

The Athenian

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Sponsored by Grafton Cares

MAY 2021

Is It Normal Yet?

Well, maybe not normal but we can feel it coming. Vaccinations continue to increase and guidelines slowly loosen, promising greater freedom to be out and about. The weather, despite the wind and fluctuating temperatures, holds the promise of warm sunny days and gardens once again producing fresh veggies. As always, patience is required. Also be sure to make an appointment and get vaccinated.

In this issue there is plenty to read about. There is good news on the school unification front, and details about a new trash and recycling company, a new CSA farm in Town, along with info about the annual Meeting House Plant sale, and more. So, read on.

- Dennis Hunt

Select Board Meeting Tidbits

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

- Discussions continued with regard to the Town's Conflict of Interest Policy. It was clear that Janet Perry will need to recuse herself from any votes or discussions that would bump up against the policy due to a parent/child relationship. However, there were differing opinions from VLCT, the Board's attorney, and a member of the public who is also an attorney, on the question of Taylor Hill matters. David Bemis indicated that as per the Town attorney, Janet would be sitting in on and voting on the Taylor Hill petition.



- The Board was asked about the Commissioner selected for Taylor Hill and when the Board met to make that selection. David indicated that there was not a public meeting. The attorney had asked for names to submit to the judge who will appoint the Commissioner.

- It was noted that when the Board has a vote that is not unanimous, the minutes should reflect how the Board members voted.

- DeCamp Trucking of Claremont, NH was the only bid received for the Town's trash and recycle service. They are willing to do bi-weekly trash pick up and bi-weekly recycle on the opposite weeks for \$36,501.

The green Athens trash bags will still be used, and recycling will need to be bagged and tied, and cardboard separately needs to be broken down and

tied. David made a motion to accept the bid from DeCamp, but noted that the question about tonnage being included needed to be clarified. [Note— detailed information is on the Town website along with a link specific to Athens created by DeCamp - <https://decamtrucking.com/athens>]

- Discussion on the roads noted an underdrain planned for Brookline Rd. at the bottom of Hedgehog (near 432 Brookline). Dan Taylor asked why not have an engineer evaluate this since it is a recurring problem, before spending money on the underdrain work. David stated that an underdrain had worked on Rt. 35 and suspected that it would work for

Brookline Rd. as well.

- At 7:58 David made a motion for an executive session on a personnel matter at Janet's request.



The Board came out at 8:24 at which time David made a motion to increase the pay rate from \$11.25 to \$11.75 for elected and appointed officials who get an hourly wage for their service. This is retroactive and to meet minimum wage rate for Vermont as of January 1, 2021, although David noted that the Town is exempt from minimum wage laws.

- Sherry

Maier

Notes from the School Board

There was a meeting with the State Board of Education (SBE) on 4/20/21. At that meeting the SBE voted to allow Westminster to withdraw from the Windham Northeast Union Elementary School District (WNUESD). We are scheduled to meet with the SBE on May 19th to see if they will leave Athens and Grafton as a union school or return us to the joint contract as we were before. We are asking them to leave us as a union since it will save us money. It is more costly to operate under a joint contract system.

All the elementary schools within the SU returned to 5 days a week of in school learning as of April 19th. This change was welcomed by students and teachers alike. The BFMS and BFUHS are expected to be back 5 days a week of in school learning starting May 10th.

Plans are being made for a summer school program at all the SU schools that will be free to all students that want to attend. The program will be paid for by the 21st Century grant and by government recovery plan monies.

- Lynn Morgan

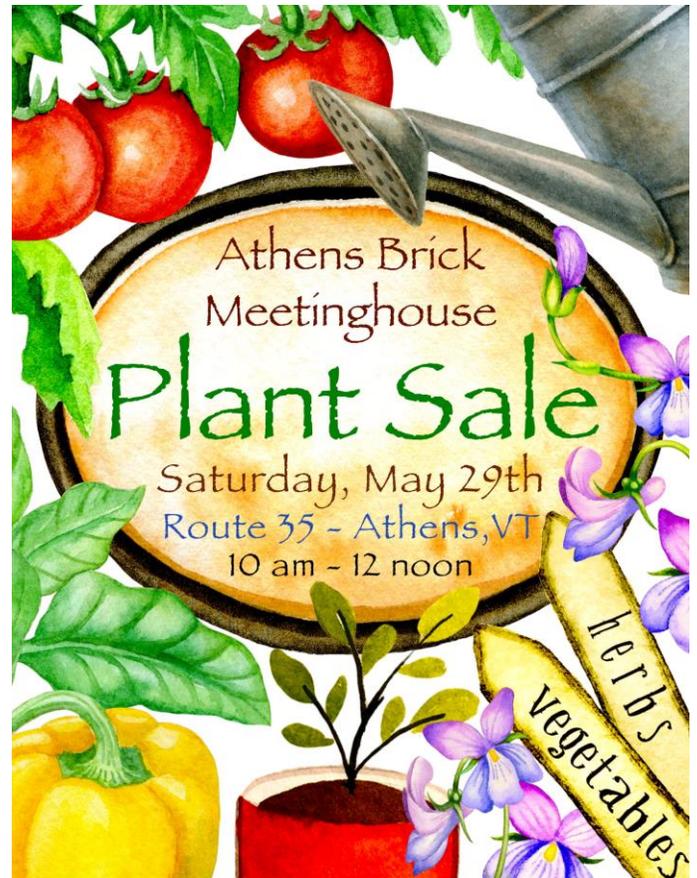
4th Annual Plant Sale at the Meetinghouse

Our 1817 Brick Meetinghouse will be the site of the 4th Annual Plant Sale fundraiser on Saturday, May 29th from 10:00 to 12 noon.

