

Athens Selectboard Meeting Minutes
April 18, 2024
7:00pm at the Athens Community Center

In attendance: David Bemis, Sandi Capponcelli, Janet Perry, Krista Gay, Denise Randall, Hannah Regier, Don Capponcelli, Sherry Maher, Tim Stevenson, Mike Bates, April Lyman, FACT TV (Cody),

Called to order at 7:04

Adjustments to Agenda

Janet asks for an executive session.

Minutes of Prior Meeting

Denise makes a motion to accept the minutes. Sandi seconds. Put to a vote: all in favor.

Public Comments

April asked when the truck is being lettered. David doesn't know but agrees it should be done soon.

Tim Stevenson says there is a meeting Monday at 6:00pm at the Community Center to discuss the local hazard mitigation plan. Matt says he has already been out with Mike McConnell and didn't think he needed to be in the meeting. Tim asks David if the selectboard and planning commission would be invited. The emergency committee will be there.

Boards and Officials

Don – The Cemetery Commission had their annual reorganization meeting. They discussed rolling over their 12-month CD. Rates are disappointing, so he is leaning towards a 6-month CD to see if rates are better in 6 months.

Krista asks for an update on the cemetery situation. Don doesn't have information yet on who did the damage to the stone wall in the Valley Cemetery or if they have insurance. The vehicle that damaged the wall left a drive shaft behind on the ground that was gone the next day.

Hannah says she filed a report with VLCT as a precursor for an insurance claim. David asks if the town wants to put up gates to protect the cemetery. The gates could be taken down for the summer. Gates would cost less than the \$1,000 deductible. Don says Nathaniel Noyes can give an estimate for the repair job. The board discusses different methods of keeping vehicles out of the cemetery. Any gates would not impact foot traffic into the cemetery. David says the cemetery commission doesn't have the funds to purchase gates, but the town could purchase them.

Janet makes a motion for the town to pay for some gates to close off the cemetery at certain time of the year and leave the timing of when they are open to the Cemetery Commission. Sandi seconds. Put to a vote: all in favor.

Mike Bates – He doesn't have the truck schedule yet, but he's working on it. Mike asked VLCT about the selectboard spending money out of the reserve funds and not budgeting for them or getting voter approval. He says the selectboard needs voter approval to spend tax-generated funds. He says an example is buying the grader recently. Paving is another expense he's concerned about. Mike says that the selectboard doesn't have permission to use money in funds without voter approval. He says those expenses need to be budgeted for in the March vote. Denise says that the voters approve of the money being put in the funds to be used for a specific purpose. She asks if it needs to be budgeted for again when it is used. Mike says it does. He says the board must also abide by that fund's policy. Mike says the selectboard spent over \$100,000 last year from reserve funds that wasn't in the budget. Mike says other towns' budgets show expenditures from all funds. He says in each fund there are reserved and unreserved funds — the unreserved funds can be spent and reserved funds are tax-generated revenue that wasn't spent in prior years.

David asks for the budget committee to work on it. Mike says the selectboard should get with VLCT and figure it out. David wants the budget committee to work on it. Hannah says that Amber is the chair of the budget committee. David says he'll talk to Amber.

Mike also wants to figure out the deficit spending from last year. He says some of it is coming back to the town, but there is \$47,000 that isn't and he wants to know what the town is going to do about it.

Sherry Maher asks about the practical logistics of how each fund is managed. The Meetinghouse asked for \$2,500 this year that went into the Meetinghouse fund. She wants to know if the committee needs to put the \$600 that goes towards lawn care in the budget. She wants to know if Hannah can pay those expenses and there doesn't need to be a town vote for a month's mowing. Mike says they shouldn't be spending more than they have in the fund. Sherry clarifies that each expense doesn't need to be in the budget. Mike says the money from taxpayers must be tracked. He says the committee should have a budget to justify how much money they are asking from taxpayers each year.

Sherry says that the Meetinghouse grant reimbursement should be in in about two weeks. The plant sale is coming up in May. There will be other events for the summer, like an ice cream social, concerts, and a quilt show (14th of September.) She asks about the corner being cleared out across from the meetinghouse. It's already been approved by the landowners and Sherry wonders if the town can proceed. Sandi will talk to Matt about it. Jay Maciejowski is willing to help identify trees to cut.

Tim says the committee moved the trailer into place for the storm that happened a month ago. He says he appreciates the 7 members of the committee and how they are responsive to what needs to be done. They got a heater set up for a family that was out of heat.

Sherry thanks Sandi for the town Facebook page – it was an important resource for the storm response. David points out that it is not an official town Facebook page.

