

Athens Becomes a Tent City

It Could Happen and Here's How

Two upcoming ordinances will be presented for hearings and first readings at Athens City Council. The common-sense voices of our community need to speak up. There will be two meetings - please attend **BOTH**. Without the feelings and opinions of citizens shared publicly, city council members will make their own decisions based on their own feelings and agendas – which is the current direction. Speaking at the meetings will be the most powerful. Every person can speak 3 minutes, two times*. If you can't speak, please attend these meetings to show your support. If nothing else, send an email to Debbie Walker, Clerk of Council - dwalker@ci.athens.oh.us and request that it be READ INTO THE RECORD. Check the Athens City Council meeting agendas at the website <https://athensoh.portal.civicclerk.com> on Friday afternoons before each meeting (usually held on Monday nights at 7pm) to ensure the item is listed on the agenda as the agenda can change.

Huts at The Gathering Place - October 20, 2025 at 7pm

Case #25-04 to allow the use of “temporary housing” currently not permitted in R-3 for 7 N. Congress St. at The Gathering Place. Not more than 3 shelters may be installed per sink and toilet located within 200 feet and these can be a porta potty.

FACT: The huts will be in the parking lot and will not have access to The Gathering Place building during closed hours. The Gathering Place hours are M-F 9:30am-6pm, Sat 10am-6pm, Sunday 12pm-5:30pm.

CONCERN: Where will residents of huts go when The Gathering Place is not open? Sit outside of the hut with no electric or resources? What will that look like? Will unwanted visitors have access to the porta potty? How will those living in the huts protect themselves from others trying to access huts and facilities? Can 3 more huts be added per every porta potty which would increase the number of huts?

FACT: It has been confirmed that the staff (former and current) of The Gathering Place has permitted dangerous convicted felons to be at the facility which is against their handbook rules and dangerous to The Gathering Place members and those who live in the area as well as for the children who attend The Athens Middle School.

FACT: Oren R Apple attempted to **rape** an OU student in 2001 in Seigfred Hall by hitting her over the head with a paint can. He plea bargained from the rape charge to two kidnapping charges (Athens News 10/25/2001). His lengthy criminal record includes **burglary, abduction** and most recently **public indecency (masturbation) and inducing panic** while at one of our Athens parks in 2024. He trespassed on OU grounds multiple times (which he is banned from) and on 6/3/2019 the address he provided was **7 N. Congress St. – The Gathering Place**. There are many who can corroborate him being at The Gathering Place. This record can be found on court docket 2019CRB00596 State of Ohio vs. Apple, Oren R 14-OU. Case Judge Todd L Grace.

CONCERN: It is not a matter of **IF** but **WHEN** someone **will be hurt when allowing dangerous felons near college student residences and middle school children**. Does our community want to trust a few people who have already shown poor judgment in decision making for the safety of many?



Rezoning of R-3 and B-3 to allow Temporary Housing November 3, 2025 at 7pm

Case #25—05 to amend Title 23 to allow “temporary housing” shelters in R-3 and B-3 Zones to be permitted as a conditional use. This would allow temporary housing structures that are not affixed to the property and that do not contain kitchen or bathroom facilities – one sink and one toilet must be available for use with 200 feet for every 3 temporary shelters. The sink and toilet can be a porta potty.

FACT: If #25-04 The Gathering Place ordinance, does not pass, this is a secondary ordinance that if passed, The Gathering Place and others can apply for and receive a conditional use for the huts/tents based on the criteria listed.

FACT: The ordinance may be updated to include that there is to be “oversight” by a mental health organization or a mental health care professional.

CONCERN: What does that mean? Someone driving by once a week? Who will insure there is proper oversight? It seems the city is setting up our community for a “free for all” situation.

FACT: If passed, those who meet the criteria can apply for this use and will be permitted if they meet the guidelines outlined in the ordinance.

CONCERN: Tents and huts could be erected all over the city. Back yards and parking lots in R-3 and available spaces in B-3 could be used. The mayor of our city said there is no one “lining up” to add temporary shelters, but if this ordinance is passed and an option, then many will apply and be granted this use. Review the zoning map at <https://www.ci.athens.oh.us/291/City-Maps-GIS> to see all the locations that will be permitted if passed and review the zones that abut those zones.

Common sense decision making
doesn't mean we don't care,
it means we do care.

*At both meetings, the hearing will be held first and citizens can speak 3 minutes and then each ordinance is scheduled for its first reading the same night and citizens can speak a second time for another 3 minutes.