

The Athenian

SPECIAL EDITION

Sponsored by Grafton Cares

FEBRUARY 21, 2023

Meet the Candidates!

Last week the Athenian invited all declared candidates for public office in Athens to submit a brief candidate profile that we would then share with the voters of Athens. Since there were seats with no declared candidates, we invited anyone who did not submit ballot paperwork by the January deadline, but who was interested in mounting a Write-in campaign to submit a profile as well.

There are 17 seats up for election this year, and 8 declared candidates, some are running for multiple offices. There are 2 contested races – 3 candidates are running for the two 1-yr seats on the Select Board, and 2 candidates are contending for a 5-year seat on the Meetinghouse Committee. There is no declared candidate for 4 seats (Lister, Town Grand Juror, Town Agent, U.H.S.D #27 Rep.).

We received responses from 4 of the 8 declared candidates who combined are running for 8 of the offices on the ballot. They were all asked to respond to the following questions:

- What position(s) are you running for?
- Why are you running for this position(s)?
- What skills or experience do you feel you would bring to this position(s), and/or what would you hope to accomplish if elected?
- Is there anything else you would like the voters to know about you when they are considering who to vote for?

Here are their unedited responses. We are presenting the candidates for two contested races first.

Sandi Capponcelli

for re-election to a 1-year Select Board seat

I had to think long and hard about the question of why I am running for a position on the selectboard. I

have never been asked that question before. Last year was our first time our town tried out a 5-member selectboard. I ran then because I realized that 3 of the 5 members (according to who was running at the time) might be related directly/indirectly to each other and that might present a potential conflict of interest on the board with only 2 members not directly/indirectly related. What kind of board would that present to the town was my question. So after 23 years of being a lister, I chose to run for the selectboard and was voted into a 1 year term.

I worked with the road crew and with FEMA to get a reimbursement of approximately \$58,000 back to the town to cover storm damage in July of 2021. I helped get the community center from an idea to a place where we have had 2 tag sales and a Halloween party held in the building. The building has also been cleaned out and the main room freshly painted, both jobs done by local teens who were able to get some community hours in towards their high school graduation.

Since my husband and I moved here almost 44 years ago we have been both elected officials and volunteers. Our sons went to the elementary school (community center) which is one reason why I feel we can't let that building just sit there and only used when we have a town meeting or large meeting. I feel a connection to that building having moved here before it was built, my husband being involved in the process of getting that school built and my sons attending that school. I also was a member of the PTG and served on the school board.

I would like to see the community center through to the point that it is really a community center. Right now we are in search of grants to keep the project moving forward. It won't only be a community center it will also be a place that townspeople can gather during a weather emergency and if we get very lucky in the arena of grants we may be able to have a commercial kitchen which could be used by our

blossoming farming community and others. It's uses can be as varied as the people in this town.

Why am I running for selectboard? One reason is because I don't feel serving for one year has enabled me to get some of the jobs done that I have set before myself and because my heart is here, in this town, for better or worse. I feel I still have enough energy and the abilities to keep helping Athens moving forward and to help improve the lives of the people that live here.

Krista Gay

for a 1-year Select Board seat;
a 5-year seat on the Meetinghouse Committee;
and re-election to the elementary school board.

I'm running because I really care about my town and my neighbors. Specifically, I'm running to accomplish 3 things: 1) make our local government and committees more accessible; 2) preserve and improve our town buildings; and 3) encourage younger people to get involved.

First, since returning home during COVID to work remotely, I've dedicated myself to being involved in town and helping my neighbors. At various times, I've served as a Trustee of the Campbell Fund (in which I helped provide financial resources to our neighbors experiencing financial hardship, and drafted the payment agreements to ensure the funds are repaid); as a member of the elementary school board (during which I was responsible for organizing the school's feedback forum, served as a bridge between parents and the board, and helped draft the district's flag policy to comply with federal law); as a member of the Athens Community Center Committee (during which I served as a lead organizer of the Halloween Party, led the Halloween Party, and donated various resources); and as the Town Agent and Grand Juror (during which I helped connect neighbors to legal resources, and reviewed grant and town contracts to avoid potential legal risk); and as a volunteer at our monthly town dinners (at which I have met many of you!) Through all of this, I learned that the Select Board is ultimately the one who makes the decisions for these committees, as it serves as the "final stamp" of approval on the committee work. Accordingly, I have realized that serving on the Select Board would allow me to help ensure that the hard work of these committees comes to fruition.

Second, our town has some wonderful buildings that I think deserve to be preserved. I want to help ensure that these buildings, such as the Meetinghouse, receive adequate funding and attention. I also believe that it is unacceptable that our Town Garage does not have a bathroom on site for our Town employees to use. If elected to the Meetinghouse Committee or Select Board, I would do all that I could to help us find grant and funding sources to ensure that the Meetinghouse receives the funding that it needs to be preserved, as well as work to find and support any funding to get our Town employees an on-site bathroom, while also not unfairly increasing the burden on tax payers.

