

# The Athenian

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Sponsored by Grafton Cares

JUNE 2021

## Here Comes Summer!

Despite the changeable weather from warm to cold and back to warm, we know that the beautiful summer weather is coming. And, things are gradually opening up again with picnics, swimming, hikes without gloves and jackets. I feel strongly that I have put my snow shovel away for the last time...really!

In this issue you will find some great summer events from the annual Grafton/Athens picnic on July 31st along with a heads up for a concert at the Meetinghouse. Mark your calendars!

Last summer we did not take our usual summer break in July and August because so much was unfolding so rapidly with the pandemic and we felt a need to do our part to keep our community informed about a very volatile situation. This summer it feels like we can take a break, so you can look for the next Athenian in September. But no worries as that will not stop us from sending out important updates between now and September.

- Dennis Hunt



The Family of Eleanor Bemis gathered on a chilly May day for the dedication of a new Dogwood planted at the Meetinghouse in her honor.

### Select Board Meeting Tidbits

In addition to news in other pieces below, here are a few things from the May Select Board meeting that might be of interest:

- There was a conversation regarding plastic bags for recycling. David Bemis clarified that any bag readily available at stores can be used
- There was a discussion on concerns about emerald ash borer and any plans to address dying ash trees along the roadways. David said he has not received any reports that it has been found in the area. Bob Andersen, Tree Warden has been looking into it and communicating with the road crew.
- Witchie Artu shared information about possible funding from the State for housing and suggested tapping into it for the community. He indicated that it would be from the American Rescue Plan Act, and

added that he would be willing to help out anyone interested in this grant.

- David noted that a person who helps with grants will be meeting with the Budget Committee at their next meeting.

- Amber Stevens noted that the Budget Committee notes indicated that the 6-wheeler is up for replacement in 2023. David indicated that since the Town put money into it for repairs last year, and purchased an extended warranty the hope is to get 1 or 2 years beyond that schedule.

- Amber noted that the listers had a grievance hearing scheduled for May 26th, Anyone with a grievance needs to put it in writing and contact Amber for an appointment.

- Plow damages to Osgood's mailbox, as well as extensive damage to a stone wall and garden on Mill Hill were discussed.

- Sandi Capponcelli has been looking into possible grants for the bathroom and weatherization at the Town Garage.

- Matt Perry gave an update on road work and equipment and culvert orders. There was some discussion about work being done at the entrance to the Town Garage which has brought about the need to move mailboxes that are located near the driveway to the garage. As there have been mailboxes there for over 40 years, there was a lengthy discussion as to why the sudden concern, and who determines where they should be placed. Matt stated that he has some paperwork that indicated this, and residents asked for a copy. The Board voted to send letters to the residents impacted by this, noting that it will be further discussed at the June meeting.
- A motion was made for an executive session on a personnel matter at 7:35. At 7:50 the Board came

out of executive session reporting that no decisions or motions were made.

- Matt asked about purchasing more gravel and was told to contact David if needed and he will contact Board members to decide if it is needed. Matt will get a price on gravel and get bids for sand for the July meeting.
- Under further business, there was more discussion on the issue of relocating the mailboxes. April Lyman asked who had been contacted at the Chester Post Office, and repeated the request for a copy of the paperwork referred to. - *Sherry Maher*

### **Notes from the School Board**

On May 19 Jack Bryer did a wonderful job presenting the case before the SBE to continue the Windham Northeast Union Elementary School District (WNUESD) as a two town union school district composed of Athens and Grafton following the withdrawal of Westminster from the union district. The State Board voted in favor of preserving Jack's proposal. A big thanks goes out to Jack for all his hard work throughout the whole withdrawal process.

For the school year of 2021-2022 the school board has hired Angela Cartier as the new GES Principle and Laurel Vogel has been hired as the new 3rd-4th grade teacher. We will be looking for a new 1st-2nd grade teacher as Kellie Hallock is moving to a new position. We will miss Kellie for she has been a fabulous teacher and is well liked by the students and staff. We wish her the best of luck in her new position.

The 6th grade graduation will be held outside at the GES school on June 8 at 6:00. However, due to COVID there will be a limited number of people that can attend. Reservations with the school are required.

- *Lynn Morgan*

### **Status of the Athens Grafton Elementary School**

On May 19, the Vermont State Board of Education allowed Grafton and Athens to remain as a school district without being merged with anyone else and without being shifted to some other supervisory union.

While there are people in both communities that would prefer to resume our status as a joint agreement between two independent districts, it was clear from the beginning that we would have great difficulty getting approval of that arrangement, and frankly the changes in school financing have made it difficult to succeed fiscally, at least for now. I hope most of you are happy with this arrangement. So far very few districts have managed to overturn forced consolidation even partially.

Here is what needs to happen next.

