

Athens Select Board Regular Meeting Minutes
Thursday, September 18, 2025
7:00pm at the Athens Town Office

Present: Sandi Capponcelli (Board Member), Denise Randall (Board Member), David Bemis (Board Member), Krista Gay (Board Member), Janet Perry (Board Member), Scott Strasser, Don Capponcelli, April Lyman, Ellen Mirante, Dennis Mirante, Sabrina Gibbs, Bruce Tenney, Jr., Christian Rogerson (arrived late)

Meeting called to order at 7:02pm. FACT TV was not present. Krista Gay took minutes and a recording of the meeting was made.

Adjustments to the Agenda:

- Krista states she has received an update re: placing cameras in the town office and whether Australian ballots are needed for the Town Plan vote. David states these will be discussed under officials.

Minutes from the Prior Meeting/Future Meetings/Executive Session:

- Krista states that there are minutes from the August 8, 2025 meeting, but she understands that there are no minutes from the regular August 2025 regular select board meeting.
- David makes a motion to approve the minutes from the August 8, 2025 meeting. Sandi seconds. All in favor. The motion passes.
- It is announced that Krista will be taking the minutes at this meeting.
- Scott Strasser (Town Clerk and treasurer) announces that he is resigning. (2:56)
- Krista makes the motion to go into executive session under 1 VT Stats § 313(a)(3) to discuss the appointment or employment or evaluation of a public officer or employee. David seconds. All in favor.
 - The Select Board enters executive session at approx. 7:06pm. The Board invites Scott to stay, everyone else leaves.
 - The Board exits executive session at approx. 7:18pm.
 - No decisions were made in executive session.
- Krista makes a motion to accept Scott's resignation with regret. Sandi seconds. All in favor. (4:33)

Public Comments

- Ellen Mirante: Asks questions to Janet re: a standing seam roof or metal roof. Ellen asks the Board to keep her informed.
- Dennis Mirante: Asks if the road crew is on summer hours. David says yes. Dennis asks how it "worked out" David responds "it worked out fine." Dennis thinks it would be a good idea to have the Road Foreman come to meetings to give an update on what they are working on. Sandi says she normally gives a road update. Dennis asks if there has been signage on the town trucks. Janet responds "not yet." David explains the difficulty the Board has in reaching the signage company. Dennis states that he feels like things get brought up in town and swept under the rug. Dennis states that the town should reduce diesel consumption. David says one of the ways the town is trying to reduce oil consumption is with a new heating system at the garage.

- Don Capponcelli: Says that he appreciates the effort that Scott put in as Town Clerk/Treasurer and he's sad to see Scott go.

Private Road/Driveway 911 Address (10:10)

- Bruce Tenney, Jr. explains that 911 is seeking to change the address on his property and rental property driveways. He states that he does not believe that the numbers need to be changed. He has had his address for 40 years and does not want to change his address.
- David explains that it had been conveyed to him by 911 that they were wanting to make addresses along town roads from 1-1000, while addresses in Athens are 1-100. David says Athens will not change from 1-1000.
- Bruce states that he does not think that his rental properties are on a road that needs a driveway, he states they are on his private driveway.
- Bruce claims that "you guys" had changed the other road to "Tenney Estates." Bruce "ripped that one up and threw it away" and his father took it over.
- 911 is now trying to name the driveway to Bruce Jr.'s rental properties.
- Bruce provides examples of when emergency services successfully navigated to his house and surrounding properties without any problems on current address system.
- Bruce has put in new trailers next to his house.
- David says that he does not think that Bruce's address needs to be changed.
- Bruce says that Tyler Hermanson at 911 said that the Select Board decides on the address change.
- David says he hopes we can keep Bruce's house from being renumbered, but the 4 new rental properties will be renumbered.
- New road with the rental properties will be Tenneybrook Road. New ones will be Tenneybrook Extension.
- David states that he cannot guarantee that 911 will listen to us, but we will try.
- David makes a motion to work with 911 to establish a name for the road as Tenneybrook Road and the road with the new rental properties will be Tenneybrook extension. (29:56)
 - Sandi seconds.
 - All in favor.
 - Motion passes.

Boards & Officials (30:55)

- Cemetery Commission (Don): Cemetery Commission did not meet in September. Next regular meeting is first Wednesday in December unless a special meeting is called.
- School Board (Krista): Nothing to report.
- Meetinghouse Committee (Krista): The quilt show last week was successful. One more meeting in September.
- Community Center (Krista): Chili cook-off will be this Saturday. Halloween Party will be the Saturday before Halloween.
 - Ellen asks how much it is to rent the community Center. It's \$50, and \$25 will be returned if you leave it in good shape.
 - April says she never got her money back from when she rented it.
 - Sandi notes this.

