

Athens Selectboard Meeting Minutes
May 19, 2022
Athens Town Office

In attendance: Sandi Capponcelli, David Bemis, Janet Perry, Harold Noyes, Denise Randall, Hannah Regier, Darlene Wyman, Donald Capponcelli, Matt Perry, Fact TV, April Lyman, Donna Currier, Lynn Morgan, Ginger Maciejowski, Sherry Maher, Tim Stevenson, Andy Toepfer, Douglas Francis

Called to order at 7:06

David welcomes Sandi and Harold onto the selectboard.

Organization of selectboard

Denise nominates David Bemis to be chair. Sandi seconds. Put to a vote: all in favor.

David suggests there should be a vice chair to the board to cover if he isn't there.

Janet nominates Sandi to be vice chair. Denise seconds. Put to a vote: all in favor.

Adjustments to Agenda

None

Minutes of Prior Meeting

David makes a motion to approve. Denise seconds. Put to a vote: all in favor.

Public Comments

Darlene: suggests putting a large plastic container outside of the town office for UPS and FedEx deliveries to be placed in. David suggests a wooden one would look nicer. It is suggested that Don C. help with the project. Maybe some of the pressure treated wood from the school playground could be used.

Don Capponcelli: Made an appointment with Farnham insulators to look at the moisture mitigation project under the town office floor on June 2nd at 10:00am.

Boards and Officials

Janet says the board has to approve applying for the standard allowance for the ARPA grants. VLCT has recommended this.

Sandi makes a motion to approve the standard allowance for the ARPA funds. Harold seconded. Put to a vote: all in favor.

Sherry Maher: Would like the contract for the meetinghouse Facade Project to be signed at this meeting. The person who will be working on the windows is ready to start tomorrow morning at 7:30. The contract is a standard industry contract. Janet asks where the money will come from.

It is coming from the \$50,000 grant that was awarded and what is in the historic society account. Janet is concerned that the town is liable if the board signs the contract, so she wants the funds in a town account. The grant is a reimbursement grant, so the money has to be spent in order to get the money back. They may be able to submit for reimbursement throughout the project. David asks if there is paperwork from the Historic society saying it will cover the cost. No, but Sherry says she can provide that tomorrow, and transfer the funds to the town's meetinghouse account on Monday. There is some discussion about whether or not the building or the floor has settled several inches — the walls are not tied to the floor and that is a different project and not connected to the Facade Project window work. Harold suggests the board authorize David to sign the contract once the funds have been transferred. David and Sandi would like to have the contract reviewed by an attorney before signing. Janet asks if another member of the meetinghouse committee should work with Sherry in representing the town in making decisions on construction questions.

David makes a motion to approve that he is allowed to sign the contract before the next selectboard meeting, after it is reviewed and approved by the Town Agent or counsel, and the funds have been transferred from the historical society to the town's bank account / meetinghouse fund. Denise seconded. Put to a vote: all in favor.

It is up to the contractor as to whether he wants to begin work without a signed contract. Sherry: They have to put up a sign that is to the standards of the National Park Service that will be up for the duration of the project. She wants to make a banner. She asks if it can be put on the bulletin board. David says it's fine to put it on the bulletin board. The bulletin board is getting wobbly and might need some more gravel around the posts.

They want to get rid of some old construction materials that have been stored in the small closet under the stairs in the meetinghouse. They would like to use a town dumpster next time one is ordered.

The Meetinghouse committee is talking about the idea of a vapor barrier under the meetinghouse. The ground under the building is still very wet despite the drainage work that's been done. First they have to address the settling floor. Don has suggested putting in more pillars under the floor once the window project is finished, and then put in a vapor barrier. Don says he wants to talk to Jonathon Jessup for an expert opinion about the function of the existing pier construction and what the best repair plan is. Jon Jessup has confirmed that jacking up the floor will not affect the window project. The floor is floating and not tied to the walls.

The landowners on the corner of Meetinghouse Road still haven't heard from Matt. Matt says he has tried to connect with them twice but no car was in the driveway so he assumed no one was home. Matt should be available to do the work. The town doesn't have a chipper. Burning the brush would be Matt's preferred method, but it depends on how the landowner wants it done. He confirms that there is a 3 rod right of way on the road. Matt will try to get in touch with the landowners and plan the work.

