

**Athens Select Board Meeting**  
**Thursday October 16, 2025, 7pm**  
**Athens Town Office**

Present: Tom Taylor, Linda Taylor, April Lyman, Christian Rogerson, Tim Stevens, Sherry Mahar, Ellen Mirante, Dennis Mirante, Amber Stevens (Town Clerk), Denise Randall (Select Board Member), David Bemis (Select Board Member), Krista Gay (Select Board Member), Janet Perry (Select Board Member). Select Board Member Sandi Capponcelli was not present.

Meeting called to order at 7:00pm. The meeting was recorded by FACT TV. Krista Gay took minutes.

**Adjustments to the Agenda**

- Krista states she has been putting "action items" in select board meeting minutes and would like to find a place to discuss them. David says that this can be done during Boards & Officials.
- Krista states she would like to go into executive session prior to discussing the petitions on the agenda in order to receive legal advice from counsel.
- Krista makes a motion to go into executive session prior to discussing the petitions in order to receive legal advice. David seconds. Krista, David, Janet, and Denise in favor. Motion passes.

**Minutes of Prior Meeting / Future Minutes**

- Minutes have been unable to be posted on the website due to the Town being locked out of the website. Amber states that she has received access to the Town website and will be able to post minutes going forward.
- Krista states that she realized that she misspelled "Whitney Road" incorrectly in the minutes from the September 18, 2025 meeting and will correct that.
- Denise makes a motion to accept the minutes from the September 18, 2025 meeting with the spelling correction. David seconds. Krista, David, Janet, and Denise in favor. Motion passes.
- Denise makes a motion for Krista to continue to do the minutes. Janet seconds. Krista, David, Janet, and Denise in favor. Motion passes.

**Public Comments**

- Linda asks when the Town will be doing reappraisals. David says maybe next year. David said that property values have changes considerably since Covid, causing most towns in the state to have to re-appraise and there are only a few number of companies in the state doing this. Some towns are backed up until 2028.
- Krista adds that the new Vermont education bill will be causing changes to property taxes. Individuals should be prepared to see an increase in their home values and an increase in taxes as a result.
- Dennis said that the Town should tighten our belt and be as frugal as possible.
- Ellen extends a welcome to Amber as the new Town Clerk and asks what days she will be working. Amber says she will be in Monday 9-1 and she will confirm with Darlene

(Assistant Town Clerk) regarding additional hours. Ellen said that she has heard from people that they would like to sign up to vote. David says individuals can also register to vote on the state website.

- Ellen asks who the new Treasurer is. Board confirms that this is also Amber.
- Ellen says she submitted petitions. David says this will be discussed under the "Petitions" agenda item.
- Ellen says she saw something on TV about Winooski using a water process to save money on salt.
- Ellen asks about the roof status. The Board states that this was to be addressed by Don, the Town's Clerk of the Works, but he was unable to attend the meeting due to a family emergency.
- Tom says he has 3 things:
  - 1) Linda (his wife) was told that the town crew was going to come back and put a catch basin at his house. That hasn't been done yet. David says that the town crew has at least two of these to do.
  - 2) When are they going to put the name on the town truck? Krista says this was not on the to-do list. Krista had previously tried to reach out to the Company and was unable to get ahold of anyone. Krista tells Tom to provide her with the number and she will contact them again.
  - 3) "How come that town truck is out of town every morning for at least two and a half hours?" Tom claims the town truck has been in Chester and Bellows Falls. David says he did not know that the truck was out of town every day. Krista asks the last time he saw it out of town. He said last Thursday in Townshend. Krista asks if it was at the hardware store. Denise says we haven't checked the warrants yet.
- Tim asks if the road crew has a coffee machine at the town garage. Board members say yes. David isn't sure if it's working currently due to the construction.
- Christian states that he heard that there was a petition re: trash so he looked back at previous town meeting minutes. Current plan was approved by voice vote in 2024. He states that he likes trash service as it. He agrees with John Oberling from a previous meeting: it is better to pay for one truck to collect trash for all of town then to have a bunch of trucks bringing trash to the dump. Christian doesn't have time or truck to bring his trash, and thinks it's better to have a service do it. He doesn't want trash collection to be hard for people. Pooling people's money for a trash service is using the Town's money well.
  - Denise says at the meeting where trash was voting on that someone wanted it to go to the Town of Rockingham. To do this, we would need a contract with Rockingham. David and Denise are unsure if they would be willing to contract with us. There would need to be a communication between our Town and Rockingham.
  - David says a few years ago we went to one trash pickup a month and it did not save a lot of money.
  - Ellen states "all the towns around us do what the state proposes. The state does not propose anything about putting it on the tax bill."
  - Dennis says that there is a lot of waste in Town. He claims that the issue of the Town truck being out of town has been brought to the Select Board several times and not addressed.

