

The Athenian

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DECEMBER 2021

December—A Busy Time of Year

With the cold and windy weather, the desire to settle in for the winter is quite tempting. There are also plenty of ways of having outdoor fun. In this issue you will find opportunities to volunteer to help others, where to find good books to curl up with, a tree lighting ceremony, and an important town meeting on the 15th to decide on two critical questions about how town meetings will be conducted. Mark your calendars and read on...

- 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:

- When asked if masks would be required at the Special Meeting scheduled for December 15th, the Board felt that anyone who is unvaccinated must wear a mask. David Bemis further indicated that they would try to follow the recommendations of the VT Board of Health.
- Wichie Artu reported on his continued efforts related to addressing the out-of-date flood maps. For Wichie's farm and other properties in the flood zone to participate in NFIP a model flood plan ordinance will be needed. In addition, Wichie presented 2 MOUs that would enable the Emergency Committee to purchase food from 2 farms in town – Wild Shepherd Farm, and Grace Farm, should the shelter need to be opened in a weather emergency.
- Janet Perry reported that Matt Perry is getting applications for charge accounts at Benny's Sunoco and the Riverbend Market to purchase gas for the new leaf blower.
- David noted that our solid waste management district is working on a permanent drop off site for Hazardous Waste in Springfield. Stay tuned for more details on that when available.
- Sandi Capponcelli is working with Matt on securing FEMA reimbursement for the July flooding and a

possible mitigation grant. Sandi also noted Matt's request to purchase stone now to stock pile for the 2022 mud season. After some discussion regarding available funds, the Board approved the purchase.

- Janet is working on getting money for the damage done to the pond on Brookline Rd from a vehicular accident.

- Sherry Maher

Special Town Meeting Wednesday, December 15

Be sure to mark your calendars for the Special Town Meeting scheduled for 6 PM on Wednesday, December 15th. This

is an important vote for the future of our town and how important town-wide decisions are made.

There will be 2 articles before the voters that night. Article 1 asks if we shall elect Town officers at all future Annual and Special Town Meeting by Australian ballot. And Article 2 asks if we shall adopt all budget articles and monies at all future Annual and Special Town Meeting by Australian ballot.

- Sherry Maher

Special Select Board Meeting

The select board is calling a special select board meeting for December 4, 2021 at 10:00am at the Town Office. We will be viewing and discussing the culvert behind the Town office with Scott Jensen.

- Darlene Wyman

Budget Committee Update

The budget committee has completed a draft of the 2022 budget and will discuss it with the selectboard on December 14th. There are a few details left to iron out regarding quantities of stone and gravel, contracted services for highway projects, and what grants the town is looking into for next year that would require matching funds. The highway foreman informed the budget committee that the small truck will need a new plow very soon. That cost is estimated at \$8,000. In addition to adding that amount to the equipment fund this year, the budget committee is recommending we allocate

\$800 a year to the fund going forward, so that the funds are available the next time a plow is needed. Overall for 2021, the town's expenditures are running close to what was budgeted, with several expenses still waiting to be reimbursed by grants.
– *Hannah Regier*

Tree Lighting this Sunday!

Join us for the 2nd Annual Tree Lighting at the Athens Meetinghouse on Sunday, December 5th.

We'll gather at 5 PM on the lawn of the Meetinghouse. Bring along any decorations that are suitable for outdoors to add to the tree. We'll have some hot cider to share and maybe even sing some Christmas Carols together.

Thanks once again to Jay & Ginger Maciejowski and the Athens Tree Farm for donating a beautiful Christmas tree for this event.

There is an update on the Meetinghouse Committee's work to restore the exterior of the building. As you may recall, we were awarded a \$50K grant last year from Preservation Trust Vermont. Along with a \$50K gift and funds on hand we plan to restore or repair all of the windows, tackle exterior carpentry repair and have all the exterior wood repainted. We have been waiting for the green light from the National Park Service with approval of our plans. That came in earlier in November. Now the committee will be putting out RFPs (requests for proposals) from area contractors interested in the work. It's been a long wait, but now that we have finally jumped through all hoops for this federal grant, we should see the exterior restoration work getting underway come the spring!

– *Sherry Maher*

Perpetual Thanksgiving from Grafton Cares

While Thanksgiving Day suggests that folks give thanks for the good things in life on a particular day of the year, Grafton Cares is blessed to find itself being thankful month after month for the kindness and generosity of people who keep a continuous flow of unsolicited donations coming to us. True, we do not have a large budget, but being able to assist in a meaningful way folks with needs is deeply gratifying to us, and--the point of our existence. So, thanks to all who make this possible.

Our activities over the last month include: Meals on Wheels deliveries to 9 customers, delivery of 7 Sunshine Baskets, distribution of \$135 in gas cards for medical appointments, 2 rides to medical appointments, gifting 1 baby blanket and 1 shawl made by our knitters, and lending out 3 walkers and 1 shower chair.