- Janet gives a reminder that the Select Board is having a meeting on Monday (9/22/2025) and Mike McConnel could not come. But another representative will be there.
- Town Plan Vote (Australian ballot update): Krista reached out to VLCT and was informed that there is a Vermont law that requires votes on town plans, when put to the voters, to be by Australian ballot.
- Budget Committee (Janet): Will be meeting second Tuesday of October.
- Cameras in the town office (Krista): Krista reached out to VLCT re: having cameras in the town office. Was told that while there is generally no reasonable expectation of privacy in a public place, this did raise a number of concerns and we should consult with the town attorney. There are questions about how long we have to keep recordings for.
 - Krista says that some statute of limitations in Vermont are 6 years, so she would think videos would need to be kept for that long. Discussion that that would be difficult and expensive.
 - Locks have not yet been changed.
 - No action to be taken re: cameras at this time.
 - David will get a quote on something like a Ring to put outside.
- Plowing Whitney Road above the Picz's house (Sandi): Sandi reached out to Megan Brock at AOT. Megan cited statute 19, subsection 302, which is the minimum standards for a class 3 highway or highway negotiable under normal conditions all seasons of the year. The Board has the authority to determine whether a section of highway should be plowed in the winter. However, the property owner aggrieved by the decision of the select board may appeal the transportation board.
- Discussion re: whether the homeowner uses the property in the winter. He previously sent a letter at the last meeting stating he would go up. Denise states she is concerned re: whether a fire truck could get to the house if it was not plowed. Sandi says that there is consideration that the road is not fit to plow and the truck cannot turn around.
 - Krista says that Carmen sent her a message after the last select board meeting. Krista stated that she did not attest to the truthfulness of Carmen's statement, but Carmen conveyed that Green Mountain Power has trucks that are bigger than the town's trucks go up to that house and turn around. David says this may be true but there is no snow banks this time of year and nothing is slippery. Krista states that it makes her nervous that the Board has been notified that someone will be in that house in the winter and they may be a need for an ambulance and she is not sure how it would work on something falling back on the Board.
 - Janet says that if the road has not been plowed before the year 2000, then the town does not need to plow it if it's unsafe. She claims that it has never been lowed.
 - Sandi says if they really want it plowed, then they can do what Megan said and go to the transportation board.
 - David tells Sandi to follow up and communicate the Board's reservations re: not having an easy way to turn around and to have a dialogue with them. If they wish for it to be plowed, they have a hearing to determine whether it should be plowed or not. If the board votes no, they can go to the transportation board. But first we need to have a hearing.
 - Janet says that Matt showed her the road once a couple of years ago and she was petrified. Denise says that Krista and her were up there a few months ago.

- David said that it's not a terrible road and not in terrible shape but that he could see where it would be difficult to maintain in the winter to standard. We need to communicate with the homeowners re: our concerns.
- Ellen states a garbage truck goes up there.
- Sandi says that she will get a letter out to the homeowners.

Town Project Update (51:52)

- HB will be putting in lights outside of the community center. Work expected to begin October 1, 2025.
- Town garage construction project showing significant budget performance with multiple line items under projected costs
 - Foundation work completed \$4,000 under budget, framing labor \$3,000 under budget, windows \$900 under budget, roof work \$30,000+ under budget (59:21)
 - David makes a motion that the insulation be changed from the Rockwool insulation to the spray insulation for \$3,200 to provide enhanced R36 wall insulation with Builders Installed Products. (01:01:26).
 - Denise seconds. In favor: Denise, David, Krista, Janet. Sandi abstains.
 - HVAC/plumbing design complications requiring \$224,000 vs \$97,000 budgeted, necessitating scope reduction negotiations with HB Energy Solutions (01:06:40)
 - David makes a motion to employ HV plumbing for HVAC plumbing work to be done at the town garage, in addition, that the original plan to be scaled back to within budgetary guidelines of \$97,000 and that Don work with HB to come up with the plan. Denise seconds.
 - Janet asks if they will be able to put in heat this year. Don says we may have to go with temporary heat this year. Janet states she is more worried about the backup boiler than she is heat pumps.
 - In favor: Denise, David, Krista, Janet. Sandi abstains. Motion passes.
- Don will show selectboard members the proposed plans for the community center after the meeting on 9/22
- Janet asks if Don has looked into getting a standby generator yet for the town garage. Don says no. Janet says they should have had one by now. David asks if they have a portable generator. Janet says that it doesn't always work. Sandi says they should have something that is reliable. Don says he'll ask HB.
- Discussion re: the paint color of the garage. Will be red with complimentary color for the addition.

Executive Session Re: Official Appointment (01:16:37)

- David makes motion to go into executive session for the appointment or employment or evaluation of a public officer or employee. Sandi seconds. All in favor.
 - Executive session entered at approximately 8:31pm
 - Out of executive session at approximately 8:78pm
- No decisions were made in executive session.

- David makes a motion that Krista contact attorney Sarah Buxton re: the opening of the town clerk and treasurer positions, and David will contact NIMRIC re: assistance in the financial area. There will also be a special meeting on September 22, following the hearing. Krista seconds. All in favor. The motion passes.
- Don notes concerns to ensure that vendors and contractors are properly paid.
- Krista asks that Sandi post on the Facebook page, that is not an official town site, that the town office is going to be closed. And that anyone interested in the position contact a select board member.

