

Athens City Council sends letter concerning the renaming of Wayne National Forest

By Sean Eifert

In its meeting on September 18, the Athens City Council discussed a letter sent to Lee Stewart, the Supervisor of the Wayne National Forest pertaining to the renaming of Wayne National Forest. Recently, Wayne National Forest has been in headlines for its controversial name, which originated from General Anthony Wayne, responsible for the removal of Native Americans from the state of Ohio.

“Our Council members as a body suggested changing the name of the Wayne National Forest to the Buckeye National Forest,” President Knisley said. “They haven’t reached a decision yet. (Stewart) did comment they had 12,000 responses, and consulted with 40 tribes. 12 tribes actively participated in the process, and the secretary’s decision will be made, they hope, by November.”

“They’re still thinking they’re going to be able to get this across the finish line sometime in November. November is indigenous people’s month, so it would be really fitting for them to accomplish it by that point,” Mayor Patterson said. He also noted that there would be a monetary stipulation. “There is going to be a cost associated with it, if you think about all the signage that has Gen. Wayne’s name on it, they’re going to have to replace it with whatever they land on.”

Council member Micah McCarrey presented two important ordinances concerning police activities. First, Council Member McCarrey introduced an ordinance declaring certain firearms no longer needed for municipal purposes, which would allow the Athens Police Department to move weapons. “It really is an administrative decision to move, in this case, 49 firearms and eight cases of ammunition. There is a benefit to the city, in that we do get money back for selling (the firearms) to a business in Columbus. That also helps the law enforcement officers acquire new weapons.”

The other ordinance presented by Council member McCarrey would allow the Service-Safety Director to enter into a memorandum of understanding with an Ohio Organized Crime Investigations Commission task force. “This is a great resource for Southeast Ohio, in that crime isn’t typically bound by just a municipality. So, when we have investigations that involve activity

that exists across county lines, it's really helpful to have task forces that have individuals assigned to share information with one another," Council member McCarrey said.

Council members asked questions to both Service-Safety Director Andrew Stone and Mayor Patterson regarding the cost of an uptown improvement project that would route wires underground on Washington Street through North Carpenter Street, regarding pricing. "In the correspondence I've had with Mayor Patterson, I think it's in the 400,000 dollar range." Director Stone said. Mayor Patterson stated his desire to accomplish a more resolved uptown improvement plan that would cost upwards of two million dollars. "I'm going to see if we can get a further uptown improvement project using the Appalachian Communities grant," Mayor Patterson said.