

# The Athenian

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Sponsored by Grafton Cares

SEPTEMBER 2022

## Community Suppers Return!

Usually, the return of the Athenian from our “summer break” signals that summer is just about over. But that is countered somewhat this year as we look forward to enjoying Community Suppers again on the first Friday in Athens! We last gathered for supper in Athens on March 6, 2020, and now 2 and a half years later we are finally coming back together. This also had Dennis and I reflecting recently on the fact that the suppers now as well as this newsletter have been a regular part of our community for 12 and a half years ...WOW! Over those years, much has changed, much has stayed the same, and I dare say, we have all benefited from these endeavors to come together and build our sense of community.

As we come back together again this Friday, let's celebrate that as we say “Hello, we've missed you!” to old friends, and “Welcome neighbor” to the new folks who have arrived in Athens over these 2 and a half years!

- Sherry Maher

### Select Board Meeting Tidbits

In addition to news in other pieces below, here's a rundown from the June, July & August Select Board meetings that might be of interest:

#### June

- At their June 16th meeting, the Board unanimously adopted the Vermont Declaration of Inclusion, adding Athens to the list of 63 towns and cities, along with organizations such as the Vermont League of Cities and Towns, and Governor Scott. The Declaration begins, “The Town of Athens condemns racism and welcomes all persons, regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, gender identity or expression, age, or disability, and wants everyone to feel safe and welcome in our community.” To learn more and read the full text



of the Declaration go to their website <https://vtdeclarationofinclusion.org/>.

- A School Board Town Meeting was held in June where those present passed all articles related to the withdrawal of Westminster from the WNEUES District. As of July 1 Athens and Grafton will be the only members of this union district. Harold Noyes was elected to be the third representative to the new board from Athens. Grafton did not elect a third member at that time.
  - Concern was raised by the Weather Emergency Committee regarding the fact that there is not a viable plan for a cooling shelter in town for residents during the severe heat waves being forecast.
  - Lengthy discussion regarding possible policies for Driveway Access, Culvert Replacement and Maintenance. Research and further discussion will be brought up at a future meeting.
  - Town Garage access was clarified. The gate is to be closed when the town crew is not on the property. No private heavy equipment should be in the yard, and no town equipment will be used to load private vehicles. Signage will be posted and sand and mulch for residents will be made available outside the gate. Mulch is now down Miller Rd. to the back of the Town Garage property.
- #### July
- The Municipal Tax Rate was set at 1.04, down from last year's rate of 1.14.
  - The new email address for the for the Town Office is [townoffice@athensvt.gov](mailto:townoffice@athensvt.gov). New addresses will be forthcoming for the listers and the road foreman.
  - Health concerns were raised regarding trash accumulation on a few properties and the Health Officer was to be notified.

- The Town Meeting Survey Committee is gathering input from residents with the goal of engaging more people to attend and participate in Town Meeting.
- The Emergency Committee has cleaned, reorganized and repacked the supplies in their trailer including cots, Red Cross bedding supplies, MREs, cleaning products, paper goods, etc.
- Updated flood maps continue to be delayed and Wichie Artu has had no success in connecting with FEMA on this matter.
- A lengthy discussion addressed issues with the relationship between the Board and the Meetinghouse Committee, evident in the audio recording from the Board's discussion at a special meeting on July 1 regarding the outstanding loan balance. The purpose of the special meeting was for approval of the first payment for the current restoration project under contract with Stebbins. Chair David Bemis apologized on behalf of the Board, and after much discussion, a plan to move forward was agreed to.
- A new policy regarding Highway Access for new or reconfigured driveways was approved. There was also a discussion on parameters for naming private roads so as to comply with the 911 system.
- It was noted that 28 names of resident dog owners were on a list of those with unregistered dogs.

### August

- Repair to Mill Hill was approved for washed out areas following a recent accident.
- Hannah Regier gave an update on servicing the old safes that the Town hasn't been able to access for roughly 30-40 years. She also noted that there is a significant need for more document storage for Town records. She found an inventory of what was in those safes as of 1992. Discussion followed about this issue and possible grants will be researched.
- Hannah reported that new highway maps are posted and 2 roads – Ober Hill and Ernst - are not accurately listed and thus are noted as not up to standard.
- Discussion continued on proceeding with Hazard Mitigation Plan. Tim Stevenson will be reaching out to Brookline about working together on the process.
- Discussion on progress for the new Community Center, along with the second annual "Untag Sale" scheduled for August 27.



