

Athens Selectboard Meeting Minutes
May 16, 2024
7:00pm at the Athens Town Office

In attendance: David Bemis, Sandi Capponcelli, Janet Perry, Krista Gay, Denise Randall, Hannah Regier, Don Capponcelli, Carmen Dresser, April Lyman, FACT TV (Cody)

Called to order at 7:03

Adjustments to Agenda

None

Minutes of Prior Meeting

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

Public Comments

Don thanks the road crew for picking up the playground demolition debris at the Community Center.

Treasurer Report

Hannah points out that the Building Renovation Fund has an equivalent amount to the ARPA funds in it earmarked for the town garage.

The transmission repair bill came in for the small truck which puts it at 200% of its annual budget.

Hannah is working with Beth Ann Agostini on two tax sales which are scheduled for July 11th at 10:00am. She will be checking with VLCT if the process will be affected at all by new legislation. She says that the delinquent tax policy will need to be revised again to follow the new statute.

David makes a motion to authorize a member of the selectboard to bid on the properties up for tax sale. Denise seconds.

Discussion: Denise asks if the property owners come forward and pay the taxes and fees, the tax sale is cancelled. Hannah affirms this and says the property can also be redeemed for a year after being sold at tax sale.

There were about 12 people at the Community Center renovation public input session the previous Thursday. Jon Saccoccio is taking all the suggestions and commentary into consideration as he designs two initial directions for the building. There will be an opportunity to share the designs with the board and the public before a direction is chosen and refined. There

are boards in the town office with drawings of the current building that anyone can add their ideas to using post-it notes.

The Community Center Advisory Committee is pursuing the Village Trust Program as a path to funding the community center part of the renovations. Hannah is also looking into the Catalyst grant program from the Northern Border Regional Commission which has a September deadline.

The Community Center fire alarm is broken. Doug from HB, along with the manufacturer, has determined that it suffered a power surge sometime in the winter that damaged the motherboard. The cost of the repair, including labor, is \$2580. The board thinks that a surge should be covered by the VLCT insurance. The board asks Hannah to submit a claim and also start the process of getting it repaired.

Hannah says she sent April and Sherry's names to the governor for the JP appointment. She assumes one of them will receive an appointment certificate in the mail. She doesn't know if the town will be notified.

Boards and Officials

Don says that the state police got back to him on the identity of the driver who damaged the cemetery wall. The individual has no insurance, is homeless, lives in his truck, and has addiction issues. Don has contacted Ivor and Nathaniel on price and availability to do the repairs. He is still waiting to hear from Ivor but Nathaniel says it would be mid to late July before he could do the work. The board previously voted to approve the commission putting gates across the entrance. The commission meets again on June 4th and will discuss it then.

Hannah reads the letter and emails from VLCT with reasons that they denied coverage for the cemetery wall. They don't cover land or "retaining walls." Hannah tried to reason with them based on Krista's point that the stone wall is a fence not a retaining wall, but Pam Blouin, the claims rep didn't agree. She said that if the town wanted the wall/fence covered they would need to contact the underwriting department and have it put on the schedule. David says the town could repeal it to someone else at VLCT but doubts it will get a different response. The board discusses further that the stone wall is a fence and has historic purpose as a fence to keep animals out of the cemetery. Hannah says she's surprised that VLCT doesn't have stone walls listed specifically since this is Vermont and every town has stone walls. Krista says she will contact the underwriter and try to get clarification on their policy and restate that the town would expect the wall to be covered as a substantial asset.

Don says that the cemetery commission's CD rolled over and earned \$601.31. Hannah has reinvested \$15,600 into a new CD at Savings Bank of Walpole with a 4% annual rate.

Denise says that Sandi had posted on Facebook that the road crew had gone to a four-day work week. She hadn't been aware of it beforehand and wonders if the board should vote on it. Sandi clarifies that the road crew is working 6:00 – 4:00 and taking Fridays off. If they don't have their 40 hours, they use their saved comp time. Sandi says she's checked with other towns and it's a common practice. The road crew has done it for years, but it hasn't been publicly acknowledged. She says she's trying to open up communication between the road crew, residents and the selectboard.

David makes a motion that the road crew can work a four-day work week from late spring to fall, being 10 hours days and/or using comp and vacation time to make a 40-hour week. Sandi seconds.

Discussion: The board discusses when the four-day week should start and end. They don't want to say exact dates because it's weather depending. Krista asks what the need is for a four-day work week. Sandi says it's a matter of daylight – the crew can put in a longer day in the summer. David says it's a benefit that some towns offer. Krista says there is a significant concern that they aren't working 40 hours. David and Sandi say if they don't, they make up for it with up comp time they have accrued or vacation time. Denise says that in the payroll warrant the timecards say 6:00 – 2:30 which isn't a longer day. Denise questions if the guys start at 6:00. David says he has seen them on the road at 6:15 - 6:30.

