

Select board Meeting

February 18, 2021

7:00pm

Virtual Meeting

Present were Darlene Wyman, David Bemis, Denise Randall, James Trimble, Bonnie Hitchcock, Danny Taylor, Dennis Mirante, Fact TV, Hannah Regier, Janet Perry, Krista Gay, Lynn Morgan, Tina White, Sandi Capponcelli, John Maciejowski, Don Capponcelli, Andy Toepfer, Donna Currier, Sherry Maher, Matt Perry, and Alyssa Noyes.

David called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

Adjustments to the agenda: David made the motion to add Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association's purchase of the Massey property on Brookline Road. Denise seconded. Put to a vote. The motion carried.

Minutes: David made the motion to accept the minutes of the January 21<sup>st</sup> meeting. Denise seconded. Put to a vote. The motion carried.

Public comments: April asked what the road commissioner's job consisted of. David stated they were to advise the select board on issues and repairs for the summer roads. The road commissioner does not receive any pay. It is a separate job from the road crew. Darlene stated that two weight permits and the annual boundary survey needs to be signed by David. She will leave them on the table for David to sign. Krista stated according to 17 VSA§ 2651 the road commissioner may be elected or appointed. They are to assist the select board at their request and have experience on town highways. Sherry asked who the town attorney was and what their job description was. David stated that Steve Fine is the town agent and his job consists of hiring a town attorney when needed. She asked who was serving the town in the legal matter with Taylor Hill. Michael Tarrant is now the attorney working with that. Sherry stated she had gotten copies of the documents concerning Taylor Hill and was dismayed that the questions she was hearing from the town attorney and the Taylor Hill attorney basically sounded they the professional integrity of the engineer. She was also disturbed at how long and costly and contentious this whole process has become and thinks that it is very unfortunate that it has taken this turn. Krista Gay wanted to clarify that Taylor Hill is not suing the Town of Athens. Dennis stated that this is Jim's last select board meeting, he would thank him for his service on the board. He also commended the road crew on winging back the snow banks in preparation of the next storm. Dennis was hoping that at next week's informational meeting the candidates would be able to speak instead of being restricted to only discussing the articles. David stated that at a regular town meeting the candidates can't speak or be interviewed on a floor town meeting. The board is trying to keep the town meeting format. David stated that if

they wanted a candidate's forum, they would be able to use the town web site, but the board could not host this. It was suggested that possibly the Athenian or Fact TV could do this. Sherry stated that the Athenian would not be available because it is a project of Grafton Cares and is a non-profit organization and they are concerned about any political matters being dealt with because that is not something that Grafton Cares is involved with. The Athenian is planning on sending a reminder to get the word out that ballots are now available and how to get them and how to send the ballots back. They will also include a list of all the candidates that are running for office. Danny stated that he did not have problem if someone wants to set up a candidate's forum and if it doesn't happen he has sent out fliers to townspeople. Sherry stated she was concerned with the date for the informational meeting, since it gives a limited amount of time for people with absentee ballots to contemplate their ballots and send out after the informational meeting.

Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association reference to purchase on Brookline Road of the James Massey property: The property is in the towns of Athens, Brookline and Townshend. Andy stated WHPA is considering purchasing the property for conservation purposes. They will be removing the no trespassing signs and allowing public access and hunting on the property. WHPA is requesting a letter from the select board in favor of purchasing the property. The question of allowing ATV's on the property was discussed. Andy stated they would probably allow ATV's on the property as long as they used the trails responsibly. David made the motion the select board send a letter in support of WHPA in purchasing the Massey property. Jim seconded. Put to a vote. The motion carried. The board will ratify this motion at the next meeting.

Boards and Officials: Don stated there are three informational meetings held next week. Monday, February 22-Grafton; Wednesday, February 24-Bellows Falls Union High School; Thursday, February 25-Athens. Lynn stated as of this date, there are no candidates for the school board position, but if anyone is interested to put the word out as a write-in. Lynn stated the board has finished the grade school's assessment from September to November. She stated they had not met all their goals, but the teachers were pleased with their progress. Sandi stated that as a lister she had spoken several times with Mr. Massey and he would be glad that the land would be passing to WHPA to be conserved.

Town Meeting Informational meeting: The informational meeting will be held virtually on February 25, 2021 at 6:00pm on the town's web site. The meeting will be held to discuss the articles of warning for the town. The school will articles will also be discussed. The question was asked if David would be presiding as the moderator or the select board chair. He stated he would probably go back and forth pertaining to the questions asked. The meeting will be held similar to the town meeting format. Denise asked if the select board could meet together at the town office to attend the meeting. The office would not be open to the public. Hannah asked if she could digitalize the town report on the website for people to download. David

made the motion Hannah be allowed to digitalize the town report on the website. Denise seconded. Put to a vote. The motion carried.

Warrants and Mail: David made the motion to approve and sign the warrants. Denise seconded. Put to a vote. The motion carried. Darlene will leave the warrants at the town office.

Roads: Matt reported everything is holding up and going well. He is applying for a grant through grants and aids for stone lining Bemis Hill and Walker Road. The total of the grant is \$9775.00 with the state's share of \$7820.00 and the town's share of \$1955.00 which can be used in kind. David made the motion to sign the grant application. Denise seconded. Put to a vote. The motion carried. Matt will leave the grant at the town office. Matt asked about ordering gravel for mud season. He will contact three sources for quotes. If the quote is less than \$10,000.00 it will not have to go out to bid. Janet stated the Freightliner had been inspected and approved for the warranty. She will email the warranty to the town office.

Executive Session: At 7:55pm the board moved into executive session by phone to discuss a personnel matter where premature general public knowledge would clearly place the town of Athens at a substantial disadvantage. At 8:04 the board returned to the meeting. No decisions were made in executive session. No motions were made.

Further Business/Adjourn: David wished to thank Jim for all his help and service to the board over the past year. Denise also thanked him. There being no further business, Jim made the motion to adjourn. David seconded. Put to a vote. The motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 8:05pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Darlene Wyman, Town Clerk