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Athens City Council Postpones Historic Overlay Ordinance After Packed Meeting



The Athens City Council met Tuesday night to a packed chamber, with overflow seating required as many attendees—some wearing green shirts—came to oppose a proposed historic overlay ordinance. The meeting opened with routine business, including the call to order, invocation, pledge, roll call, and approval of minutes, all passing quickly. Athens City Intermediate School students also presented a program highlighting school activities, including a “School Olympics” held alongside the 2026 Winter Games in Italy.


During citizen comments on agenda items, five residents spoke against the proposed historic overlay district, citing concerns about its potential impact. The consent agenda, which included surplus property approvals, a Parks & Recreation office relocation, a Fair Housing Month resolution, and several board reappointments, passed unanimously without discussion. Council also unanimously approved rezoning property at Hicks Street and Eastanallee Avenue from industrial to residential.

New business drew the most discussion. Ordinance 1152, which would adjust refuse collection and service charges, sparked debate over requiring roughly 200 residents currently receiving free trash service to begin paying. After discussion of financial impacts and eligibility concerns, the item was postponed for further information. Ordinance 1153, establishing the H-2 Historic Overlay District, drew extensive public opposition and council debate, including one member withdrawing prior support after hearing public comments; it was postponed indefinitely on a 3-2 vote.

Other items, including a zoning amendment adding requirements for drive-thru oil change facilities and a budget amendment, were approved unanimously. Department reports showed no major issues, while city officials noted rising sales tax revenue and a recent rebound in hotel/motel tax collections, and the city attorney provided updates on ongoing legal matters with no major changes.

During final citizen comments, residents raised concerns including flag lighting across the city and a proposed splash pad at Cook Park, and one speaker became disruptive and was cut off. The meeting adjourned following final comments.

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Athens, Tennessee

Crash on I-75 Sends Two to Hospital, Charges Possible



A crash on Interstate 75 Southbound at mile marker 54 Wednesday afternoon resulted in injuries to two people and may lead to charges, according to authorities.

The Tennessee Highway Patrol reported that just before 4 p.m., a Ram 350 lost control, left the roadway, and then re-entered the interstate before colliding with a Jeep Compass. The Jeep was driven by a 67-year-old man who sustained injuries and was transported to a local hospital by AMR. His grandson, who was also in the vehicle, suffered minor injuries.



The driver of the Ram was not injured. Authorities say charges could be pending as the investigation continues.

Responding agencies included Niota Rural Fire, North McMinn Rural Fire, the McMinn County Sheriff's Office, and AMR. The crash is being investigated by THP Trooper Dean Conk Jr.

Source: David Prater, Niota Rural FD

Community News You Can Use

- WYXI Radio will broadcast live Friday from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the McMinn County Living Heritage Museum's Trash & Treasure Sale—and the public is invited to stop by and be part of the fun. Come meet Cousin Mark and Brother Barry, check out featured items, and sign up for prize giveaways during the broadcast. The sale continues through Saturday with a wide variety of items available, and proceeds support the museum's programs and preservation efforts.
- [The Tennessee Department of Veteran's Services has awarded DENSO North America in Athens the Gold Tier designation in the Veteran Ready Business Recognition Program](#)—the program's highest honor. Commissioner Baker presented the award, noting that the company advanced from Silver to Gold in just one year in recognition of its efforts to recruit, hire, and retain service members, veterans, and their families. Businesses interested in participating in the free recognition program can apply through the Tennessee Department of Veteran's Services website at www.tn.gov/veteran



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Friday, April 24, 2026

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Athens, Tennessee

Athens Chamber of Commerce 80th Annual Meeting Winners

The Athens Area Chamber of Commerce 80th Annual Meeting was held last evening at The Barn at Faith Farms. The following were recipients of this year's awards: Man of the Year, Randy Dunlop; Young Man of the Year, Matt Harper, Farmer of the year, Riley Maso n; Woman of the Year, Frances Witt McMahan; Young Women of the Year, Lauren Brown and Lindsey Ferguson; Teacher of the Year, Amanda Million; Mother of the Year, Sylvia Gossett; and Diplomat of the Year, Hugh Willson. *Photos by: Stephanie Devine, Morning Fax Staff*



Randy Dunlop, Man of the Year presented by Sharon Livingston (R), Publisher, DPA and given by Niota Mayor, Lois Preece.



Dr. Tyler Forrest, President, L TWU, presenting the Young Man of the Year award to Matt Harper



Riley Mason, Farmer of the Year



Cathy Allen, L and Sandra Boyd, R presenting Woman of the Year award to Frances Witt McMahan



Dr. Stacy Swafford, TWU, presenting the Young Woman of the Year award to Lindsey Kimball accepting for Lauren Brown.



