

The Athenian

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Sponsored by Grafton Cares

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A Local Newsletter Can Be Like A Community Supper

That was the headline for our first issue in January of 2011. Fast forward 11 years - our last community supper was in March 2020, nearly 2 years ago now.

We went on then to say, "A local newsletter can be like a community forum where neighbors speak to neighbors. What opportunities exist to help us get through difficult times? What possibilities are out there to get involved with community undertakings?"

We could never have predicted the difficult times we have seen over this period, but we are pleased to have played a role in keeping that spirit of community suppers thriving through this time.

Finding ways to welcome new community members despite the lack of "get-together" opportunities like the 27+ who came together for the tree lighting at the Meetinghouse. Or frequently sharing information like our Food News You Can Use, important COVID related updates from Grace Cottage, or email blasts about town government happenings. And of course brightening your days with tips on where to go for a great walk in the woods, library and other area happenings, or humorous and thought-provoking quotes selected by my co-editor, Dennis Hunt.

So we'll keep it up. Read on to find out among other things, what the Special Town Meeting outcome means for Town Meeting 2022. There are 17 Town Officer seats to be voted on. Might one have your name on it?

- Sherry Maher

Select Board Meeting Tidbits

In addition to news in other pieces below, here are a few things from the December Select Board meeting as well as the Special Select Board meeting called for January 6 that might be of interest:

- The Board approved a grant application for funds to help cover the cost of a culvert that needs to be replaced. The culvert is at the entrance to the back parking lot behind the Town Office and Church.



*Meetinghouse Tree Lights up the Dark
- Sherry Maher*

- A mask ordinance was discussed. The Board approved a motion requiring masks to be worn at meetings during flare ups of COVID and when the Town Office is open to the public. [NOTE: We want to thank the Board for taking this proactive step to help prevent the spread of this virus.]

- Matt Perry reported that all is going well with the roads. New headlights are needed on two vehicles, and a 'Metal Only' sign was requested for the junk pile at the garage. A grant was submitted for ledge removal, and a hydraulic study is needed for the Ober Hill bridge. Matt also stated that it is about time to repave the roads and outlined the sections of Route 35 he would like to have repaved.

- Janet Perry presented an invoice to have on file for the cost of damage to the beaver pond on Brookline Rd. and Matt said that the FEMA grant is coming along.
- At the special board meeting on January 6, the board approved Steve Barrett as a replacement commissioner which will allow the legal process to move forward on the question of Taylor Hill. Next will be a hearing with a decision to ultimately be made by the three commissioners. As part of the discussion at the meeting were a number of concerns related to conflict of interest – some were because suggested commissioners know Tom or Dan Taylor, others were because a member of the board is the parent of the current Road Commission/highway foreman.

- Sherry Maher

Special Town Meeting Summary & Outcomes

On Wednesday, December 15th, 84 registered voters of Athens gathered at the former elementary school to address 2 articles put forth by the Select Board.

The first asked if future votes for Town officers shall be done by Australian ballot. After a number of voters present expressed opinions on this article, it was noted that this change seemed to be related to the pandemic,

and if so, could it be amended to be just for the upcoming Town Meeting in 2022. Moderator David Bemis stated that such an amendment would be too much of a change and could not be made. After further discussion Tom Taylor called the question. The article passed by a vote of 50 yes to 34 no.

The second article asked if all other business at future Town Meetings would be decided by Australian ballot. After much less debate, with no one expressing support for this article, the article was defeated by a vote of 71 to 13.

So, as a result of Article 1 passing, it is now time to begin thinking about being a candidate for one of the offices up for election come March 2022. If you are an interested candidate, you need to complete a Candidate Consent Form and a Candidate Petition with signatures from a minimum of 3 registered voters. Both forms are available at the Town Office and from the town website www.athensvt.com, and need to be turned in to the Town Clerk by 5:00 PM on January 24th. There is also a list of the 17 offices that will be voted on this year

Along with FACT8 TV recording the meeting in its entirety, two other local press outlets covered the meeting. The coverage by the Brattleboro Reformer can be found here: <https://brattlebororeformer-vt.newsmemory.com?selDate=20211217&goTo=1&artid=2>. And by Vermont Public Radio here: <https://www.vpr.org/vpr-news/2022-01-05/pandemic-once-again-forces-vt-towns-to-adjust-plans-for-town-meeting-day>. And a link to videos from FACT8 TV are here: <https://www.athensvt.com/meetings.html>.

