

The Athenian

Volume 14, Number 9

Sponsored by Grafton Cares

MAY 2024

Athens - Moving Forward in Big Ways!

Spring is a time to look forward to the summer ahead and beyond, and this spring things are really happening in Athens. While the big projects for the Community Center and the Town Garage will likely take a long time to be fully realized, there is considerable progress. Plans are coming together for the much needed work at the garage and the further development of the former elementary school which as a community center that will also

become the new location for our Town Office. Finally a bathroom at the garage, and the thought that adequate safe dry storage capacity for our vital and valuable town records is a real possibility - a tremendous move forward to everyone who has ever stepped into that shed off the side of the Town Office to see the state of our current record storage! Let's be sure to get some before pictures now so that everyone can really appreciate what has been accomplished when all is done!

And beside big building and infrastructure projects, there are community happenings, like the events planned on or connected to the new community forest on the Bull Creek Common Lands, a series of summer events at the 1817 Brick Meetinghouse, and happenings connected to the Community Center. See more details below and be sure to get out your markers and calendars! And stay tuned to Athens VT My Hometown - *Sherry Maher*

Select Board Meeting Tidbits

In addition to news in other pieces below, here are a few things from the April Select Board meeting that might be of interest:

- Damage was done to the stone wall in Valley Cemetery by a vehicle that entered the cemetery and got stuck. A report was filed with VLCT in advance of an insurance claim. The board discussed the need for a gate to keep vehicles out of the cemetery from the late fall through early spring to prevent future incidents.
- Mike Bates has contacted VLCT with auditor questions he has regarding the expenditure of reserve funds that are not reflected in the budget. He



noted other towns show both reserved funds and unreserved funds, and stressed that money from taxpayers must be tracked. David will talk with the budget committee about this.

- The small town truck went to the dealer for warranty work on the transmission. However, while it was within the mileage limit, the transmission was 400 hours over what the warranty covers. New transmission cost - \$9,000, repair -

\$3,500. The dealer took it apart before letting the town know it was out of warranty so now it can't be taken elsewhere for a second estimate. There was concern that the dealer shouldn't have pulled it apart without first informing the town it was out of warranty. They approved the cost for the repair, but were going to talk to the dealer and other repair shops. Hannah noted that the truck is already over budget for this calendar year.

- Hannah reports that the budget is tracking well for the first quarter with most items at 25% of annual cost. The board approved moving the ARPA funds into the Building Renovation Fund and earmarked for the garage. Notices were sent on April 1st to several delinquent taxpayers. Tax sale proceedings will be started for those who don't respond by May 1st.
- The board approved and signed the Annual Financial plan for town highways. And a letter from the town requesting a grant for the emergency repairs to Brookline Rd. in January was approved and signed.
- Krista noted that Athens is down one member on the school board meaning we aren't fully represented and district-wide committees are affected. Teacher negotiations have reached an impasse and have gone into mediation.
- The board voted to move monthly selectboard meetings back to the Town Office starting in May.
- Solid waste bids were opened and reviewed. Further review will follow with a decision at the May meeting or an earlier special meeting if needed.

- Hannah shared detailed information on costs and funding for the Town Garage project as well as an update on the Community Center. Total cost estimate for the garage is in the range of \$500,000. Funding gap is approximately \$260,000. She has put in for congressional earmarks for both the garage and the community center. There will be a forum on May 9th for the public to share input on ideas for the space. Scoping has begun which is covered by the MTAP grant. Hannah also shared information about the Village Trust program that could be a source for grant funding though a nonprofit "Village Trust" would need to be formed as the municipality is not eligible for these funds.
- Janet called for an executive session to evaluate an employee. No decisions were made in executive session. Following that, the board approved vacation time and state statutes on sick leave minimums for Duane Snide once his six-month probationary period is up.

- Sherry Maher

Athens Community Center Public Input Forum

Join the conversation on improving this building to benefit the community and invest in Athens' future at 6:00 PM on Thursday, May 9th in the Community Center.

