

The Athenian

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Sponsored by Grafton Cares

MARCH 2022

Democracy In Action!

Some say that democracy is on the run, but you would not know that at Tuesday's annual town meeting. Maybe it was the fact that, because of COVID, we had not been seeing each other on a regular basis. And it was like "old home week" with a lot of friendly chatter. "Good to see you!" "How is the family?"

That feeling carried over to the meeting itself, not a harsh word was said, creating a desire in many folks to participate in the debate. We listened to each other as well, which added to the good atmosphere.

We have packed a lot of information in this month's issue including signs of spring and CSA news. So be sure to read on...
- *Dennis Hunt*



- The motion to set the time for future Town Meetings was amended by a standing vote of 29 to 7, and then approved by a nearly unanimous voice vote. The 2023 Town Meeting will be held at 6 PM on the Monday before the 1st Tuesday in March. And here is a rundown on the election of officials:

Moderator - Bemis 46, Damon 24.

Town Clerk and Treasurer - Hannah Regier 72 votes

Road Commissioner - Matt Perry 54 votes

Krista Gay for Town Grand Juror - 50 votes, for Campbell Fund Trustee - 54 votes and Town Agent - 47 votes.

Meetinghouse Committee - Candace Damon 65 votes.

Cemetery Commission - Don Capponcelli 71 votes.

Delinquent Tax Collector - Darlene Wyman 69 votes.

Selectboard - David Bemis 54 votes

Lister - Amber Stevens 68 votes

Constable - Stephen Oakes 62 votes.

Auditors - Michael Bates, 64 votes, James Trimble 66 votes, and a 3rd seat remains open.

Regarding the WNUESD School board, Lynn Morgan was reelected for Athens, Krista Gay won as a write in candidate for the second Athens seat, and David Major was voted in for Westminster and Hardy Merrill for Grafton, both also as write in candidates.

Please note that anyone interested in seeking the positions for the two new select board members, the high school representative and the one-year term for auditor, should contact the select board. They will make appointments to these open seats as well as to many non-elected posts at their March meeting. - *Sherry Maher*

Select Board Meeting Tidbits

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

- Discussion continued about steps needed for the Town to participate in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). Current flood maps for Athens

Town Meeting Report

Approximately 50 people attended the 2022 Athens Town Meeting on Tuesday at 10 AM, and was nearly ready to adjourn in less than 1.5 hours. But the last official item of business - setting the time and day for next year's meeting, turned into a lengthy debate on the now familiar question of what time or day would enable more voters to attend.

Here is a brief summary from Tuesday's Town Meeting for those who couldn't make it. We had lots of "ink" in the Reformer, were part of a story on VT Digger, and it is already available to watch on FACT8 TV(https://www.fact8.com/e107_plugins/media_library/media_library.php?118.0).

- Voted YES to eliminate the position of Road Commissioner in a year.
- Voted YES by paper ballot 26 to 23 to expand the Select Board to 5 members.
- Also by paper ballot, voted YES 26 to 23 to publish a list of Delinquent taxpayers in the Town Report.
- All budget articles passed including the creation of fund for matching grants using \$15,000 from 2021 surplus.
- All social service agency requests passed unanimously by voice vote.

are from 2007 and need to be updated. Athens is in the queue for updated flood study in 2023. There is no cost to the Town for the mapping. Wichie Artu suggested bringing landowners into the conversation so they will know how it will affect them. Federal banking laws require flood insurance for properties in a “special flood hazard area.”

- The Board of Civil Authority (BCA) sent a letter to the state opposing the redistricting proposed for Athens.
- The Board approved reordering a supply of Town trash bags.
- Saxtons River Fire Department submitted a request to increase the cost for their services, but it was not received in time to be included in the budget for this year.
- Matt has posted some of the roads due to mud conditions. Gravel purchase from Bazin was approved, and the FEMA application is still in process.
- Darlene & Lynn were on Channel 5 on Feb. 22 for a show about VT Town names. - *Sherry Maher*

Notes from the School Board

Summer school this year has been scheduled for July. It will be only one month due to staffing shortages. The summer program for the elementary aged students will be held at only two of the elementary schools within the SU to improve the staff to student ratio. The 2 schools are yet to be determined.

