

The Athenian

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Sponsored by Grafton Cares

APRIL 2024

Total Solar Eclipse!

A total solar eclipse will visit North America this Monday, April 8, 2024. The duration of totality will be up to 4 minutes and 27 seconds, almost double that of The Great American Eclipse of August 21, 2017. The 2017 total solar eclipse was witnessed by about 20 million people from Oregon to South Carolina, and the upcoming Great American Eclipse is sure to be witnessed by many millions more. And the next one won't occur until August 2044!

The exquisite beauty of the Sun's corona hanging in the suddenly darkened sky — is something truly worth seeing. In the US, totality will begin in Texas at 1:27 pm CDT and will end in Maine at 3:35 pm EDT on April 8, 2024.

When viewing a total eclipse from any location please be sure to follow safety rules for viewing <https://science.nasa.gov/eclipses/safety/>. For more information on eclipses check out [How & Why Solar Eclipses Happen](#).

- Ginger Maciejowski

Select Board Meeting Tidbits

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

- Hannah Regier requested that the town discuss concerns a landowner about a 50 ft. long 50 year old hedge before removing it. Matt Perry has indicated that the town has the right to take it down because it is in the right of way. David Bemis agreed that the landowner should be contacted first hoping to seek an agreeable solution.
- Two MTAP related agreements were approved - one for \$9250 for assistance with the Town Plan update, and the other for \$43,495 for scoping work for the Community Center. Krista Gay inquired for the Meetinghouse Committee if there might be assistance through MTAP to help with planning costs for handicapped access to that building. The WRC representative suggested asking the state about this.



● Janet Perry reports that the Planning Commission is still going through the plan and hopes to wrap up by the end of 2024. The MTAP grant approved tonight is for help and updating maps by WRC.

● A resolution was read by David that the VLCT recommended for the

balance (\$125,064.65) of the ARPA funds. Questions followed for clarification. It was explained that the board needed to take this action so as not to lose the money. It will now go toward payroll but won't offset taxes and the VLCT has guidance on handling the surplus for next year.

- Annual appointments and requirements were addressed. April Lyman's name will be sent to the governor to be appointed for the balance of the open term. Caleb Lemieux has accepted the constable position.
- An MRPG permit was signed and will be sent in with the \$500 annual fee. This program provided significant funding for the stone lining work. Sandi Capponcelli will check with Matt to confirm that all the needed updates have been posted.
- Don Capponcelli shared information regarding a potential solar array project on the Community Center roof that could get funding as a climate emissions reduction project. It would cover all of the electric needs for the town buildings.
- Sandi requested and the board approved Hannah paying invoices from Valley Auto within a week of receipt.

- Sherry Maher

Town Meeting Highlights

The Athens Town Meeting was attended by 82 voters this year, lasting just over 2 hours. A number of questions were raised about the budget, the cost of trash and recycle, and the cost of a new used grader already purchased. In the end, the budget passed by a vote of 52 YES and 30 NO.

Also after many questions, discussion, and a defeated amendment, a voice vote approved allowing the board to expend funds in the Town Office Renovation Fund on projects for the Community Center, the Town Garage or the existing Town Office. A suggestion for the Community Center was to include exterior lighting for the driveway up to the building.

A few clarifying questions were asked prior to voice vote approval for 2 articles related to ending our status as one of 3 or 4 remaining “dry” towns in Vermont.

An article to return to alternating weeks of trash pick up and recycle pick up was also approved by voice after a number of clarifying questions were answered. This means that starting in June 2024 we will return to a weekly schedule with trash picked up one week and recycle on opposite weeks.

Article 10 asking voters to discontinue the use of Australian ballot for the election of officers drew considerable debate, but in the end, it was defeated by a paper ballot vote of 21 YES and 60 NO.

Following the results of the vote on Article 10, nearly half of those in attendance left the meeting. Those remaining proceeded to approve by voice vote Articles 11 - 24 with the day and time for the 2025 Town Meeting set for 6PM on the Monday before the first Tuesday in March. - *Sherry Maher*

Note from the School Board

All of the school articles on the ballot, including the school budget, passed on election day. Thanks to all for your support. The WNESU Board Negotiations Committee is still working on resolving an acceptable contract with the WNEA Teacher Negotiations Committee. It has gone through two mediations and is now in a fact finding process. I’ll keep you updated as information is released. There were a couple of glitches with the playground project. Those have been corrected. The goal is to have construction completed by the end of summer.