Dr. Stacy Swafford, TWU, presenting the Young Woman of the Year award to Lindsey Ferguson.



Amanda Million, Teacher of the Year, presented by Dr. Grant Wilhite, Vice President Academic Affairs, TWU



Paul Willson presenting Mother of the Year award to Sylvia Gossett.



Hugh Willson, Diplomat of the year presented by John Rodriguez, Chamber Chairman

UPCOMING CHURCH NEWS & EVENTS

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THIS WEEK
NEXT WEEK
EVERY WEEK

Friday, April 24, 2026

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Athens, Tennessee

Church News & Events

- **Celebrate Recovery** meets every **Tuesday** at 6:00pm at Woodward Ave. Church of God in Athens They also meet every **Thursday** at 6:00pm at Watts Bar Community Church in Decatur and Thursdays at **6:30pm** at **Spirit City Church North Etowah**.
- St. Mark AME Zion Church will be holding a Pastor Appreciation Service for Rev. Tiki Dixon this Sunday, April 26th. The service will begin at 11 a.m. and will be held at Keith Memorial United Methodist Church in the main sanctuary. The theme is A Man for All Seasons based on 2 Timothy 4:1-5. The guest preacher will be Rev. Michael McNair. All are welcome.
- **St. Mary's Legacy Clinic** offers free mobile medical care for the uninsured. Anyone who is medically uninsured is eligible to receive care. *St. Mary's Catholic Church (1291 E Madison Ave, Athens) is the McMinn County location and accepts patients every 3rd Thursday of the month.*
- The Etowah Christian Ministerial Association will host three community services on the National Day of Prayer, Thursday, May 7, in Etowah. A prayer breakfast will be held from 7:30 to 9 a.m. at Spirit City Church, followed by a noon service at the L & N Depot Pavilion featuring group prayer and music from the Miracle Lake Singers and the Central High School Choir will perform. An evening service is set for 6 p.m. at the Gem Theater, with prayers led by local pastors and music by The Men of Praise. For more information, contact ECMA President John Roberson at 423-263-2896.
- The New Hope Methodist Church will host its next Christian Men's Prayer Breakfast on Thursday, May 7 at 8 a.m. at Maddi Mae's Cafe in downtown Athens. The ecumenical gathering is open to men of all Christian faiths, regardless of church affiliation, as well as those seeking to build a relationship with Jesus. For more information, contact Marcus Guinn at marcus-guinn@gmail.com or 423-507-7769.
- Athens Lutheran Annual Rummage & Bake Sale will be held Friday and Saturday, May 1-2, from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. at 710 Forest Ave., across from the library and wetlands.
- One Voice Choir will host a benefit concert on Sunday, May 3 at 2:30pm at Light of Life Ministries. This special concert is to show support for Mr. Ronnie McMahan. All are welcome to come out and support the cause.

We encourage you to e-mail us community events, church news, or other items of interest for possible use in the Morning Fax.

Any items you would like us to consider, e-mail: wyxiradio@gmail.com

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Armstrong Realty Joins Athens Chamber



A Ribbon cutting was celebrated recently for new Athens Area Chamber of Commerce member, Jerry Armstrong Realty, located at 19 S Niota Rd., Englewood. Shown here are chamber and business representatives, family members and Owner Jerry Armstrong and Real Estate Agent Savannah Hutchinson.

Source: Julie Simbeck, AACofC

TOSHA Plans Fine After Chemical Exposure at Cleveland Mars Plant

The Tennessee Occupational Safety and Health Administration (TOSHA) says it plans to issue a fine following a chemical exposure incident at the M&M Mars chocolate plant in Cleveland.



According to TOSHA, seven workers were exposed to harsh chemicals at the facility in December, and six of them required medical treatment at a nearby hospital.

Following an inspection, the agency assessed penalties totaling more than \$11,000. TOSHA noted the amount could change if the company contests the citation.

Source: WTVN News Channel 9


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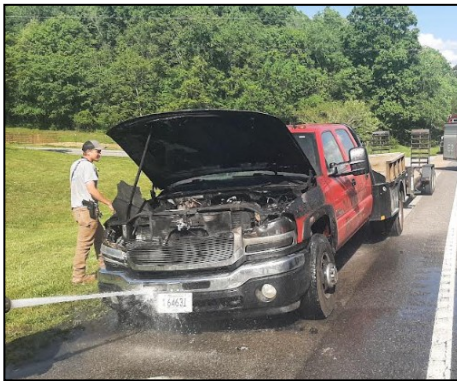
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Friday, April 24, 2026

Morning Fax®...Today's News This Morning Page 6

Athens, Tennessee

Truck Fire in Sweetwater; No Injuries



A truck fire was reported Wednesday afternoon around 5 p.m. at the intersection of Highway 68 and County Road 297 in Sweetwater.

