

Athens Selectboard Meeting Minutes
August 18, 2022
7:00pm at the Athens Town Office

In attendance: Fact TV, Sandi Capponcelli, Hannah Regier, Darlene Wyman, Donald Capponcelli, Janet Perry, Denise Randall, David Bemis, Tim Stevenson, Krista Gay, April Lyman

Called to order at 7:02

Adjustments to Agenda

David adds Boards and Officials after public comments.

Minutes of Prior Meeting

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

Public Comments

Hannah mentions that the logging operation at the top of Sam Farr Rd. has been quiet for a year and has left the town's gate broken and a pile of log debris blocking the legal trail. She asks for someone on the selectboard to ask the loggers to putting the area back to how it was before they began the logging. David says he will try to talk to the Lakes about repairing the gate and making the trail accessible again.

April asks when Mill Hill will be repaired. David says he spoke to Tom and went down to look at the road and agrees it does need to be repaired. David relays that Matt said once there is chloride, he will grade the road and fix where the road is washed out. April says she thinks some dirt needs to be dumped on the road because there has been an accident already. David says the town can put some gravel on it, but they want to wait until there is chloride so the repairs don't cause a lot of dust. April thinks it shouldn't wait.

Boards and Officials

Hannah brings up document storage. She has a quote from the Royal Group for having the safes looked at. It is quite expensive: from \$1500 - \$3000 depending on what needs to be done with the locked ones. Hannah had sent photos of the safe to Joel at the Royal Group, so he knows what they are. Joel brought up that if he had to drill out the safes and there is stuff in them, then the town would need secure storage for those documents as well. Hannah found some inventory sheets from 1992 that indicate there are documents and artifacts in the safes. Some of the documents that are listed as being in the big safe have been taken out and put in file cabinets to make room for land records books in the big safe. So the town is already out of document storage and desperately needs a better storage solution than the moldy environment of the back room at the town office. Hannah reads out some of the items on the inventory list. She asks if the town can fast track the process to getting a vault up at the community center building, perhaps using ARPA money. David suggest the selectboard look for grants for a vault.

Janet says she and Sandi have seen a grant for “major improvements” for municipal and community buildings that might be a match for this. She says it’s a matter of getting estimates for how much it will cost. Don says the estimates from several years ago were for a vault at the town office, but there are not as many constraints at the community center. Don suggests visiting Grafton’s vault to see what works and what doesn’t. David says to check out other towns as well, like Brookline’s which is newer.

David makes a motion that Janet and Sandi look into grants for building a vault. And the town will not open the safes until the town has storage to secure the items that are in them. ARPA money could perhaps be used for matching amounts. The construction should look to accommodate 50-100 years in the future of document storage as well. Denise seconds. Put to a vote: all in favor.

There will need to be mold remediation and preservation of documents at the time of moving them.

Janet asks if this means that the town office is definitely moving up to the elementary school. David says it isn’t a foregone conclusion, but it makes much more sense to build a vault up there. Denise says there isn’t room for a sizable vault at the town office. Janet agrees it makes more sense to have the vault and office at the old school. Sandi says there is more free space at the community center bldg.

David suggests looking into precast vault products. Don thinks that precasts won’t meet the state standards for fire rating — a 6 hour fire rating requires a 10” poured concrete walls. Don presumes that if we’d be using grant money, we’d want to meet that state standards. David agrees, and still urges that precasts be explored. Sandi suggests talking to the state archivist.

Hannah points out that the state new highway map has a couple roads listed as “Not up to Standards.” Those roads are Ober Hill and Earnst Rd. David says that Earnst Rd. reclassification documentation had been sent to the state, and Ober Hill was never downgraded from a Class 3. He says the town should probably do something to downgrade that road.

Tim / Emergency Committee: David says that the person they need to talk to at the state about FEMA approval for Athens and Brookline to work together on the hazard mitigation plan, is on maternity leave and should be back in September. WRC was recommended by the state to not play much of a role in the town’s communication because they will probably be a bidder on the RFP for the plan. David suggests Athens and Brookline move forward in talking to each other about working together while they are waiting for the individual at the state to get back from maternity leave.

David makes a motion that Tim Stevenson reach out to Brookline and be Athens’ contact person with them, and to form an understanding with Brookline on if and how to work together. Denise seconds.