After this long winter living with a global pandemic, we so look forward to seeing many of our friends and neighbors at this annual outdoor spring event come the end of May. You'll find a variety of perennials, annuals and vegetable seedlings, as well as delightful garden related raffle prizes. The Plant Sale will be outdoors on the Meetinghouse lawn with plenty of safe social distancing, and no need for close person to person contact. Experienced gardeners from the Athens Area Garden Club will be there to answer questions and offer gardening advice.

Our national historic landmark will be open for viewing the Meetinghouse sanctuary, and we'll even have some wonderful local musicians in the vestibule. Join us following the Plant Sale at 12:30 PM, as we dedicate a beautiful Korean Dogwood in memory of Eleanor Bemis, longtime member of the Brick Meetinghouse Committee.

Anyone bringing plant donations please drop them off between 8AM – 9:30AM or contact one of these committee members for other arrangements – Ginger – 869-2405, Pam – 869-2557, Sherry – 869-2141.



In other news a group of us will be visiting the lovely Brookline Meetinghouse this week to see what they have accomplished, share successes, and brainstorm challenges for preserving these wonderful buildings. And we're already planning to be part of the Bi-Annual Windham County History Fair in Newfane come this August.

- Sherry Maier

Grafton Cares Update

Like the new growth in spring, things are slowly coming back to life as we once knew them at Grafton Cares.

The knitters, all vaccinated, are again gathering in person to practice their craft, and this month we shall delight in having our first "in-person" board meeting in a very long time.

Under Lucia Corwin's directions, Strong Living is starting its spring session, and although still virtual, Lucia says, "We would like to invite all who are interested in boosting their strength, balance, and bone density to come and see what we are all about. Most of the exercises are done sitting in a chair with leg and hand weights, although all levels of fitness are addressed. The weights are provided by Grafton Cares. You can concentrate on upper body or lower body separately or do both. Come spend 45 minutes with a congenial group

eager to help you learn the simple exercises. The class meets twice a week on Tuesday and Friday mornings from 9:30 to 10:45. Come and try a few sessions at no cost and see if it is a good fit for you. If you have any questions, please call me at 843-5158."

With all this activity, we are encouraged to hope that lunches and dinners will not be far behind.

Other activities for the month of April include Meals on Wheels for 11 customers; delivery of three Sunshine Baskets, one welcome bag, and one lap robe; \$170 in gas cards for rides to medical appointments; and the loan of one shower seat. Teaming up with SEVCA and the Grafton Community Church, we coordinated and completed the purchase and installation of a new stove for a local resident.

With that said, we wish you all a happy, healthy ride on Spring's crazy roller coaster! - *Bill Toomey*

First Season for Grace Farm

Grace Farm is a tiny, low-till vegetable and pastured meat farm starting its first season here in Athens. We're growing vegetables on a half acre of permanent, low-till beds, working mostly with hand tools (with the occasional bit of help from a generous neighbor with a tractor). We avoid tillage to preserve and improve soil health, which in turn allows us to grow healthier and more nutrient dense vegetables. We offer summer and fall weekly vegetable farm shares, or CSA shares, on a sliding scale, in hopes of allowing access to all who want to participate.

We're raising pastured laying hens, meat chickens, and pastured hogs. Our animals are pastured with movable electric fencing, rotated regularly to ensure that their impact on the land is healthy. We strive to create stress-free, happy lives for our meat animals. We farm with as few inputs as possible, don't use disposable plastic for growing, minimize fossil fuel usage whenever possible, and never spray herbicides or pesticides. We believe that healthy soil, animal welfare, and happy farmers are the recipe for a great farm. Veggies and eggs will be available on the farm soon in a small farm stand. The summer vegetable CSA is sold out, but there's still space in the fall CSA. You can hear more about the farm at gracefarmvt.com, or reach out to Grace at mooney.grace@gmail.com.

- *Grace Mooney*

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 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 date this month is Wednesday, May 12th 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 Brattleboro Area Farmers Market opens for the season on Saturday, May 1st, and Townshend Farmers Market opens on Friday, May 28th. Visit DigInVT to find information about other area farmers markets: <https://diginvt.com/places/search>.