Bring your ideas and questions to discuss with your neighbors, town officials and Jon Saccoccio, the town's architect on this project.

Proposed functions:

- Community gathering space
- Event and program rentals
- Town office
- Community kitchen
- Emergency shelter
- Heating / cooling shelter
- Energy efficiency and independence

Possible features:

- Public Wi-Fi
- Record storage vault
- Research and reading area
- A porch
- Coffee bar
- Solar panels
- ADA lift
- Better outdoor lighting

Mark your calendars!

- Hannah Regier

Notes from the School Board

Both the Ath-Graf and the SU boards have had their reorganizational meetings following the March voting. The governance positions for both boards have all been filled. Cathy Siano-Goodwin was voted back in as the Ath-Graf board chair, and Cheryl Charles was voted back in as the SU board chair. The monthly meeting dates have been set for this year. The Ath-Graf regular board meetings will be the 2nd Thursday of each month.

These meetings will be held at the Grafton Elementary School library at 6:00 pm. The SU regular board meetings will be the 3rd Wednesday of each month. These meetings will be held at the BFUHS in the Universal Room at 6:00 pm. All school related notices will be posted in the Brattleboro Reformer.

Keep an eye open for articles regarding the new Yield Bill that is being debated in Montpelier. Those on our board that are knowledgeable about financing are finding this bill worrisome. It could mean a rise in our school taxes for small rural schools.

Athens is still in need of a third board member so that we have equal representation on the board with Grafton. The Ath-Graf board is a great team to work with. Each member is always willing to answer questions to help new members grow in understanding and knowledge of school board processes. Please call if you have any questions or are interested (802-869-2227).

- Lynn Morgan



Grafton Cares Update

If April is thought to be the cruelest month, could it be due to surprise snowfalls, the horrendous mud, and the flooding? Well, we got through it all--sometimes barely--and we are pleased to report the following: Meals on Wheels to 8 customers, \$125 in gas cards for medical appointments, 6 rides to medical appointments, and 3 sunshine baskets.

We have been very pleased with the attendance at community meals, and our calendar for May is

as follows:

- Friday, May 3, dinner at 6 p.m. in Athens
- Wednesday, May 8, lunch at noon in Grafton
- Friday, May 17, dinner at 6 p.m. in Grafton
- Wednesday, May 22, lunch at noon in Grafton

Anyone needing to contact Grafton Cares should call either Kate Bova at 869-1527 or Bill Toomey at 843-2397.

"May"--a word implying potential--hopefully good things for everyone.

- Bill Toomey

Protecting Life and Property for 100 Years: Part Two

The Grafton Fire Department has responded to a variety of incidents during the past hundred years and an incident of a different nature occurred in 1996. Heavy rain caused the Chester Hill Road to wash away leaving behind serious flood damage which required 5 days of pumping and stand by from the firefighters.

What is regarded as the largest fire in Grafton with a loss exceeding ¾ of a million dollars took place in 1997 when the Windham Foundation barn burned. The 1865 barn housed an extensive collection of antique horse drawn carriages. Local citizens helped firefighters by removing computers and files when the office building was threatened. There were ten Fire Departments on scene for over 15 hours. An unusual occurrence at this fire was when pumps on the fire engines wouldn't function due to obstructions in the hose lines from the hydrants which turned out to be clogged with fish from the fire pond above the Village. Fire Chief Stan Mack later issued an appeal for people not to place unwanted fish in the pond and not to surreptitiously stock the pond for fishing in the future.

Another unexpected outcome from a fire was when Town Meeting had to be recessed in 2001 due to all of the firefighters leaving to fight a fire in the Kenyon barn on Fisher Hill. This response was hampered by blizzard conditions which caused two fire engines responding from other towns to get stuck in snow drifts enroute to Grafton.

