Select board Meeting

October 21, 2021

7:00pm

Athens Town Officer

Present were David Bemis, Janet Perry, Darlene Wyman, Sandi Capponcelli, Wichi Artu, Lynn Morgan, Gabriel Sistare, Don Capponcelli, Krista Gay, April Lyman, Harold Noyes, Eugene Bills and Denise Randall.

David called the meeting to order at 7:08pm.

Adjustments to the agenda: Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation representative will be added to the agenda after executive session.

Minutes of prior meeting: David made the motion to approve the minutes of the September 16 and October 12 meetings. Denise seconded. Put to a vote. The motion carried.

Public comments: Sandi stated a new home was being constructed on Reed Road and there were heavy trucks going over the road. There were no overweight permits issued for these vehicles.

Wichi stated after speaking with John Broker-Campbell through email, that the current flood maps were issued in 2007 so they are really outdated. Updating the maps is a 3-4 year process that is headed up by FEMA. Throughout the process the town has the opportunity to ve involved to help FEMA identify which areas they should investigate. Even though the town is not part of the National Flood insurance Program, folks can still get private insurance but will possibly have to wait for updated maps. The Windham Regional Commission also can provide E911 contact information for those currently in the flood areas. John suggested if we don’t regulate the flood areas, we could still send out the maps and insurance information for folks in the flood areas. David stated we should pursue getting flood insurance and it doesn’t need to be affiliated with a town plan. David suggested Wichi get in touch with Hilary Cooke to discuss flood insurance.

David mentioned FEMA hasn’t released the money to the state yet for the Hazard Mitigation Plan. The town is in line to receive the grant.

Don asked David liked the chair rack Dennis Mirante made. David stated he did and he thanked Dennis for it.

Executive session: At 7:15pm David made the motion to go into executive session to discuss a personnel matter where premature general public knowledge would clearly place the town of Eugene and Sandi were asked to stay.

At 7:27 David made the motion to move out of executive session. Denise seconded. Put to a vote. The motion carried. No decisions were made in executive session. No motions were to be made at this point.

Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation: Gabriel addressed the board explaining that BDCC is the regional development corporation for the Windham region that serves Windham County and a few towns in the Bennington County. He is here this evening to discuss a funding request for Athens of $1,326.00. This is based on $3.00 per person based on the town population of 442. BDCC is the state approved regional development corporation Southeastern Vermont Economic Development Strategies is the sister organization that allows to expand capacities and are currently the most staffed RDC in the state. This allows them to work on more programming to better support the communities they serve. The various services were discussed. Gabriel stated he has been working with Sandi and Matt pursuing the USDA grant and loan program and they decided to pay for a grant worker to help focus on applying for a community facilities grant. David asked if the town paid for the grant writer. Gabriel stated BDCC pays takes payment for that. As for funding BDCC, David stated we would not be able to pay anything this year but a line item can be put in the budget for next year. Wichi commented BDCC helped him through the Southern Vermont Young Professionals program and BDCC does help provide community support.

Culvert behind Town Office: The board discussed the culvert at the joint meeting. David stated it was his understanding the state requested Matt to temporarily fix the culvert so the parking lot could be used behind the town office and Matt has done this. There are grants out there to be pursued, but it would then become a town culvert. The town and church use the parking lot Harold stated he was under the impression 20 years ago when the culvert was put in that the town gave the church a 100 year right of way and the church paid for putting the parking lot in. . David asked if the church would be willing to help pay the town’s portion of the grant monies. Harold stated he would have to bring it up to the trustees of the church. David asked if the board wanted to pursue putting a box culvert in. Janet stated she would like to see what the state has to say. Denise stated she would like to see what is available for funds then proceed from there. More discussion followed. David made the motion to proceed talking to the state and see what’s available for funding then proceed after that. Denise seconded. Put to a vote. The motion carried. Darlene will get in touch with Scott about the possibility of putting in a box culvert or culvert and about grants that are available. Then possibly meet with him and Matt to discuss the culvert and grants.

Boards and Officials: Sandi asked about sending a note to Potash Hill Corporation for the office equipment that was donated to the town. David made the motion to send the note to Potash Hill Corporation thanking them for the office equipment. Janet seconded. Put to a vote. The motion carried.

Sandi stated to proceed with the grant for the town garage Gretchen would need a letter of resolution from the select board saying the board will help secure funds for a match when they go for a grant. She will send a draft for the board to look at. Also photos of the inside and outside of the garage were needed and plan for the septic system and bathroom were needed. Funds are also needed to be put in place as matching funds. Something would have to be in place to show the board is willing to match funds. This would have to be done at town meeting. David stated the board could acknowledge they will contribute matching funds, but they couldn’t make a fund. Sandi stated it was the intent that the board is willing to pursue this. Letters of support are needed. Estimates are needed so Matt and Eugene are looking into contractors and plumbers. The septic design was discussed. The board discussed getting the estimates for the septic design and doing the perk test this fall. Sandi will ask Amber who could be contacted for septic designs and the cost. Best Septic may also be of help. The board will look at the letter of resolution at the next board meeting.

Sandi had a report from Matt for the roads. The roads are in good condition and there are still a couple of small washouts that need to be fixed. The road crew is working on fall maintenance such as clearing leaves from the ditches, grading and putting in gravel where needed. More gravel is needed to finish Mill Hill and spots on the lower road. Also gravel is needed for some areas on the upper roads. The road crew is getting ready for winter. The sand has been delivered. Salt is still needed. David made the motion to purchase the essential gravel that is needed. Janet seconded. Put to a vote. The motion carried.