- Executive session was called for a contract matter.
- Regarding highway matters, the new backhoe has arrived, BART inspected tanks at the garage and found that gauges needed to be replaced and the heating oil tank needs to be replaced. Both trucks are in need of repair but it wasn't clear if they would be covered by warranty. Sand has been ordered, chloride has not been available.

- Sherry Maher

### Notes from the School Board

We are grateful for the returning staff and the new staff that have joined our school team. Many of the open positions at the Grafton Elementary School have been filled. As of this writing, the school is still in the process of interviewing for a Counselor position and a Title One position.

On August 25th I had the opportunity to meet the staff and tour the school building. The custodians, Gary and Bob, have been working very hard this summer getting the building ready for the classes. Walls are painted, floors cleaned and polished, windows washed, and supplies and equipment was moved into the proper rooms for each teacher. The classrooms were very attractive and inviting, and the staff members were so friendly and enjoyable to visit with. Thank you, Angela, for organizing the "Meet the Staff" event. The staff was talking eagerly about the 2-hour school bus tour event they would be going on the next day. During this event they would be visiting families, community members, handing out goodie bags, and cookies, made by the Grafton Inn.

Planning for the new playground is in progress. The school's playground committee and Angela have put together a plan with 6 playground structures to be added to the ones still standing, and 6 activity stations. They have secured the EESER grant Concept Approval. The committee's next step is to look into whether the equipment and base material chosen are ADA compliant.

Save the date. 6:00 pm on Monday, September 12th there will be a community meeting at the Grafton Elementary School. We hope many of you will come join us and voice your opinions on the discussion topics that are brought up.

- Lynn Morgan



## Things are Moving Right Along at the Meetinghouse!

While it seemed to take forever to get the current Meetinghouse Façade Project off the ground, once it started things have moved right along. We have restored windows - which to those who knew just how deteriorated the windows were - is just amazing as there was nothing but glaze holding the glass in place! The exterior painting is well underway, and before long we expect to see the job fully done. We've had the team of Pinnacle Window & Door and Stebbins Spectacular Painting, thanks in part to a grant administered by the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, combined with a very generous donation to the Historic Society from a friend of the Meetinghouse and designated Town funds. The Committee and the Athens Historic Preservation Society is extremely grateful to all for their support to preserve this incredible building.

With the end of the project in sight, we just might be able to pull off an ice cream social! Stay tuned for happenings at the Meetinghouse.

And speaking of being social, we recently teamed up with our colleagues from the Brookline Meetinghouse for very successful fundraiser at the Guilford Welcome Center on I91. It was lots of fun to chat with visitors to Vermont about our buildings, while offering snacks and yummy sandwiches for many very generous donations. Kudos to Pam Russo, Ginger Maciejowski and Don Capponcelli for lots of help in holding up our end, as well as to those who donated baked goods for the event. But the prize- if there was one - would go to Laurie Indenbaum for offering to entertain all with her fiddle tunes and bringing along a few musical friends to boot! If you missed the opportunity to support this event, no worries as I think you may get another chance next year!

- Sherry Maher



## Grafton Cares Update

Last month passed in a flash, and following our summer break from community lunches in July, we were delighted to have good attendance for all five lunches

held in August. While we are eager to have more volunteer cooks for these, lunches will continue to be held every Wednesday at noon in the Chapel.

The first community dinner since the start of COVID will be held at 6 PM, Friday, September 2, in the Athens Church. And reestablishing our old pattern of first and third Fridays of every month, it will be followed by a dinner at 6 PM, September 16, in Grafton's Chapel. Special to this Grafton dinner will be a debut performance by Bill Toomey who has answered the call for cooks. Bill's repertoire includes mud pies in his early years and current triumphs with pb & j sandwiches as well as hot dogs and canned beans. And yet, with some assistance from his associates, he promises a gourmet surprise that would make an Iron Chef weep. Don't miss it!

Our activities this past month include: Meals on Wheels, 7 people; 1 ride to a medical appointment; 3 sunshine baskets; 1 welcome bag; 2 shawls; and \$385 in gas cards for medical appointments. In the medical equipment department: 1 walker returned, and 1 wheelchair loaned.