- Tom says re: trash, when he worked on the road crew, the road crew had to pick up trash around town. If there is not a town trash service, there will be more trash on the road and throughout town that the road crew will need to pick up.
- Sherry asks if the road crew's slip reflect them being out of town. Krista says we will look into that.
- April says if the road crew is going to pick up parts, "almost every place delivers. So you don't have to drive your truck there to pick stuff up." Denise says that while parts can be delivered, sometimes the road crew may be working on a project and needs parts before they would be delivered.

#### **Board & Officials (22:10)**

- Tim speaks on behalf of the Emergency Committee re: placement of the emergency trailer. The trailer has been parked at the Community Center (it was previously at the town garage) due to the construction work being done at the town garage. The committee has talked to Matt (Road Foreman), who conveyed that as long as it is parked in a decent place, a plow in the winter should not be an issue. Kate (from Grafton Cares) shared about storing materials at the Community Center, but there was a moisture problem. Emergency Committee could purchase a dehumidifier. Advantages of leaving cots and materials in trailer as they presently are is that the committee would not need to pack them up and move them in the event of an emergency. Tim wants to know if using the Community Center is an option. David asks if there is a moisture problem in the trailer. Tim says there is. David asks if there is a rodent problem, and Tim says there is no evidence of rodents.
  - Krista asks if the Emergency Committee has a preference over keeping materials in the trailer or using the Community Center. Tim says he came here to talk about options. Krista says her only concern with keeping it in the trailer is that if we got a wicked snow storm, it may be difficult to get materials out of the trailer without snowblowing. David says they could angle the trailer a certain way to avoid this.
  - Krista says that she will talk to the Community Center Committee.
  - Discussion about where to place the trailer once the construction at the Town Garage is complete.
  - Janet asks how much stuff is in the trailer. Tim says it's about 1/3 full. There are cots. There are things in tubs.
  - Tim would like to ask about using the Community Center basement. Sherry says that we need to do research into the space and the humidifier to make sure whatever is purchased is adequate.
- Shery for the Meetinghouse Committee: Sherry sent an invoice for part of the scoping work. This will be addressed during warrants. Sherry was on a phone call with Tina and Krista with the Vermont Rural Development Committee. Discussing funds that need to be used by end of December. Best use of funds may be grant research and putting together a capital campaign plan.
- Amber for Budget Committee: did not meet because of town plan meeting. Next meeting is November 11, 2025.

- Krista for School Board; still need a member for the high school board. Going to start meeting twice per month due to the budget. There will be public hearings from the state on redistricting. Enrollment in the 30s. Discussion re: enrollment, lack of jobs in the area, and Airbnb's.
- Krista for Community Center Committee: Halloween Party on 10/25. 5pm.

