estimated cost of \$250,000. It also includes a longevity pay increase of \$100 per year of service with a three-year vesting schedule, projected to cost \$100,000. City officials said the budget maintains the city's employee healthcare coverage through Blue Cross/Blue Shield using the state plan, with only minimal changes.

The spending plan also proposes adding two new full-time positions — an IT technician and a stormwater coordinator — along with two new part-time or seasonal positions in the Parks and Recreation Department. No property tax increase or user fee increases are included in the current proposal.

Much of Thursday's discussion centered on the planned construction of Fire Station No. 3 and the potential need for additional fire-fighters within the city. Because the proposed budget is balanced, some council members discussed reducing expenditures in other departments in order to fund additional fire department staffing. No votes were taken during the hearing, and city officials emphasized that the budget remains a proposal. Additional revisions and discussions are expected during upcoming work sessions and regular council meetings. The full proposed budget is available on the [City of Athens website](#).



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Monday, May 11, 2026 **Morning Fax®...Today's News This Morning Page 2** **Athens, Tennessee**

Athens Chamber Gains New Member

A ribbon cutting was celebrated recently for new Athens Area Chamber of Commerce member, Dream World Services LLC, located in Athens and surrounding areas. Dream World Services specialty is in electrical and home improvement. Contact them at (423) 333-7502.



Chamber friends joining the celebration and pictured here are: Stephanie Devine (WYXI Radio), Hugh Willson (Chamber Diplomat), Paul Semenoff (Chamber Diplomat), Dusty Smith (Owner, Dream World Services), Nicholas Smith (Dream World Services), Tony Leverett (Chamber Board), Lisa Rhea (Chamber Diplomat). Back: Holly Goines, Julia Erman, Robert Preston (Chamber President/CEO), Doug Bailey (Chamber Diplomat), K. West Leverett, Edward Hall, Wesley Skinner (Chamber Diplomat/Board), Brad Johnston.


Community News You Can Use

- The McMinn County Commissioners will be meeting in Regular Session in the Blue Room of the McMinn County Courthouse in Athens on Monday, May 11 at 6pm.
- The City of Athens has extended the closure of Elizabeth Street from Highway 30 / S. White Street to Cedar Springs Road through 5:30 p.m. on Friday, May 15, as crews continue utility tie-in work for the new McMinn Health Department and Medical building. Local residents will still have access to homes on Elizabeth, Charlotte, Brewer and Holt streets, while other motorists are encouraged to follow detours and expect delays in the area.

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Monday, May 11, 2026

Morning Fax[®]...Today's News This Morning Page 3

Athens, Tennessee

SETHRA to Hold USDA Commodity Distribution in Meigs County

The Southeast Tennessee Human Resource Agency (SETHRA), in partnership with the Chattanooga Area Food Bank, will distribute USDA commodities to eligible Meigs County residents on May 13.

The distribution will take place at the Meigs County City and County Building, located at 351 River Road, beginning at 11 a.m. and continuing until supplies run out.

Residents may register on the day of the event, though advance registration is also available through the local SETHRA office. Appointments can be scheduled by calling the Meigs County SETHRA office at 423-334-3305.

To complete an application, residents must provide proof of income for all household members or documentation showing category eligibility. Eligibility is based on household income meeting federally established guidelines or other qualifying criteria.

SETHRA officials noted that, in accordance with federal law and USDA policy, the agency does not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability.

McMinn County Arrest Reports

May 7, 2026

Robin Teague, 56 of Athens, charged with DUI, drug paraphernalia, and failure to appear for shoplifting, Bond \$2,000.

Robert Gaston, 54 of Englewood, charged with reckless endangerment with a firearm, possession, and or carry of a weapon by a felon with a drug offense, possession, and or carry of firearm ammunition by a convicted felon, Bond \$250,000.

Billy Jones, 53 of Loudon, charged with DUI, possession of meth, and drug paraphernalia, Bond \$34,000.

Jonathan Witt, 25 of Athens, charged with felony domestic aggravated assault, Bond \$15,000.

**Those accused are considered innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.
Information gathered using public sources.**

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Monday, May 11, 2026

Morning Fax®...Today's News This Morning Page 4

Athens, Tennessee

Obituaries

Johnny Raymond Solsbee, 83, of Etowah, passed away on Friday, May 8. He was a long-time member of Wesley Memorial United Methodist Church. Johnny began his career working at both the McMinn and Meigs County Health Departments before becoming a full-time dairy farmer and earning the McMinn County Farmer of the Year award. After moving on from farming, he worked as the McMinn County Assistant Highway Commissioner before eventually ending his career as Etowah City Manager. Funeral services will be held at 2:00 p.m., Monday, May 11 in the chapel of Bordwine Funeral Home. The family will receive friends from 12:00 to 2:00 p.m., Monday prior to the service. Interment will follow the service in Mars Hill Cemetery. Bordwine Funeral Home of Etowah is in charge of arrangements

Chaztus "Bill" Whaley, 50, of Cleveland, passed away on Thursday, May 7. Survivors and arrangements to be announced by M.D. Dotson & Sons Funeral Home and Cremation Service.

Terry Browder, 59, passed Wednesday, May 6. Survivors and arrangements to be announced by M.D. Dotson & Sons Funeral Home and Cremation Service.

Steven Ward Brown, 72, of Athens, passed away on Thursday, May 7. Steven was a wonderful father and loved all his family. He was an avid collector of guns and knives and he was a lifelong truck driver. Funeral services will be at 1:00 PM on Monday, May 11 in the Chapel of Laycock-Hobbs Funeral Home. Visitation will be from 12-1 pm prior to the funeral service. A graveside service will follow at Pond Hill Cemetery in Niota. Laycock-Hobbs Funeral Home will be in charge of the arrangements.

Eileen Martin Carver, 98, passed away on Thursday, May 7. She was a life-long member of Zion Hill Baptist Church in Englewood, where the original church building is named after her, the Eileen Carver Building. She enjoyed golfing and was in a bowling league for over 30 years. She was a founding member of The Luncheon Pilot Club of Athens. Family and friends will gather for a graveside service on Wednesday, May 13, at 4:00 pm at Zion Hill Cemetery. Companion Funeral Home of Athens and the Cody family are honored to assist the family with these arrangements.

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