There was a thankful outcome when the Fisher homestead, also on Fisher Hill, burned in December of 2010. Then Firefighter, later Chief, Rich Thompson was first on scene and kicked in a door and crawled across a room in heavy smoke and fire to rescue Bea Fisher from the rapidly spreading fire. He was to be honored by the State Legislature for his heroism. Firefighters were called back to the scene several times over the next few days as the winter supply of firewood in the cellar continued to smolder.

Over the years there have been many incidents of flooding in Grafton but the worst appears to be due to Tropical Storm Irene in 2011. All roads into town were washed out leaving Grafton isolated for a few days. One house was totally washed away during the storm and others so badly damaged they had to be torn down. Surging waters water overtook cars traveling on Route 121 East washing one into the Saxtons River where a woman was trapped on the roof of her car until being rescued by firefighters and local citizens. This dramatic swiftwater rescue was re-enacted for a documentary shown on The Weather Channel. The overall situation made national news prompting much concern from around the country about the covered bridges, Cheese Company, and the Foundation's flock of sheep none of which had been any serious danger.

Forest fires, also known as wild land fires, are often prevalent in the

early Spring and in late April of 2015 Grafton Firefighters were called to five fires in four towns ranging from Brookline up to Weston. A more recent wild land fire occurred on a ridge off the Cambridgeport Road here in Grafton in 2018. While not large in area, its ridgeline location was challenging. To reach the fire a mile long "road" had to be cleared up a 550 foot elevation gain to reach the ridge's summit at 1374 feet. A mile of hose then was stretched up to the ridge and another quarter mile of hose to the fire ground. An off-road fire engine was winched up to the summit to pump water for the 74 firefighters from 12 fire departments who would spend three days fighting this fire.

These events are merely a sampling of responses made by Grafton's volunteer firefighters over the past 100 years. Whether it's a structure fire, wild land fire, motor vehicle accident, downed power lines, carbon monoxide, a woman in a raging river, a cat stuck in a tree (yes that has happened), or a cat trapped in a reclining chair (yes that too), Grafton Volunteer Firefighters are prepared to protect your life and property. If you have an emergency do not hesitate to call 911 for their help.

Athens Emergency Responses March 24 – April 23, 2024:

The Rescue Squad responded to 3 medical and 1 motor vehicle incidents. The Fire Department responded to 1 motor vehicle accident.

-Dave Ross

New Services from Windham County Humane Society

Windham County Humane Society is offering many new services that Athens residents may be interested:

Pet food pantry: free pet food available outside during open hours

Sliding scale flea and tick medications

Low cost veterinary wellness services

Pet dental services

Spay/neuter and microchipping

- Caleb Lemieux

Gearing up for Summer at the Meetinghouse

The Meetinghouse Committee in conjunction with the Athens Historic Preservation Society will be holding the 7th Annual Plant Sale fundraiser at the Meetinghouse on Saturday, May 18th, a week prior to the holiday weekend. The Plant Sale is from 10 to noon, and donations of perennials, annuals or vegetable plants are welcomed. Contact Sherry at 802-869-



2141. All proceeds support the restoration of the Meetinghouse.

We are also calling all quilters for the 2nd Quilt Show this fall at the Athens Meetinghouse scheduled for September 14th. Help us once again fill the pews with your beautiful quilts. There will be prizes and raffles. Interested quilters should contact Pamela Russo at 860-575-5576.

And watch for more details on the rest of our summer events for 2024 including a concert or two, and an ice cream social.
- *Sherry Maher*

Athens Weather Emergency Committee

The Athens Weather Emergency Committee presently consists of 8 volunteer members whose purpose is to provide aid to any Athenian citizen who requires help during a weather-related emergency: severe snow, wind, or rain storm, or excessive heat wave.

The town has been divided into zones with at least one member responsible for each. Should you need help during a weather emergency, please consult the list below for the person/people who cover your zone.

They will evaluate your situation and decide if it can best be met by the Committee and/or our Emergency Shelter, or by a next door neighbor or someone on our volunteer list

If your Zone Representative is not available, please call Tim Stevenson (802.869.2141).

