

The Athenian

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Sponsored by Grafton Cares

APRIL 2021

Is It Spring Yet?

The calendar says it is, but looking out the window says something else. With temperatures above 60 one day and a forecast of possible snow it is hard to know what lies ahead. I washed the car the other day and rediscovered that it is black instead of brown.

But we know warm weather is coming to stay and you will see hints of that below with Green Up Day and the annual Meetinghouse plant sale. The big story remains with the coming of the COVID vaccines. The possibility of being safe and pursuing summer type activities makes you want to cheer.

In this issue there is plenty of info about a variety of topics, and a few spring themed photos. So...read on.
- *Dennis Hunt*

Select Board Meeting Tidbits

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

- Camille Roberts from WHPA asked to clarify the issue of ATVs on the Massey property from last month's meeting. According to the conservation easement they are not allowed on the property. If it does happen it is a rare exception. The Board voted to support the conservation of the Massey property.
- There were questions and much discussion regarding conflict of interest questions with Janet Perry now serving as a Select Board member given that her son is a Town employee. Of particular concern was closed door executive sessions dealing with personnel. Board members stated that there is a conflict of interest policy that would be followed (available for review at the Town Office), and the question of recusal would be determined at each session.
- David Bemis stated that Triple T notified the Town that they will no longer provide trash and recycle removal for the town. They have agreed to continue service through April while the Town seeks to contract with another company. The Board asked the Budget Committee to put our RFPs seeking bids



for another company that will work with the new trash and recycle schedule passed as part of the Town Meeting vote in early March.

- Annual appointments were made to fill a variety of open positions typically done following Town Meeting. These include positions of Auditor, budget Committee, Fence Viewer, Housing Grant Committee, Planning Commission, Surveyor of Wood & Coal, Tree Warden, Town Service Officer, Windham Regional Commission, Emergency Management Director, and Representative to the SWWSWMD.
- Tim Stevenson raised a question about the purpose of having a Planning Commission since there has been no effort to develop a Town Plan. David stated that it is reasonable for Athens to have the Commission and to have a Town Plan. Discussion followed about why the previous efforts failed. Tim asked that the Board take a more active role in the future and asked that anyone interested in reviving the Planning Commission get in touch.
- The Local Emergency Management Plan was adopted.
- Matt Perry asked about a purchase of gravel from a new source for a higher price than what we already have. A number of questions were raised. Matt wants to see if this gravel will be more effective for really bad mud spots.
- Questions were raised about posting roads for mud season as has been done in the past. Matt feels there is no need to post the roads as the logging on Reed Rd. is done, and the oil companies have been avoiding deliveries when the roads are soft. If there was any activity that was destroying a road, he will post it.
- David made a motion for an executive session on a legal matter. When asked he confirmed that this was related to Taylor Hill, at which point concern was raised about conflict of interest since Janet is related to many of the residents on the hill.

Discussion followed and David withdrew his motion pending consultation with the attorney and VLCT.

- At the close of the meeting Janet read a statement about her election to the Select Board, and her desire and intention to serve the community.

Sherry Maher

Notes from the WNUESD School Board

On March 3rd the School Board had its annual organizational meeting. We were very pleased at that time to welcome Ginger Maciejowski on as the new Athens board member. Board positions were filled and committees that need to be formed were discussed.

At the WNESU meeting on March 18th we were updated on Act 173. The president pro tempore of the Vermont Senate, Becca Balint, had stated earlier that S13, a bill to make some corrective changes to Act 173, would not get out of committee this year. It was reported at this meeting that S13 has made it through the committee and into the senate. It is expected to be crossed over to the house soon. This gives us hope that there will be corrective changes to Act 173 before it is instated. [As noted in our March issue, act 173 addresses the funding formula for special education.]