Westminster will be electing an interim board early this fall. Their duties will be limited to such things as

buying back their buildings - Westminster Central and West West, taking back full responsibility for their debts and working out a proposed separate school budget for approval. Together with the present board, they will work out their budget for next March, (or their next budget approval cycle) and they will take over officially on July 1, 2022.

Athens and Grafton members will also need to approve their separate budget in March, but they have more to do.

We will have to determine what our district governance will look like. Will we elect members at large or will we elect members from each town? How many members should we have? Four? Five? Six?

Do we want to try to place votes before some kind of joint district meeting (maybe via Zoom or TV as part of both town's Town Meeting Day) or do we want to have everything be part of an Australian ballot vote? And-- what do we want to call this newly re-shaped district? Surely not the WNUESD!

There is a lot to figure out.

Please let me and colleagues Jessa Westclark, Lynn Morgan, and Ginger Maciejowski know your thoughts on these issues. I will try to schedule some time with the Athens and Grafton select boards later this summer to discuss these things in more detail. You can always send me a note at [jack.bryar@wnesu.com](mailto:jack.bryar@wnesu.com) or call me at 843-2735. Much thanks,  
- *Jack Bryar*

### **Meetinghouse Happenings!**

We are pleased to report a great success for our 4th Annual Plant Sale fundraiser at the Meetinghouse

despite the cold wet morning on Saturday, May 29th. Gardeners are intrepid and we are grateful! We are also grateful to our resident garden experts, Treah Pichette and Sandi Capponcelli.

Additionally, a note of thanks to the Grafton Village Nursery, Allen Brothers, Harlow Farm Stand and Walker Farm for donating great raffle prizes making four gardeners very happy!

On May 4th, four members of our Meetinghouse Committee paid a visit to the Brookline Brick Meetinghouse. It was both fun and inspiring to share our varied stories - successes and the many challenges associated with protecting these beautiful old buildings and the history that goes with them. We look forward





to seeking future ways that we can support each other and collaborate on our missions to preserve these historic gems. We'll be having them here for a visit sometime

later this month.

We have an ongoing fundraising effort continuing through mid August when we will draw winners for a cord+ of cut and split hard maple firewood, as well as a great stash of rough cut hemlock lumber (20 - 2x4x8, and another 20 - 2x6x8). With lumber prices climbing and climbing this is a great prize to get in on for your future projects! And as the saying goes in a Vermont winter, you can always use more firewood.

Mark your calendars for a fun concert at the Meetinghouse on Sunday, August 8th at 6 PM. We'll be combining it with an Ice Cream Social, so come early, eat some ice cream and enjoy music by the Bard Owl duo at 6 PM. T. Breeze Verdant and Annie Landenberger are known for their sweet harmonies and driving rhythms on tunes old, new and originals. It's sure to be a fun summer evening.



And the following weekend, come visit us on the Newfane Common where we'll be participating in the Biennial Windham County Historic Society Fair, Saturday, August 14th. It's a great fun-filled day whether you are a history buff or not! It will also be your last chance to get in on the firewood and lumber raffles!

Amid all this, we are still working through the process of getting paperwork in order, and scope of work approved by Preservation Trust Vermont so we can proceed with seeking bids on the exterior work we have been planning for. It may not be done by the end of this season, but after all, the building has been there for going on 204 years so in the scheme of things, what's another year? Anyone interested in getting involved with the upcoming events, planting some perennials at the Meetinghouse, or the exterior project, please do get in touch.

- Sherry Maher

### Grafton Cares Update

As with the hope that comes in spring, Grafton Cares has taken heart in being able to have its first in-person

meeting in many months. It was a good thing that we were all masked as the masks muted our expressions of astonishment at the announcement that both President Dennis Hunt and Treasurer Cathy Hallock would be giving up their positions while continuing to serve on the board. Both Dennis and Cathy have served so long and well that we felt it would go on forever, and it was with gratitude and relief that we learned that their experience and wise counsel would continue to be part of our operation for some time to come. It was also announced that Joan Lake would be retiring from the board, and while this is a loss to the board itself, surely we will continue to benefit from Joan's most welcome presence as does almost every aspect of Grafton life.

Our activities over the past months continued as usual in May, as we delivered Meals on Wheels to twelve customers, sent out two welcome bags, five sunshine baskets, and \$170 in gas cards for medical appointments. The knitters sent out two lap robes. A commode and hospital bed were returned to us and we loaned out one wheelchair.

In conclusion, it appears that our annual "food sale fundraiser" at the Vermont Welcome Center will not take place since the Center does not yet have a plan on when to reopen.

We thank all of you for the kind support you have shown us over the past year and wish everyone a super-healthy summer season.

