

The Athenian

Volume 13, Number 7

Sponsored by Grafton Cares

MARCH 2023

Spring - Just Around the Corner?

But, the winter of 2023 is not done with us just yet! The good news is that this storm heading our way as I write this, won't get here until after Community Supper on Friday, and will be gone before Town Meeting on Monday night, March 6th at 6PM! And speaking of that, remember if you already have your ballot, you can turn it in on Monday night. Otherwise, stop by the Town Office when the polls are open between 10 – 7 on Tuesday, March 7th to cast your votes for Town Officers, School Directors, school district budgets



Sherry Maher

Select Board Meeting Tidbits

Here are a few things from the February Select Board meeting that might be of interest:

- Tim Stevenson raised concern about available grants that the Town is not eligible for without a Town Plan. Should there be a desire to try a third time to create and pass a Town Plan, Tim stressed the importance of a strong endorsement from the Select Board. Hannah Regier concurred with Tim that we are missing a number of funding opportunities
- Don Capponcelli learned that ARPA funds can be used as matching funds for other grants. He is interested in USDA planning grants for both the Community Center and Town Garage. He also asked for an official charge from the Board about the possibility of moving the Town Office to the Community Center. David recommends that it be on the March agenda, and can be brought up under other business at Town Meeting.
- Hannah reports that the change from accrual to cash accounting in NEMRC went smoothly. There may be some items that show up in next year's Town Report that will prompt questions.
- Sandi Capponcelli reported an inquiry from a middle school science teacher to use the Community Center as a home base for an outdoor science program. More details to follow.
- Steve Oakes has agreed to fixing the gate and broken sign at the logging landing on Sam Farr Rd. The

logging will continue happening there for a number of years, but the gate should be fixed within a few weeks.

- It was noted that a lot of stone has been used on the roads and more gravel was delivered that week and it's not even mud season yet.

- Janet Perry was given the highway budget planning packet for

Matt Perry who will take it down to VTrans for help filling it out. The Board will act on it at their next meeting.

- Denise Randall noted again that the highway time sheets continue to be lacking in the requested details. For example, "shop" was listed as the activity several whole days. There is a potential liability risk to the Town if that information was to be needed for verification at some point in the future.
- There was discussion with regard to the insulation work to be done at the Town Garage and Town Office. Sandi wants to request the return of a deposit since the contractor who was awarded the job has not been responsive. David notes the need to give them a definite time frame first since we did agree to the contract.
- David inquired about a letter regarding posting the roads. Janet reports that Matt hasn't posted the roads because last year the signs were ripped off.
- Steve Oakes was reappointed as Health Officer. Harold Noyes reported that at a recent meeting he attended with the Sheriff's Department, that Steve might need to get more training for his role as Constable.
- There was a discussion about the appraisal process in light of the impact changing real estate values have had. David notes that it is all up in the air but at least Athens is not going to have to do a reappraisal this year.
- A lengthy discussion took place related to grants and possible grant writers to assist the Town, and the cost of such services. Hannah notes that being organized with full project plans and know which grants fit for which pieces and how it all fits together would make sense.

- A concern was noted about the appearance of the Town Report and in particular the handwritten page numbers. Sandi is willing to offer her professional skills to help the auditors design the books.
- A brief Executive Session was held. There was no mention in the minutes of any decisions made in session.
- *Sherry Maher*

Notes from the School Board

At the February 8th SU meeting the Superintendent reported on the PCB testing that the state is scheduling for all the schools. Westminster has been tested, but the results have not yet been seen. The High School is scheduled to be tested next month, Saxtons River scheduled for April and Central School will be scheduled for some time in 2024. Andy informed us that PCBs were used in insulation and wiring into the 70's. Once the PCB levels are determined, if any, then the source of their presence needs to be identified, cleaning protocols established and relocation sites lined up if the school is contaminated enough to require relocation of students.

He also reported that: "The SU is beginning a pilot program with WeRHope in our Middle and High schools. WeRHope is an organization that provides imbedded coaches in schools to work with students to reduce anxiety and increase social emotional well-being. In a survey conducted last year by Greater Falls Connection at the high school, 79% of students acknowledge "During the past 12 months, how often have you been bothered by feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge?" The schools are still dealing with social emotional fallout from the pandemic period.