Authorities say a GMC 3500 haul-

ing an empty flatbed trailer began showing flames underneath the driver's side wheel. By the time fire crews arrived, the vehicle was fully engulfed under the hood. No injuries were reported.

Responding agencies included the North McMinn Fire Department, Niota Fire Department, and McMinn County Sheriff's Office Sgt. Amber Cook.

Source: David Prater, Niota Rural FD

AUB Employee Earns Wastewater Certification



The Athens Utilities Board (AUB) has announced that employee Tillmon Devaney has completed his apprenticeship program and is now a certified Grade 4 Wastewater Operator.

Devaney, who previously worked in machining, completed a two-year apprenticeship with AUB after gaining hands-on training at the utility's wastewater treatment facilities. He now works at one of

AUB's two Athens plants, which handle treatment processes that vary daily based on conditions such as rainfall and drought.

Supervisors praised Devaney's commitment and work ethic, noting his approach as career-focused rather than temporary. AUB officials said his certification reflects both his training and dedication to public service.

Devaney said his interest in wastewater treatment began during school tours of AUB facilities and has grown into a long-term career in the field. *Source: Amy McDonald, AUB*

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Athens, Tennessee

Youth Baseball Tournament Set for Athens Regional Park



The Training Legends youth baseball organization will host a tournament at Athens Regional Park on Saturday and Sunday, April 25–26, on

the facility's new artificial turf fields.

The event, titled the "42 Classic: Presented by Dick's Sporting Goods," will feature youth teams from across the Southeast. Training Legends is a showcase organization based in the Metro Atlanta area that hosts tournaments throughout Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee, Florida, South Carolina, and North Carolina. *Source: Matthew Siniard, Athens Parks & Rec.*

31st Annual Athens Soap Box Derby Set for May 30 on Keith Lane

The 31st Annual Athens Soap Box Derby will be held Saturday, May 30, on Keith Lane in Athens, serving as a qualifier for the 88th All-American Soap Box Derby World Championships in Akron, Ohio, scheduled for July 11–18.

The local race will feature Stock and Super Stock divisions. Stock is designed for ages 7–13, while Super Stock is open to racers ages 9–18. Drivers are still being sought for both divisions, with some cars available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Race day will begin early, with Keith Lane closing at 4 a.m. from Cedar Springs to Powers Path and reopening only to derby traffic. Practice begins at 7:15 a.m., followed by opening ceremonies at 8 a.m. and racing to follow. Admission is free.

The event features gravity-powered cars reaching speeds of about 21 mph on a 950-foot track, using a double-run format with electronic timing to determine winners. Radio coverage will air on WYXI Radio AM 1390 and FM 94.5. For more information, contact Athens Parks & Recreation at (423) 744-2704.

Source: Derek Phillips, City of Athens Program Coordinator

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Athens, Tennessee

McMinn County Arrest Reports

April 21, 2026

Spencer Sisson, 29 of Athens, charged with assault against a first responder, resisting stop, and child support, Bond \$12,000.

Ronald Ferris, 43 of Rossville, Georgia, charged with violation of probation for driving on a suspended license, and child support, Bond \$5,647.95

Hunter Young, 18 of Sweetwater, charged with statutory rape, contributing to the delinquency of a minor, and custodial interference.

Mary Wyatt, 55 of Athens, charged with driving on a revoked license, failure to have insurance, stop sign violation, violation of vehicle registry, and unlawful removal of registration.

Lashondra Williams, 42 of McMinn County, charged with driving on a revoked license.

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

Starr Regional Reports \$55M in 2025 Community Health Services

Starr Regional Medical Center has released its 2025 community benefit report, outlining major investments in healthcare services, staffing, and regional support across McMinn County.

Hospital officials say the report highlights more than \$55.2 million in uncompensated and charitable health services, along with over \$9.6 million in capital improvements, including ICU expansion, outpatient rehabilitation upgrades, a geriatric behavioral health unit expansion, and implementation of tele-ICU services.

In 2025, Starr Regional also expanded specialty care by adding providers in cardiology, OB/GYN, emergency and family medicine, and several telehealth specialties. The hospital reports employing about 675 staff members, distributing more than \$51 million in wages and benefits, and providing additional support for professional development and tuition assistance.

The facility also contributed more than \$27 million in local and state taxes and continued community support for organizations including the American Cancer Society, United Way of McMinn & Meigs Counties, area chambers of commerce, and local schools.

Hospital leadership said the investments reflect its ongoing mission of "making communities healthier" and expanding access to care close to home. *Source: Brandi Armstrong, SRMC*

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