Janet asks if the supplies in the trailer could be stored in the community center. Sandi says there is still a mold problem in the community center basement. Don says that other towns could benefit from the town's cots in emergencies that don't affect Athens as badly.

David says the small truck is at Claremont Ford to have warranty work done on the transmission. The town is well within the mileage limit of the warranty, but they say the hours are 400 over what the warranty covers. A new transmission is \$9,000. Repairing the transmission could be around \$3,500. David is checking if the transmission is one with an extended warranty because of issues with them. One way or the other, the town will have to do something about it.

The dealer took the transmission apart before telling the town that it wasn't under warranty. Sandi says that Matt had asked the dealer in advance if the transmission was under warranty and was told it was.

The truck would have to be towed to another shop if they find someone else to work on it. Denise asks what the issue was. David says it wasn't shifting correctly and there are some broken parts in the transmission. The exact date that it started having issues isn't known. Krista says there are things that can be done if the business promises one thing and then does something else that causes the customer harm. She thinks that it's a problem that they took it apart and it isn't even as drivable as it was when the town brought it in. She suggests at least talking with Ford about how they changed their story. She isn't suggesting litigation, but says they at least have to put it back together.

The board is leaning towards the \$3,500 repair rather than a new transmission. Hannah says the truck is already over budget for the whole year.

David makes a motion to spend \$3,500 on the transmission repair and he and Sandi will talk with Claremont Ford and possibly other repair shops. Krista seconds. Put to a vote: all in favor.

Treasurer Report

Hannah says the budget is tracking well for the first quarter. Most line items are around 25% of the annual cost. She points out where the ARPA funds were transferred into the general fund, and both funds are reflected in the balance sheet. She asks if the board wants to move that money again.

Janet makes a motion to transfer \$125,064.65 into the Building Renovation fund (former Town Office Renovation fund) to be earmarked for Town Garage use. Sandi seconds. Put to a vote: all in favor.

Another pane broke out of the upstairs window in the town office and there was broken glass in front of the door. Hannah asks if the window can be fixed. The board discusses options for fixing it. Mike Bates says he'll do something to fix it within a couple of weeks.

Hannah says final notices were sent to several delinquent taxpayers on April 1st. She says if she doesn't receive payments or communications from the taxpayers by May 1st she will start tax sale proceedings. David says that if tax sales do happen, the board can vote to authorize the town purchasing the properties if there are no bids.

Justice of the Peace nominations: Sherry Maher will be added to the list sent to the governor. David says the list is closed and Hannah can send it now.

Janet – Roads: Matt had a meeting with Meagan on the 8th. She has the annual financial plan to sign.

David makes a motion to sign the Annual Financial plan for town highways under Title 19 section 306(j). Sandi seconds. Put to a vote: all in favor.

Janet says that Meagan asks for a letter from the town requesting a grant for the emergency repairs for the undermining of Brookline Rd. in January. David reads the letter which states the damage done and the inability of the town to cover the costs.

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

Krista – Schoolboard: They are still down one member, which means Athens isn't fully represented and the district-wide committees are affected. The district is still bargaining a contract with the teachers. They reached an impasse and are in mediation.

David brings up the issues of holding meetings in the Community Center without all the functionality of the Town Office. He asks what people think of moving back to the Town Office for meetings unless there is a larger attendance expected. Hannah says it's hard for her to have to do the meetings at the Community Center.

Janet makes a motion to move back to the Town Office. Sandi seconds. Put to a vote: all in favor.

David says there should be an agenda posted for the Emergency Committee meeting Monday night. It doesn't need to be warned as a special selectboard meeting. David will email Hannah an agenda.

Solid Waste Bids

BMG Trash and Recycling LLC: \$48,000.00

Vermont Trash Removal LLC (Tilar Amidon): \$29,988.00

Decamp Waste Services: \$38,723.88

David asks if the board wants to speak with SWWSWMD about their recommendations regarding the three bids. Krista thinks their advice would be good. Mike Bates says the question to SWWSWMD should be more about a fair price for the town's needs. The district should have the data on Athens' tonnage because their operating budget comes from \$9/ton of waste per town.

Krista says it's important that the decision isn't made based solely on the recommendation of the district.

David makes a motion to review the three bids with the SWWSWMD and take up a decision at the May meeting. Denise seconds. Put to a vote: all in favor.

The board will call a special meeting when they have a decision.

Hannah asks if she should communicate anything to the companies. David says she can let them know the board is considering the offers.