Don reported that the things are starting to move on the Meetinghouse grant. The 15 year covenant won’t be done until the work is completed. David clarified the covenant wouldn’t ve done until after the work is done and paid for. Don also reported there is some settling in the floor of the Meetinghouse. Don checked underneath and noticed the piers were settling. He asked Sherry if Jonathan Jessup would warrantee his work. Sherry got in touch with Jonathan and he would come out to fix it.

Lynn reported on October 2 there was one case of covid in grades 3&4. The classes were on remote learning from October 4-8. On October 15 there was one case and one close contact and will be on remote learning until October 25th or 26th. The total count of covid cases in all the schools within the supervisory union to date this month is 20. Surveillance testing at Grafton Elementary School started Thursday Sept. 23rd for all staff and students who signed up. It will continue to be offered every Thursday at the school and is open to any staff or student that signs up. As of Sept. 23rd there are 46 students in the Grafton Elementary School. Three of these students are attending the VT Virtual Learning Collaborative rather than in school classes. The Grafton Elementary school garden is doing well. The students will be harvesting kale, tomatoes, pumpkins and corn this year. The pumpkins will be incorporated into the school’s fall event this year for the students. As of Sept. 23rd the after school programs were up and running from 3:15-5:00pm with the children being served a small meal at 3:15pm then engaging in a variety of clubs and enrichment activities such as arts, crafts and group games.

At the supervisory level work is being done on the Memorandum of Understanding between the Windham Northeast Supervisory Union and the Windham Northeast Education   
Association that will set forth the protocols and terms that each party will agree to in regards to governing Covid 19 vaccinations of staff. The board is also starting the 22-23 budgeting process.

Don asked if the fire extinguishers for the school could be serviced. The town garage extinguishers were discussed, also. David mentioned the Un-tag sale the school committee will be hosting on October 23 from 9am-12:00pm. David made the motion to get the fire extinguishers at the school and the garage updated and to allow the school committee to disposal of any unwanted or unneeded items left after the tag sale. Janet seconded. Put to a vote. The motion carried.

Hazardous Mitigation Plan: David stated nothing could be put out to bid for having the plan redone until the state receives the money from FEMA and that the town was in line to receive the funds.

Special Town Meeting/Australian ballot: There has been no word from the legislature as to whether the town meeting for 2022 will be held by Australian ballot. Janet mentioned she emailed Carolyn Patridge and she contacted the secretary of state and he hadn’t heard anything from Legislature, but with the Delta variant, thinks Australian ballot for the meeting might happen again. Krista asked how far in advance the ballots have to be done. David stated they would have to be done by the 25th of January. Denise mentioned if anyone is to run for office they need their consent form in before January 25th. Krista asked what would happen at a town meeting if we’re not discussing the articles. Discussion followed about the informational meeting held last town meeting. Krista stated she was concerned about the legislature process if the town meeting was by all Australian ballot. David asked the board whether to hold a special town meeting or wait to see what the legislature does. Denise commented she would not like to wait until the November to see what happens. David stated we may not hear from the legislature until they convene in January then we wouldn’t have time to hold a special meeting. Janet felt there’s a lot of people who would like to have Australian ballot at least for the officials and would like to see the special town meeting be done this fall if possible. David asked what the board would like on the warning for the town meeting. Janet stated we should have an article for the town officials and another article for the budget and other special articles. Sandi stated she would like to ee the officials on Australian ballot and everything else be up for discussion. Denise stated she would vote no because she prefers an in person town meeting and unless we are mandated to do it, she would prefer not to. The time and date of the special meeting was discussed. The meeting will have to be posted and an article put in the papers. Janet asked if could be voted on by Australian ballot. Janet will find out if it can be by Australian ballot.

Janet made the made the motion to have a special town meeting to decide Article 1. To see if the town will vote elected officials by Australian ballot for their annual town meeting and Article 2. To see if the town will decide to vote Australian ballot for budget and monetary issues for their annual town meeting and Janet will contact VLCT to get the exact wording for the articles the time line for the town meeting to be held December 9th at 6:00pm at the former school. The motion was put to a vote. Denise voted no. David and Janet voted yes. The motion carried.

Warrants and Mail: The warrants were reviewed and signed. The mail was reviewed. David made the motion he sign the Standard Grant Agreement from the state of Vermont #GA0019 pertaining to stone-lining ditches. Janet seconded. Put to a vote. The motion carried.

Denise asked the road crew be more specific as to the work being done on their highway logs. David will speak to Matt and Eugene.

Denise asked about the time the sheriff’s department patrols the town. David will contact the sheriff’s department about this.

David made the motion he sign the agreement with Cargill Salt. Janet seconded. Put to a vote. The motion carried.

The board accepted the resignation of Angel Squires as auditor. Darlene will post the position and the board will appoint someone at the next board meeting.

Denise asked what the process would be if Australian ballot were used when the officials need to have all the paperwork and what they needed to have. They would need to have a consent form for putting their name on the ballot with 5% of the voters on the checklist signatures.

Harold was concerned about the school bus using Mill Hill Road. David will contact the head of the buses to inform them that Mill Hill should not be traveled on.

Janet will follow up on the damage done to Brookline Road by the vehicle that went into the beaver pond by Steve Oakes property to contact the insurance company of the vehicle for restitution of the damages.

There being no further business, David made the motion to adjourn. Sedconded by Denise. Put to a vote. The motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 9:22pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Darlene Wyman, Town Clerk