Select board Meeting

August 19, 2021

7:00pm

Athens Town Office

Present were Fact TV, Tina White, Sandi Capponcelli, Darlene Wyman, David Bemis, Matt Perry, Janet Perry, Lynn Morgan, Don Capponcelli, April Lyman, Wichi Artu, Denise Randall, Tim Stevenson, Sherry Maher and Krista Gay.

David called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

Adjustments to the Agenda: There were no adjustments.

Minutes of the prior meeting: Denise made the motion to accept the minutes of the prior meeting. David seconded. Put to a vote. The motion carried.

Public comments: Don stated he was sorry people had damage in the storm. He also stated the bridge that was fixed during Irene on Reed Road saved the road from this storm. He also commented the underdrain that was installed on Brookline Road helped that road and there was no damage on Herring Hill. Don stated the mitigation work that has been done seems to be paying off and he would like to encourage the town to continue done the road with mitigation work. Wichi brought up in trying to seek funds for flood damage. He stated that one of the roadblocks they ran into was try to get flood insurance, the town needed a Hazard Mitigation plan. David stated we do have a Hazard Mitigation plan and we have put in a grant to help update this plan. Tim stated he had conversed with Alyssa Sabatto at Windham Regional Commission concerning this matter. He stated the town should hire a consultant to help with the plan. Tim suggested putting out an RFP to hire a consultant as soon as possible. Tim also stated Alyssa stated a Town plan would help speed things up. Denise asked if the existing Hazardous Mitigation plan could be revamped. David stated that is what most likely would be done. Sherry asked what a consultant could do that no one in the town could do. David stated a consultant could help with what FEMA is looking for in the plan and could help guide us with that. He stated that Alyssa helped with the existing plan, but it was really the select board, the road commissioner at the time and the emergency committee that worked on the plan. Tim stated the plan should be worked on sooner rather than later. Wichi stated he felt the flood plain maps were not up to date and what could be done about this. Sandi stated the existing flood maps show only from behind the town office to the Wild Shepherd Farm. David stated it could probably be brought to the attention of the state. He also stated it is not the town that does the flood maps, but the state. If the town asks the state to look at this again, they may take a look at this. Sherry asked if there had been any updates since five years ago. David answered and said there were some maps from a few years ago, but have not recently been updated. Don stated he thought the maps showed preoccupation and the inundation and not the erosion. David stated this was pretty much true. Wichi asked if the town should follow up on contacting the state on this. David stated the state redoes the maps and doesn’t know how many years it takes in order to do this, but certainly we can tell them it is our experience the flood plain is larger than what is on the current maps. Don asked If VLCT was involved in this. David stated he didn’t think they were involved, it is the Windham Regional Commission and the state. Sherry asked if Andy Toepfer would have anything to contribute to this. David answered he might because he does a lot of things with maps. David stated it would be a good idea for the select board and the emergency committee have a meeting with the idea of starting revamping the Hazardous Mitigation Plan and asking Andy and Alyssa Sabatto. We would not be asking Alyssa to write the plan, but about the flood maps and how we would go about that. The Windham Regional Commission would probably be one place to go to get direction as to how we would change the maps. Tim proposed some kind of process be initiated tonight leaning towards the flood maps being updated. David stated something would not be done at this meeting, but to plan a meeting that the select board, the emergency committee and the road commissioner would attend. Krista asked if the question of discussion on the Australian ballot had been done. Denise stated she had not done this yet and apologized for that. Tim wanted to share a conservation and correspondence he had with Stephen Watson, the Brattleboro Climate Coordinator concerning Green Mountain Power’s interest in partnering with communities to develop Resiliency Zones. The Resiliency Zones will prevent outages from happening by leveraging renewable generation,, battery storage, and other innovations and help communities bounce back more quickly if outages do occur in the event of storm damage or prolonged grid outage, the Resiliency Zones will enable backup power from the batteries and renewable energy to flow to a network of customers served by the traditional grid. This creates backup power that can work independently from the larger electric system when needed. This correspondence was from Sarah Ludwin-Perry with Green Mountain Power and she concluded that she would be in touch with Athens and so when that happensfor Tim will make sure she comes to the select board meeting for a presentation. Denise mentioned that there had been less power outages since the lines have been moved to the roadside and Green Mountain Power is still in the process of moving lines.

