Special Select board Meeting

November 6, 2021

10:00am

Athens Town Office

Present were Darlene Wyman, Sandi Capponcelli, Harold Noyes, Dennis Mirante, Tim Stevenson, David Bemis, Wichi Artu, Krista, Dan Taylor, Mike Bates, Tina White, Janet Perry, Matt Perry, Eugene Bills, Tanya Noyes, Alyssa Noyes, Dan Noyes, Fact TV, Donna Currier, April Lyman, Ivor Stevens, Denise Randall, Bonnie Hitchcock, Linda Taylor and Diane Hitchcock.

David called the meeting to order at 10:02am.

Adjustments to the agenda: Scott Jensen was unable to attend to discuss the culvert behind the town office. Another meeting will be scheduled.

Public comments: Dan Taylor presented a petition signed by 63 registered voters asking the Special Town Meeting be held in person. Tina asked how many signatures were needed. It was discussed that 5% of the checklist were needed. It was asked how many people were on the checklist. Darlene looked it up and stated there were 278. Janet Perry presented a petition signed by 9 registered voters asking for Australian ballot for the articles for the Special Town Meeting. Dan asked that a copy of the November 4th meeting be sent to him.

Harold asked the meeting be held in house as we seem to be losing small town America. He takes pride in the fact we have meetings we can voice our opinions face to face and ask questions face to face. Tanya stated they agree with what Harold said. Linda said all she could say is there is no honesty and integrity.

Donna stated she would like to have the town meeting as we have always had it so we can have conversation.

Bonnie stated she would like the town meeting be in person where she likes the discussion of the articles. Dan Noyes agreed with that.

Krista stated in addition to what was said, 63 registered voters would like to have the meeting in person. A virtual meeting is possible to discuss like we did with the Town meeting this year, but there are some people in town that do not have computers so they wouldn’t be able to attend that way. She stated that in a virtual meeting there are instances where you cannot hear someone or it cuts out and she thinks that 63 people on short notice were adamant of wanting to come together to discuss is something the select board should take very seriously.

April stated that Town Meeting is the only event that brings out the people.

Tina would like to urge the select board to have discussion on December 9th and continue the March meeting in person. She has spoken to several people in town as everyone else has and they feel these are very important issues for our town. It’s the only time of year they get to come and voice their opinion on what should be done in their town.

Ivor asked if you could vote the individual articles by Australian ballot in person and stated a lot of the articles he wouldn’t fully understand if there was no discussion on it.

Mike stated the only issue he had was the town voting the town officers. He stated a lot of people don’t participate at town meeting and you can get people to volunteer for town offices.

Dennis stated he would like to hold a meeting where you could vote with mail in ballots for the officers and articles at the meeting in person.

Wichi stated he thought the articles should be discussed. There was an issue at last Town meeting where the people didn’t understand the articles and if they had they would have voted another way. Wichi asked if an email had been sent to him to warn him of the meeting. It had not. Because an email had not been sent out he stated this meeting was also not properly warned. Wichi asked the meeting be postponed and the meeting and be properly warned. Wichi wished to apologize to the board if they felt his previous letter to the board on November 4th was aggressive. David stated he felt that anyone didn’t think Wichi had been aggressive and the meeting was closed down. David felt the majority of this meeting was done and felt the board should go ahead with the meeting and will correct anyone wanting to be notified by email to do so. Wichi stated it was a violation because he had not been properly warned and if we continue with the meeting we risk the decisions made in this meeting to be void. Denise stated that Wichi is saying the meeting was not properly warned but would take it as a friendly gesture he allow the meeting to go on with the meeting since we have such a large turnout. Wichi stated that whether it was a violation or not was not for him to say and that is what is the interpretation of the law is. Janet felt that with the good turnout she felt we should proceed with the meeting. David asked since this was the only violation and since Wichi was at the meeting, would he allow the meeting to continue. Wichi stated it was not for him to allow. The violation is there and whether to continue or not is up to the select board.

Dan stated that too many things had been pushed back and hopes Wichi will take a stand on it because there have been many times in the past where things have not been done properly. Dan also asked if Darlene was just the town clerk or the board’s secretary.

Dennis asked where all the people were over the years that didn’t complain and all of a sudden everything has to be right to the letter of the law. He stated it has always been like this but no one has showed up to question it.

Denise made the motion to end the meeting since Wichi did not receive notification by email according to the open meeting law after his request. David seconded. Janet asked whether the board wanted to set another special meeting. More discussion followed on whether the notice had to be published in the newspaper. Sandi stated she contacted the Secretary of State and VLCT and they stated it does not have to be published, but they do need to be notified. The time of the next meeting was discussed. Harold asked if the meeting to be postponed until Thursday to give ample time to notify everyone. Friday was also discussed. Janet mentioned it may be too late for the timeline. It was discussed that the December 9th meeting could be changed. Tina asked why the date for the Special Town Meeting couldn’t be discussed now. David stated because the meeting was going to close. She also asked why this is such a big push right now and why can’t it be done at the Town Meeting. David stated it had to be done by January if we’re going to vote by Australian ballot. Denise wished to call the question. The motion was put to a vote. The motion carried. The next Special Select board meeting will be held Friday, November 12, 2021 at 7:00pm at the Town Office.

Respectfully submitted,

Darlene Wyman, Town Clerk

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