**ATHENS COMMUNITY CENTER ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**Draft of Minutes of September 2, 2021 meeting**

* (A committee to study and to advise the Athens Selectboard regarding the future of the Athens Elementary School building was appointed on Thursday, August 19, 2021 at the regularly-scheduled monthly meeting of the Athens Board of Selectmen. Appointees were David Bemis, Kelsey Birch, Kate Bova, Sandi Capponcelli, Dennis Mirante, Matthew Shea, Tim Stevenson and Tina White.)

. The meeting was **called to order** by Tim Stevenson at 6:30PM (Tim had organized the group via e-mail for the first meeting). Present were Tim, David Bemis, Sandi Capponcelli, Dennis Mirante, Matthew Shea and Tina White, appointed committee members.

* Don Capponcelli was also present as a non-committee member willing to advise the committee and assist with research.
* Kate Bova had resigned the committee via e-mail on Sept. 2, 2021
* Kelsey Birch was not able to be present for the meeting

**. Organizational** – After initial discussion David Bemis nominated Sandi Capponcelli as chairman; seconded by Dennis Mirante. Carried to a vote and passed, with all six members present in favor.

* David Bemis nominated Don Capponcelli to be note-taker for the committee; seconded by Tim Stevenson. A question was raised as to whether a non-committee-member qualified as note-taker. Don pointed out that this is the case with most of the school board meetings in our supervisory union. Carried to a vote and passed, with all six members in favor.

**. Committee Name** – Tim Stevenson suggested the name “Community Center Committee.” David Bemis offered an amendment to “Community Center Advisory Committee,” as all final decisions would be made by the Athens Selectboard. Sandi Capponcelli asked about the name “Community Building Advisory Committee,” but it was decided that “Community Center” conveyed a greater sense of ownership to the town’s residents. “Community Center Advisory Committee” name carried to a vote and passed, with all six members in favor.

**. Regular time of meetings** – David Bemis moved that the Committee meet on the first Thursday of the month at 6:30PM at the former Athens Elementary School building. Special meetings can be called by the Committee chair. Seconded by Tina White. Discussion that followed included trying to limit the meeting sessions to one hour or less per meeting. Carried to a vote and passed, with all six members in favor.

**. Clarity of Purpose** – In the discussion that followed, it was generally decided that the Committee should work to take full-stock of existing conditions and remedies for the building as it exists at present prior to any deep dives into possibilities for the building’s future. For consideration at present are the following:

1. Survey of physical needs
2. Disposition of the building’s contents
3. Possible lighting upgrades
4. Possible energy savings
5. Possible ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) upgrades

As to possibilities for the building’s future, David Bemis suggested that at a time future the Committee could put out a town-wide survey to get a range of ideas on possible uses for the building. Light discussion on the building’s possible uses included Town Meeting and community space (yoga classes mentioned), emergency shelter needs and the possibility of the Town Office moving into the building (with the old Town Office space being used for small group meetings).

**. Survey of physical needs** – The Committee decided on Saturday, Sept. 18, 10AM to 12 Noon for a special meeting work day to make a detailed survey of the building’s needs.

* Sandi had contacted the State of Vermont regarding documentation on the building’s septic system. She received scans of microfilm documents showing blueprints for both building and septic system, as well as a signed inspection report from the State of Vermont verifying the system was installed to specifications. Sandi would be looking into loading the e-mail onto a thumb drive and getting printouts of the blueprints.

David Bemis wondered if the building’s general contractor GPI Construction might still have their copies of the blueprints in their archives from 1981. Don will look into this.

* Tina noted that the wood retainer wall on the east gable end foundation was in need if replacement.
* Tina wondered whether the brush on the north end of the property as well as the brush on the northeast corner of the building could be cut back while the Road Crew had use of an over-the-side mower on the week beginning Monday, Sept. 6’th. David would contact Road Commissioner Matt Perry to see if this would be feasible. Tina advised that caution would be needed on the northeast corner of the building until the septic tank could be located.

**. Disposition of the building’s contents** – At the outset it has been noted that there are toys, furniture and reams of paper on the main level, as well as a defunct upright piano and paint supplies on the basement level. In the discussion that followed, Sandi mentioned that Matt Perry will be getting a dumpster at the Town Garage at some time in the near future. David also noted that there is a Hazardous Materials pickup day scheduled for Athens in September.

* Sandi also suggested a Donation Tag Sale Day, perhaps sometime in October. Matt Shea spoke in favor of getting rid of as much as possible without incurring trash tipping fees. The Committee will have a better idea of possible tag sales items after the 09/18 survey work day, and may be able to decide upon a Donation Tag Sale date (perhaps as early as October 16’th) at their regular October 7’th meeting.

**. Possible ADA upgrades** – Don has reached out to State Inspector Steve Dumont, who has not yet returned Don’s phone messages. The building was constructed in 1981, approximately 10 years before the passing of the federal Americans with Disabilities Act. As long as the building was under the ownership of the Athens School District and operated as an “educational” facility, there was flexibility in enforcement of some of the larger implications of the law. But now the building has experienced “change of ownership” and “change of use (i.e. “assembly,” “business”).” Up to 20% of any permitted work will need to be dedicated to meeting ADA needs where the building is lacking. There is a possibility that an elevator, along with a regular service contract, may be required. If so, there may be possible alternatives to an elevator. Don urges that all is very preliminary at this point. He will get floor plans and continue to reach out to the State on this issue.

**. Date of next regular meeting** – Thursday, October 7, 6:30PM at the former Athens Elementary School building.

. The meeting was adjourned at 7:24PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Donald Capponcelli