

Town "Hearing" on Town Plan
September 22, 2025, 7PM
Athens Community Center

Present: Sandi Capponcelli (Select Board Member), David Bemis (Select Board Member), Krista Gay (Select Board Member), Janet Perry (Select Board Member), Denise Randall (Select Board Member) Don Capponcelli, Ellen Mirante, Dennis Mirante, Andrew Toepfer, John Oberling, Chris Company (Windham Regional Commission)

David explains that the meeting was not warned correctly, so this will not be an official hearing. We will have another hearing. People are welcome to talk and give feedback.

Andy and John state that they think it is a good plan. (1:13). John thinks that it is well thought out and well developed and represents the views that the townspeople communicated to them. Don says it's a simple and concise plan that distinguishes itself from zoning. David states that a town plan has nothing to do with zoning. Don says that the town missed out on a grant because we didn't have a town plan a few years ago.

Chris (3:47) states that a town plan is not a zoning document and a town plan does not give license as a town to do zoning, that would require adoption of zoning bylaws. The really important reason to have a town plan is because of Act 250. Having a town plan would give the town standing in an Act 250 hearing. A town plan gives the town a formal voice in an Act 250 proceeding. Otherwise, the town is commenting as any other member of the public would. He also explains that there are grants, mainly through the Agency of Commerce and Community Development, that require a town to have a town plan in place to receive funding.

Denise states her understanding is that a town plan is needed to obtain flood insurance. Chris explains that FEMA requires a town to have a town plan in place or a local hazard mitigation plan in order to participate in the flood insurance program.

David explains that Athens had previously voted that a town plan must be adopted by the voters. This has to be done by Australian ballot.

Dennis states that he is concerned by the lack of attendance at the meeting, and that word has not gotten out on how important it is for the town (7:19). He asks if the Select Board has endorsed it. Krista says that there is a letter that was previously put into the previous meeting that we would support a town plan. Krista also suggests that Dennis can reach out the Athenian.

There is mote discussion re: that the town plan is not zoning, and concerns that townspeople think that the town plan is zoning and vote against it thinking that it is zoning.

Krista thanks the town planning committee for their work (10:13). She states that she would like to be able to purchase flood insurance.

Chris states he will confirm with Melissa at WRC re: status of hazard mitigation plan and flood hazard bylaws.

David asks about funding cuts (12:38). Chris discusses status of various funds at state and federal level.

Dennis asks if implementing zoning would require a separate process than the town plan (15:18). Board says yes. Andy said you'd also need a planning commission that wants to write zoning laws, and Athens does not have a planning commission that wants to do that.

Discussion of when to set date for hearing. Special hearing will be set for October 14, 2025.

Meeting ends at approximately 7:37pm.