Updates on Garage and Community Center

Hannah shares a print out with information on the Town Garage costs and funding. The information is compiled from meetings with Jon Saccoccio and Maggie Foley.

Cost estimate for the design Jon created is \$445,802, including various contingencies

Additional \$88,320 for design and engineering to get to implementation.

Total cost estimate of \$500,000 range.

Funding sources include the former ARPA funds of \$125,000, \$115,000 estimated from MERP, and \$30,000 in-ind for the town to do the site work.

Funding gap is around \$260,000.

Hannah says she put both buildings into applications for congressional earmarks. Last year, they heard back within a month that the town was selected. She says there aren't any other big ideas for funding.

There are three options for how to move forward:

1. Piece out the components with Don Capponcelli managing the project. Don says he'd want to have an interview in a public setting and share references. He says he agrees with the pros of the option, but doesn't agree with the cons. He has the background to do the work and is up for it, including design, engineering and permitting.
2. Work with a construction manager to refine the design and estimate. It would cost more for an additional phase of work but could make the overall project cost lower.
3. Bid out the project now with the schematic design. This would test the estimate, but if the town doesn't have the funds to move forward, there doesn't seem to be much point.

Hannah's suggestion is to wait a month and see if anything happens with the earmark applications. If work needs to be done on the garage roof, she doesn't think that will hurt the

town's eligibility for grants. However, if the town starts piecing out other components, the bigger grants to cover the whole project would be off the table, because you can't get grants for work that is already started.

Janet asks if Maggie Foley has gotten back with other ideas for grants for the garage yet. Hannah says that she hasn't, but she does expect to see that. Unfortunately, the state has pulled the plug on the MTAP program and it's ending at the end of April, which is much sooner than originally expected. Athens did really well with the funding and assistance we got. Maggie will wrap up her phase of work with a list of grant recommendations.

The Community Center scoping has begun. A public input forum is proposed for May 9th, to invite the community to share their ideas for the space. A few people can't make it to the meeting, but it's decided to keep the date. Hannah says there can be ongoing opportunities to comment and review the designs.

Hannah says the contract for Jon's work is the exact amount of the MTAP grant and he will be billing WRC directly for his work.

Hannah shares the Village Trust program that has just rolled out. It's grant program that is a collaboration of the Preservation Trust of Vermont, Council on Rural Development and Vermont Community Foundation. It could be a good match for the Community Center project. A nonprofit "Village Trust" would have to be formed to apply for funding.

David makes a motion that the board supports a group forming to be a Village Trust. Janet seconds. Put to a vote: all in favor.

David suggests that the information could be put on the town's website to get people interested in being part of the trust.

Warrants and Mail

The warrant was signed and mail opened.

David makes a motion to sign the JASW contract for the Community Center scoping. Janet seconds. Put to a vote: all in favor.

Janet makes a motion to sign the SFY24 TAP / Stormwater Mitigation grant. Denise seconds. Put to a vote: all in favor.

Sandi makes a motion to sign the long term disability insurance joinder. David seconds. Put to a vote: Four in favor. Janet abstains

Sandi makes a motion to sign the short term disability insurance joinder. Denise seconds. Put to a vote: four in favor, Janet abstains

David makes a motion to sign the group term Life insurance joinder. Sandi seconds. Put to a vote: four in favor, Janet abstains

David makes a motion to sign the contract with Dubois and King for the Ober Hill Bridge scoping. \$49,972. It is covered by a grant. Denise seconds. Put to a vote: all in favor

Sandi makes a motion to sign the letter of intent to participate in the SFY25 Grants in Aid program. Janet seconds. Put to a vote: all in favor.

Sandi makes a motion to sign the contract with Windham County Humane Society to be pound keeper for \$385/year. Janet seconds. Put to a vote: all in favor.

David makes a motion to approve weight permits for Cota and Cota, A.S. Clark and Structural Wood Corporation. Krista seconds. Put to a vote: all in favor

Janet makes a motion to accept the FEMA grant for repairing the Ober Hill Bridge. Krista seconds. Put to a vote: all in favor.

Executive Session

At 9:09 Janet makes a motion to go into executive session to evaluate an employee. Krista seconds. Put to a vote: All in favor.

At 9:27 David makes a motion to leave executive session. Sandi seconds. Put to a vote: All in favor.

No decisions were made in executive session.

David makes a motion that at the end of the six-month probationary period Duane Snide receive vacation time and that the town will follow Vermont statute on sick leave at a minimum. Sandi seconds. Put to a vote: All in favor.

Further Business

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

Adjourned at 9:30

Respectfully submitted,
Hannah Regier, Town Clerk