Discussion: Tim thinks he should contact the chair of the Brookline selectboard. David says he will get that contact for Tim. Denise asks if there is a deadline for having the mitigation plan. David says there isn't and the FEMA funding didn't come through until a few months ago. Tim asks if anyone has suggested the partnership to Brookline. David thinks that WRC reached out to them. The last email David got from the state indicated that Brookline was on board with the idea.

Put to a vote: all in favor.

Don / CCAC: They have received the \$1200 PACIF grant for the emergency lighting. Don suggests everyone try to refer to the building as the Community Center now instead of "the old school." The un-tag sale is coming up on August 27th (10:00 - 2:00) and Don wants to cut down the playground which has gotten dangerous. He'd like to offer some of the usable parts and hardware at the un-tag sale. He had heard that there was the prospect of some HUD backed grant money available through the state. He has gotten a quote from HB for a four heat pump system — that is around \$28,000. He is getting a quote for a 20-25kw backup generator. Sandi says it's a larger generator because of the possibility of having a kitchen at the building, and Don says it's also because of appliance startup surges. It has been suggested that it would be less expensive to get LED replacement bulbs and converters for the existing fixtures instead of pulling out all the lighting and putting in new fixtures. Denise asks what the cost difference would be. Sandi and Don say it's ~120 bulbs per floor. HB didn't see a problem with the age of the fixtures. David asks if there is Efficiency Vermont grant money for replacing the lights like the town did at the town garage. Sandi says there is a grant but not sure how much it would be. David suggests if grants were combined, could the 40 year old fixtures be replaced? Denise asks if there's a deadline for the HUD grant. Janet says there is a deadline in September for asking for help for preparing the grant, and later in the year is the final deadline. David says to get the grant application with the September deadline in and then they can make decisions on how to do the lights.

Sandi will be accepting donations for the un-tag sale from 12:00 - 3:00 this Saturday.

Krista Gay / school board: There will be 38 total kids anticipated in school this fall with only 3 in kindergarten. The majority are from Athens. Part of the low enrollment is due to homes selling to corporations and investors to be rented as Airbnbs, so there isn't an influx of new families to the community. The school has been on a hiring spree — 6th grade teacher, kindergarten, grade 3/4, librarian and a gym teacher. They have had a community restorative justice circle that went over well. They will be having a community feedback and listening session on September 1st for anyone to weigh in on school related stuff.

Denise asks about tuitioning kindergarteners to Saxtons River instead of hiring a teacher. Krista says that has been discussed but Rockingham isn't accepting students and Westminster requires an application process and the board has to approve each student. The district does anticipate a higher kindergarten enrollment next year. The school district is in really good financial shape.

Executive Session

David makes a motion to go into executive session to discuss a matter for which premature public knowledge would place the town at a substantial disadvantage. Denise seconds. Put to a vote: all in favor.

David makes a motion to come out of executive session. Sandi seconds. Put to a vote: all in favor.

No motions were made in executive session and no motions are necessary at this point for the issue discussed.

Warrants and Mail

Mail was opened and warrants signed.

David signed the lease agreement for the new backhoe.

David signed the grant agreement with the state for stone lining on hedgehog gulf. The grant is for \$12,500.

David asks about the BDCC bill for municipal support that was sent to the town. Hannah says she did reply that they would need a petition to have an article in the town report. David says the \$1326 is not budgeted and the town isn't inclined to pay them now because although they do good work for other towns in Windham County, they don't do as much for Athens. Also the population quoted in the bill isn't accurate.

When BART inspected the tanks, they recommended the gauges be replaced at the town garage diesel and oil tank, and the heating oil tank needs replacing next year. The tank is older and doesn't have legs. David asks for Matt to get the quote for the diesel tank gauge. Denise asks if Russel Brown could replace the gauge or the tank.

Roads

New backhoe has arrived. Chloride is not available. Both trucks need repairs: Small truck needs both universal joints and big truck has an emissions control light on. David asks if the small truck repairs are under warranty. Janet and Sandi don't think so. David says to make sure the repairs aren't covered by the 36k mileage warranty. Sandi will ask Matt about this. Matt ordered sand but Bazin Bros is short on drivers so we haven't gotten it yet.

Further Business

*David makes a motion to adjourn. Sandi seconds. All in favor.
Adjourned at 8:32*

Respectfully submitted,
Hannah Regier, Town Clerk