Athens is still in need of a third board member so that we have equal representation on the board with Grafton. The Ath-Graft board is a great team to work with. They are always willing to answer questions to help members grow in understanding and knowledge of school board processes. Please call if you have any questions.

- *Lynn Morgan*

Grace Cottage - Spring Into Health 5K

As you put together your family’s calendar of spring events, please consider adding the following, organized by Grace Cottage Family Health & Hospital.

May 11, Saturday, “Spring Into Health” 5K. 8:30 AM start at the Townshend Common, rain or shine. Open to people of all ages and abilities, whether they run, jog, walk, stroll or roll. All participants will be timed. \$20 for adults; no charge for children ages 17 and younger. T-shirt for first 100 registrants. Register online at gracecottage.org/events.

Fun, fitness, friendship, and fund-raising are the goals. Look for more information on upcoming events at gracecottage.org/events or call 802-365-9109.

- *C.J. King*

News from Grafton Cares

March was a challenging month for Grafton Cares--only because of the mud encountered during Meals on Wheels deliveries. It was formidable, but every customer's needs were met. In addition to delivering meals to 8 customers, we also provided \$125 in gas cards for rides to medical appointments, 4 rides to medical appointments, 2 sunshine baskets, and 1 welcome bag. In the medical equipment department, we loaned out 1 wheelchair, 1 hospital bed, 1 walker, and 1 shower seat, while 1 walker and 1 shower seat were returned.

Attendance at community meals has generally been solid, and our calendar for April is as follows:

- Friday, April 5: dinner at 6 p.m. in Athens
- Wednesday, April 10, lunch at noon in Grafton
- Friday, April 19, dinner at 6 p.m. in Grafton
- Wednesday, April 24, lunch at noon in Grafton

Anyone needing to contact Grafton Cares can call either Kate Bova at 869-1527 or Bill Toomey at 843-2397.

Wishing you all a glorious spring.
- *Bill Toomey*

April Library Corner

Smiles and Gratitude:

As is almost always the case in our town, there are lots of reasons for gratitude! I would like to thank our crew of volunteers and the librarian’s assistant, Angel Squires, for the wonderful job keeping the library open and taking care of basics while my knee is out on an extended sabbatical. I also appreciate your patience and understanding as patrons for any delays with things like on-line books requests and inter-library loans. I am working from home at times, but not yet managing a full schedule. If you need something right away, please stop by the library or call 802-843-2404. I do check library email, but not on my usual schedule.

Invitation to Bid on Library Porch Renovation

The Grafton Public Library board of trustees is accepting bids for porch renovation work. Bids are due



Athens First Easter Egg Hunt

April 17th and will be reviewed at the April 22nd meeting of the library trustees. For any questions regarding the invitation to bid or information about how to view the project please contact: Librarian Michelle Dufort, librarian@graftonpubliclibrary.org.

Programs @ Your Library

Spanish Conversation has resumed its weekly schedule once again, but is only available on Zoom at this time.

The Nature & Books Discussion Group will be meeting on Zoom to discuss Mary Oliver's wonderful collection of essays, *Upstream*. Please contact us for more information.

The Neighbor-to-Neighbor Lecture series returns in late April after a month hiatus. Multi-instrumentalist Harry Hudson will present *Intimacy of the Acoustic Guitar*. Harry will offer a tour of acoustic musical styles and histories of the rare guitars from his collection, as they were meant to be played then and now. Nominated for the Nashville Musician's Registry, Harry has performed solo on tv and radio and shared stages with Hall of Famers, preferring all the while just to play on his couch for his dog, Rothko. Dogs are invited with their owners to this intimate performance of original music, but we ask for pre-registration for both canines and their humans.

Library Programming

Spanish Conversation Group, Tuesdays, 11am to noon on Zoom, Advanced Beginner to Intermediate Level.