- Sherry Maher

Notes from the School Board

The school boards were notified on December 9 that the finance business manager had resigned. On December 13 the following letter from Andy Haas, the interim superintendent, was made public.

Mr. Haas stated, "Our auditors, RHR Smith & Company, have issued a letter dated December 10, 2021. In the letter, they identify some areas of serious concern in our financial record keeping. It appears from their work that there are numerous material financial misstatements in our documents. It is clear from their findings that the Supervisory Union has a lot of work to do to bring its financial record keeping up to standard. We are committed to doing whatever is necessary to achieve that end.

It is important that we maintain transparency at all times so that our community is aware of the situation and our efforts to bring our records into compliance. I have notified the Agency of Education, our boards and now the public. We will be working with experienced professionals to fix the problems identified in the audit. We hope that we will be able to quickly move through

the areas of concern and develop budgets and data that can be relied upon. The Supervisory Union will be promptly hiring a new business manager who will have the skills necessary to ensure that our financial data is accurate."

As a result of the status of the finances at the SU it is highly unlikely that any of the school budgets will be ready by March town meeting day. We know what we need to spend, except for teacher salaries. Negotiations are still under way. We also do not know what deficits and surpluses we have to work with until the auditors have finished their work bringing the financial record keeping up to standard.

COVID is still active throughout the SU schools. Total COVID case count for period of December from 1st through 13th for the SU is 35. The total COVID case count for the same time period for Grafton Elementary School is 2.

Please contact me if you have any suggestions or concerns.

- Lynn Morgan

Budget Committee Report

On December 14th, the budget committee met with the selectboard and had a thorough review of the 2022 budget. Following are the updates made: Added \$50,000 of anticipated grant revenues for covering emergency roadwork from the July flood and 2021 stormwater ditch work; increased the budget for all fuels, in anticipation of higher prices for the 2022 pre-buy; increased the elementary school building maintenance budget to cover needed fire safety upgrades. Outstanding items: Pending quotes, the selectboard is considering a budget for hiring an IT contractor for town office computer systems. The selectboard is considering raises for the highway employees. And with the influx of Covid recovery funds to the state, it is likely there will be an article in the town report asking to start a new fund for matching grant monies for building and highway projects.

- Hannah Regier

Crisis Fuel and Utility Assistance

Are you out of or about to run out of home heating fuel? Have you received an electric disconnection notice? In either situation, contact SEVCA Family Services staff for help at 800-464-9951 or connect with them online at sevca/familyservices.org. Find out the details and a staff member can help you through the process.

-Dennis Hunt

Grafton Cares Update

The solstice has happened and the days are getting longer. That's the good news. For the time being, we've stopped fantasizing about the end of the plague and the resumption of community lunches and dinners. So

what's to be done other than putting one's head down and keep on truckin'!

So far the truckin' has been OK as we continue delivering Meals on Wheels to 11 customers in Grafton and Athens. Also, 1 welcome bag, 6 sunshine baskets, 8 shawls, and 1 baby blanket conveyed our hopes for joy and comfort to various folks in the neighborhood. In the medical equipment department, the exchange was hot, as 2 walkers went out and 2 came back, 1 commode was loaned out and 1 returned, and 3 shower seats were returned. Finally, to aid in traveling to medical appointments, we provided \$260 in gas cards.

Our wishes for a bounty of health and happiness to everyone throughout the New Year. *-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 food pantry at the Church is sponsoring free food pickup at the Church during the week. Staples such as pasta, tomato sauce, jam, oatmeal, and sometimes even frozen meat if 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 and please wear a mask. Delivery can also be arranged.

Townshend Community Food Shelf. This long-time food shelf is open and providing food to those who need it. They have limited fruit, vegetables, milk, frozen meats, 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. Be sure to wear your mask. If you have questions call 365-4348.

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! Meals are prepared by the Newfane Country store and distributed every Thursday from 4:30pm to

5:30pm in front of the Newfane Congregational Church. All meals are free, and there is a onetime registration at the site or call Jeryl at 802-348-7173. Deliveries can also be arranged.

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, and Friday. Sign up is straight forward. Call Senior Solutions Senior Helpline at 800-642-5119 for all the particulars and enjoy having meals delivered to your door in Athens and Grafton.

Veggie van Go. Free food is available for the months of January (1/27) and February (2/24) from noon to 1pm at the Newfane Congregational Church on West Street. 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 program is sponsored by

Grace Cottage Family Health & Hospital and the Vermont Food Bank.