Other Business

- **Hedges/Tree (1:28:53)**
 - Janet says that the road crew: “went out to the hedges, replaced culvert, did the hedges” and that Matt is requesting a select board member or two go out with them again because there is a tree that needs to be cut and Matt would like someone there. Sandi says that she can go as a witness. David asks that Sandi also ask the Tree Warden, Jay Maciejowski, to go with them.
 - Sandi and Denise say that Jay and Mark Pickering “recommended it.”
- **Mill Hill Stonewall**
 - Janet states that there has been a “stone wall that was put up on Mill Hill in the Town’s right of way.” It was recently put up “where the work was done there last year.”
 - Krista asks if Janet is saying that Tom Taylor put up a stone wall on his property in the town’s right of way.
 - David says that Tom added on to the one that was already on his property. Janet says that it’s in the town right of way and needs to be addressed. David says “What if we can get him to put an application in and it’d be signed on.” Janet states that it is in the town right of way. Krista states “Janet you only get mad about the town right of way when it’s people that you don’t like.” David tells Krista not to “go there.” Janet again states that it’s in the town right of way. Janet states a few years ago, the town had to pay Ivor Stevens because a grader supposedly hit the stonewall that was in between the trees, and now the stonewall extends past the trees. David says that he thinks with the town policy Tom can fill out a permit, and they get it, it is fine. Janet says “no” and “if it’s in the town right of way it’s a liability for the town.” Janet says if a plow or grader hits the stone wall, the town will be responsible for it. Denise says that’s the purpose of “this document saying that the town is not responsible because it’s in the town’s right of way and it’s the homeowner’s responsibility.” David agrees that that is his understanding. David says part of Tom’s house is in the town right of way if it’s a three-rod road. Sandi says it is. Janet says “it would be nice to go by the policies that we put in place.” Ellen asks if Tom is grandfathered in because nothing has happened in 50 years. Sandi states this is a new section of wall. David said Tom was not the road foreman when the house went up.
- **Butson Circle**

- Janet asks if there has been any movement re: signing of the culvert agreement for Butson Circle.
 - Sandi says that she has the agreement that Janet wrote and that it has not been signed yet.
 - Krista states “I feel like we’re going to talk about stuff like this, it should be warned, so if people have an interest, they can come and talk about it.”
 - David said that is true if we’re going to make any decisions on it, but Janet was just asking if anything had been done.
 - David states that “it was agreed upon back when we did it.” Krista says to put it in an email and to send it to folks so that there is a copy of who it was sent to and when. Sandi says she does not have the emails for everyone and that she only has a copy of what Janet had written out that was what was agreed upon.
- **Vacation time**
 - Janet says last year the Select Board changed the vacation time eligibility period from one year to six months, but it was never changed in the personnel policy. David says this change is still in effect, and that it should be worked into the policy, we can make an addendum. Janet asks if the Board changed the amount employees could get after six months. David does not recall, we will have to look back at minutes. Krista says we need to pay someone and go through and review the handbook because there have been changes to a number of things. Requests that David add that as an agenda item to the next meeting.
 - **Town clerk vacancy**
 - Discussion re: how to post the town clerk vacancy.
 - Sandi will get website info from Scott and provide to Krista so that minutes can be posted.
 - Discussion re: how to upload recording of the minutes and how to post them on the website. Krista will check with Hannah to see how she used to do it when she was town clerk.
 - **Mail**
 - No mail requiring response.

End of Meeting

- David makes motion to adjourn. Denise seconds. All in favor. Motion passes. Meeting ends at approximately 9:18pm.

Action items

Krista

- Contact Sarah Buxton regarding town clerk/treasurer position opening (01:19:01)
- Obtain website login information from Scott and share with Chris for minutes posting (01:26:30)
- Complete minutes for current meeting and BOA meeting using recordings (01:43)

Sandi

- Send a letter to Whitney Hill owners re: road concerns and process (45:16); (01:43:26)
- Post town office closure notice on Facebook page (01:26:30)
- Attend property with road crew as witness for tree removal (01:29:50)
- Check mail at town office and determine working key (01:45:14)
- Contact interested parties of Taylor Hill/Butson Circle culvert agreement (1:37:27)

Don

- Obtain quotes for both standing seam and exposed fastener roofing options for town office (54:13)
- Work with HB Energy Solutions to modify HVAC/plumbing plans within \$97,000 budget (01:06:40)
- Number all new door keys for tracking purposes (49:02)
- Meet with board members at community center to review bathroom location plans (01:10:32)
- Check with HB re: a generator (01:13:59)

David

- Follow up with 911 re: Tenneybrook Road (21:28)
- Follow up re: a camera outside the front door like a ring (51:08)
- Contact NIMRC for financial assistance during transition (01:19:01)
- Add personnel policy handbook review to next regular meeting agenda (01:38:46)

Janet

- Check with Mike or Chris regarding town plan approval process steps (01:35:13)

Respectfully submitted,

Krista Gay