Nature & Books Discussion Series: Wednesday, April 24, 6-7:30 pm on Zoom, *Upstream* by Mary Oliver

Neighbor to Neighbor Lecture Series: Sunday, April 28, 2-3:30 pm *Intimacy of the Acoustic Guitar* with Harry Hudson—please contact the library if you would like to bring your furry friend to this program

- Michelle Dufort

Green Up Day is Coming!

Vermont Green Up will soon be here. This year Green Up is officially on Saturday, May 4. However, Green Up activities in Athens can be done any day between April 26 and May 5. The Road Crew will be picking up the bags on Monday, May 6.

There are 20 routes that have volunteers signed up for. There is still one section of Reed Rd that needs a volunteer and several long routes I'd like to divide into two routes. If anyone is interested in helping, please give me a call or drop me an email ASAP, as I need to get the Green Up packets put together and delivered soon. Thanks go out to all who have already signed up to help with this year's Greening Up of Athens. - Lynn Morgan



Be sure to get your Eclipse glasses!

Chester Townscape Tree and Shrub Sale 2024

Chester Townscape's annual Tree and Shrub Sale has begun! This event offers good-size, proven trees and shrubs at below regular, nursery retail prices to help people beautify their properties. Here are the 2024 seven shrub selections offered:

Red Sprite Winterberry (female for berries); Jim Dandy Winterberry (male pollinator); Little Quick Fire Hydrangea; Autumn Brilliance Shadbush; Dwarf Buttonbush; Firelight Hydrangea; and PJM Elite Rhododendron.

All specimens are hardy and low maintenance, feature multi-season interest, and sport beautiful blossoms. Most are native. All appeal to pollinators and/or birds. Any one of these plants would also make a wonderful present. Proceeds from the sale support Chester Townscape's charitable civic projects. Buyers do not have to be Chester residents; but they do have to preorder and pay before April 9 and then pick up the shrubs in early May from Main Street in central Chester.

For an informative order form that gives details about the shrubs, their botanical names and prices, and where to send the check and order form, please visit <https://www.chestervt.gov/chester-townscape.html> or contact Lillian Willis at 802-875-1340 or lbwillisct@comcast.net.

- Lillian Willis

Celebrate Earth Day and Witness a Solar Eclipse

The Nature Museum invites everyone to join them for two exciting events.

On April 8th, from 12:00 to 5:00, The Nature Museum is hosting a solar eclipse viewing party. Activities include celestial craft-making and safe viewing of the eclipse using provided glasses. Educators will share the science behind solar eclipses along with historical information and mythological lore. The museum's indoor exhibits, grounds, and playscape will be open for exploration and play throughout the event. "Here in Grafton, we're really excited to see a near-total eclipse," says Museum director Nikolas Katrick. "We can't wait to share the moment with neighbors, visitors, and Grafton Elementary School next door."

On April 20th, from 10:00 to 4:00, The Nature Museum will host an Earth Day Open House. Explore the diversity of wildlife neighbors in Vermont from small insects to big mammals. Live native animals will be showcased by the Southern Vermont Natural History Museum, and museum educators will delve into the fascinating worlds of bats and our native wild cats. The Magic Forest playscape will be open for play, and

visitors can also see the ongoing wetland restoration project and explore the awakening pollinator garden. Indoors, interactive exhibits highlight Vermont flora, fauna, and geology.

April vacation camps are also being offered during the week of 23rd - 25th for children ages 4-11. For more information about these events and the on-going expansion projects, visit The Nature Museum's website at nature-museum.org. - *The Nature Museum*

Join Bull Creek Common Lands for 'Saturdays on the Land'

Bull Creek Common Lands invites the public for Saturdays on the Land, monthly community walks and events at Raymond Bemis Community Forest in Athens, VT.

Please consider joining us this year for community walks and opportunities to enjoy the land together. More dates for the second half of the summer are forthcoming. All are welcome!