Get an early start on fall. It makes the first snow seem farther away! Best to all.

- 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 [grafftonchurch@gmail.com](mailto:grafftonchurch@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 7:30pm. Masks requested but not essential. If you have questions call Joe Winrich at 365-4348.

**Everyone Eats—Newfane:** This program benefits our communities in several ways. It financially supports area restaurants and their employees, as well 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 month of September on the 22nd from noon to 1 PM at the Newfane Congregational Church on West St. 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. Future dates are 10/27, 11/17 and 12/22.

**Multiply Your EBT Benefits at a local Farmers Market.** Do you have 3 Squares VT/SNAP benefits? When you use 3 Squares VT/SNAP or P/EBT benefits at a local farmers market, you'll now get up to \$20 match in Crop Cash for fresh fruits & veggies. That means \$10 in EBT buys \$30 of local food! The Brattleboro Area Farmers Market is open Saturdays, the Putney Farmers Market on Sundays, the Townshend Farmers Market and the Greater Falls Farmers Market in Bellows Falls are both open on Fridays. Check this directory: [nofavt.org/find-organic-local-food/farmers-markets](http://nofavt.org/find-organic-local-food/farmers-markets) for more farmers markets details.

You can always call the Senior Help Line at Senior Solutions 802-642-5119 for more food information.

--Dennis Hunt

## **Senior Solutions: It's Time to Apply for Seasonal Fuel Assistance!**

September is here – which means it is time to sign up for Vermont's Seasonal Heating Fuel Assistance Program, which can offset winter heating costs by anywhere from a few hundred to even a few thousand dollars. Senior Solutions can help you apply for assistance through Vermont's LIHEAP program, which could help lower your bills if you heat with oil, kerosene, propane, electric, coal, wood pellets, or wood.

Half of Vermont seniors who are eligible never even apply with the simple, 1-page application, leaving money on the table. Many others wait until the middle of winter, when the temperature, fuel level in the tank, and bank accounts are all running low. But by waiting until after November, even those found eligible receive only a portion of what they would otherwise be awarded.

This program is income and household-size based. If your income is at or below these levels, you qualify:

Household of 1 – 2,096/month

Household of 2 – 2,823/month

Household of 3 – 3,550/month

Household of 4 – 4,279/month

Benefits are sent directly to your fuel company on your behalf, giving you a credit for the season. In the case of wood, it will either appear on an EBT card containing a cash amount, or could be directly deposited into your bank account.

There are many misconceptions about this program: It doesn't matter if you own your home, or rent, as long as you are incurring a heating cost. It doesn't have an "asset test," so the value of your vehicles, property, and bank accounts are immaterial.

Call the Senior Solutions HelpLine at 802-885-2669 to obtain an application or receive assistance making an application over the phone, while you are still entitled to full seasonal benefits.

- Thom Simmons

## **September Library Corner**

### **Smiles and Gratitude**

A big thank you to volunteer Kira Bate, a Green Mountain Union High School student earning her community service graduation requirements at the library. She's been a great help! Many thanks as well to Tania Evans for her new book donations for both our collection and the book sale room.

### **Library Programs**

We've had such a great time on our Walks of Wonder this summer that we are extending the program for another month to enjoy the hawk migration at Putney Mountain. This is a fairly easy hike, so please consider joining us.

The Nature & Books Discussion series, co-sponsored with the Nature Museum, will resume in October on-line and an amazing list of titles is forthcoming. Please contact the library to sign-up for this spirited book group. The Page Turner's Book Group continues monthly both in-house and on-line and we always welcome new participants. We also enjoy welcoming newcomers to our weekly on-line Spanish Conversation group. Contact us if you are interested in joining this group—it's perfect for those at an intermediate Spanish level and a lot of fun.

We will kick off the school year with a library-sponsored musical program featuring singer and storyteller Marcos Levy on September 13 at the Grafton Elementary School.

### **New Books**

Our shelves are filled with titles for you to enjoy in the waning days of summer and into the fall. Stop by and check out new books by well-known authors such as Geraldine Brooks, David Fischer Hackett, Elin

Hilderbrand, Ruth Ware, Tess Gerritsen, Sy Montgomery and more. Or try an author who is unknown to you—you may discover a new favorite. Younger readers will find new graphic novels on the shelf, lots of great new picture books, engrossing chapter books and educational nonfiction. If you don't find what you are looking for, let us know. We are happy to consider books for purchase and also search in the Vermont inter-library loan system for our readers.