The Supervisory Union board has been working at updating the school policies. As they are updated they are passed to the district boards for approval. We have also had a report from the Auditors, RRH Smith. They have made great progress in getting the SU financial books back into order. As a result we were able to get our budget pulled together already and hope to have the information at our next meeting that will let us determine if we have a deficit or surplus from last year to roll over into the 2022-23 budget.

Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns about our school district- 892-869-2227.

- *Lynn Morgan*

Thank You Darlene!

This past town meeting was Darlene Wyman’s last as our town clerk. At the end of last year Darlene informed the select board that she would not be running for either town clerk or treasurer. This was an end to an era.

Darlene was elected for the first time as town clerk in the late 1990’s. She has spent over 20 years taking care of the needs of Athens and it’s residents. From dog

licenses to marriage licenses it was Darlene who you saw. She started before the advent of computers in town offices and like many others in local government she had to learn as she went. The job of town clerk can be one of stress and anxiety. There are deadlines that must be met, paperwork needing to be filed with the state and federal government, and a whole host of other things that need doing in a timely manner. She always remained calm even when the pressure was on.

Darlene and her husband Dick moved into Athens in the late 1960’s and raised their family here. She was the bus driver when the school bus was a van and she served on the school board. Darlene is also a long time member of the Athens Community Church.

During her long tenure as our town clerk she also took on the job as treasurer and as delinquent tax collector, wearing multiple hats and doing many jobs because there wasn’t anyone else to do them. She has been a rock in the foundation of our town.

Although Darlene is no longer our town clerk or treasurer, she will still be working for the town as she was reelected as the delinquent tax collector. She will still be in the office on (some) Mondays helping our new town clerk, Hannah Regier learn the ropes. They have worked together for the past 2 years with Hannah in the position as assistant treasurer and now with Darlene’s help she is moving into her new positions as town clerk and treasurer.

This all means that Darlene will be able to pursue some of her hobbies such as quilting. She was the recipient of a gift card to Country Treasures, a fabric and quilt shop in Chester donated by several of the town officials and she also received a card signed by all those in attendance at this past town meeting.

A big thank you from everyone in town for the many years of service, and we are happy we will still see you (on occasion) at the town office. - *Sandi Capponcelli*

And This From Darlene...

I wish to thank everyone for their support over the years and for the card and gift that was presented to me Tuesday. It was a nice surprise and greatly appreciated.

Thank you.

- *Darlene Wyman*

Grace Farm Offers Veggie Shares

Grace Farm 2022 vegetable shares ('CSA shares') are now available! Vegetable shares will run from the beginning of June through the first week of October, for a total of 19 weeks. Members will receive a weekly mix of fresh vegetables, and will also have



access to other farm products, such as pestos, salve, herbs and flowers. Two pick up locations are available; Grace Farm in Athens, and the West Townshend Farmers Market in Townshend. Grace Farm pickups will be Tuesdays from 4 to 6, June 7 through October 11th. West Townshend Farmers Market pick-ups will be Fridays during the market, 4:30-6:30, June 3rd to October 7th.

Farm shares are \$20-30/week, on a sliding scale. The farm share will be free choice, on a points system; each pick up will be staffed by a farmer, and members will get to choose from available veg and farm products using their weekly allowance of points. Note; there will be no late pick up available, but you can send someone else to pick up your share if you won't be able to make it to pick up.

Weekly egg shares are also available, at \$6/dozen, as an add-on to your summer or fall vegetable share.

The goal of the sliding scale is to make produce available to individuals and families no matter their income level. The hope is that families who are financially stable and never worry about feeding themselves opt in at the \$30/week level. Folks who sometimes worry about paying bills can opt in closer to \$20/week. If you don't know which level makes sense for you, let's chat! No one will be turned away due to lack of funds.

Sign up at <http://gracefarmvt.com/store>, or reach out for more information, mooney.grace@gmail.com.

- Grace Mooney

Grafton Cares Update

It has begun again, our annual ritual. Like Lucy promising to hold the football, spring promises us that it's here. Then, as we go for the bait, it is snatched away, and like Charlie Brown, we land on our heads--in a foot of fresh snow! Nonetheless, we can come up smiling for, after all, it IS spring!

Be assured, Grafton Cares will not enact any ritual such as here described. Community meals are always on our minds, yet we will make no promises which we will later have to retract. But, the day will come when they'll be back!

Over the past month we were privileged to provide: Meals on Wheels to 12 customers, \$285 in gas cards, 1 shawl, 3 sunshine baskets, 2 welcome bags, and 1 hospital bed. We received 1 shower chair.