Meetinghouse plant sale is next Saturday from 10-12. Plant donations are welcome and appreciated. Bring them between 8:30 and 9:30 and make sure they are labeled.

Tim Stevenson, Emergency Committee: Meeting next Monday to get volunteer questionnaire together to mail to town. David suggests an email or survey app instead of a mailing that costs \$200+ of postage. The town has some resident emails and the Athenian has a pretty big list. Tim will bring it up at their meeting. The committee is hoping to get a heat emergency mitigation plan together. Tim has spoken with Alyssa Sabetto at WRC about what facilities in the region might be available. She suggested the Rockingham library and Grafton Town Hall might be options. Tim will look into both those options. David suggests the Grafton Elementary school could be an option for a shelter. Lynn will check if the school has AC. Doug Francis says the Grafton Elem. school doesn't have AC. The cots that the committee has are moldy and need washing. They will do that on some Saturday. The tabletop exercise was useful and clarified things that needed a physical scenario to understand.

David says Alyssa Sabetto from WRC suggested Athens collaborate with Brookline on a combined hazard mitigation plan. The state is ok with the towns collaborating. It shouldn't affect funding amounts that come to each town.

Denise makes the motion to explore that option of joining with Brookline for the hazard mitigation plan. Sandi seconds. Put to a vote: all in favor.

Lynn Morgan, Emergency Committee Pet Shelter: Would like to get permission to use the Athens elementary school building as a pet shelter in the case of a weather emergency where people are put up at the Athens church. According to law the town has to provide something like that. The Windham Humane Society doesn't have space. Hotels would be an other option, but likely not affordable for many people. The idea is to put dogs, in crates, in the basement, on plastic. Cats and small animals would be upstairs in carriers, on plastic. Cats and dogs would have to be kept separate. David brings up the problem of animals being on the carpet upstairs. Owners would have to provide the crates and carriers. Owners would be responsible for caring for the animals and a staff member would be present at all times and can take care of the animal if the owner is unable. David suggests using the entranceway hallway upstairs where there are currently coat hangers as the upstairs location for pets, instead of the main room. Sandi agrees that would be a better location. David brings up the fact that there is no generator at the school building so if the power is out, there wouldn't be heat or lights. Sandi says it's on the list for the CCAC to get a grant for a generator, no timeline on that. VLCT says the building's insurance would cover the pet shelter use.

David makes a motion that the Emergency Committee can form a pet shelter in the Elementary School Building, using the basement and upstairs hallway can be used as a pet shelter. Denise seconds. Janet asks if having the town office up there would affect anything. David says that can be worked out when we get to it. Put to a vote: all in favor.

Lynn, Schoolboard: Photocopier contracts are coming to an end throughout the SU. They are looking for one contract for all the schools in order to save money. Wonderful news about the

finance office: the state agrees that e-finance was a disaster and given permission to sign up for any system that works better for the SU. The business manager is doing research into possible systems. ESSER committee has been working hard. They are coming to the end of spending ESSER 1 money and have ESSER 2 underway. ESSER 3 priorities have been collected and they trying to have a community meeting to go over the list of and get feedback from community members to whittle down the dream list.

Upcoming meeting and vote for the school district is on Tuesday the 24th at 7:00pm. People are encouraged to attend and vote. Don says article 6 seeks approval to go to a six person board with equal representation from both towns. Article 7 might be hard for people to understand: it would allow those members to be voted from the floor at the meeting on the 24th. Still looking for candidates for schoolboard. Harold brings up that Tanya Noyes is the high school representative now. Last day of school is June 20th. 6th grade graduation is June 13th.

David says he got an email request from the resident at 416 Route 35 who wants their address changed to 1 Herring Hill. Darlene, as the 911 coordinator, will be working on that.

There is extra money from the state for hazard mitigation projects that has to be applied for rapidly. Deadline is June 30th. Alyssa Sabetto can also help with this. There will be some amount of town match to the grants.

David makes a motion that Sandi and Janet work with Matt on the hazard mitigation funding and notify the rest of the board if there are projects to apply for and that the grant application work can be done before the next selectboard meeting. If need be, a special selectboard meeting can be called to discuss any issues. Harold seconds. Put to a vote: all in favor.

