**ATHENS COMMUNITY CENTER ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**Draft of Minutes of April 6, 2023 meeting**

\*The meeting was called to order at 6:35 by Chairperson Sandi Capponcelli. Present were Sandi, Matt Shea and Tina White, committee members. Also present was Don Capponcelli.

\*The minutes of the March 2, 2023 meeting were approved with no additions or corrections (Matt Shea moved to accept; Tina White seconding).

**\*Grant Updates:**

- The State-administered Municipal Energy Resilience Program (MERP) is rolling-out application forms for mini-grants for a variety of purposes, of which grant-writing seems most applicable to Athens.

- Don has been struggling for almost 2 months to procure planning grant applications with USDA. Brattleboro Development Credit Corp. (BDCC) had at first offered to help with the application process but then had to back away due to staff shortages. In the meantime the USDA Brattleboro office is lacking the office personnel it had in the mid-2010s, and the Director is mostly working remotely. BDCC did come through with providing contact info. for Don. Matt Shea senses the frustration and offers to contact State Rep. Heather Chase about Athens’ struggles in making progress toward our municipal projects.

- Sandi questions the capacity of battery storage for solar-powered heat pumps in the event of extended power outages, and thinks we may still need to pursue a grant for a generator.

**\*Building Use for April –** The Committee cleared the Selectboard tables from the east end of the room to provide space for the CPR class scheduled for April 26’th. The chair setup was retained for the Special Town Meeting warned for April 27’th. The family requesting use of the space for a birthday party have cancelled their plans.

- There is some lingering concern with insurance liability with use of the space by private groups. Sandi says that this has been checked out with VLCT and that the Town is covered.

-Tina White has looked over the private use contract that has been drawn up for the Athens Brick Meeting House and feels that it would be adaptable for the Community Center with name changes and other minor adjustments.

**\*Fundraising Ideas/ Events:**

- Tina White has spoken with the director of the Hartford, Vt. rest stop on I-91 South, near White River Junctiion, Vt. The CCAC could reserve a spot for a rest stop bake sale- They prefer we book a full day, but would accept a half-day booking. Tina suggests we schedule Athens volunteers in 2-hr shifts. We could offer things such as baked goods, coffee and bottled water. Tina was told that some groups have been known to bring in as much as $1,800.00 per day. Don says that is consistent with his experience helping the Athens Brick Meeting House Committee at the I-91 North exit in Guilford, Vt. last summer. Tina suggests that we need a Square Account since so many people no longer carry cash. The Committee will ask Town Treasurer Hannah Regier about this. The CCAC needs a separate account in the Town Ledger for its revenues.

- Matt Shea suggests a summer event with local musicians. Sandi suggests an accompanying barbecue. Tina adds that this would also be the time for a chili cookoff. It is decided that August should be the time for the event. We should be starting to plan soon and advertise early. There should be a donation jar at the event.

- Tina White suggests a Childrens’ Holiday Shopping Event around December 1’st. She describes a similar event in Saxtons River where a room was set up for children to shop among donated gifts by themselves (accompanied by a volunteer guide). They were allowed up to 5 gifts at a dollar apiece. Gift-wrapping by volunteers would be included. Sandi suggests advance promotion including the Athens Facebook page.

**\*Further Business:**

- At its 03/16/23 meeting the Athens Selectboard gave a formal charge to the CCAC to research the possibility of moving the Athens Town Office to the Community Center building. Don will meet with Hannah Regier to discuss space needs.

- Matt Shea and Tina White support the idea of commercial kitchen space in the basement level. Tina describes how the space would be helpful for individual families doing large volumes of canning.

-Matt Shea suggests free space for farmers’ market stands in the lower field by the road. The spaces could be both scheduled or pop-up. The intention is to help in-town and nearby small farms get exposure in a more public space and for them to advertise sales at their individual farm locations.

**\*Date of next meeting** will be Thursday, May 4, 2023, 6:30PM; location to be warned.

\*Tina White moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:43PM. Seconded by Matt Shea.

Respectfully submitted,

Donald Capponcelli