Director of Technology reported on the many areas within the WNESU and its member districts that use technology and the various technology items that are outdated and in need of replacing. Some of the areas that are being worked on are cybersecurity, HVAC server systems, class room smart boards and teacher computers and cameras and door access control systems. WNESU has a 3 year plan established to get these various systems updated, repaired, or installed.

The board discussed a matter brought to it's attention regarding the Superintendent's contract. This discussion was done in executive session. There had been rumors that Andy was getting a pay raise. That was not the case. His pay stayed the same.
- *Lynn Morgan*

Grafton Cares News

March at last! Is the end in sight? Perhaps if we're willing to mud-dle on for a bit longer.

At any rate, we had a rather quiet month in February with food being at the center of our activities. Community dinners and lunches were well attended, although we always have room for more folks.

Here is our meals calendar for March. Please note changes due to St. Patrick's Day dinner held on Friday, March 17, in the Chapel. This is a fund-raising event for the Grafton Historical Society and happens on the night when we would normally offer our Grafton dinner. Thus the changes are as follows:

Friday, March 3: dinner in Athens at 6 p.m.

Wednesday, March 8: lunch in Grafton at noon

Wednesday, March 22: lunch in Grafton at noon

Friday, March 31: dinner in Grafton at 6 p.m.

During February, we provided Meals on Wheels to 6 customers; \$135 in gas cards and 2 rides to medical appointments; 1 welcome bag; 2 sunshine baskets; 2 lap robes and 1 baby blanket.

Wishing you all the luck of the Irish if, in fact, the Irish are all that lucky.
- *Bill Toomey*

Fire and Rescue Training Updates

The monthly training statistical report for Grafton Fire and Grafton Rescue always lists a number of training events each month but doesn't provide any details so it might be informative to review training activities from recent months. Through the Fall there was a strong emphasis on practicing CPR skills for the Responders from both groups with a call requiring these skills occurring a few weeks later. The Fall also saw the Firefighters in a comprehensive hose handling training along with Firefighters from departments that make up the West River Training Group. Rescue Responders meanwhile reviewed toxicology and the use of Narcan for drug overdoses.

The Winter began with the Rescue Squad preparing for off-road emergencies such as could occur specifically at the Grafton Trails Outdoor Center but also on VAST snowmobile trails or on the WindmillHill/Pinnacle hiking trails. Related to this, Firefighters trained with members of the Rescue Inc Technical Rescue Team on low angle rope techniques which would be used to move an injured patient up or down a steep embankment in a Stokes basket. The two Grafton groups also trained on incident command and how various personnel and resources are coordinated at a multi-agency emergency.

In January, Rescue and Fire Responders spent a Sunday in a specialized program funded by the Pollio Family Foundation learning self-defense measures which could be employed to protect themselves when confronted by unruly or combative patients. Most recently Firefighters received training from the State Hazmat Team on hazardous materials in order to be prepared for an accident involving whatever chemicals might be on one of the numerous trucks traveling local roads. The final February training featured a live burn of a small structure to demonstrate how keeping windows

and doors closed can reduce the spread of a fire and the creation of flash overs.

Training can be time consuming, and special instructors and equipment expensive, but training helps our First Responders maintain their various certifications, learn new skills, develop team work, and keep them ready for whatever emergency might occur here. As First Responders in very small towns there's not a lot of anything but a little of everything so its necessary to be prepared for whatever may happen.

Rescue Squad Responders will be at the Athens Community Supper on March 3rd along with their mobile unit, 58 Rescue One, when they can answer questions and show you around their rescue vehicle. If you'd like to be part of this dedicated and active group of volunteers this would a great opportunity to get more information or you can contact us by email at graftonrescue@vermontel.net or if you're interested in the Fire Department, graftonfire@vermontel.net is the email to use. You can also contact us through the Grafton Fire and Rescue Facebook Page where pictures from some of these training activities are posted.

Emergency Services January 24 to February 23

- 3 medical
- 1 fire standby
- Fire Department
- 1 fire investigation

- Dave Ross

A Visit From Senator Nader Hashim

On Monday February 27th a small group of Athens officials had the pleasure of meeting with our State Senator Nader Hashim.

Hannah Regier, our town clerk, first meet with Senator Hashim at the town office. Hannah spoke with the Senator concerning record preservation which is a top priority not only of our land records, but many other records and books that are currently housed in non fire rated safes and unsecured fire proof filing cabinets.