Third, representation matters. I am often the youngest person on committees, and that can be intimidating. My hope is that if I'm elected to these positions, I can be an approachable, friendly advocate for my neighbors, and that my presence would help younger people, or those who are not normally involved in "politics" feel welcome.

Lastly, I'm running because I believe that I have established myself as a trustworthy, dependable neighbor that gets things done. I have promptly answered every email and phone call that I have received in relation to my positions, listened to my neighbors, advocated for them and obtained the information that they needed (like advocating for the community forum), and followed up to make sure that they were taken care of. My neighbors deserve accessibly, professional, friendly representation, and I believe I am well-suited to be that person.

Professionally, I am an attorney, and therefore have developed research, writing, and oral advocacy skills. As an employment attorney, my knowledge could help inform our town policies and procedures. Further, if I do not know an answer, I admit this, look it up, and follow up with the person.

Interpersonally, I am also able to remain calm and level-headed during controversial conversations (which inevitably occur in small town governments), and am able to separate and recognize my own biases from those that are best for my neighbors and community at large. Accordingly, I think that I am able to bring a level of dependability, integrity, and trustworthiness to all of my positions. Through my work so far, I have established myself as a good listener, a dependable neighbor, and someone that cares.

As for what I plan to accomplish, the first thing I would like to focus on is ensuring all town

government meetings are accessible. On the school board, for example, all of our meetings are broadcast live. I would like to find a way to bring this to other committee meetings, especially Select Board meetings, to allow elderly and homebound neighbors participate in real time. As noted above, I also hope to find fiscally responsible ways to preserve our buildings and get a bathroom at the Town Garage.

I grew up in Athens (2006 graduate of Grafton Elementary and 2012 graduate of Leland & Gray, thanks to school choice) and returned to Athens after receiving my education. Accordingly, I'm in a unique position of being able to both recognize the concerns of life-long residents, as well as those that have recently moved to town and those working remotely.

Since returning home, I have advocated for my neighbors to be fairly represented. In addition to my above work, I: 1) helped organize and lead the petition to keep town meeting in person; 2) led the effort to keep that vote in person for people to voice their concerns; and 3) proposed the amendment (which carried) last year to move town meeting to the evening to try to ensure a larger turnout and to allow those who work to participate.

I welcome any suggestions and feedback, and encourage anyone with questions or concerns to contact me at krista.ann.gay@gmail.com

Denise Randall

for re-election to a 3 year Select Board seat.

I am running for this position because I want the town to run efficiently. I want all persons living in this town to be treated equally and fairly.

Currently I have been on the board for 3 years. I hope to make sure the budget is kept in check and roads are maintained.

I have lived in Athens for 33 years. Before I was elected to the select board I sat on the Athens School Board for about 12 years. If elected this will be my 4th term on the Select Board.

Hannah Regier

for reelection as Clerk & Treasurer,
to be the new Delinquent Tax Collector
all of these are 1-year seats.

I am running to serve townspeople with the basic services that the town office provides, to take care of the town's record archive, to help keep the town

running by interfacing with vendors and various state agencies, and to maintain transparent accounting for all taxpayer money. These positions fit well into the rest of my life and I'm grateful for voters' support and patience as I learn the ropes.

I have professional project management experience, good communication skills, a grasp of technology systems, an interest in problem solving, and a strong ethical sense. Over the last five years I have accomplished moving the town's accounting into a digital system that makes it possible to easily track where all the money goes. Over the next several years, I would like to work towards improving the record storage situation so that the land records and important historical documents are preserved for future generations.

Feel free to contact me with any questions you have about town records or operations. If I don't know the answer, I will try to figure it out and get back to you.

And a Few Important Reminders About Voting and Town Meeting

Absentee ballots are now available from the Town Clerk or by going to the My Voter Page from the Secretary of State: <https://mvp.vermont.gov/>.

Remember, Town Meeting this year will be at 6PM on Monday, March 6th. At the Community Center (aka the former school building). The next to the last order of business of that meeting will be to vote on when to have next year's Town Meeting.

You can turn in your absentee ballots at Town Meeting on Monday night, but you **CANNOT get ballots** at the Town Meeting. You can also turn your voted ballots in on Monday, March 6th during regular Town Office hours – 9-1, or you can mail them using the envelopes provided. There are multiple Australian ballots to vote on. One for Town offices, and multiple ballots related to our school district.

Be sure all voted ballots are sealed in the VOTED BALLOTS envelope and that you complete and sign the certificate on that envelope. You can then put that into the larger mailing envelope and drop in the mail.

The polls will be open at the Town Office from 10AM to 7PM for in person voting on Australian ballots for Town Offices and school district matters.