

The Athenian

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Waiting and Hoping

Waiting. We know it is not over, and we have been waiting since March. And now, some of our biggest challenges await us this holiday season. Can we find ways to celebrate and stay safe?

Hoping. Now that there are vaccines being produced, we can envision a kind of normalcy somewhere on the horizon. We hope for the safety of our health care workers on the front lines.

Now we must do our job of following the guidelines to avoid social gatherings, stay 6 feet apart, and wearing our masks. - *Dennis Hunt*

Select Board Meeting Tidbits

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

- David reminded all that Public Comments is not a time for questions and answers, but a time to bring things to the Board's attention.
- Questions were asked about the status of the truck that was out for repairs, if the cost was under or over the approved bid, and if it was determined whether or not Old County Rd. is private or a town road.
- A lengthy discussion addressed the likely vote for a "divorce" from our forced merger. See more on that below.
- A request was made by the WNESU to rent the school building for special education needs. The Board agreed to proceed with that.
- Fire extinguishers in the school building need to be serviced, and repairs made to the boiler room door.
- The Town will apply for a grant to work with WRC for completing/updating the Emergency Mitigation Plan.
- Work on the dump truck came in at \$17,400. Matt is negotiating with the shop manager as the work was only approved for \$15,000.



- The chipper is still not working, and Matt is looking to purchase a leaf blower for required maintenance of the stone lined culverts. Some road grading will be done soon and Matt reports that they are ready for winter.

- The Board was asked if the Taylor Hill Road matter was still open for discussion. David indicated that

their letter was final. Dan Taylor noted that when the Board was asked at their last monthly meeting, David indicated that no information was available on the matter. However, the letter sent to the residents of Taylor Hill was signed on the date of that October meeting. David noted that their deliberations were to be public and that the time period of the deliberation was from the end of the hearing until the letter was signed. Dan noted that nothing was said following the executive session in October about a decision or signing the letter. - *Sherry Maher*

Historic Photos on the Town Website

If you want to see what the town, and possibly your own house, looked like in the early 1900s, there is now a collection of historic photos on the town website (athensvt.com). These are photos that have been in the town office for years, from various different sources. Sandi Capponcelli organized them into a binder and Hannah Regier scanned them and uploaded to the website for the public to enjoy. If you have any old photos of Athens that you would be willing to add to the town's digital collections, you can bring them to the town office and Hannah will scan them and return the originals to you. Just be sure to include a note with your contact info and any information you have as to the content of the photos.

- *Hannah Regier*

NOTES FROM THE SCHOOL BOARD

As of November 12th all the K through 6th graders were going four days a week in both the Grafton Elementary and the Westminster Central schools. There are currently no COVID-19 cases being dealt with in either school. Due to lack of space, the Middle School is not yet at four days a week of in-school education. The 5th and 6th grades are going four days a week, but 7th and 8th are not. There is work being done to find appropriate spaces to house additional classes so that the 7th and 8th grades can open up for four days of in-school education.

The SU nurses have recommended that all schools in the district go to remote learning for the week following Thanksgiving vacation and the week following Winter Break vacation. This would give time for any potential COVID-19 cases to surface before students return to school. There was a lengthy discussion about this recommendation with logical reasons for and against the recommendation.

However, in the end the board voted 3 to 2 in favor of the nurses' recommendations. Westminster is moving forward on its plan to withdraw from the WNUESD. The petition has been completed and submitted to the select board. The Westminster select board has a lawyer working on the wording of the motion to be voted on by the towns people. In the meantime, the finance office at the SU is working on gathering together the financial data that will be useful for all three towns to demonstrate that dissolving this union is more financially beneficial than keeping it intact.

In addition, we anticipate that the Commissions together with members of the WNUESD Board, will hold an online voter information session to answer questions ahead of such a vote. Both towns will have to vote to approve the withdrawal before such a withdrawal petition can be considered by the State Board of Education.

Jack Bryar, School Board Chair adds, "We anticipate the Westminster vote about withdrawal will occur in early January. If the withdrawal proposal passes in Westminster, the Athens and Grafton selectboard's Educational Advisory Commissions will prepare advice to the voters of the two remaining towns as to whether to approve or reject Westminster's withdrawal."

Please remember, if you have any question or concerns please contact me with them and I will do what I can to get you the answers/help you need. 869-2227; jelpmorgan@yahoo.com.