#### **Town Plan Grant / Vote (44:33)**

- Janet presents document from individuals advising the Town from Windham Regional on the Town plan to extend services until the end of December. David makes a motion that we sign it. Krista seconds. Krista, Denise, David, Janet in favor. Motion passes.
- Board thanks Windham Regional for all of their help and coming to Athens so much.
- David makes a motion to approve the Town Plan that was presented at the October 14, 2025 hearing, there were no additions or changes that needed to be made, and that a vote be scheduled by Australian ballot. Denise seconds.
  - Discussion: Krista notes that Dennis has been asking for the Select Board to make an enthusiastic endorsement of the plan. Krista reiterates that the Town Plan is not zoning. There has only been positive support for the Town Plan. Krista says she would make an enthusiastic endorsement of the plan. Denise says she agrees with Krista.
  - Discussion re: when to schedule the vote for the Town Plan. Board sets the date for December 8, 2025. Krista will confirm with VLCT that this date is within the permissible timeframes.
  - David's motion is amended to make the vote December 8, 2025. Krista seconds. Denise, David, Krista, Janet in favor. Motion passes.
  - Sherry says based upon her research, the town has up to 1 year to adopt the Town Plan. Sherry asks why this can't just be part of the regular Town Meeting. Krista and David share that we wanted to get it done as soon as possible.
  - Krista makes a motion that the Select Board endorse the town plan. David seconds. Denise, David, Krista, Janet in favor. Motion passes.
- No treasurer report tonight.

#### **Select Board To-Do List Review**

- For Krista
  - We filled treasurer/town clerk position. Amber got access to website. Krista completed the previous minutes and will send to Amber.
- Sandi and Don not present so unable to go over their list.
- For David:
  - Hasn't heard back from 911 people re: road.
  - Discussion re: cameras. David thought we had put this on hold. Krista and Denise thought we were still doing one camera out front.
  - Amber has stepped in so we don't need the extra help with NIMRC.
  - Will add policy review to next meeting.

- For Janet: We approved Town Plan so this was taken care of.

Board members completed their tasks or they will be put on for the next meeting.

#### Petitions (59:51)

- Krista makes a motion to go into executive session based upon a finding that premature general public knowledge would clearly place the public body or person involved at a substantial disadvantage regarding confidential attorney client communications made for the purpose of providing professional legal services to the select board. 1 V.S.A. § 313. David seconds. Denise, David, Krista, Janet vote in favor. Motion passes.
- Before entering executive session, Tom asks if someone can put glass back on the bulletin board at the Town Garage because stuff blows off. David says that he has made arrangements for this.
- The Select Board invites Amber to stay in executive session.
- The Select Board enters executive session at approximately 8:02pm
- At approximately 8:30pm, Janet steps out of executive session and goes outside. Denise, David, and Krista continue executive session without her, and Amber remains in the executive session.
- Executive session ends at approximately 8:36pm.
- David tries to turn on the recorder after executive session, and it will not turn on. Fact TV will send Krista an audio recording to do the minutes.
- Krista states that the Board received the petitions and that the Board reached out to legal counsel regarding the petitions. She notes that Ellen had suggested during public comments that there needed to be a meeting in a certain number of days, but none of the petitions that the Select Board received called for a Special Town Meeting. Krista states that none of the petitions that the Select Board received are complaint, and that all of the petitions, except the one that calls to change the Town to a fiscal year, are outside of the purview of what the voters may vote on. However, the petition for the change to a fiscal year was not compliant.
  - Krista states that the voters are allowed to vote on the Town budget at the regular Town Meeting. However, the Board's understanding—without revealing attorney-client communications—is that the individual line items that were proposed in the petitions that involved funding cannot be separated from the larger budget vote or budget process.
  - Ellen asks if she could do an "amendment" to the petitions. Krista states that she cannot tell an individual not to petition the Select Board—individuals have a right to do that. But the petitions that were submitted were outside the purview of what may be voted on or were otherwise not written in a way that could be put to voters. Krista reiterates that the Board had not received any petition calling for a Special Town Meeting.
  - Ellen asks if the other articles can be voted on in March. Krista reiterates that other than the petition re: the fiscal year, the Select Board understands that the other items cannot be voted on by voters. They are outside of the purview of voters. These items dealt with appropriated funds which cannot be separated from the larger budgeting