Multiply Your EBT Benefits at the Brattleboro Winter Farmers' Market. Do you have 3 Squares VT/SNAP benefits? When you use 3Squares VT/SNAP or P/EBT benefits at the Brattleboro Winter Farmers' Market, you'll get up to \$20 match in Crop Cash and an additional \$10 match thanks to a grant from the Vermont FoodBank, so \$10 SNAP becomes \$40 for locally produced food! To get all the particulars call SEVCA (Southeastern Vermont Community Action) to see if you qualify at 1-800-464-9951 or sevca.org.

- Dennis Hunt

January Library Corner Smiles and Gratitude

Heartfelt thanks for the following special donations to the 2021/22 Grafton Public Library Annual Appeal: in memory of June R. Schlachman, Henry Moseley, Mary Lou Jockell and Marge Prouty and also in honor of the Grafton Public Library staff. I'm thrilled to report that we have just a little over \$1000.00 to go to meet our budgeted goal for this year's annual appeal. Almost



Our 2021 Tree by Daylight - Sherry Maher

there! Again, we thank you very much for your sustaining support.

Many thanks to Wendy Martin and Tania Evans for their donations of new books for the collection throughout the year, as well as others (too many to list) who have donated from time to time. You may have noticed that the entire list of December New Books at the library consisted of donations. We are most grateful.

In addition, I'd like to thank Bill Toomey, Pat Mack, David Ross, Denise Martin, Maureen Fletcher and our anonymous wreath Santa for invaluable assistance beautifully bedecking the library for the holidays. Finally, much gratitude goes to Storyteller Extraordinaire, Bill Toomey, and all our attendees for creating such a wonderful gathering on Zoom for this year's Holiday Tales program.

New Books and Displays

While we are the fortunate recipient of wonderful book donations, we also purchase great new reads for the library too. January's New Book order will be arriving soon. Readers can expect the latest by Jodi Picoult, Colson Whitehead, Amor Towles, Louise Erdrich, and Diana Gabaldon. Look for the recent French lockdown blockbuster by Herve Le Tellier (recently released in the US), a new biography by Stanley Tucci, a book of stories about the NYPD, and much more. If you do not yet receive the New Books email notification, please let me know and I'll be happy to include you, so you can receive the full list.

It's also that time of year to draw attention to the Notable Books of 2021. We have quite a lot of them! Stop by to see our display and catch up on the titles you may have missed.

January Schedule:

The library will be open for curbside service ONLY January 3-8. We return to our regular schedule on January 10—with the library open for patron browsing. Spanish Conversation on Zoom, Tuesdays 11am, intermediate level

Nature & Books Discussion Series on Zoom, Fox & I by Catherine Raven, Wednesday, January 26, 6-7:30pm (re-scheduled program) Please contact us to register.

-Michelle Dufort

FNP Juliette Carr Joins Grace Cottage Family Health

Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP) Juliette Carr has joined the primary care staff at Grace Cottage Family Health in Townshend.

Carr holds a Master of Science-FNP degree from Georgetown University and a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She is Board Certified as an FNP and as a Maternal & Newborn RN. In addition, she is a Registered Herbalist

with the American Herbalists Guild and holds an LGBTQ+ SafeZone Certification. She provides gender-affirming, holistic care to adults and children.

In addition to seeing patients for general primary care and family medicine, Carr also has a subspecialty in Integrative Medicine and is a nationally recognized speaker and writer on holistic medicine. She is Co-Chair of the American Nurses Association of Vermont's Legislative Advocacy Committee and is a member of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners and Sigma Theta Tau Honor Society of Nursing. She is the recipient of both a Southern Vermont "Emerging Leader Award" and a "Rising Stars Award for Top 40 under 40" for community service in 2021.

Before joining the Grace Cottage staff, Carr worked as an Adjunct Professor at University of Massachusetts-Amherst College of Nursing and as an RN at Brattleboro Memorial Hospital.

Carr says that, "Working at Grace Cottage allows me to serve my neighbors as part of the best primary care team in Windham County, which is a wonderful feeling." She lives on a farm in Newfane with her family. In her free time, she enjoys hiking, gardening and skiing. Juliette Carr is accepting new patients. To schedule an appointment with her, call 802-365-4331.

- C.J. King

Coloring - Not Just For Children

Think spending hours coloring is only a childhood pastime? Think again!

Coloring has the ability to relax the fear center of your brain. It induces the same state as meditating by reducing the thoughts of a restless mind. This provides quietness, which allows your mind to get some rest after a long day of arduous tasks. It has also been shown to improve motor skills and vision, improve sleep, and help you focus. All the more reason to consider adding some stress-relieving coloring time to your day!