Finally, with spring on the doorstep, Lucia is eager to help folks greet warm weather with healthy, summer-ready bodies. To join the Stong Living program, just give Lucia a call at 843-5158.

Best wishes.

- Bill Toomey

Meals on Wheels Celebrates 50 Years in March!



March 2022 marks fifty years since Meals on Wheels, the nation's premier nutrition program for seniors, was funded. And for Vermont's aging population, it has become a lifeline for many of our neighbors.

"I began preparing meals for Wardsboro and Jamaica residents, and then Townshend," said

Stephanie Schryba, the owner of the Townshend Dam Diner. "Then, when Valley Cares ended their programming, I picked up Grafton, Athens, Londonderry, and then Newfane."

In fact, the area served by the intrepid volunteers and staff out of the Dam Diner covers the largest geographic spread of any Meals on Wheels operation in southern Vermont. Each month, more than 1200 meals are prepared by Stephanie and delivered by a faithful fleet of volunteers to area residents who can't leave their homes

"Stephanie is incredible," said volunteer driver Matt Jenkins, who delivers in Jamaica. "She's the lynch pin of this whole operation."

Other drivers agree, and point to how she has assembled a volunteer fleet from various towns and organizations, including Dennis Hunt, who is affiliated with Grafton Cares, and Karen Sabin, who delivers in Wardsboro but sees Neighborhood Connections as her "home base."

Sporting a Cape Cod "Elder Care" hat from his former volunteer days, Dan Towler was thoughtful as he waited for the carefully packaged meals to be loaded into



his car for the Townshend route. "I wish more people would sign up for this – it's a great service and ensures that people who remain at home get good, nutritious food. I know there are many more out there who could benefit from this."

Dan may get his wish, as the number of meals delivered in the area grew 8% each month during the last quarter of 2021.

"It's based on nutritional needs., but there is also the social aspect of having a friendly face come to the door," says Wendi Germain, the Nutrition & Wellness Director of Senior Solutions, which provides substantial support to the program. "For many, these drivers may be the only face they see all week. We so appreciate these volunteers. I cannot overemphasize how critical it is to have public support for these programs, through both volunteerism and donations." Wendi noted that Meals on Wheels operations across Vermont rely heavily on public donations to keep them running.

Those wishing to volunteer drive time or donate, or to sign up for home-delivered meals may contact Wendi at wgermain@seniorsolutionsvt.org or call 1-802-755-7295. In addition, donations may be made directly to Stephanie Schryber through the mail at PO Box 338, Townshend VT 05353.
- Thom Simmons

Veggie Van Go

Free, fresh food distributed each month hosted by Grace Cottage Family Health & Hospital. Upcoming Distribution Dates: Thursdays, Noon – 1 p.m. March 24 and April 28. Location: Newfane Congregational Church (at the back side of the Newfane Common). Veggie Van Go is a program hosted by hospitals & schools and offered by the Vermont Food Bank. Typical items include seasonal fresh produce and occasional frozen or dairy products. All in need are welcome! There are no eligibility requirements.
-Dennis Hunt

Nature Museum Update

The Nature Museum has a variety of programs coming up in March. Now that we are gradually getting out again, these deserve a look see. For more information contact the Nature Museum at 802-843-2111 or info@nature-museum.org

March 10. "Hyenas, Carnivores, and the Ecosystem."

March 11. "Mighty Acorns Club, ages 3-6, March Session."

March 12. "Winter Wildlife Tracking."

March 23. "Books and Nature Winter Series."

-Dennis Hunt

Entries From A Weather Journal

With temperatures reaching into the 50's the other day it really was a taste of spring.

You could feel it coming. Treah Pichette's observations can second this feeling; "John heard red-wing blackbirds along the road yesterday which seemed early so I looked up in my records. Over the last 18 years, only twice have they returned in February and other than this year, the other date was the 29th which would have been March 1st in a non-Leap Year! The average return is around March 15th, so this year they are a full 3 weeks early."

However, you never can tell what awaits us from one year to the next. Take a look at these two examples.

February 30, 2008. "The snowiest winter so far. One storm after another. Roof raking, ice dams, leaks, partially covered windows, and fences covered. There is fear for the coming mud season."

March 2, 2006. "Cloudy, cold, dry. Missed another snowstorm. It went south of us. "Endless nonsense!"