- process that is voted on. They cannot be piecemealed out by other votes throughout the year outside of the budgeting process.
- Krista states that she hears Ellen and the other voters concerns about the fiscal year and spending, and asks Amber if the Budget Committee can look into the fiscal year (even though a compliant petition has not been submitted). Krista asks Amber to have the Budget Committee look into 1) how changing to a fiscal year would work; and 2) the pros and cons of changing the Town to a fiscal year. Krista asks Amber to report back on the Budget Committee's findings at the November 2025 regular Select Board meeting.
  - Amber agrees that the Budget Committee will address this at their November 11, 2025 meeting.
  - Ellen asks if the Select Board is "going to move forward" with the fiscal year petition. Krista says they did not receive a request for a special meeting. Ellen says she doesn't know how to do that, and is requesting verbally. Krista states that she cannot instruct Ellen what to do, but that a Special Town Meeting was not requested, and even if one had been, there was no petition submitted that as written could be put before the voters. Ellen asks if she can get a lawyer. Krista states that she cannot encourage Ellen to bring legal action against the Town.
  - Ellen states that "80%" of Towns in Vermont are on a fiscal year. And that being on a calendar year allows the Select Board to "give away goodies" and claims that this causes tax bills to go up in March. She suggests that the Select Board is not putting the tax payer in their best interest. David assures Ellen that the Select Board is looking to do what is best for taxpayers.
  - Krista reminds the room that the only issue before the Select Board currently is whether or not the petitions are compliant. She understands that people are upset about spending. She reassures Ellen that she hears her, and that is why the Select Board is directing the Budget Committee to look into the fiscal year, even though the petition that they received was not compliant.
  - Denise states that articles for regular Town Meeting are due in January.
  - Dennis asks Denise why she isn't supporting the fiscal year. Board members state that they aren't not supporting the fiscal year proposal, they are directing the Budget Committee to look into it. The Select Board states they do not want to taint any research or recommendation from the Budget Committee prematurely.
  - Ellen states that VLCT is helpful. The Select Board clarifies whether Ellen reached out to VLCT on behalf of the Town. Ellen declines doing so.
  - Krista tells Ellen that the Select Board has implemented her feedback, such as having a "to do" list for members, and directing the Budget Committee to look into the fiscal year issue.
  - Ellen asks if anyone can go to Budget Committee meetings. The answer is yes, these are public meetings.

#### **Garage Project (1:20:12)**

- No update.

#### **Warrants & Mail (1:20:16)**

- Received something from Fish & Game re: posting property, but that is more for Amber.

- Received overweight permit. David makes a motion to sign. Krista seconds. Denise, David, Krista, Janet vote to approve. Motion passes.
- There is something from the International League of Cities. We are not a member now. David does not recommend that we join.
- Krista fills out Brattleboro Credit Corporation survey.

Krista makes a motion to adjourn. Denise seconds. Denise, David, Krista and Janet in favor. Motion passes.

Meeting adjourns at approximately 8:59pm.

Action items for next month:

Krista

- Reach out to Company re: getting name on town truck with number to be provided by Tom.
- Speak with Community Center Committee re: placement of emergency trailer.
- Confirm with VLCT that vote of December 8, 2025 for Town Plan is within the permissible time frames.

David

- Follow up with 911 re: Tenneybrook Rd.
- Follow up re: camera in front of office. Make recommendation at next meeting.
- Add policy review to November 2025 regular meeting agenda.

Sandi (from last meeting as not present, so therefore copied verbatim)

- Send a letter to Whitney Hill owners re: road concerns and process
- Post town office closure notice on Facebook page
- Attend property with road crew as witness for tree removal
- Check mail at town office and determine working key
- Contact interested parties of Taylor Hill/Butson Circle culvert agreement

Amber

- Have Budget Committee looking into: 1) how changing to a fiscal year would work; and 2) the pros and cons of changing the Town to a fiscal year. Report back findings to the Select Board at the November 2025 regular meeting.

Don (from last meeting as not present, so therefore copied verbatim);

- Obtain quotes for both standing seam and exposed fastener roofing options for town office
- Work with HB Energy Solutions to modify HVAC/plumbing plans within \$97,000 budget
- Number all new door keys for tracking purposes
- Meet with board members at community center to review bathroom location plans
- Check with HB re: a generator