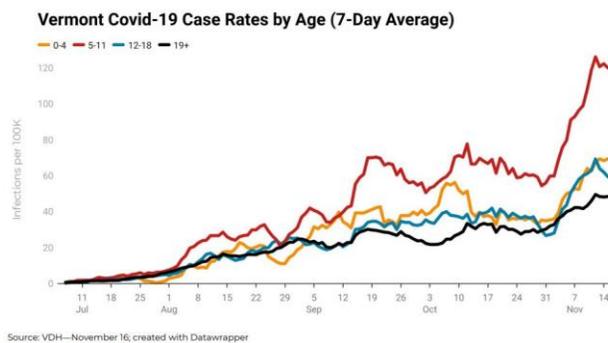
Lucia Corwin wants folks to know that the Strong Living Program is still up and running and would welcome more participants. You may register by calling Lucia at 802-843-5158.

We are saddened to announce that record high number of Covid cases in the state means that there that will be no Christmas Day dinner this year, nor any other community meals for the foreseeable future.

Our best wishes to everyone for a healthy and joyful Christmas.
– *Bill Toomey*

Grace Cottage Community Message

Vermont has been receiving a great deal of attention in the news these days, and not just because of Patrick Leahy's announcement that he won't be running for the Senate in 2022. There have been shifts regarding COVID-19 case rates, exposure / quarantining / testing standards, and treatment, so this seems like a good time to review the current COVID-19 situation in Vermont, and to put things into perspective:



Vermont's average daily COVID-19 cases are up 82% over the last 14 days. We currently have the 6th highest daily case rate among all 50 states. However, we are 43rd among all states in the rate of hospitalizations. Why are cases of COVID-19 surging in Vermont, and what can be done to get us back on track?

- Because we were eager to comply and many of us got our COVID-19 vaccinations as soon as we were eligible, we now have waning vaccine immunity. The solution? Get your booster shot as soon as possible.
- We are seeing a decrease in the use of masks in public places. Mask Up!
- The Delta variant of COVID-19 is highly contagious. Get vaccinated, get your booster shot, continue to social distance, and wear your mask.
- Unvaccinated children have the highest case rates in Vermont. Get your children vaccinated.
- Those most at risk (the immunocompromised) should consider treatment with intravenous monoclonal antibodies.

But, for the following reasons, don't panic:

- Hospitalization rates due to COVID-19 in Vermont are currently quite low. In fact, among all 50 states, Vermont has the 7th lowest daily rate of hospitalization.
- VT has the highest vaccination rate of any state in the U.S.

- Vermont's COVID-19 death rate since the beginning of the pandemic is still the lowest of any state, at 62 deaths per 100,000 people (for comparison: 119/100,000 in New Hampshire; 281/100,000 in Florida; 342/100,000 in Mississippi).

To sum up:

- Community transmission of the COVID-19 virus is high.
- Masks should be worn in indoor public places while prevalence of the virus continues to be high.
- No social interactions are without some level of risk. However, socializing in small groups of vaccinated people indoors without masks seems to be relatively safe and appropriate for healthy individuals.
- The virus is, or soon will be, ubiquitous. Nearly everyone on this planet will get it at some point.
 - For those who are unvaccinated, many will suffer illness, many will lose days of work, some will be hospitalized, some will suffer long-term consequences, and about 1% will die.
 - For those who are vaccinated, most will not suffer illness; some will develop moderate symptoms for a couple of days; some of those who are older and have medical conditions will be hospitalized; only a very few will suffer long-term consequences.
- Vaccination of the population, particularly now focusing on children, will significantly decrease the prevalence of the COVID-19 virus. – *Doug DiVello*

Holiday Wreath Making at the Athens Tree Farm

Hands were busy over the Thanksgiving weekend at the Athens Tree Farm. Even though we are not selling trees this year, our old “corn crib” has been transformed into a workspace for wreath making and is very comfortable with a new woodstove to keep us warm. The family enjoyed a chance to learn how to make a balsam wreath to take home with them. We send our wishes to everyone for a holiday season filled with family and fun.



- *Ginger and Jay Maciejowski*

Notes from the School Board

All the school boards within the Supervisory Union have gotten started on their budgets. The financial office has worked tirelessly this year to alter the reports that are produced by the new book keeping software the state instituted in all the schools last year. The reports that are generated by this software are not reader friendly.

Therefore, the financial staff had to get creative to design ways to generate the reports so that they could be understood by the general public. A huge thanks goes out to Flora and her staff. This has been a difficult process, and they have done a wonderful job.

The budgets are moving ahead slowly at the moment due to the slow process going on with the teacher negotiations. The negotiation committee has been working with all the parties concerned to negotiate a plan that is agreeable to all.