### Programming Schedule

Spanish Group on Zoom, Tuesdays, 11:00am-noon, Hybrid, in person and on Zoom. Intermediate level. There will be no Spanish Group on 9/13

Musical Concert with Marcos Levy, Tuesday, September 13, Grafton Elementary School

Walks of Wonder: Sunday, September 18, 2022, 11:00 am: Putney Mountain, Putney Vermont

Page Turners Book Group, Tuesday, September 6, 12:30-1:30, Hybrid, in person and on Zoom

September focus: *Books by Bohjalian*

- Michelle Dufort

### Spring Bulb Sale at Chester's Fall Festival

On September 17 and 18 Chester Townscape volunteers will again be selling spring-flowering bulbs at Chester's Fall Festival at a location between the Hearse House and the Information Booth. All bulbs are top quality, hardy, easy care, shunned by deer and voles, and expected to return year after year when grown in full or part sun and in well-drained locations. The different varieties of narcissus offered this year include early, mid, and late bloomers with a variety of colors and heights. The 2022 Bulb order form describing the Queen's Day, Mount Hood, and Sun Disc daffodil offers may be downloaded from [www.chestervt.gov/chestertownscape](http://www.chestervt.gov/chestertownscape).

Bulbs will be sold Cash and Carry from 10 AM-4 PM on Saturday and Sunday September 17 and 18. Bulbs may also be ordered in advance by September 12 for pick-up at the Fall Festival by making a check out to CCA with CT Bulbs in the memo line and sending the completed order form and check to Chester Townscape, PO Box 561, Chester, VT 05143. For additional information or for those who must make alternative pick-up arrangements, contact Polly Montgomery at 802-875-5446 or [montgomerypolly@yahoo.com](mailto:montgomerypolly@yahoo.com).

At the bulb table, Townscape's free brochures for the Main Street and the Stone Village/Depot walking tours will be available. Volunteers will also be raffling a garden pot for 2023 display in some lucky person's front yard. All sales help support Chester Townscape's seasonal floral displays which will be changed later this fall to display pumpkins, flowering kale, and corn stalks at public locations around town. These decorations beautify Chester and make it a handsome

place in which to live and visit. Chester Townscape is a committee of Chester Community Alliance, a 501(c)(3) charitable organization.  
- Lillian Willis

### Notes From A Weather Journal

Labor Day weekend, we expect the weather to be accommodating, beautiful sunny days and cool nights. Just like in 2007. "Beautiful, cool, low humidity, sunny, blue skies."

Most Labor Days turned out to be that way since 2007...but there are exceptions!

**September First, 2011:** "4<sup>th</sup> Day. Still no electricity. Roads gradually being opened. Propane at 66%. Can hold out many more days. Weather cooperating, cool, warm, sunny and dry."

**September First, 2021:** "Cool, cloudy start. Flash Flood Warning because of remnants of Ida (tropical storm). Delta Virus still spreading."

Hopefully, this year will be just like 2007!

- Dennis Hunt

### Thoughts To Ponder

Labor Day, a time to celebrate both work and play. Here are a few thoughts, one light hearted and others more serious.

"Labor Day is a glorious holiday because your child will be going back to school the next day. It would have been called Independence Day, but that name was already taken"  
--Bill Dobbs

"My father taught me to work, he did not teach me to love it."  
--Abraham Lincoln

"Far and away the best prize that life has to offer is the chance to work hard at work worth doing."  
-Theodore Roosevelt

"Real success is finding your lifework that you love."  
--David McCullough

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

**CONTACT US** at [theathenianvt@gmail.com](mailto:theathenianvt@gmail.com).



**TRASH PICK-UP: SEPT 5 & 19, OCT 3**

**RECYCLE PICK-UP: SEPT 12 & 26**

## Enjoy More of a Look at the Meetinghouse Façade Project

Top Left – Meetinghouse” Face Lift” underway.

Top Right - Transom Window from center front of the building at the shop in Keene, NH.

Center Left – Badly deteriorated sill from Palladium Window sits atop the new wood that will replace it.

Center Right – Restored Palladium Window ready to be reinstalled.

Bottom Left – Window openings covered while windows were out for restoration.

Bottom Right – Restored Windows back in and sills painted.

