

Athens Selectboard Meeting Minutes
March 16, 2023
7:00pm at the Athens Town Office

In attendance: Sandi Capponcelli, David Bemis, Hannah Regier, Janet Perry, Darlene Wyman, Denise Randall, Dennis Mirante, Amber Stevens, Don Capponcelli, Joshua Ferenc.

Note, Harold Noyes is not present at this meeting.

Called to order at 7:02

Adjustments to Agenda

Sandi makes a motion to add organization of the board and discuss a policy proposal. Denise seconds. Put to a vote: all four in favor.

Organization

Sandi makes a motion for David to be chair of the board. Put to a vote: David abstains, all three others in favor.

Janet nominates Sandi Capponcelli to be vice chair. Denise seconds. Put to a vote: Sandi abstains, all three others in favor.

Minutes of Prior Meeting

David makes a motion to accept the minutes of the prior meeting. Sandi seconds. Put to a vote: all four in favor.

Public Comments

Don Capponcelli: says no one should feel bad about the budget vote. He thinks the town is doing things better than it used to and might have to turn back the clock. He has thoughts to contribute to the budget discussion when it happens. David says the budget discussion will be mostly amongst the selectboard and the budget committee. Don would like to submit something in writing before the meeting to be considered.

Dennis suggests to look at the largest expenditure items to cut in the budget. David says they will look at everything.

Boards and Officials

Don C: The Meetinghouse has the go ahead from the Vermont Preservation Trust to seek bids on custom storm windows, leveling the floor, and moisture mitigation.

Don C: The moisture mitigation work in the Town Office has been completed now.

Don C: Had to reset the boiler in the Community Center. It has a problem with a zone valve that might need a service call.

David makes a motion that Don prices out getting the valve fixed. Denise seconds. Put to a vote: Sandi abstains, all three others in favor.

Hannah says that Krista Gay has asked for a recount of the selectboard election and that has been scheduled for March 23rd at 6:00pm.

Hannah says that she's been having an issue with the billing with All-Access Infotech. She had a meeting with them in November to discuss budgeting for 2023, in which they told her that the monthly charge of \$506 would remain the same for 2023. Apparently they hadn't been billing for cybersecurity services which we had been getting, so they started billing for those this month, which adds over \$2800 additional for the year. All-Access is not standing by what they said in November and is trying to turn the conversation into Hannah asking for free services, which is not really the point. David says that the town does need the cybersecurity services and that VLCT might not cover the town if we don't have it. Hannah agrees, that regardless of the insurance requirements, it is important to be protected from data breaches. She says unfortunately the town is stuck with it even though it is more than what was budgeted.

David makes a motion to keep the cybersecurity service provided by All-Access Infotech.

Discussion: Denise says we don't really have a choice. David says the choice would be to switch vendors, but that would be costly. Denise asks if Hannah is happy with All-Access's service. Hannah says she isn't thrilled that they are very poor communicators, but she thinks the service is solid. David says he deals with another company that is similar and they are not any more forthcoming or helpful, and they get paid a lot of money.

Denise seconds. Put to a vote: all four in favor.

Appointments / Annual Requirements

David makes a motion that the Brattleboro Reformer be the paper of record for the town. Denise seconds. Put to a vote: All four in favor.

David makes a motion to appoint Don Capponcelli, Robert Anderson and Adrian Tenney to be fence viewers. Denise seconds. Put to a vote: Sandi abstains, all three others in favor.

David makes the motion to appoint Hannah, himself, Denise, Janet, and Sandi to the Housing Rehabilitation Committee. Put to a vote: Janet seconds. All four in favor.

David nominates Ivor Stevens to the Planning Commission. Sandi seconds. Put to a vote: All four in favor.

David nominates Don Capponcelli to be Surveyor of Wood and Coal. Denise seconds. Put to a vote: Sandi abstains, all three others in favor.

David suggests postponing the appointment of Tree Warden until he hears back from the current warden to see if he wants to continue in the position. The others agree.

David nominates Lynn Morgan to be Town Service Officer. Sandi seconds. Put to a vote: All four in favor.

David nominates Andy Toepfer and Bob Anderson for WRC representatives. Denise seconds. Put to a vote: All four in favor.

Denise nominates David Bemis to be Emergency Management Director. Sandi seconds. David abstains, all three others in favor.

David nominates Carol Bingham and Mike Bates to the Budget Committee. Janet seconds. Put to a vote: All four in favor

Sandi nominates David Bemis to the SWWSWMD. Denise seconds. Put to a vote: David abstains, all three others in favor.

David nominates Denise to be the alternate to the SWWSMWD. Sandi seconds. Denise abstains, all three others in favor.