-Dennis Hunt

Library Corner

Smiles and Gratitude There has been much activity at the library this spring and many people to thank! First, a huge thank you to Ivor Stevens and his crew for removing the crabapple stump and straightening the flag pole on the library lawn. Kim Mack and family are donating a new crabapple to the library in memory of Laura Knowlton, and we are very grateful. It's a wonderful gift for all of us to enjoy over the years. Second, our garden angel, Sarah Yarosevich, has been hard at work on the gardens and grounds. They look fantastic and will provide much beauty over the summer months. Thank you for your superb work, Sarah. Third, another huge thank you to Ray Lisai and Brendan Beuhler. Brendan is meeting his high school graduation community service requirement by working at the library. Ray is working with Brendan, providing equipment and supervision, for powerwashing and cleaning of the library building, painting projects and more. Brendan is a fabulous worker and they are a very helpful team.

Library Changes During Vermont Forward Plan

The board of trustees of the library met to discuss operational changes allowed under Governor Scott's phased re-opening plan. As of May 1st, the library will NO LONGER be quarantining books, conducting contact tracing or requiring patron appointments during open hours. We are classified as a Group B sector and we ARE required to enforce mask wearing and physical distancing. While we will continue with on-line programming and schedule outdoor programming, we will not have indoor programming at this time, nor will non-library groups be permitted to hold meetings inside the library. We look forward to the possibility of more changes after July 4, but the board of trustees may need to re-visit earlier guidelines at any time, should



health and safety conditions necessitate.

May Library Programs

Spanish Conversation on Zoom, Tuesdays, 11am, intermediate level.

Stories of a Soldier with Bill Toomey, on Zoom, Friday, May 21st, 7pm. Registration required.

Nature & Books Spring Series on Zoom: May 26, 6-7:30pm, Entangled Life by Merlin Sheldrake.

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.

www.graftonpubliclibrary.org

- Michelle

Dufort

Household Hazardous Waste Collection

The Southern Windsor/Windham Counties Solid Waste Management District will hold a household hazardous waste collection on Tuesday May 25th, from 2-6 PM at the Springfield Transfer Station. Go to www.vtsolidwastedistrict.org to get directions to the Springfield Transfer Station and print out a list of materials that they take and those that they don't.

Businesses that are Conditionally Exempt Generators may participate but must pre-register and pay for disposal costs. Call 674-9234 for a registration form.

The District is in the process of building a permanent household hazardous facility which will be open for six months of the year, 8-10 hours a week. Drop-off of materials will be by appointment only. A nominal fee may be charged.

- Mary O'Brien

Nature Museum Update

The Nature Museum is kicking off a busy summer schedule. Although the building remains closed until further notice, we are planning an exciting schedule this summer, including week long camps, the Bellows Falls Fish Ladder and Visitor Center, and our free Summer Unplugged programming at local libraries.

Stay tuned, and thank you for your enthusiastic support of our online programming this year. We are thrilled to begin offering in-person events too! For more information contact us at info@nature-museum.org

Chester Plant Sale

The annual Chester Plant Sale at St. Luke's Church, at 313 Main Street near the Village Green in Chester, Vermont, has become a marvelous opportunity for the public to purchase a wide selection of proven, large, healthy, hardy plants at bargain prices. The sale features numerous perennials well suited to this part of Vermont, herbs, raspberry plants, dahlia tubers, and some special annuals and propagated shrubs, and more. The sale is scheduled to run on Friday May 28 and Saturday May 29, 9-3 both days, and on Sunday May 30, 9-1. If you need more information, contact Lillian Willis at lbwillisct@comcast.net or 802-875-1340.

– Lillian Willis

Entries from A Weather Journal

What a difference a year makes. Below are two entries from the “Additional Observations” sections for the end of May 2019 and 2020.

2019. “A long, cold, icy, snowy winter with a late and low average sugar season. A lot of rain with little sun, with a few days here and there.”

2020. “Our story is the pandemic virus. Massive unemployment and sheltering in place. Now, cities rioting after the killing of an unarmed African American.

The weather was a typical spring. Not a whole lot of snow over winter.”

–Dennis Hunt

Treah Pichette shared another interesting weather note: “The one amazing thing I have recorded about this April’s weather is this: So far (and this will probably be a final for the month unless the weather gets MORE extreme!), April’s highest temperature here was 79.7 degrees on the 16th, and the low was 18.5 on a April 5th, a span of 61.2 degrees within a week and a half. I find that perhaps record-breaking! Of course, we also had about a foot of snow a week ago as well and today, 4/22, we’re back to Jan. temps! Not sure what this may say about this year’s growing season, if anything.”

Thoughts To Ponder

The weather is always on our mind. Here are a few quotes to help us deal with it and put a smile on your face.

(1) “Weather forecast for tonight. Dark.”

–George Carlin

(2) “Everybody talks about the weather, but nobody does anything about it.”

–Charles Dudley Warner

(3) “The Bermuda Triangle got tired of warm weather. It moved to Alaska. Now Santa Claus is missing.

–Steven Wright

–All 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

NEXT Grafton Cares Lunch & ATHENS COMMUNITY SUPPER: SOME TIME SOON WE HOPE!

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.



TRASH & RECYCLING DATES:

TRASH PICK UP – MAY 3, 17 & 31

RECYCLE – MAY 10 & 24



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Page 1 - Spring Hike –
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Violets & Daffodil –
Sandi Capponcelli

Opposite-April Snow &
Spring Turkeys – Treah
Pichette