On Friday March 26, Helen Richards-Peelle resigned from her position as principal of the Grafton Elementary School effective immediately. We are fortunate to have a teacher on staff, Angela Cartier, who is a licensed administrator in Vermont. Angela has agreed to serve as the Grafton Elementary School Teaching Principal until the end of the school year. She will have the support of Liz Harty, Westminster Center School principal, Chris Pratt, superintendent and Dr. Lynn Carry, assistant superintendent, for advice and help as needed. We are very comfortable that with this team effort the GES students will continue to receive the excellent education they deserve.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me at lynn.morgan@wnesu.com or call 869-2227.

- Lynn Morgan

Budget Committee Update

The Budget Committee thanks Denise Randall for her contributions over the last five years, and welcomes Carol Bingham as a new member. Amber Stevens has stepped into the role of committee chair. Right now the committee is working on getting bids for a new trash hauling service. We are hoping there will be several quotes for the select board to consider at their April meeting.

- Hannah Regier

Meetinghouse Gets a Boost!

It's official and we are so excited! Athens is one of 9 rural communities to receive funds from the Paul

Bruhn Historic Revitalization Grant to support projects that will help to spur new economic activity and bring new life to under-utilized buildings. For our 1817 Brick Meetinghouse, this \$50,000 award will help to cover much needed repair work on all windows, as well as carpentry repairs to the exterior and fresh coats of paint on all exterior wood surfaces. This will make our beautiful Meetinghouse shine brightly once again! In addition, the project will include the creation of a permanent hinged hatch in the sanctuary floor for easy access to monitor and address any concerns under the floor.

This grant combined with the \$50,000 gift that the Athens Historic Preservation Society received at the end of 2020 specifically for this work, along with funds currently available in the Meetinghouse account means that we are entering into this project having already secured all the funding that will be needed to complete this work.

We will have advisory support through this project of the knowledge and expertise available from Preservation Trust of Vermont as well as the Vermont Division of Historic Preservation. The Bruhn Historic Revitalization Grant Program is administered by the National Park Service, Department of the Interior.

- Sherry Maher

News from Grafton Cares

Grafton Cares wants to express its thanks to the road crews of Athens and Grafton for making possible our thrice- weekly slog over miles of dirt roads now experiencing their spring transformation as wheel-sucking sloughs. Truly, without graders and gravel trucks, our Meals on Wheels program would likely be suspended for at least a month. As it is, we are now delivering meals to 11 customers, and folks have gone out of their way to compliment Chef Dave and his crew at Valley Cares for their excellent cooking.

Additionally, we have provided 7 sunshine baskets; 3 welcome bags; and 2 rides and \$115 in gas cards for medical appointments. Returned to us were one raised toilet seat and one walker.

We wish everyone a healthy and happy spring!

- Bill Toomey

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. Contact Mary Feder at grafonchurch@gmail.com or call her at the church at 843-2346 and leave your name and phone number or email 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 date this month is Wednesday, April 14th 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 Serve. 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.

-Dennis Hunt

3rd Annual Plant Sale Fundraiser at the Athens Brick Meetinghouse

Calling all Gardeners - Mark your calendars for Saturday, May 29th at the Athens Brick Meetinghouse. Starting at 10:00 AM until 12 NOON, members of the Athens Meetinghouse Committee in conjunction with the Athens Historic Preservation Society and Athens Area Gardening Club will be helping visitors find just the right plant for their gardens. Gardeners can pick from perennials, annuals, veggie and herb seedlings, iris rhizomes and more. There will be raffles for delightful garden prizes! And the Meetinghouse will be open for tours (ground floor only).

All proceeds support the restoration and upkeep of our 1817 Brick Meetinghouse. Tax deductible donations can be made to the Athens Historic Preservation Society for the benefit of the Meetinghouse. For more information call 802-869-2141 or email athensmeetinghouse1817@gmail.com.

- Sherry Maher



SEVCA Offers ‘No Cost’ Weatherization Services

Southeastern Vermont Community Action (SEVCA) currently has openings for no-cost weatherization services and is accepting applications. Some applicants will receive services this year. We provide complete weatherization services, from energy education to weatherization and energy retrofits. These free upgrades save money and help insure a warm, comfortable, and safe home. Our expert staff can help you to improve your home’s performance by offering:

-Home energy audits performed by highly trained energy efficiency auditor who conduct a comprehensive home audit to determine what we can do to improve energy efficiency in the home.