-Dennis Hunt

Thoughts To Ponder

The Annual Town Meeting is an important part of living here in Vermont. It is a critical part of our democracy at a time when it seems to be under fire. Here are some things to think about.

"The benefit of an open town hall meeting is one, that you get to hear a lot of different views, and two, it has credibility."
-John McCain

"Shouting down and intimidating someone from speaking their mind is not exactly a Vermont town meeting value, nor should it be an American town meeting value."
-Bernie Sanders

"The town hall meeting is a concept we created to help us make sure that every member of the community can come in and give their opinion." -Alan Edelman

-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: 3rd Monday 10:00 AM

School Board: 2nd & 4th Thursday 6:00

Do you have a news item for The Athenian or a favorite family story to share?

CONTACT US at theathenianvt@gmail.com.



TRASH PICK-UP: MARCH 7 & 21

RECYCLE PICK-UP: MARCH 14 & 28

Charles Perham Journal – March 1863 – Shared by James Trimble

1. Did not go to meeting today. Practiced some in the morning. Henry was here. It has snowed all day. In the evening played upon my piano.
2. Stayed home all day and practiced on my piano. A very pleasant day.
3. Stayed at home all day and practiced. Father went to town meeting. A very snowy day today.
4. Went to Saxtons River to day. Started to Mr. Chilses to see Jennie Ober. Heard Helen play. Did not practice much in the evening.
5. Stayed at home all day. Father went to Cambridgeport. I practiced. A very pleasant day.
6. Stayed at home all day. Did not practice but three hours today.
7. Practiced three hours in the forenoon. In the afternoon started to go up to ----- but did not go. Stayed to Dodges a little while in the evening practiced some.
8. It stormed so I could not go to meeting so I practiced upon my piano 6 hours.
9. Went to Cambridgeport mill in the forenoon had Royals cut my hair. In the afternoon and evening practiced about six hours.
10. Practiced about six hours today. Broke a road out with the oxen today. A very pleasant day today.
11. Went to Saxtons River today to my fourth lesson. Started to see Jennie Ober. I come home Father is sick. Had a invitation for Friday night.
12. Stayed to home to day. Practiced five hours. Broke a road down the hill started to Dodges.
13. In the forenoon practiced in the afternoon went down to see Royals folks came home. Received a letter from Emma.
14. Stayed at home alone all day today and practiced. Father and mother went over to Mr. Jenkins.
15. Father and I went to meeting today. I played in church. George Harwood died last night at 3 oclock. In the evening I practiced.
16. Practiced three hours today. Did not much feel like practicing today. Broke a road down the hill with the oxen. Jessie came up here to get me to go to play tomorrow and the funeral.
17. Jessie stayed all night last night. I and Father went to the funeral today and I played for them to sing. In the evening I practiced.
18. In the forenoon I practiced upon my piano. In the afternoon father and I went to Saxtons River to take my fifth lesson. In the evening I practiced upon my piano.
19. In the forenoon I practiced upon my piano. In the afternoon Ella came up here she stayed till night I went home with her.
20. Practiced in the forenoon. Received a letter from Emma. In the afternoon went to Mr. Akins stayed to Mr. Ball a little while. In the evening came home with Mr. Dodge.
21. Stayed home all day. In evening practiced about six hours. Mother is sick today.
22. Went to meeting with the team alone for Mother is sick today. In evening went down to Cambridgeport to concert with Martha Ball.
23. The Dodges was here this morning. I went down to Brookline after aunt Nancy. Today I practiced four hours I did not feel like practicing today.
24. Practiced in the forenoon. In the afternoon I went down to visit Mr. Dodge a little while the rest of afternoon and evening I practiced.
25. It rained so hard today that I could not go down to my lesson. I practiced about five hours. Mother is feeling better today a stormy evening.
26. Went to Saxtons River and took my sixth lesson.
27. The Dodges was here this morning wife and children. Aunt Phebe. Merrill and wife. Practiced about five hours in the evening
28. Tapped some trees today. Father to boil off sap. Practiced don't know how much. In the evening practiced.
29. Did not go to meeting. I was home about all day. In the evening went down to see Marion had a good time.
30. I stayed to home all day. Marion, Ella Ball and Willy Dodge came up here. In the evening went down after Sylvia went down to hear ---- with Sylvia.
31. Went to carry aunt Nancy home in the forenoon. Practiced in the afternoon. In the evening Sylvia here had a grand time tonight.