Should you have pets that need shelter as well, this can be provided at the Community Center as long as they are housed in a pet carrier, and you assume responsibility for their food, and the cleaning up any mess they make.

ZONES OF RESPONSIBILITY

(also posted to the Town Website)

Don Capponcelli (869.2590 142 Reed Rd.): Reed Road
Cheree Alsvig (802.428.3016) & Justin Stearns (802.591.0560 24 Reed Rd.): Ernst & McCusker & Walker Roads, Rt. 35 from Walker Rd to Townshend town line.

Tim Stevenson & Sherry Maher (869.2141 230 Rt 35): Rte 35 from Walker Rd. to Grafton town line; Herring Hill Rd. & upper Mill Hill, Meetinghouse Rd.

Bonnie Hitchcock (869.2503 57 Taylor Hill): Brookline Rd. from 35 to junction of Valley Cemetery, Taylor Hill, Ober Hill, Grout Rd.; Miller Rd. and lower Mill Hill.

Lynn Morgan (869.2227 250 Brookline Rd.): Brookline Rd from Valley Cemetery Rd to Brookline town line; Sam Farr & Whitney Rds

David Burns (869-6354 92 Valley Cemetery Rd.): Valley Cemetery Rd.
- *Tim Stevenson*

Bull Creek Common Lands:

‘Saturdays on the Land’

Bull Creek Common Lands invites the public for Saturdays on the Land, monthly community walks and events at Raymond Bemis Community Forest in Athens, VT.

Community Forest & Adjacent Trails with the BCCL Board and Neighbors. Walk the extended trail network north of the Community Forest, listen to the Louisiana Waterthrush and other returning birds, and enjoy the forest as it starts to leaf out. Meet at Raymond Bemis Community Forest, 315 Brookline Rd, Athens, VT.

More Saturdays on the Land dates will be announced for summer and fall soon. Check our website, where you can learn more about us, or get in touch, at www.bullcreekcommonlands.org

Do you have an idea for a Saturday on the Land theme or offering? Get in in touch with us at hello@bullcreekcommonlands.org

- *Candace Jensen*

May Library Corner

Smiles and Gratitude:

We’ve just received a bunch of nearly brand-new books from Wendy Martin, Donna Alexander and Tania Evans. Thank you to all three for their on-going generosity. Many thanks to Sam Battaglino for hanging the new U.S flag on the pole in time for Memorial Day. To all who sent poems to share and kind notes of appreciation for Poem in Your Pocket Day during National Poetry Month in April—much gratitude! We are forever thankful to Sarah Yarosevich for her work on the flower gardens. We do contract with Sarah for this service—but she puts in much volunteer labor as well. One more time with feeling—huge thanks to library volunteers Maryanne Donald, Ellen Goldstein, Deanna Maceachern, Pat Mack, David Ross, and librarian’s assistant, Angel Squires, for keeping our doors open and basic library functions running smoothly during my medical leave.

Books, Books and More Books

A large order of adult books is arriving at the library—filled with great reading for the summer and beyond. I also have processed all our recent new book donations and they are on the shelves now. When you need a break from spring cleaning, or it’s a rainy day, or you need a literary escape, or it’s just time to for a book, we’ve got you covered from front to back with bestsellers, historical fiction, fantasy, mystery, biography...please sign up for our email list to receive a full list of new titles.

For our younger readers (and those who enjoy juvenile and YA fiction, no matter your age) we have ordered this year's Red Clover Award and Golden Dome Book Award nominees and more in children's literature—with support from the Bodman Foundation and the Russell/Paulsen family.

Programs @ Your Library

The Nature & Books Discussion Group will meet on Zoom in May for a final session before a summer break. Please contact us for more information.

Stay tuned for announcements of this summer's offerings of Neighbor-to-Neighbor Lecture Series programs—we have some great stuff in the works!

