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Members of Athens City Council during council's meeting on Jan. 16. (FILE)

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City Council: Members discussed Athens-Hocking recycling contract renewal

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The Athens-Hocking Recycling Centers are committed to recycling cardboard, paper, aluminium cans and steel cans. Under the current contract, plastic and glass recycling is not guaranteed.

Athens City Council members met Tuesday night to discuss grants and city-wide projects. They also discussed the renewal of the refuse recycling contract. That contract allows for Athens' current recycling practices.

The contract will increase in about \$30,000, mostly due to the impact current international markets have on the local recycling industry. Just in the past year, there's been a decrease in commodities, Bruce Underwood, the executive director of Athens-Hocking Recycling Centers, said.

"A lot of the refuse and recycling processes are expensive to start with," Councilwoman Chris Fahl, D-4th Ward, said. "Why get rid of (the contract) when its working?"

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Due to the global market and trade bans on materials, Athens-Hocking Recycling plants are getting less out of recycling, however, throwing anything away costs money, Fahl said.

“We are going to do our best to continue recycling our plastics,” Underwood said.

Council members also heard updates on the request for the City of Athens Wastewater Treatment Plant. The city belt presses sludge, meaning that the waste from the city gets concentrated.

Although sludge can go to farms to be used as manure, there is a fine balance between what can go in the fields and what must go to landfills, Mayor Steve Patterson said.

“This is where the design at this point where there’s a number of possibilities that are being considered,” Athens City Council President Chris Knisley, D, said. “(We must) help decide on the most efficient method.”

City Council heard a number of potential ordinances from committees. Paige Alost, the executive director of the Athens County Convention and Visitors Bureau, gave a presentation on Athens’ first national motorcycle event.

The Vulcan Riders will visit Athens July 8-14. The national organization chose Athens because of the Windy 99 project, which is the only motorcycle trail in Ohio.

The event is projected to bring in \$900,000 in local spending.

“Being the first rally we’ve hosted here, we really want to roll out the red carpet (and) use that as a model to other rallies here,” Alost said.

Patterson introduced a potential ordinance to allow a grant application from the National Endowment of the Arts. The City of Athens is looking to collaborate with the Ohio University College of Fine Arts to expand community outreach.

OU and the director of Arts West are looking to craft a grant to work on projects such as pop-up art and pop-up murals and symphonies, Patterson said.

“There’s a possibility of having something in the school districts,” Patterson said. “It could be county wide too, having this grant at a larger scale.”

The partnership would be an equal match up to \$200,000 with OU.

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