Saturday, April 27th, 2024 • 10am-12pm

Vernal Pool Community Walk with Athens' own guest naturalist Lynn Morgan. In partnership with the Grafton Nature Museum, join BCCL to explore the wetlands of the Community Forest in this season of new life and springtime! We will look for signs of salamanders, newts and other amphibious critters. Meet at Raymond Bemis Community Forest, 315 Brookline Rd, Athens, VT

Saturday, May 11th, 2024 • 10am-12pm

Walk in the Community Forest & Adjacent Trails with the BCCL Board, learn about our upcoming conservation plans and enjoy the early spring forest. Meet at Raymond Bemis Community Forest, 315 Brookline Rd, Athens, VT

More Saturdays on the Land dates will be announced for summer and fall soon. Check our website, where you can learn more about us, or get in touch, at www.bullcreekcommonlands.org.

Do you have an idea for a Saturday on the Land theme or offering? Get in in touch with us at hello@bullcreekcommonlands.org

- *Candace Jensen*

Main Street Arts Summer Camps

SAXTONS RIVER, Vt—Main Street Arts (MSA) is going to be offering two summer camp programs — Trish Roberts' Wildbrook Forest Theater Camp and The Un-Lost Island of Atlantis with Putnam Smith. No theater experience necessary and no audition will be required. Space is limited, with slots available by sign up on a first-come, first-served basis.

The Wildbrook Forest camp will run on June 24-28, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. The cost is \$270 per student and is open to students 8-12 years old.

The second camp will run from Aug. 5-17, from 9 a.m. to noon, on Monday-Friday at MSA. The cost is \$300 per student. The program will result in a fully costumed performance on MSA's mainstage. The performances will be on Friday, Aug. 16, at 7 p.m., and Saturday, Aug. 17, at 4 p.m. and 7 p.m.

MSA is located at 35 Main St. in Saxtons River. Please visit mainstreetarts.org/camps.html or email info@mainstreetarts.org for more information or to register,.

Protecting Life and Property for 100 Years: Part One

Let's look at some of the emergency responses Grafton's volunteer firefighters have been called to during their 100 year history. As an introduction we'll begin with what's it's like being a volunteer firefighter in a small Vermont town. In 1989 Jack Beatty, a visitor to Grafton, wrote about his observations of our Grafton firefighters for the Atlantic Monthly in which he said, "I was reminded of the people behind the scenery last winter on a visit to the Old Tavern. It was well below zero that evening; the windows were thickly covered by embroideries of frost. We were snug in our beds when we were awakened by the wail of a siren. We rushed to the windows but could see nothing; apparently there was a fire in a nearby village. Our feet freezing against the cold floor, we scurried back to bed. Next day – a bright, clear morning; temperature zero – I was taking a post-breakfast walk around town when I spotted the fire engine returning to the firehouse. It was 9:00 A.M.; the siren had gone off at two. The men on the engine were covered with pitch and had ice in their hair, ice in their nostrils, ice caked on their gloves and boots. They were volunteer firemen and now they would have to clean themselves up and go on to their day's work. They had spent the night fighting a fire in the town of Saxtons River. Mutual aid is the ethic these villages live by. And somehow, knowing that our safety rested in the hands of those who live out a pre-modern ethic, protecting life and property on winter nights – somehow, that deepens the pleasure I take in Grafton, giving character to its charm."

In 1929 Grafton Firefighters were seriously challenged to protect a property important to the town when the 1867 Village School belfry was struck by lightning. The bell itself was molten and pieces of it scattered over the school yard. An account in the Town Report said "except for the hard work of the firemen the building would've been lost."

Another fire was to strike the Village School in 1936. A newspaper article stated "Nothing was saved as flames quickly doomed the attractive two-story building: firemen worked valiantly in vain. A neighbor discovered the fire at about 3 A.M. and the firefighters

arrived at 3:15 laying a hose line down Pleasant Street to the river but in spite of great efforts the fire roared on.” Classes were temporarily held at the Chapel with books, desks, and supplies donated by individuals, other school boards, and even by school book publishers. When the new school was built the following year it already had most of what was needed to open and for the first time even had running water and flush toilets.