- Bill Toomey

### The Grafton/Athens Annual Community Picnic

Save the date for the Community Picnic: Yes, we are planning ahead to Saturday, July 31<sup>st</sup> for a fun day at the Grafton Trails Outdoor Center (Grafton Ponds). There will be music, food, and pony rides. Come for the day, come for an hour and bring you lounge chairs, picnic blankets, kids and Frisbees. Enjoy great music by Club Soda from noon until 3 pm (pony rides start at 11 am). Walter's famous grilled chicken will be ready at 3 (only one meal served this year). MKT will cater all the salads and extras (no need for potluck this year). Beer and wine will be available through MKT as always. Nelson will have his "Outrageous Raffle" again (donations accepted).

-Community Picnic Committee

### Food News You Can Use

Below is a list of local sites where food assistance is available at no or little cost to you. Please get the word out to your friends and neighbors about these programs as we go through these uncertain times.

**Grafton Community Church Food Pantry.** The Grafton Community Church is sponsoring free food for pickup at the Church during the week. Staples such as pasta, tomato sauce, jam, oatmeal, and sometimes even frozen meat are available. Call Mary Feder at the church

at 843-2346 or email her at [graftonchurch@gmail.com](mailto:graftonchurch@gmail.com) and leave your name and phone number to arrange a pickup time. Food can be brought to your car and “social distancing” will be maintained along with wearing a mask. Delivery can also be arranged.

**Veggie van Go Leland & Gray Lower Parking Lot**  
Free food is available each month at the high school. The dates this summer are June 24, July 22, and August 26 from 12-1. Just drive to the lower parking lot, stay in your car, and a box will be brought out and put into your trunk. The purpose of the program is to help people obtain fresh fruits and vegetables to sustain a healthy lifestyle. All are welcome and no proof of eligibility is required. This is hosted by Grace Cottage Hospital and sponsored by the Vermont Food Bank.

**Townshend Community Food Shelf.**  
The long-time food shelf is open and providing food to those who need it. They have limited fruit, vegetables, milk, frozen meat, and fresh bread. They also have canned food, pasta, rice, and shelf stable proteins.

They are located in the Townshend Church and are open every Monday from 6pm to 7pm. Line up with your car and you will be given a number and let into the pantry as a group and out a separate exit. Be sure to wear your mask. If you have questions please call 365-4348. Their mailing address is P.O. Box 542, Townshend, VT 05353.

**Meals on Wheels.** Senior Solutions in Springfield, VT sponsors a Meals on Wheels program for seniors and those with disabilities. Grafton Cares provides pickup and delivery three times a week, Monday, Wednesday, Friday. The meals are prepared in the kitchen of Valley Cares Assisted Living in Townshend. Sign up is straight forward. Call Senior Solutions Senior Help Line at 1-800-642-5119 for all the particulars and enjoy having meals delivered to your door in Athens and Grafton.

**Everyone Eats—Newfane.** This program benefits our communities in several ways. It financially supports area restaurants and their employees, as well as area farmers and other food producers. And we get to eat nutritious meals!

What: Free meals

When: Every Wednesday and Thursday 4:00 to 5:30.

Where: In front of the Newfane Congregational Church.

Who: Anyone who has been negatively impacted by COVID.

How: First Come. First Served. Sign up not necessary unless you want delivery. Delivery is available for the homebound and folks unable to make the drop off time. Sign up is required for delivery (kept confidential).

If you have questions or need to call for delivery, contact Jeryl at 802-348-7173. If leaving a message leave your

name and phone number.

**Multiple Your EBT Benefits at a local Farmers Market** – Do you have 3SquaresVT/SNAP benefits? When you use 3SquaresVT/ SNAP or P/EBT benefits at a local farmers market, you'll get up to \$10 match in Crop Cash. That means \$10 in EBT buys \$20 of local food! The Townshend Farmers Market is open on Fridays, Brattleboro Area Farmers Market is open on Saturdays, and the Putney Farmers Market on Sundays. Visit DigInVT to find information about other area farmers markets: <https://diginvt.com/places/search>.

*-Dennis Hunt*

## Green Up 2021

Green Up has once again restored greener roadsides to our town. A huge thanks goes out to all the diligent volunteers. This year's report is as follows: # of Volunteers - 50; # of hours spent - 29.5; # bags of trash filled - 55.5; # of bags of recyclables filled - 24; approximate weight of all bags filled - 691 pounds; # of tires found - 17; # of large items found - 15; miles of road covered - 13.6. For the first time as the coordinator, we had a hazard waste item reported. A needle was found on route 35 between the junction with Brookline Road and the Meeting House. A thank you goes out to Austin for his good marking of the object and the quick reporting of it, and to David Bemis for the quick removal of it. The most unusual item reported this year was a homemade bong. Green Up does not only need to happen at the beginning of May. I encourage all Athenians to continue to pick up trash from along your road frontages throughout the year. – Lynn Morgan

## June Library Corner Smiles and Gratitude

We are very grateful to Bill Toomey for the moving and memorable storytelling session, Stories of a Soldier in May. A very special evening indeed. This was Bill's third storytelling session on Zoom for the library and all have been extremely well-received, wonderful events. What a gift to us!