Then Senator Hashim met with Sandi Capponcelli & Janet Perry, selectboard members and Don Capponcelli who has been invaluable sharing his 40+ years of carpentry skills, project management and contacts with the town. There was a short meeting at the town office where we went over a list provided by Don, concerning the needs of both the Community Center and the Town Garage. We then took the Senator up to the Community Center for a walk through. He was filled in on the history of the building and what it took to go from the one room schoolhouse, now the town office, to the school on the hill and the eventual closure of the school and how this closure impacted our town



and our sense of community. There was also a discussion on the possibility of the Town Office being relocated to the Community Center building.

Finally we drove down to the Town Garage and met with Matt Perry, Road Foreman and Eugene Bills, Road Crew. We emphasized the need of having a town garage that was in good repair, a better working environment and another place for emergency management if needed. Janet had a comprehensive list of work needing to be done.

Janet, myself, Don and Hannah appreciated Senator Hashim taking 2 hours of his time to come to Athens and familiarize himself with our small town. As a small group we have been working to secure funding in the forms of grants to help with the Community Center and the Town Garage. It is a long process and not a fast one. We are sensitive to the needs of the community and to the financial restraints due our tax base which is why we felt this meeting with the Senator was of utmost importance. - Sandi Capponcelli

ISS Sighting

Athens Vermont February 18 2023: This morning I set a lawn chair in the doorway of Bay 2 of our woodshed, facing west northwest at 5:30 to watch for the International Space Station to appear. The notice I received from NASA said it would be visible for seven minutes at 5:50 am from the WNW to the ESE, and would rise to 86 degrees meaning it would pass directly overhead. At about 5:30 it suddenly appeared at the very top of the tallest pine tree across the town road behind our garage. It was somewhat fuzzy because of the cloudy

sky, with no stars visible. I got up from my chair and moved to the top of the stone stairway to see it disappear in the eastern portion of the sky. As it approached the horizon, (the top of the East Ridge) it became much brighter for a few seconds then faded out completely. After trying from several other places, open fields like the Claremont Airport and an

old mountain hayfield in Acworth NH, it feels good to have succeeded in seeing this object before it either disintegrates or is shot down by aliens.

- Henry Woodbury

Public Service Survey – Local Media Access

The Department of Public Service is asking customers who receive television services through VTel to fill out this short survey. It is being sent by the Department of Public Service asking for input regarding community television. This survey asks your opinion on your use of community access channels, and what you,

as a community member, may wish to see more of from VTel or the PEG stations regarding the Public, Educational, and Governmental (PEG) channels.

<https://survey.alchemer.com/s3/7241981/VTel-User-Survey>

– Dept. of Public Service

March Library Corner

Smiles and Gratitude:

It was wonderful to see so many folks at our Open House last month and we thank you for attending. Many thanks to Rachel Laliberte for her culinary skill, Angel for the delicious brownies and everyone who helped to set up and clean up. We are also very grateful to Grafton Elementary School's 3/4 class and their teacher Mrs. Stern for crafting wonderful diamante poems to be displayed at the Open House. Fantastic writing, GES students! If you weren't available for this Open House, never fear. We plan to have another in June!

Our interior painting and restoration job is now complete, with walls and ceilings repaired and freshly painted in both the Hayes and the circulation room, as well as windows in these two rooms and the adult fiction room repaired, painted and re-installed. We had a wonderful crew helping with all the organization and cleaning before and after the project: Pat Mack, David Ross, Mary Beth Culver, Kim Bank, Jean Lix, Ray Lisai, Kathleen Pajcic, Jay Maciejowski, Liz Provo, Lucia Corwin, Deanna Maceachern, and Maryanne Donald. Thank you all for your invaluable assistance.

We've got a fresh batch of new books on the shelves thanks to donations from Wendy Martin, Joan Walsh and Tania Evans and we thank them for their on-going generosity. Stop by and check them out!

We've had a wonderful response to both the 2022 annual appeal drive and the on-going capital campaign to address heating/cooling improvements at the library. We are immensely grateful to everyone who has been able to offer support. At this time, we've raised enough funds to proceed with the first phase in making our historic building more energy efficient. We will be sharing progress and details at regular Open Houses at the library and also in the Grafton News. We look forward to your input, interest and feedback.

What's New @ the Library?