Over the years there have been a number of forest fires with one in 1930 up in Howeville, near Mollie Beattie State Forest, which burned 1,000 acres. More than 400 firefighters and soldiers from the National Guard fought this fire and with the help of some rain finally extinguished it after three days. Another large forest fire, in 1964, up in the Acton Hill area had Fire Warden Frank Jones respond as follows: “Thanks to those who contributed food, etc. for our men who helped fight the fire. The Junior Firefighters did a bang-up job and I feel sure Grafton will be safe in the future with these young fellows coming along to watch our woodland.”

Although not an emergency response by the Fire Department, people may recall the filming of the movie “Funny Farm” in the local area in 1987. Firefighters weren’t in the film but did spend 300 hours pumping the water needed for snow making. A sizable contribution from Warner Brothers helped to create the Fire Truck Replacement Fund.

Then in 1991 the Village Store burned bringing in over 50 firefighters from 7 towns who utilized for the first time the new hydrant system installed by the Windham Foundation. The 1968 International fire engine failed during this fire which heightened the effort to purchase a new engine the following year. Even with this setback the fire was brought under control in 3 hours prompting the insurance company to call it “an amazing stop by the firefighters”. At the time the Grafton Fire Department consisted of 6 members. With the Village Store closed the Cheese Company opened a convenience grocery and the Fire Auxiliary had coffee, pastries, and newspapers every morning until the store reopened six months later. In the next installment we’ll look at events closer to the present era. In the meantime, stay safe and follow Grafton Fire on the Grafton Fire and Rescue Facebook page.

Emergency Responses February 24 – March 23: Rescue Squad 1 medical, Fire Dept. 1 tree/ wires burning. The Rescue Squad congratulates its First Responder and Athens resident Renee Van Kuren for successfully completing her studies and training and has certified nationally as an Emergency Medical Technician.
- Dave Ross



Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association News

The Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association will hold its annual meeting on Saturday April 20, at 4 pm at the Westminster West Congregational Church. For more information about the WHPA and their upcoming events, visit their website at windmillhillpinnacle.org.

21st Annual Herricks Cove Wildlife Festival

Presented by Ascutney Mountain Audubon Society, VT Fish and Wildlife and Great River Hydro on Sunday, May 5, 2024 from 10:00 – 4:00, Rain or Shine. Gates open at 9:30. Located at Herricks Cove, 4 Herricks Cove Road, Rockingham VT.

Come celebrate the wonders of wildlife through live animal programs, exhibits, and activities for children and adults alike. Go to the link - <https://amasvt.org/herricks-cove-wildlife-festival> - to see the schedule of activities.
- Lynn Morgan

Reed Road Weather Summary

Winter gave us a bit of a kick in the rear on the way out with a 2-foot snowstorm this month after several weeks of almost balmy temperatures. Vermont in March can be a challenge!
High temp. 60.9 degrees F.
Low temp. 9.5 degrees F.
Snow total: 29 inches / rain total: 5.5 inches
- Treah Pichette

Thoughts to Ponder

“No winter lasts forever; no spring skips its turn. April is a promise that May is bound to keep, and we know it.”
— Hal Borland
“Snow in April is abominable,” said Anne. “Like a slap in the face when you expected a kiss.”
— L.M. Montgomery, *Anne of Ingleside*
“It is as sweet as early grass butter in April.”
— Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*

COMMUNITY INFORMATION

Select Board Meetings: 3rd Thursday 7:00 PM

Budget Committee: 2nd & 4th Tuesday 7:00 PM

Planning Commission: 1st Tuesday 10:30 AM

Meeting House Committee: 2nd Monday 10:00 AM

School Board: 2nd Wednesdays 6:00 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: APRIL 15