Wendi Germain, a Chester resident and the Nutrition and Wellness Director at Senior Solutions, has recently created a coloring book called "Finding Calm Through Color." The book features many intricate "mandalas" to help you release your creative instincts. Wendi is a self-taught artist who found the joy of art when she realized that art doesn't always have to be planned to look a certain way. For her, the beauty is in the unexpected result; she starts each piece with no expectations. She loves to draw and paint mandalas and always avoids drawing straight lines and sharp corners. Drawing and coloring should be fun!

Staying indoors (when you can!) throughout a cold winter? Unable to enjoy group activities due to the pandemic? Don't go stir-crazy! See what a little artistic expression can do for you! The book will be available before the end of January, and a free copy can be

obtained by calling the Senior Solutions HelpLine at 802-885-2669.

- Thom Simmons

“Don’t live the same year 75 times and call it a life.”

--Robin Sharma

“Now is the accepted time to make your annual good resolutions. Next week you can begin paving hell with them as usual.”

--Mark Twain

--All quotes selected by Dennis Hunt



A Temporary Athenian - Treah Pichette

Notes From A Weather Journal

It’s Winter. Vermont and snow go together. But this season has so far been snow challenged. Surely that won’t last. But back in 2007 there was an even bigger challenge as you will see.

January 1, 2007: “Freezing rain. What little snow we have is badly threatened.”

January 8, 2007: “Another big RAIN. A bit of snow first but washed away!!”

January 15, 2007: “More freezing rain. Suppose to be a big snow storm...still brown. Unbelievable.

January 19, 2007: “Missed another one. This one went below us and then up the coast. Total snow this entire winter is 2 ½ inches.

This state of events lasted until Valentine’s Day. Wherever you went people were getting very excited about the coming snow day.

February 14, 2007: “A huge snowstorm is underway. Very large totals expected. (We got 2 feet!)

--Dennis Hunt

Thoughts To Ponder

It’s that time for New Year’s Resolutions and here are a few quotes to think about and maybe put a smile on your face.

“Tomorrow is the first blank page for a 365-page book. Write a good one.”

--Brad Paisley

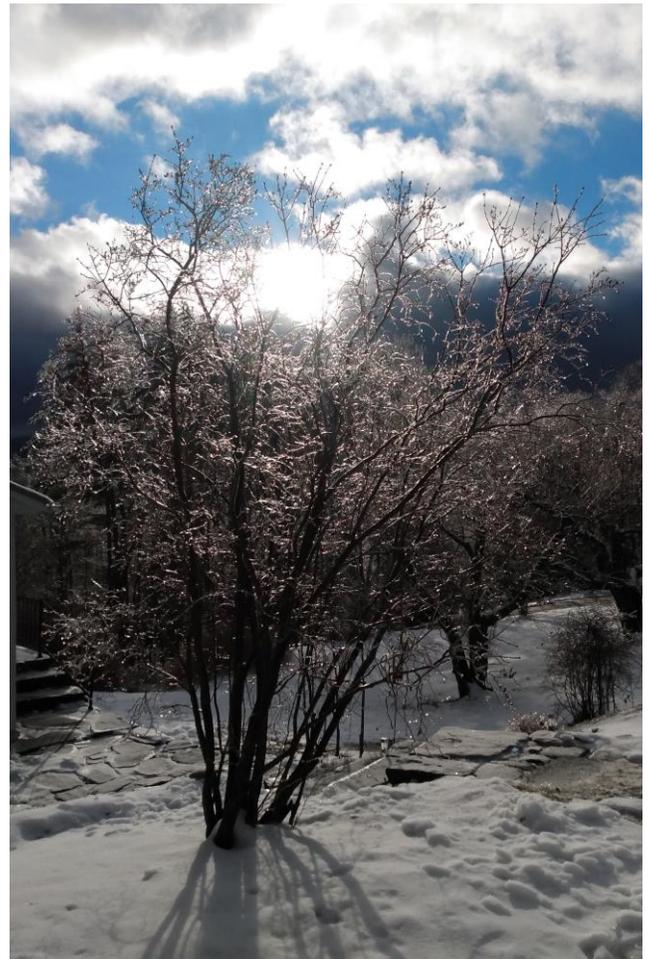
COMMUNITY INFORMATION

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.



TRASH PICK-UP: JAN 10 & 24

RECYCLE PICK-UP: JAN 3, 13 & 31



Magical Ice and Sunlight - Sherry Maher