Hannah: Campbell fund has disbursed some funds to an applicant. The trustees of the fund wrote a warrant and Hannah wrote the check to reimburse the committee member. David thinks that the selectboard still needs to approve the funds as a pro forma act even though the trustees make the grant decision as they see fit. Checks can be written when the Campbell Fund trustees present a warrant, and then the selectboard will also sign the warrant at their next meeting.

David asks to moving executive session to the end if no one objects. No objections.

Roads

Roads made it out of mud season. Underdrain project is starting. We got a \$20,000 grant from Better Back Roads for ledge removal and stone lining ditches on hedgehog gulf. 80/20 match with the town's 20% being in-kind. Also received a \$200,000 grant for structures to replace the culvert at Steve Oakes' beaver pond. The board needs to sign a few documents for Matt to return to the state so those projects can get started.

David makes a motion to sign the Certificate of Compliance for Road and Town Bridge Standards and Network Inventory, and the Annual Financial Plan for Town Highways as of Title 19 306J. Sandi seconds. Put to a vote: all in favor.

Matt talked to Windham Regional about the grant for the bridge behind the Town Office, and they said it's looking pretty good. They will notify in August.

Matt has a meeting on Monday with Wade Masur from VLCT insurance to look at improvements to shop to make sure they are in compliance. They have done a lot of cleaning.

Matt says the town needs a permit for driveway accesses or anything in the town right of way. State law says towns need to have a permit and we need to start working on that. Matt states that driveway culverts need to be 18" (not 15" as he had previously stated). David says it will need an ordinance. Janet has a model ordinance from VLCT to work from. There also needs to be clarification on who is responsible for driveways that don't have culverts but should. *Janet will find out what is required for calling a hearing and passing an ordinance. They will plan for a half hour before the July selectboard meeting.*

Matt's house phone number is for emergency only. He asks that for regular stuff people please call the town garage between 6:00 and 2:00.

Warrants and Mail

David makes a motion to allow Hannah to replace the printer in the office. Sandi seconds. Put to a vote: all in favor.

David makes a motion to sign a letter requesting athensvt.gov as the town's domain. Denise seconded. Put to a vote: all in favor.

David makes a motion to sign the weight permit for Consolidated Communications. Denise seconded. Put to a vote: all in favor.

Executive Session

David makes a motion to go into executive session at 8:15 to discuss a legal matter where premature public knowledge would place the town at a significant disadvantage. Sandi seconds.

Executive session ends at 8:27. No decisions were made in executive session.

Bull Creek Common Lands

David leaves to recuse himself from this topic for which has a conflict of interest. He turns the meeting over to Sandi.

Andy Toepfer, on behalf of Bull Creek Common Lands, requests that the Athens selectboard sign a letter of support for a project on Brookline Rd. Andy points out that David is leaving because he is the owner of the land that the organization is wanting to buy. It is a 36 acre parcel. Bull Creek Common Lands is a new 501(c)(3) nonprofit that has been organized to own land, conserve land and provide community access. This project is for a Community Forest

that would be owned by Bull Creek Common Lands, not by the town, keeping the land on the tax roll. Bull Creek Common Lands is applying for a grant from the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board to acquire and conserve the property. The land would have a permanent easement restricting development. Existing informal trails would be expanded and open for community use, and an existing pull off could be used for parking 2-3 cars. VHCB has an interest in funding projects that towns are in favor of, so the organization is asking for a letter of support from the selectboard. Need the letter of support before the next Athens selectboard meeting — it is the last missing piece of the grant application. Harold asks if the land would be posted for hunting. Andy says the community could have input on it at a forum. He says there are different opinion between people who don't want it posted and people who are concerned about safety. There isn't a decision on it yet. The easement could allow for hunting. Harold asks if that decision would come before the selectboard, and Andy says, no that it will not be a town owned property and Bull Creek Common Lands will ultimately make the decisions on how the land is used. The selectboard can have input along with the rest of the community.

Sandi makes a motion that the selectboard signs the letter for Bull Creek Common Lands, in favor of them purchasing the property. Denise seconds. Put to a vote: all in favor.

Further Business

No further business.

Harold makes a motion to close. Janet seconds. Adjourned at 8:37

Respectfully submitted,
Hannah Regier, Town Clerk