Library Programming

Spanish Conversation Group, Tuesdays, 11am to noon on Zoom, Advanced Beginner to Intermediate Level.

Nature & Books Discussion Series: Wednesday, May 22, 6-7:30 pm on Zoom, *Buzz Sting Bite: Why We Need Insects* by Anne Sverdrup-Thygeson, Registration required - librarian@graftonpubliclibrary.org

- Michelle Dufort

Wildflower Walk with WPHA

Mark your calendar for our May 4 wildflower walk led by Lisa Merton and Lisa Chase. Please sign up by emailing ordinator@windmillhillpinnacle.org and meet at 1 p.m. at the Congregational Church of Westminster West.

Hope to see you there!

- WPHA Newsletter

Grace Cottage

May & June Events

There's still time to sign up for Grace Cottage Family Health & Hospital's 15th Annual Spring into Health 5K on May 11, on the Townshend Common. The event begins with a shotgun start at 8:30 a.m. You can run, walk, roll, stroll, or push your baby carriage for this fun, family-friendly event!

Registration is \$20 for adults; children under the age of 18 are free with signed parent/guardian permission. To register, go to gracecottage.org/events. A virtual option is also available. Register at the same link. You can also register on May 11 just before the event.

On June 8, Saturday, "Tee Up for Health" Golf Benefit. Noon start at Haystack Golf Club in Wilmington. A great round of golf in a spectacular setting. \$175/golfer; lunch & dinner included. Prizes. Register online at gracecottage.org/events. Proceeds from the event will go toward Grace Cottage's new primary care clinic building.

Register online at gracecottage.org/events. For more information, contact Grace Cottage Foundation at info@gracecottage.org or call 802-365-9109. Proceeds will go toward Grace Cottage's new primary care clinic building.

- C.J. King

Chester Plant Sale May 31 - June 2

The annual Chester Plant Sale at St. Luke's Church, the gray church at 313 Main Street near the Village Green in Chester, Vermont, is a great opportunity for the public to purchase an impressive selection of proven, large, healthy, hardy plants at bargain prices. Well-groomed plants with helpful labels make garden additions easy, and experienced gardeners will be on hand to give advice about planting and garden design.

The sale is scheduled to run on Friday May 31 and Saturday June 1, 9-3 both days; and on Sunday June 2, noon-3. The later timing of this event allows for larger and more attractive plants – all organized by kind and growing needs on the side lawn of the church. People who have perennials to contribute in advance or plants to suggest or who need more information are encouraged to contact Lillian Willis at lbwillisct@comcast.net or 802-875-1340.

- Lillian Willis

Reed Road Weather Report

We have continued our up & down weather this month, giving us both typical spring & a taste of summer along with a thunderstorm on the very last day. But the daffodils have been loving it!

High temperature: 77.1 degrees

Low temperature: 23.9 degrees

Precipitation: approx. 3.8 inches of rain

- Treah Pichette



COMMUNITY INFORMATION

Select Board Meetings: 3rd Thursday 7:00 PM

Budget Committee: 2nd & 4th Tuesday 7:00 PM

Planning Commission: 1st Tuesday 10:30 AM

Meeting House Committee: 2nd Monday 10:00 AM

School Board: 2nd Thursday 6:00 Grafton School

Do you have a news item for The Athenian or a favorite family story to share? Or would you like to be on our email list and get the newsletter in your inbox?

CONTACT US at theathenianvt@gmail.com.



