

Athens Selectboard Meeting Minutes
October 20, 2022
7:00pm at the Athens Town Office

In attendance: Sandi Capponcelli, Hannah Regier, Darlene Wyman, Janet Perry, Denise Randall, Harold Noyes, David Bemis, Amber Stevens, Wichie Artu, Carol Bingham, Donna Currier, Darlene Wyman, Carl Ball (SR), Matt Brennan (SR), Amy Howlett (SR), Casey Haynes (BDCC), Sherry Maher, Don Capponcelli, April Lyman

Called to order at 7:01

Adjustments to Agenda

None

Minutes of Prior Meeting

Sandi makes a motion to approve the minutes from the prior meeting. Denise seconds. Put to a vote: all in favor.

Public Comments

None

Saxtons River Trustees

David says the town received a bill from them requesting \$15,000 for 2023 fire service protection. The town had some concerns about how that was arrived at without discussion with the town. He asks the trustees to talk about it. Amy calls the meeting of the SR Village Trustees to order. She says the contract has been \$5000 since 1994. Last year they asked for \$7500 and the town of Athens said they had asked too late, which she agrees was true. They used the town of Rockingham's charges were to come up with their figure. They looked at the average number of calls and also the number of years that the town had been paying \$5000. Matt Brennan says they apologize for the lack of communication. He says they started looking at the number of calls to Athens — there are more rescue calls than fire calls. The number has increased tremendously over the years. They looked up the hourly rate for the truck and rescue personnel and added it up and came to the \$15,000. David asks what their figure was for a call and the SR board says they do not want to discuss dollar amounts in open session. Matt says two other factors: they need a new fire station and there is discussion happening about the village of Saxtons River needing to pay Rockingham for the use of the trucks that come to Athens. That could be a large sum that amount isn't included in the \$15,000.

David makes a motion to go into executive session at 7:09 to discuss a contract matter for which premature public knowledge would put the town at a substantial disadvantage. The Saxtons River trustees and the town clerk are invited to join. Denise seconds. Amy makes the same motion for the SR Trustees. Put to a vote: all in favor.

The boards leave executive session at 7:33.

No decisions were made in executive session. The trustees leave the meeting.

Boards and Officials

Don — Town office crawlspace work — Farnham insulators is backed up until January. Denise asks if spraying when it's cold out will be a problem. Don will ask. He will have 2" insulation around the perimeter. David thinks it's best to get it done as soon as Farnham is ready.

Wichie — Town meeting survey — 12% of voters responded. See attached report. David suggests setting up a volunteer service for giving rides to people who need them. Wichie says perhaps more people would come on Saturday, but not a whole lot more. David asks Wichie to write up a bit about this survey to put in the town report so it can be referred to when voters are picking the time for the 2024 meeting.

Sherry — The Meetinghouse open house will be Nov. 6th from 12:00 to 2:00. They will offer donuts and hot cider. People can see the renovation work that has been done. The facade project is almost done — just a few things left before the last check is sent to Stebbins. Sherry sent a grant to the Vermont Division of Historic Preservation for storm windows to protect the historic windows that were just repaired, and also do some moisture mitigation inside to protect the new windows as well. She wants to know where things stand with clearing the trees on the corner. Sandi says she sent a proposal to Kate Bailey three weeks ago and hasn't heard back yet.

Harold — school board — PTO had a successful food sale on Indigenous Peoples' Day Wkd. Halloween parade on Oct 30th, main street in Grafton. Thanksgiving feast is Nov 10th at 1:00 at the school. Circus Smircus will be in residence Nov 11 - 18th. Winter sports are happening: skiing, ice skating, etc. Chaperones are needed. People can call the school to volunteer.

Hannah asks if there has been any progress in finding grants for vaults. Sandi says they are thinking about it. Janet says Gary Fox is too busy to help us not. Wichie asks if the town could hire someone else to help with grant writing, perhaps even BDCC. Sandi says the town had worked with them once, but it didn't go anywhere.

Wichie — weather emergency committee — there have been discussions about all the possible emergencies that could happen and how overwhelming that might seem.

Meeting House Easement

Sherry has shared a copy of the final draft on Monday. The only question is if there are any encumbrances on the property. Assuming the draft is accurate, Sherry would like the selectboard to approve signing the final document when it is ready. David says since the issue with the Housing Rehabilitation fund has been settled, there shouldn't be any encumbrances.

David makes a motion that the selectboard signs the final draft when it becomes available and authorize David to be the agent who signs. Put to a vote: all in favor.

BDCC

Casey gives an overview of BDCC — it is one of 12 of Vermont’s regional development organizations. It only gets a small amount of funding from the state. SEVEDS is a partner organization strategizing about long term economic vitality for the region. They do workforce programs, high school programs, young professionals group, new Americans support, Covid relief TA. He thanks the town for funding them last year. There will be funding for weatherizing municipal buildings coming up, and BDCC will offer assistance for accessing that funding. Don says the town has three or more buildings that would need that. Casey says he will have Meg follow up. Janet wants to know if these are different programs than Efficiency Vermont. Casey doesn’t know but will follow up. Casey says they are working on getting a federally recognized economic development district set up in southern Vermont. He wants the town to sign a letter of support.

David makes a motion to sign the letter of support for BDCC. Denise seconds. Put to a vote: all in favor.

David wonders how Bennington and Windham county would really collaborate with the mountains separating them.

Casey says last year they petitioned and received funding last year, but the town doesn’t have a record of it. They would have to petition to get an article in the town report, and then would not have to petition again unless they want to raise the amount.

Roads

Sandi says the town garage is in need of a new door. Don says the “man door” is 19 years old. A new commercial grade door from WW would cost \$1423. Don says he can also check with Perkins Home Center. David asks if there’s any chance of a used commercial door. He suggests Surplus Property in Waterbury or the Salvage place in White River. Hannah suggests Deconstruction Works in Brattleboro — mostly residential stuff. David asks if the current door can be secured temporarily. Don says he can do something, including a latch guard. Don will also look at a used place in Springfield, MA. David says the board will leave it to Don’s discretion to find a door and the town will reimburse him.

Janet says the sand has started coming in.

David says there is a contract from Cargill salt in the mail. He suggests signing it even if the town goes with Apalachee. Apalachee doesn’t require a contract.

David makes a motion to sign the Cargill contract. Denise seconds. Put to a vote: all in favor.

Executive Session

David makes a motion to go into executive session to discuss a contract matter for which premature public knowledge would put the town at a substantial disadvantage. Denise seconds. All in favor.

The board leaves executive session at 8:57

No decisions were made in executive session. Sandi Capponcelli will speak with the potential contractees and the board will go from there.

Warrants and Mail

The board looked at mail and signed the warrant.

Further Business

David says a concerned towns person contacted him about a political sign that was stolen from their property and a vandalism when the sign was replaced. And another sign in town was thrown in the bushes. He says anyone who has signs vandalized should contact the state police and he hopes that everyone respects each others opinion and choices of candidates and issues.

Sandi makes a motion to adjourn. Denise seconds. All in favor.

Adjourned at 9:02

Respectfully submitted,
Hannah Regier, Town Clerk