Budget / Special Town Meeting

The meeting that was cancelled due to the storm will be held next Thursday now. The special town meeting date will be set at that meeting.

Community Center / Town Office discussion

Denise thinks this could have been brought up at Town Meeting so the community could weigh in on the topic. Don says that the committee didn't feel they were ready for that and there would be too much confusion. Don says what he had asked the board for a month ago was just the charge to look into the possibility of the move.

Denise asks what would happen with the current town office if the office moved to the Community Center. Sandi suggests it could still be used for small committee meetings.

David thinks it would be a less expensive and better place to have a vault at the Community Center. Don agrees that the current town office is limited to its existing footprint. Sandi says the vault could go off of the west end of the building where the teachers' room is. The room could be used for research and work space. David says to look at all the options, including the basement. There are concerns about ADA accessibility for the basement. There is a question of if the records in the vault need to be accessible to the public. Hannah thinks as public records they need to be. Most people researching the land records will get their own books from the safes currently.

David says he's not ready to commit to the idea, but thinks it is reasonable for the committee to look into it.

Hannah says there are grants coming up quickly that will need to be acted on, so the plan should get solidified. Some of the grants are planning grants that could help figure out the idea.

David makes a motion for the selectboard to encourage the committee to pursue grants to make the community center both a town office and a community center. Denise seconds. Put to a vote: All four in favor.

Policy Discussion

Janet is interested in putting together a policy that would require committees that have all-virtual meetings that they be recorded for the public to watch. She doesn't think this is a state policy, but she thinks the town should require it for transparency reasons. The rest of the board thinks it is generally a good idea. There are questions around how exactly the recordings would be made available to the public. The town might need a hard drive to store video.

Roads

Denise wants to know how the transition from elected Road Commissioner to Selectboard as Road Commissioner happens. David says it has happened since Town Meeting.

David asks if the big truck is fixed. Janet says it is fixed – it had a broken wire.

Community Center Use

Josh Ferenc introduces himself as a middle school science teacher at BFMS. He has been part of a nature-based learning institute and has been doing nature-based learning in his classroom for nine years, but doesn't have good access to outdoor areas in town. He wants to use the land here in Athens, and using the Community Center as a hub. This is a 10-week pilot program and would have 2 days a week in Athens. The idea is to get kids to see the greater area and use the different ecosystems here in Athens. David asks about insurance. Josh thinks it would be treated as a field trip where the school has insurance for it. He would need a restroom for 30 individuals and shelter in case of rain. They would start indoors for 20 minutes and then go outside. David says that the board likes the idea but doesn't want to put the town at risk if the school doesn't cover the insurance. Denise asks when it would start. Josh says one day in April, and mostly May. He can plan to use the building for whatever the available days are. The program would happen during the school year and be held from 9- 2:00.

David makes a motion to allow the program and have Sandi be the point person and double check with the insurance. Denise seconds. Put to a vote: All four in favor.

Executive Session

David makes a motion to go into executive session at 7:49 to discuss a legal and personnel matter where premature public knowledge would put the town at significant disadvantage. Denise seconds. Put to a vote: all in favor.

David makes a motion to leave executive session at 8:07. Sandi seconds. Put to a vote: all in favor.

Warrants and Mail

Warrants were signed and the mail opened.

Denise brings up that there is ~\$8,000 for hauling stone. The total spent on stone so far this year has been \$24,635. David says they probably need to tell Matt to stop on the stone even though there will probably be another mud season.

There is some discussion on the Vtel bills and phone and internet to the different buildings. The selectboard wants the sheriff to do more enforcement.

David makes a motion to sign the non-employee work agreement with Ivor Stevens Ground Maintenance that is required for the VLCT payroll audit. Denise seconds. Put to a vote: all four in favor.

Hannah says she hasn't received a similar contract back from A. S. Clark yet. She says the town might get dinged on worker's comp if she doesn't have these contracts returned. It would be good to have a policy that says the town can't do business with 1099 vendors until all of the documents are in order each year. Hannah will try to draft a 1099 vendor policy for the next meeting.

David makes a motion to sign weight permits for Consolidated Communications, Ivor Stevens, and Bazin Brothers. Denise seconds. Put to a vote: All four in favor.

Janet asks if Hannah paid the bills for Apalachee Salt. Hannah has not received those bills. Janet says they emailed the bill to her. If Hannah gets the bill, she can pay it.

David makes a motion that Hannah be authorized to pay Apalachee Salt before the next meeting if she gets the invoices. Janet seconds. Put to a vote: All four in favor.

Further Business

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

Adjourned at 8:26

Respectfully submitted,
Hannah Regier, Town Clerk