Do you have a young reader or two in your home or visiting you on a regular basis? Join us for our Born to Read Preschool Story Hour on the 4th Saturday of each month for songs and movement, fingerplays and rhymes, short read-a-louds and book exchange, simple crafts and games, and fun and laughter! This informal story hour is appropriate for ages 0-5 and also gives parents and caregivers a chance to socialize too.

Library Programming

Spanish Group on Zoom, Tuesdays, 11:00am-Noon on Zoom. Intermediate level. (No Spanish on 3/7—Town

Meeting Day)

Nature & Books Discussion Series: Wednesday, March 22, 6-7:30 pm on Zoom (A Walk in the Woods by Bill Bryson)

Born to Read Preschool Story Hour 4th Saturday of the month, March 25, 10-11am, Ages 0-5.

- Michelle Dufort

Congresswoman Becca Balint Pays a Visit

Here at Senior Solutions, The Council on Aging for Southeastern Vermont, we were pleased to receive a visit from U.S. Rep. Becca Balint. As our newly elected federal congresswoman, her interest in the issues facing aging Vermonters is very gratifying.

Sign Up for our Monthly Newsletter: Anyone interested in hearing from Senior Solutions on a regular basis is welcome to visit our website--www.seniorsolutionsvt.org—and sign up for our monthly newsletter. Just give us your email address and look for the newsletter the following month.

Have you heard about our Foxy Fund? This is a unique program that helps support nutrition for pets. Loneliness and isolation can be problems for many older Vermonters, so the ability to care for their beloved companion pets is crucial. They often become important family members who give unconditional love. Through a generous grant from Meals on Wheels and Petco, the Foxy Fund provides grants to low-income aging Vermonters here in southeastern Vermont to assist with pet food and other small unexpected expenses. For the full story about Foxy, and to learn how you can help us sustain this service, please go to our website. And remember, you can always call our HelpLine at 1-802-885-2669 to find out more about what Senior Solutions can do to help you age successfully.

Grief and Loss Support Groups: Having a strong support system will help during the grieving process. The Visiting Nurse and Hospice for Vermont and New Hampshire hosts Grief and Loss Support Groups for anyone going through this challenging time. For more information, call us at 888-300-8853, Ext. 743

New to Medicare Classes: These free classes are being offered via Zoom every first Thursday of the month at 11:00 am. Call our HelpLine at 1-802-885-2669 to register and give us your email address so we can send you the link.

There are So Many Ways to Give Help, and to Receive It. If you have time to spare, why not call your local library, a Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) near you, a senior center, a food pantry, a Cares Group, or a community center to explore volunteer opportunities? At Senior Solutions we have many ways to connect you with your neighbors. For example, call 802-885-2669 and ask to be a Senior Companion. Or maybe, if you are a veteran, you'd like to become a Vet

to Vet volunteer visitor. Our volunteers are such an important piece of the aging puzzle here in Vermont. They enjoy knowing they make a huge difference and have fun visiting their new friends.

- Joann Erenhouse

A Vermont Gardener's Notebook, March

If you are tired of mowing your lawn every week, a meadow is a wonderful thing to replace it with. We stopped mowing a 40 ft. x 75 ft. section of our lawn about 6 years ago and have had great success doing this. If you want to try it, remember that a beautiful wildflower meadow doesn't just appear. It will take several years of developing, but year by year, it will get better and better.



Once you stop mowing, all sorts of grasses and some native wildflowers will start to grow. And you will think it is just a ratty mess! However, during that first fall, go in and cut down all plants after they have dried up and dropped seed. You must take away everything you cut and not let it rot down and give fertility to the soil. Meadows thrive on poor soil! After the first cutting, go in and mow it again closer, so that patches of bare soil show through, basically scalping it. At that point, you can scatter some flower seed if you wish, although it's not necessary. You can also plant some spring-flowering bulbs throughout.

Our meadow is full of daffodils that come up early and then disappear under emerging summer flowers and grasses. This routine is repeated each autumn until eventually, your meadow will have developed its own ecosystem. I sometimes go in and dig out sections of more invasive wildflowers, like goldenrod, and replace them with seed or plants I want to introduce. You must choose types that like a poorer soil. Many perennial flowers need higher fertility and won't thrive in a meadow with its poor soil and high competition. But your efforts will pay off as each year you notice increasing numbers of insects and butterflies, the birds will come in to feed on seeds, and new wildflowers will appear naturally. Nature seems to like chaos, so try the meadow "recipe". Everyone wins here...birds, insects, small mammals, snakes & toads, plants, the planet and YOU, who can put your feet up and look at the beauty without having to go out there to mow your lawn!