- Lynn Morgan

Budget is in the Works

The 2021 budget is being finalized, with a few outstanding items, mostly relating to the highway, still waiting for expense estimates. Details on specific items can be found in the meeting minutes on the town website. The budget committee is always looking for ways the town can save taxpayer money. With that goal in mind, we are wondering if the townspeople would be interested in going to every-other-week pickup for trash. Now that compostable organic matter needs to be kept out of trash, it seems possible that the volume and odor of what goes in the green bags might be at a level allowing for less frequent pick up. The budget committee still needs to confirm details of this option with Triple T, but if it is agreeable with them, you may see an article at town meeting asking the question.

- Hannah Regier

Eleanor Bemis, "The Cookie Lady"

Eleanor Kingsley of Hartland, VT, married Robert Bemis in 1957 and became a lifelong resident of Athens. She was a hard worker and took pride in her job at the American Optical for over 30 years. In addition, she spent numerous years serving our community on numerous committees, as an active member of the school board, justice of the peace, and member Committee through March of 2017.

Eleanor was known for her kind spirit and generosity in helping others. She enjoyed spending time with her friends of Charlestown and Bellows Falls senior centers; especially during band concerts, holiday bazaars, and seasonal turkey suppers. Her passion was baking which earned her the title of "The Cookie Lady"

In lieu of flowers please consider making a donation to Grace Cottage Hospital. She always supported the hospital and health clinic. She attended Grace Cottage Fair Day each year and was known for working bingo

for many years. - Excerpted from VT Digger

Meetinghouse Update

Finally, the roof trusses in the Meetinghouse are secured, with much thanks to Don Capponcelli for all his efforts to see this project through. And his determination saved us a good bit of money as well. Thank you Don!

And have you noticed the beautiful new historic marker sign that is now in front of the building identifying it as being on the National Register of Historic Places? The sign was fully paid for by a grant from the William Pomeroy Foundation. Much thanks to Matt and Eugene for the installation.

The Meetinghouse Committee is now focusing on fundraising and grant writing for window restoration, exterior carpentry repairs and exterior painting, hopefully this spring/summer. This is important work to keep the elements out, and put a bright new face on the building. With that, the exterior will shine again, and serve our efforts to secure funding for the needed work on the interior of the building. Anyone interested in helping to preserve this gem, is always welcome to get involved.

– Sherry Maher

Food News You Can Use

Below is a list of local sites where food is available at no 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. Give Mary Feder a call at the church at 843-2346 and leave your name and phone number or email graftonchurch@gmail.com 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.

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.

Veggie van Go Leland & Gray Lower Parking Lot

Free food is available each month on the 4th Thursday at the high school. The date this month is Thursday, December 17 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. Sometimes a second food distribution in a month is organized with little advance notice, so check the Grace Cottage website or call 802-365-9109 for information. This is hosted by Grace Cottage Hospital and sponsored by the Vermont Food Bank.

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.

Quadruple EBT at the Brattleboro Winter Farmers Market – Do you have 3SquaresVT/SNAP benefits? Now through December, when you use 3SquaresVT/SNAP or P/EBT benefits for a curbside pickup order at the Brattleboro Winter Farmers Market, you'll get up to \$30 extra in Crop Cash and Food Boost to purchase fruits, veggies and more. That means \$10 in EBT buys \$40 of local food! Orders can be made online from 8AM Tuesday morning to 8PM Thursday evening for Saturday pick up. Call 869-2141 to find out more or go to www.brattleborowinterfarmersmarket.org.

–Dennis Hunt

Grafton Cares News

November has been a month of isolation and boy! are we feeling lonely! We dream of the wonderful times past when sitting down to share great food with neighbors or getting to know new residents and learn what folks were thinking and feeling was a weekly occurrence. It is hard to see a time when community lunches and dinners will again be part of the happy rhythm of life, but we know it will come to pass, so hold on and keep your appetites and recipes handy.

Otherwise, we continue to deliver Meals on Wheels to nine customers. We have provided \$190 in gas cards for travel to medical appointments. In the department of medical equipment, we have received donations of two walkers, a pair of crutches, and one wheelchair. A shower chair was returned to us. Lastly, our knitters have given out two shawls, and three new residents received our fabulous welcome bags.

Despite the constraints we all faced this Thanksgiving Day, when one considers the millions of our fellow humans whose daily lives are utter misery, how grateful we are for all the good things we have.