-A comprehensive plan to weatherize your home that includes air sealing, insulating, duct sealing, improving heating and cooling systems, minor repairs and health and safety improvements.

-Energy efficiency upgrades on electric water heaters, lighting and old appliances through our partnership with Efficiency Vermont.

These services are available to Vermonters who meet income eligibility guidelines. Home owners and renters, including those in apartments and mobile homes are able to access this program. All household sizes may apply. For example, eligibility for a household of two is about \$50,000 per year and a household of four may be eligible with an income of about \$63,000.

Don't hesitate to call as our program staff can help you to determine eligibility. More information about income eligibility is also available on our website

For more information about the program, contact Tawny Staskunas at tstaskunas@sevca.org or call them at 802-722-4575, extension 1308, or visit their no-Cost weatherization webpage, <https://sevca.org/weatherization/no-cost-homes-wx>.



Entries From A Weather Journal

Treah Pichette shared an interesting weather note:

In the past 13 years, the ice has completely gone out of the beaver pond on Reed Road only 4 times in March (2 of which were 2020 & 2021). Peepers & wood frogs have always started their romancing within a few days of ice out.

The ground is mostly visible as the snow and ice recede and we can't help thinking about those luscious garden tomatoes. But don't hurry the season as Mother Nature can have a few things in store for us as these entries suggest.

April 28, 2010. "Yes...believe it...It is snowing. It is cold with snow cover on grass and trees. Is winter back?"

Temps: 30.7 to 48.4."

April 23, 2011. "It is snowing! It is snowing! A ground cover is appearing. Expecting a change to rain. Spring?? Temps:32.9 to 54.3."

Nature Museum Update

Ten summer camp sessions for ages 4-15 are open for registration at The Nature Museum in Grafton, including a collaborative camp at Grafton Trails. Join us to learn about local ecology while exploring the meadows, streams, and hills of Vermont! Learn more and register at nature-museum.org. -Valerie Barry

It's Time for Green Up

The snow has disappeared and the winter trash has blossomed. It's time again to pull together and spruce up our town's road ways. I am short volunteers for three sections of roadway. If anyone is interested in helping out please give me a call at 869-2227. If you haven't helped with Green Up before here is how it works in Athens. I assign volunteer(s) a section of road to clean up. Two weeks before Green Up a Green Up package is delivered to all volunteers. The Green Up package will contain Green Up bags, a description of their road assignment, procedural instructions, safety notes and a tally sheet (information I need for my report to the Green Up organization). This year Green Up is Saturday May 1st. We often have folks who are not able to do their section on the official day, so Green Up starts in Athens on Monday, April 26th and goes through Sunday, May 2nd. Any bags filled between April 26th and May 1st are to be tied closed and left well off to the side of the road, and any bags filled on Sunday are to be taken home and put out with your own trash.

The Town road crew will start picking up the bags on Saturday starting about 5 PM. I look forward to working with the Athens' team again this year.

- Lynn Morgan

Thoughts To Ponder

You can feel the energy in the air as Spring brings warmer weather, flowing "sugar" and mud season. Here are two quotes to think about and one to put a smile on your face.

- (1.) "Yes, April is a lovely, soul-inspiring, life invigorating month." -Joseph Grimaldi
- (2.) "Infuse your life with action. Don't wait for it to happen. Make it happen." -Bradly Whitford
- (3.) "I sometimes wonder if the manufactures of foolproof items keep a fool or two on their payroll to test things." -Alan Coren

-Quotes selected by Dennis Hunt

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

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

CONTACT US at theathenianvt@gmail.com.



RECYCLING DATES:

APRIL 12 & 26

Photo Credits: Muddy Roads – Hannah Regier

Maple Sugaring – Jay Maciejowski