Put to a vote: David, Denise and Sandi in favor; Krista opposed; Janet abstains.

Roads

Sandi says the road crew is looking for mulch hay right now for the ditching on Walker Rd. They are digging back banks and seeding and mulching.

Matt contacted Bazin Brothers, VT Road Works, O'Brien Paving and Springfield Paving about doing the section on Brookline Rd. where the bank collapsed. O'Brien and Springfield didn't respond. Bazin came in with a bid of \$8,500 and VT Roadworks said between \$8,000 and \$8,200. The cost for guardrail in the same location is \$4,200.

Other sections quoted for guardrail are:

- May's house on route 35 to his stepson's (Gillespie's) house would cost \$2,000.
- Two 300' sections from Denise's to Ike Snide's house \$5,800 + \$5,300 = \$11,100. David is concerned about reduced visibility at this spot.

There's a potential situation at Farmer Ike's house where they moved some material, ditched a bit on the side of the blacktop, and worked in the right-of-way without asking for a permit. Sandi says she drove down and looked, and they worked in the right-of-way on both sides. She wonders if the ditching could possibly affect runoff, but it doesn't look dangerous. Sandi thinks Ike should be alerted about contacting the town when working in the town right-of-way and close to the pavement. Sandi will try to talk to Ike. April says it looks like all they did was clean the ditch out.

David makes a motion to adopt the Local Emergency Management Plan. Sandi seconds. Put to a vote: all in favor.

David asks Hannah to get the LEMP to WRC.

Janet wants to know what the town is going to do about declassifying Ober Hill Rd. She has heard it is getting quite dangerous and it would be warranted to get the liability off of the town. David says he thinks the town needs an attorney to assist with the process. Westminster and possibly Rockingham need to also be involved. Denise says that some GPS still send people over the road.

David makes a motion that Janet reach out to the town manager in Westminster and report back at the next selectboard meeting if they are willing to help with the process and research if Rockingham needs to be involved. Krista seconds. Put to a vote: all in favor.

Solid Waste Contract

David says he spoke with Tom from the solid waste district and discussed the bids with him. He was not aware of BMG Trash Removal. Tom had heard of Vermont Trash Removal LLC and doesn't have any issues with them, but thinks they are new and only have one truck or roll-off. He also knows Decamp and had no issue with them at all.

Review of bids:

BMG Trash and Recycling LLC: \$48,000.00

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

Decamp Waste Services: \$38,723.88

Krista thinks if Vermont Trash Removal LLC can handle the contract, they are \$9,000 lower. David says that Decamp contracted with the town when no one else would after Triple-T abandoned the town and no one else would pick us up. Decamp worked with the town through the budget cuts last year and is a known quantity. Krista suggests giving them a chance to match the low bid but doesn't think accepting a higher bid is justified. Janet says the annual increases from Decamp have been minimal since they started working for the town three years ago. Hannah says Decamp has been really reasonable.

Denise reviews the liability coverage amounts: \$2mil for Decamp, \$1mil for the others.

David makes a motion to accept the Decamp bid. Janet seconds. Put to a vote: Denise, Janet, Sandi and David in favor; Krista opposed.

Hannah will contact Decamp for the new contract.

Janet makes a motion for David to sign the Decamp contract when it's available to sign. Sandi seconds. Put to a vote: all in favor.

Janet updates on the Planning Commission. It is finalized and with WRC now for review. There is a meeting on July 2nd with WRC to review their input, maps and graphs. She says the language has been cleaned up so the plan is bare bones, more readable and the meaning clearer.

Warrants and Mail

The mail was opened, and warrants signed.

David makes a motion to sign the weight permit for Thaddeus Guild. Sandi seconds. Put to a vote: all in favor.

David makes a motion to sign the revised contract with Dubois and King for engineering work on the Ober Hill bridge. Krista seconds. Put to a vote: all in favor.

Further Business

Sandi says that someone on Valley Cemetery Rd. Has a concern about ATVs being driven on the road by kids, without helmets. David suggests the resident call the State Police or Sheriff. The town Constable does not have law enforcement authority.

Janet says she's had a complaint about a vicious dog on Cemetery Hill Rd. across from where Chris Coburn lived. David says that something that Caleb could be contacted about.

Janet asks for an updated phone list that includes the constable. Hannah says it's updated on the website.

*David makes a motion to adjourn. Denise seconds. All in favor.
Adjourned at 7:58*

Respectfully submitted,
Hannah Regier, Town Clerk