– Bill Toomey

Christmas 2020 at the Athens Tree Farm

This has been a very challenging year for all of us. As we approach the holiday season we want to extend to all of you our best wishes for the holidays and a for a more positive and healthy year in 2021. **We will be having our usual Cut Your Own**



Christmas Trees this year starting on Friday Nov. 27- 29, Dec. 5,6 and Dec 12,13. We are open from 10-4 each of these days. As we want to keep our customers safe we must ask that all in your party wear masks, practice physical distancing and stay with your own group while selecting a tree. We will limit the number of people in the tree field at one time and will ask that you leave dogs at home or in your vehicle to avoid distraction and possible contact between customers. We will also try to limit the time each group is in the tree field to allow others access within a reasonable time. **We can accommodate people coming on weekdays by appointment as well. Please call us at 802-869-2405.**

– *Ginger Maciejowski*

Tree Lighting at the Meetinghouse

Please come to join us for the lighting of the Christmas tree at the Meetinghouse on December 6th at 5 pm. We will not be able to enjoy singing but will wear masks and social distance while we light up the tree. We welcome people to add outdoor decorations to the tree such as bird feeder ornaments, garlands or any other waterproof ornament. These can be added at any time to avoid a large gathering so please stop by and add to the holiday spirit. Happy Holidays to everyone in our community.

– *Ginger Maciejowski*

Christmas in Grafton – Saturday, December 5th

Get into the holiday spirit with a visit to your favorite Vermont village. This year's scaled-back version of Christmas in Grafton is focused on supporting our local businesses. Shop, dine, play, and stay local this year!

Event Details:

- Santa will make his way through town aboard a fire truck at 1 PM
- Grafton Fire & Rescue Christmas Tree Sale is happening outside of Phelps Barn from 9 AM - 3 PM Saturday & Sunday
- Grafton Historical Society is selling wreaths from 10 AM - 3 PM
- MKT: Grafton is open from 9 AM - 6 PM
- Mercantile is open 10 AM - 5 PM
- Grafton Village Cheese Shop is open 10 AM - 4 PM
- Phelps Barn Pub is open for lunch and drinks from 12 - 2 PM
- The Grafton Trails & Outdoor Center will be open from 10 AM - 2 PM. Go hike the trails, and stop by the cabin to learn more about the Center's outdoor activities and purchase a season pass.
- Enter the Raffle! As is tradition for Christmas in Grafton, there will be a basket full of Grafton goodies raffled off during the day. You can enter the raffle by submitting your contact information in a collection box outside the Phelps Barn.

Come out to admire the magical Christmas decorations adorning town, and wave hello to Santa.

Stay tuned for more details as we get closer to the date by following the Facebook Event.

– *Olivia Johnson*

Chester Christmas Market

St. Luke's Christmas Market: Culinary Classics & Crafts to Go! will now be held on the lawn at 313 Main Street in Chester, VT, on Saturday December 5 from 10 AM to 2 PM, with a special time for advance-order pick-up 9:30-10 AM. Advance ordering is strongly encouraged, and a partial list of available items is listed on www.stlukesepiscopalvt.org. To make an order contact Lillian Willis (lbwillisct@comcast.net or 802-875-1340).

– *Lillian Willis*

Entries From A Weather Journal

Having a white Christmas is always part of the fun. Over the last four years we had our wishes granted.

2016: “Warm morning, above freezing. But an excellent snow cover. Merry Christmas.” Temps 40 to 31.

2017: “Big time snow taking place now. Quite a few inches expected.” Temps 20's to 18.

2018: “Light snow last night dusted up the rain stressed snow cover. Beautiful white Christmas.” Temps 33 to 21.

2019: “Cold start. Dry with a snow cover—though dry for some time.” Temps 37 to 20.

What about this year? Time will tell. –*Dennis Hunt*

Thoughts To Ponder

Here are a few Christmas quotes to leave you smiling.

1. “Christmas: the only time of year you can sit in front of a dead tree eating candy out of a sock.” *Anonymous*

2. “I once bought my kids a set of batteries for Christmas with a note on it saying ‘toys not included.’”

Bernard Manning

3. “Be naughty, save Santa the trip.” –*Anonymous*

–*Quotes selected by Dennis Hunt*

COMMUNITY INFORMATION

Select Board Meetings: 3rd Thursday 7:00 PM

Budget Committee: 2nd & 4th Tuesdays 7:00 PM

Meeting House Committee 2nd Mondays 10 AM

School Board: 2nd Thursday 6:30 Grafton School

Would you like to be on our email list and get the newsletter in your inbox?

CONTACT US at theathenianvt@gmail.com.



UPCOMING RECYCLING DATES:

DEC 7 & 21