The Athens-Grafton Union School will be starting the process of writing our Articles of Agreement after the Christmas holidays. As mentioned before, we need to come up with a name for our district. Currently, we are known as Windham Northeast Union Elementary School District. That is a mouthful and not very descriptive of who we are. I'd love to hear from all of you with suggestions for a new name. – *Lynn Morgan*

December Library Corner

Smiles and Gratitude

Many thanks for the following memorial donations to the 2021/22 Grafton Public Library Annual Appeal: In memory of Barbara Williams, Walt Critchfield, Hans Hollstein, Patricia Parker, Beatrice Fisher, Christopher Schemm (two donations), Dorothy Heiser, Mat and Lib Hall, Catherine Wright, Marilyn A. Veltri and Ken and Rachael DeLonge. In addition, we've received a donation in honor of the fabulous Bill and Diana Toomey.

We are very grateful for all donations received and are happy to report that we are mid-way to our budgeted annual appeal goal at this time! Your sustaining support for Grafton's community library is inspiring.

I would also like to thank the Windham Foundation for removing the leaves from the library lawn and David Whittall for his steadfast pick-up of garbage and recycling. We surely appreciate it.

Upcoming Holiday Program

Bill Toomey, Storyteller Extraordinaire, returns for the holidays and will be sharing his unique and extremely charming stories in a Zoom session (on-line).

You do not want to miss the world premier of a new Toomey story—Miss Julie's Christmas Wish! Bill has been hard at work on his latest creation and will share it with us on a magical December evening, along with another of his classic stories. Please contact us to register for this event, as it is sure to brighten your holidays. Details are below.

Holiday Gifts and Shopping

While searching for unique and affordable gifts, please remember the library book sale room. We have a

variety of good books: fiction, biography, crafting, self-help, fantasy, history and more. We also have a large selection of children's books. The prices are right and you may even find an out-of-print treasure! Or perhaps you have new or nearly new books to donate to the library? We are now accepting books in the following categories only: new or newish adult fiction, history and biography. Space in the sale room is still limited, so please check your donations with me, before leaving them at the library. Thank you for your book sale room support!

December Programs:

Spanish Conversation on Zoom, Tuesdays 11am, intermediate level
Holiday Stories by Bill Toomey, Storyteller Extraordinaire on Zoom, Friday, December 10th, 7:00-8:30pm Registration is required—contact the library via email or phone.

- Michelle Dufort

Senior Solutions Call for Volunteers

Senior Solutions is seeking volunteers for its Home Visitor programs. This area agency on aging, supporting adults to age in place with dignity and independence, serves southeastern Vermont, and has a number of opportunities for volunteers to provide support and companionship to their older neighbors.

Friendly Visitors is a free program that connects volunteers of any age with those who may benefit from companionship. Visitors may also provide assistance with shopping, errands and transportation to community events and activities.

Senior Companions engage in many of the same activities as Friendly Visitors. In addition, they receive an hourly stipend and must meet age and income requirements.

Vet to Vet Vermont builds relationships between veterans that keep them connected to their military community while providing companionship with a veteran buddy.

Respite Volunteers provide a block of time to sit with an individual who needs companionship and supervision. These volunteers are trained to provide practical care and allows caregivers to have some time for themselves.

Volunteers in all of the programs receive mileage reimbursement.

Senior Solutions is also looking for referrals of people who would benefit from such services.

To volunteer for any of the programs, or to refer someone who could benefit from them, please call the

Senior Solutions HelpLine at 802-885-2669 or toll free at 866-673-8376.

You can find out more about Senior Solutions by going to its website at www.seniorsolutionsvt.org.

- Thom Simmons

Notes From Two Weather Journals

Fun weather item from Treah Pichette: There is an old wives' tale that says that the date of the first snowfall in which you can see a cat's paw footprint will tell you the number of snowstorms you'll have that winter. This year that happened on Nov. 16th so according to this very unscientific tale, we will have 16 storms this season. I certainly hope not!

Does it snow on Christmas? Since 2006 the answer is no! Most Christmas days were white, but no big snowstorms on the day. It looks like the odds will be with us on the 25th.

Over the years the temperatures have been all over the place with a low of 7.7 in 2011 and a high of 64.6 in 2015. I'm dreaming of a white Christmas.

-Dennis Hunt

Thoughts To Ponder

Getting ready for Christmas is always exciting but can be stressful. Here are three quotes that will put a smile on your face.

"Let's be naughty and save Santa the trip." —Gary Allen

"I love Christmas. I receive a lot of wonderful presents I can't wait to exchange." —Henny Youngman

"It's that special time of year when your whole family gathers together in one place to look at their cellphones."

- Jimmy Kimmel

--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

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

CONTACT US at theathenianvt@gmail.com.



TRASH PICK-UP: 13 & 27

RECYCLE PICK-UP: 6 & 20



GET INTO THE HOLIDAY SPIRIT

Christmas in Grafton

Saturday | December 11, 2021 | 10AM to 4PM

Christmas in Grafton Schedule

A full day of activities such as sleigh rides, holiday shopping, arts and crafts, snowshoeing, Christmas cookie decorating, Christmas tree and wreath sale, and most importantly...a visit from Santa! We hope you will join us for this holiday bazaar and support your local businesses this holiday season. The full schedule can be viewed on the Grafton Inn's website through the QR code.