Boards and Official: Don stated the Cemetery Commission would be meeting Wednesday, September 1 to discuss the budget. Lynn stated that on August 26th at 6:00pm there will be a joint meeting with the towns of Grafton, Athens and Westminster at the Westminster School. It will be both an in-person and zoom meetings. To find the link to the meeting will be at the WNESU website. Sherry asked if Hannah could get this and post it on the town vebsite. David answered yes. This is the time for townsfolk to ask questions regarding the vote on August 31st. Lynn also reported the ESSER monies from the federal To find the link to the meeting will be at the WNESU website. Sherry asked if Hannah could government are coming in three lump sums. The first-Mitigation was used for purchasing the PPE’s, tents, extra tables and other items needed to meet the restrictions of last year’s schooling. Second-Recovery is currently in progress of being used. It was used for the summer school programs throughout the Supervisory Union. These programs were very successful at meeting student needs. How the rest of the money will be spent is being discussed and planned in a committee of 30 SU wide folks made up of teachers, school board members, faculty and parents. The committee is still in the discussion and fact gathering stage. Third-Infrastructure has not yet been allocated. The first day of school will be September 7th. The SU and the Union boards have voted to have school open with masks mandatory for inside and optional for outside. This will be revisited as the COVID situation changes. The boards will not be mandating teachers to be vaccinated. The teachers union will work this out. David asked if anything had been done about the air ventilation. Lynn stated it had all been done at the beginning of school last year. Wichi asked about absentee voting for the school vote. Darlene said to come to the office on Monday and we could take care of that. The climbing structure at the school needs to be taken down because it failed inspection. Sherry stated the Meetinghouse committee is still waiting on the Paul Braun grant. The covenant needs to be signed by David and recorded in the land records. Sherry asked about the dead maple tree on the Meetinghouse property. She also asked about the ash tree next to it. Discussion followed on whether the ash tree needed to be removed at this time. It was asked if Jay Maciejowski could take a look at the ash tree and to ask Bob Anderson to take a look at it. Sherry stated that the property on the corner is on the market, therefore the opportunity to clear the property may have been missed. Sherry stated that the committee will share this offer with the new owner. Her concern was that the cleanup from putting in the drainage was not done completely. Sherry will approach the new owners and let them know that the town has offered to finish the cleanup. Sherry stated they had a relatively successful concert and ice cream social, but would like to see if more townspeople would become involved. She asked for ideas as to how this could be accomplished. Tim made special mention of the very active Emergency Committee. The committee is concerned about residents in need of a cool place to go in the heat. They have looked at the school, but found it was not handicap accessible at this time. They have spoken to the pastor and have received permission to use the church basement. The committee has also sent out notices to the townspeople concerning this matter.

Former School Advisory Committee: The name of the committee and when to have the first meeting were discussed. Tim stated he would send out emails to see when the best time would be for a meeting. He hoped to have one early in September. David made the motion to appointment Tim Stevenson, Tina White, Sandi Capponcelli, Dennis Mirante, Kate Bova, Matt Shea, Kelsea Burch, and David Bemis with Denise Randall as an alternate. Denise seconded the motion. Put to a vote. The motion carried. Don Capponcelli stated he would be available to help with technical aspects.

Dog Bite: The dog bite incident at the Wild Shepard Farm was discussed. The dog has been quarantined and has had its rabies shot. The person with the dog bite has asked for a hearing. David stated that the board has seven days as of notice on August 19 to have a hearing. Tina asked why it was a town issue and why the select board has to hold a hearing. David stated, if the person bitten asks for a hearing, one has to be held. Tim asked if the decision as to what happens to the dog is up to the select board. David stated it was. Krista asked if this was a one bite situation. Wichi asked if the hearing was available to the public. David stated the hearing was public and the decision would be made after the hearing. The board decided to hold the hearing on August 25th at 6:00pm at the town office. Darlene will notify all that are involved.

Roads: Matt wished to thank all the contractors that helped out with the storm damage. All the road work that has been done in the past 15 years helped considerably and the town had less damage than surrounding towns. The over the road mower is scheduled for September 6.

Krista asked if the town agent should be consulted about the dog bite situation.

Matt stated the freightliner has to go in for steering box repair. This should be covered under the warranty.

The sand bids were opened. The results: Eastman Sand and Gravel- $15.50 per yard delivered; Bazin Bros.-$17.85 per yard delivered; JP Trucking-$21.00 per yard delivered. There was a question about the quality of last year’s sand and whether it could be mixed with the new sand. Matt mentioned last year’s sand was too fine causing the roads to be slippery. Matt will check with Eastman Sand and Gravel before accepting the bid and report back at the next board meeting.

Warrants and Mail: The warrants were reviewed and signed. The mail was reviewed.

Executive Session: At 8:30pm David made the motion to go into executive session for a personnel matter where premature general public knowledge would clearly place the town of Athens at a substantial disadvantage. Matt was asked to stay. Denise seconded. Put to a vote. The motion carried. At 9:15pm David made the motion to come out of executive session. Denise seconded. Put to a vote. The motion carried. No decisions or motions were made.

Krista asked that who could stay in executive session would be clarified. David stated select board, the town clerk, the assistant town clerk and Matt was asked to stay. It can be who the board wants in executive session. Any decisions are made in open meeting. Sandi stated that she and Matt have been dealing with Brattleboro Development with Gabriel Sistere and he is the go between USDA,etc. and he got a small grant for the grant writer. The grant writer will be helping out to write a grant for the town garage.

There being no further business, David made the motion to adjourn. Janet seconded the motion. Put to a vote. The motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 9:23 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Darlene Wyman, Town Clerk