TRASH PICK-UP: MAY 11TH

RECYCLE PICK-UP: MAY 25TH

CHARLES PERHAM JOURNAL APRIL, 1873

1. At home all day the Listers here today. They appraised our stock as follows: 31 sheep \$90.00, oxen \$150.00, 3 cows \$60.00, 2 year old steers \$40.00, old mare \$15.00, Jim horse \$100.00, Nelly horse \$75.00, one hog \$15.00. Total \$545.00 In the evening went down to Powers to see why the appraisal was so high.
2. In the afternoon went down to Jim Eagers to make out an inventory of the farming tools he is to use. In the evening Jim came to dinner I took him home.
3. Have been down to Merrills to settle with Eliza and paid her the \$50.00 due her in Fathers will. Went down as far as the scythe snath shop. To Merrills to dinner. Very hard traveling to day. Settled up with the town. Now due the town \$1.98.
4. A very pleasant day have been sawing wood. In the evening went down to James Eager had him and Mrs. Bennett sign in writing what was agreed to on April 2.
5. Have been fixing the harnesses. Tried to get up to the sugar place. Shoveled some and drove through but it did not do much good for the snow is so deep.
6. Went down to see if Jim Smith got our mare. Jim Eager here after some cider brandy for his wife. Let him have one quart for .75 cents. It has rained most all day and evening.
7. Paid Mr. Alexander for recording an old deed .10 cents. Commenced to feed hay from the long scaffold section of the barn today.
8. To home all day. The teeth ache today and ear ache.
9. Have seated six children chairs today. Mother has three more to do. Elizabeth has got done 23 children and 18 cottage. A man here today canvassing for the Boston Cultivator(a weekly agricultural news paper with additional other news topics of the day) I did not sign.
10. In the forenoon went to Jim Eagers to see Mrs. Bennetts cow. Have agreed to pay \$27.00 to her for the cow. In the afternoon went and tried to get a road up into the sugar place had the worst time I ever did with the oxen. Did not get much road at that.
11. Split wood most all day. Have tapped and set 14 buckets today but sap does not run much.
12. Piled wood today. Mr. Whitney mended my stone boat in the afternoon.
13. A very windy and sleet like day some rain some snow. Wrote to Windsor Vermont Elizabeth wrote to Reed, Grafton.
14. Stayed at home all day. Sawed some wood today. Charlie Wyman come just at night to work.
15. Charlie Wyman commenced to work today. Have been sawing and splitting wood all day. The Rinsley heifer calved today.
16. Set a few more buckets today but sap does not run much too warm. Have sawed and split wood. Warm today.
17. Sawed and split wood today.
18. Went down and tried to settle with Mr. Dodge but did not make out. Greased the harness sawed wood.
19. In the forenoon went up on the hill with oxen and the steer and drawed some Hemlock. Sawed and split wood most of the time.
20. Went down and had Mrs. Eager cut my hair this morn. Snow goes just today.
21. Have been over to Townshend to see Judge Stoddard. Called to see about a grave stone and went to Dinner. Went to grave yard to look at some monuments. Called to see Mrs. David Farr and found she is very sick. Very hard walking from this home was very tired when got home.
22. Have been over to the Ball lot cutting poles and trimming up apple trees. In the afternoon went down to the saw mill with one ash and two pine logs. The ash to get sawed for traverse sled runners. He asked for sawing .25 cents. Took home the stone boat I had bought of Mr. Dodge for \$1.00.
23. Went to Bellows falls carried 29 children and 67 cottage chairs. The total comes to \$7.22.
24. In the afternoon got out manure with the oxen and steers up in the upper mowing.²⁵ Have been down to Brookline to settle with Augusta and Mr. Marsh. Paid Augusta \$50.00 due him in Fathers will. Paid Mr. Marsh \$1.25 called all accounts square. Went up to see Uncle John and found him very sick.
26. Charlie Wyman went to get the oxen shod. Paid for it \$1.84. Stopped to Towns clerk office to see about the appraisal. Paid into the town Treasurer \$20.00.
28. Charlie Wyman does not work today. Turned out the cattle and sheep and shall not feed them any meal now.
29. In the forenoon mended fence next to Mr. Goodmans south end of Stoddard lot. In the afternoon mended over by the Stickney house and far as the cheery tree in the Pond.
30. Have been mending up by the lane and fixed up the bars all around and mended down to Mrs Bennetts woods.

Transcribed by James Trimble