Weather summary for Jan.

High temp. : 48 degrees
Low temp. : 8.4 degrees
Approx. 2 ft. snow total

-. Treah Pichette

Grace Cottage's Spring Into Health 5K – May 13

Spring is just around the corner, so mark your calendar now for Grace Cottage's 14th Annual Spring into Health 5K on Saturday, May 13, on the Townshend Common.

Registration is \$20 per participant (children under age 18 are free with signed parent/guardian permission). You can go to <https://gracecottage.org/get-involved/spring-into-health-5k/> - registration is now open.

Second Wind will be on hand for official timing, and you are welcome to run, walk, roll, or stroll your 5K, starting at 8:30 am on the Townshend Common or, if you prefer, virtually at a time and place of your own choosing. The idea is to take charge of your own health and to get moving!

The 2022 Spring Into Health 5K was sponsored by M&T Bank, Linda Bastian, Big Picture Farm, Blake Hill Preserves, Cota & Cota, River Bend Farm Market, and WEEI 93.5 FM Sports Radio.

- C.J. King

Thoughts to Ponder

With St. Patrick's Day coming, some thoughts on luck and being Irish...

"I'm a great believer in luck, and I find the harder I work the more I have of it." - Thomas Jefferson

"Being Irish, he had an abiding sense of tragedy, which sustained him through temporary periods of joy." - William Butler Yeats

"You gotta try your luck at least once a day, because you could be going around lucky all day and not even know it." - Jimmy Dean

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 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 PICK-UP: MAR 6, 20, APR 3

RECYCLE PICK-UP: MAR 13, 27

Charles Perham Journal

March 1868

- 1 Have been to meeting alone today.
- 2 A very stormy day and very cold. It seems as though it will never be pleasant again.
- 3 Have been to town meeting with father. A very cold day blustery. I was appointed collector of taxes. Had a hard time getting home. The worst day I ever was out I think.
- 4 The wind has blown all day the road is very badly drifted. Have been down to Mr Whitneys. Hope we shall get out some time.
- 5 Have been shoveling snow today. Went with the oxen down to Mr. Smiths. Mrs Whitney come home today.
- 7 To W-----this morning. Started for home in the afternoon. Paid for photograph .50 cents.
- 8 To home all day did not go to meeting. For it is very bad weather. In the evening wrote to AW for my photograph.
- 9 This morn went to Post Office heard that Henry Whitney had died last night about eleven. In the evening went to the farmers club. Mr Edgard was appoint to committee for next year.
- 10 Sawed wood all day a very warm day. In the evening wrote a letter.
- 11 Have been to the funeral of Henry Whitney with father.
- 12 Tonight I am in Walpole New Hampshire. Have been up the street with Willie called and had supper with Mr. Watkins.
- 13 Came home today brought Abbie Perham home.
- 14 To home in the forenoon. In the Afternoon went to Perham auction. Received a letter from-----.
- 16 Father has been to cambridgeport. I have been sawing and splitting wood. Drewed some poles up the road with the oxen.
- 18 Sawed wood all day.
- 19 Sawed wood in the forenoon. In the afternoon carried Abbie down to Merrils. Took supper to S Perhams. Received a letter from Aehsa and photographs, pictures of houses and part of Boston.
- 20 Have set the buckets today and gathered some sap.
- 21 Have been boiling sap today. A very blustery and snowy day.
- 22 To home all day a very blustery day.
- 23 This morning went down to Merrils called to Dodges and Smiths. In the afternoon finished setting the buckets and gathered some sap.
- 24 Gathered sap all day.
- 25 Have been boiling sap and sawing wood.
- 26 Gathered sap in the forenoon. In the afternoon went to Cambridgeport carried up 23 1/2 pounds of sugar at .14 cents a pound. Paid \$3.29.
- 27 A very good sap day we gathered sap all day.
- 28 This forenoon went and carried over some trees. In the afternoon gathered sap. In the evening went to auctioneers to Amos Balls to settle for collecting school taxes.
- 29 To home all day have been boiling sap all day. Fathers birthday 71. A very pleasant day and warm snow most all gone.
- 30 Gathered and boiled sap all day.
- 31 Gathered and boiled sap all day. In the evening went with father to school meeting was appointed collector of taxes