A big thank you goes out to Mary Feder who wrote a lovely letter to Ken Burns inquiring about donations of his PBS mini-series on DVD for the library. Mr. Burns kindly donated the series Baseball, and it is now in our collection.

We are feeling quite spruced up at the library, as Brendan Buehler earned community service hours for graduation doing building projects, with Ray Lisai providing supplies, equipment and instruction for Brendan. Thank you again, Ray and Brendan.



Thank you to the Women's Community Club (WCC) for their donation of funds for memorial books for Sandy Armstrong (The Mindful Maker: 35 Creative Projects to Focus the Mind and Soothe the Soul by Clare Young), Anne Brown (Modern Comfort Food by Ina Garten), and Laura Knowlton (When Harry Met Minnie: A True Story of Love and Friendship by Martha Teichner). Memorial books are selected to reflect the interests of WCC members who have passed—a lovely way to remember and honor the individuals.

### Library Programming

We have a lot of new faces in Grafton and the surrounding area! Please join us in late June for a Zoom program to meet our new neighbors, make introductions and foster community connections. Contact the library for details.

Families—look for me weekly at the Grafton Elementary School for the Summer Reading Program with the summer school kids, starting in July.

### Library Changes During Vermont Forward Plan

At press date for the Grafton News, the May library board meeting had not yet occurred, so there are no changes to report in this issue. Please check our website or ask to be notified of any operational changes via our email list. We plan to have a full update in the July Grafton News regarding the library's Vermont Forward status.

### June Library Programs

Spanish Conversation on Zoom, Tuesdays 11am, intermediate level

“Howdy Neighbor” Program on Zoom, Wednesday, June 23rd, 7-8pm

### Library Hours of Operation

Monday 10-1, 2-4, Thursday 2-5, Friday 2-5 and Saturday 9-12. No appointment necessary.

Open for Curbside Service Only: Tuesday 10-1, 2-5 and Wednesday 10-1, 2-5 - *Michelle Dufort*

### Farm Stand Opening

Wild Shepherd Farm on Rt. 35 north heading into Cambridgeport is now open out front for plant sales. Stop by to find those plants you need to fill out your vegetable and herb gardens this season. You'll find a great selection of hardy healthy plants just waiting for a home in your garden. And watch soon for the full opening of the farm stand inside the barn. Rumor has it you'll find some great additions from other area farms as well. - *Sherry Maher*

### Notes From A Weather Journal

We gardeners dream of beautiful summer weather, especially after last year's drought. Here are two summaries in the “Additional Observations” section at the end of August.

**August 2006.** “Summer continues to be wet (I have not watered the garden once!). A very hot and humid period followed by some great summer weather. But the rain keeps coming.”

**August 2010.** “A hot, dry summer with occasional rain. Garden ahead by 2 weeks. Watering all the time. Beautiful weather.”

### Thoughts To Ponder

Summer has arrived! It is what we dream about in mud season and when we discover again that our cars are not brown. Here are some idyllic quotes.

- (1) “A perfect summer day is when the sun is shining, the breeze is blowing, the birds are singing, and the lawnmower is broken.” -*James Dent*
- (2) “Summer: Hair gets lighter. Skin gets darker. Water gets warmer. Drinks gets colder. Music gets louder. Nights gets longer. Life gets better.” -*Unknown*
- (3) “Sun is shining. The weather is sweet. Make you wanna move your dancing feet.” -*Bob Marley*

### COMMUNITY INFORMATION

**Select Board Meetings:** 3rd Thursday 7:00 PM

**Budget Committee:** 2nd & 4th Tuesday 7:00 PM

**Meeting House Committee:** 2nd Monday 10:00 AM

**School Board:** 2nd Thursday 6:30 Grafton School

Do you have a news item for The Athenian or a favorite family story to share? Or would you like to be on our email list and get the newsletter in your inbox?

**CONTACT US** at [theathenianvt@gmail.com](mailto:theathenianvt@gmail.com).



### **TRASH & RECYCLING DATES:**

**TRASH PICK UP – JUNE 14 & 28**

**RECYCLE – JUNE 7 & 21**



*Wet but happy gardeners gather up their plants at the 4th Annual Plant Sale.*

**Photo Credits** – Brookline Gathering - Lee Anne Parker; Concert - Bard Owl, Radishes – Treah Pichette, Dedication & Plant Sale images– Sherry Maher