RECYCLE PICK-UP: APRIL 29

Charles Perham Journal March, 1873

- 1 Have been to Bellows Falls. Carried 16 cottage 7 square 32 rounded chairs. Settled all up with Johnson today he paid me \$8.75. Paid in 8.75 to go on the stove this makes 26.90 we have paid in. Received a letter from Mr. Cobb that he wants me to keep his sheep. Paid for the Bellows Falls Times today \$2.00. One quart of oysters .50 cents.
- 2 Have been to meeting with Elizabeth Mr. Frost preached. In the evening went down to our school house to a meeting.
- 3 A very blustery day. Fixed up the horse worked on some chairs.
- 4 Have been to town meeting. Went down the hill and rode with George Eager. The road is badly drifted tonight as much as it has all winter. Did not get into office. Hart Hall bid of the taxes to collect \$12.50.
- 5 Have been shoveling snow all day. Mr. Edwards, Ralph Eager, James Powers, Ralph Whitney have shoveled most all day. Some think it's the worst they ever knew.
- 6 Got ready to go to mill but did not go. George Eager here to borrow a chain. George took the old mare home. In the evening went down to Mr. Deens to a meeting with Elizabeth.
- 7 Have been to Saxtons River to Mill today with Jim. A very pleasant day. In the evening Merrill Powers and Amos Ball here about the fuss between me and James Powers.
- 8 This morning went down and paid James Powers \$36.00 and took his receipt for keeping school 12 weeks at 3.00 per week. Paid the above out of the town. Have been down to Uncle John after some cider brandy to pay up Merrill what is his due. Paid him for ten quarts \$4.83. Paid George Eager for making wood box .50. What paid out today is all out of the town money. Settled up with the town tonight there is due me \$18.00 from the town.
- 9 Have been to meeting alone today.
- 10 Found it snowing when I got up in the morning. It snowed and all day. Worked on chairs today.
- 11 Broke down as far as Mr. Whitneys with the oxen. Had not hardly got into the barn when there came a terrible blow out of the south. It snowed all day. Just at night it cleared away as beautiful as could be. The snow is deepest it has been all winter. Worked on chairs some.
- 12 Broke road out as far as Mr. Whitneys with steer and oxen. Went down to our meeting house to a sociable meeting. Not very good meeting things shall get into a fuss. Carried the cider brandy down to Merrills to pay what was borrowed for fathers sickness.
- 13 Called to Jim Smiths and to Dodges. Collected tax of Jerrie and some of Merrills.
- 14 Bought Jim Smiths 2 year old Heifer for \$20.00. Paid him out of the town funds. Due to the town on the heifer is \$20.00.
- 15 To home all day snowing some all day. Worked on chairs have done four cottage.
- 16 Have been to meeting with Elizabeth. The wind has blown very hard all day very squally.
- 17 Have been down and settled with A Ball for the collecting of taxes for the school district. Received for collecting 2.02.
- 18 Went down to ----- took out of the bank \$150.35. \$75.35 was mine \$75 was fathers. Called and left receipts for Amidon for taxes.
- 19 Have been making a feed box for the sheep. Feed the sheep meal for the first time today.
- 20 To home all day. It has been snowing all day a very stormy day. It seems as through summer could never come the snow is so deep now. Spring begins today and we have not had a drop of sap as of yet. Bridges here to pay taxes.
- 21 Went down the hill and plowed out the road with the little steers. Took two sheep of Mrs. Bennett counted all accounts between me and her square. Mr. Deen owes me .52 he did not pay.
- 22 Have been to Saxtons River to Mill. A very squally day. Carried eggs and tallow to Cushings came to 1.25 it is to go on the books.
- 24 Have been down to Mr. Dodges auction. Did not bid. Collected taxes of H.H. Whitney.
- 25 Have been breaking out roads and shoveling snow. Have shoveled six hours today. In the evening went to school meeting. Tax raised was ½ cent on the dollar.
- 26 Have been to Saxtons River to mill. Went to Mr. Daggetts auction. Came home in a rain storm. Called to see Wyman. Collected tax of Rider and Bemis.
- 27 Have been down to James Eagers to look and Mr. Deens cow. Did not buy.
- 28 Shoveled most all day and broke out with the oxen and old mare. Called it. They have worked a good six hours today.
- 29 Have been to Cambridgeport. Collected on part of Thompson tax and Ball tax. It Commenced to rain very hard today and a very rainy evening.
- 30 To home all day. Have been reconing up today and finding that there is just \$73.06 now due to the town on the old receipt.
- 31 Went down to Mr. Dodges and shoveled out a stone boat that I have purchased from Mr. Dodge for \$1.00. Albert Smiths folks are moving today in the storm. Very hard traveling today.