

# The Athenian

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Sponsored by Grafton Cares

MAY 2023

## It's Spring and There's So Much to Do!

Whether it is getting all the winter clean up done around your home, or getting out and enjoying the many events and outdoor opportunities in the area, we certainly can't complain about having nothing to do! The hiking trails right here in Athens are spectacular, and as you'll see below, our own Andy Toepfer has much to do with that! Thank you, Andy!

- Sherry Maher



View from the Lake Summit on the WHPA Creature Rock Trail

### Select Board Meeting Tidbits

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

- A question about the Taylor Hill court case was raised, which led to a lengthy discussion between the Board and members of the public. A number of specific concerns and questions were raised which are detailed in meeting minutes at the Town website: [https://www.athensvt.com/uploads/1/3/1/3/131385459/selectboard\\_minutes\\_4-20-2023.pdf](https://www.athensvt.com/uploads/1/3/1/3/131385459/selectboard_minutes_4-20-2023.pdf)
- Mike Bates expressed a concern about the budget. The town had a deficit last year and it is not lawful to ignore that. He shared copies of the statute covering deficit: 24 V.S.A. § 1523 and 1683. A Board member and member of the Budget Committee will work with VLCT on the questions about the deficit from 2022 and report back in May. Mike also raised a concern about the 20% match for the Brookline Rd. culvert project. The Board says it will come from the culvert fund.
- The positions of Grand Juror, Town Agent & Lister are still open.
- There was a discussion on reporting for the ARPA Grants and login details. ARPA money has not yet been spent. Hannah Regier urged the Board to approve using an official town email address for the login as opposed to Janet Perry's personal email.

- Don Capponcelli spoke to Town building projects and the MERP (Municipal Energy Resilience) Grants. Mini-grants are available for planning, that would enable us to bring in professionals for the planning work that will be needed for the community conversation around our building projects. This planning work will also be

necessary for USDA Community Facilities grants. The Board approved Don contacting architects/engineers for quotes on the planning work (3 YES 2 Sandi & Janet Abstain).

- Hannah has been in touch with someone from Windham Regional regarding the state funding for small towns to get technical assistance. They would like to attend a Board meeting in May or June to hear from the Board what their needs will be.
- Culvert work by the intersection of Valley Cemetery Rd. and Brookline Rd. near the beaver pond will begin once school is out. Traffic will be detoured for approximately 2 weeks.
- The road crew spent multiple days working on a chipper that they have a new motor for, but then had to order a flywheel and the motor isn't an exact fit.
- Janet reported that Matt Perry is tracking any assistance for the clean-up of damage from the last winter storm. It isn't known if there will be any assistance.
- When asked if she had come up with a draft for the policy she suggested last month (requiring all boards and committees meeting virtually to record their meetings for the public), Janet said she didn't think it was necessary because they are public meetings and FACT TV will record them free of charge. David wonders why FACT TV hasn't been present to record Select Board meetings recently.

- Sherry Maher

## Budget Revote

At the Special Town Meeting on Thursday, April 27th, the warned article to approve \$598,302.95, with \$478,895.95 to be raised by taxes was defeated by a vote of 24 YES and 33 NO. Following that vote, Don Capponcelli moved to reconsider the article to reach a budget figure that the body could approve that night. A budget that was the equivalent of the actual revenue figure for 2022 was proposed by Linda Taylor and seconded. After a number of points were made (including that if we did not approve a budget that night, it would be another month before another budget could be presented, and that passing a Town Plan could open access to funds and grants to possibly help defray expenses) and questions asked (including will trash removal or road maintenance be impacted), the figure of \$574,355.36 was approved 38 YES, 19 NO by paper ballot. The meeting was adjourned at 6:57. If you couldn't make the meeting it can be seen on FACT8 TV: [https://www.fact8.com/e107\\_plugins/media\\_library/media\\_library.php?118.14175](https://www.fact8.com/e107_plugins/media_library/media_library.php?118.14175)

It was made clear that the Board and the Budget Committee, not the voters will decide how individual line items are adjusted. They will be meeting to go through and make the needed cuts. Check the Meetings tab on the Town website for notice of upcoming meetings as they work through this process.

- Sherry Maher

## School Board Notes

The SU policy committee is continuing its work on updating the school policies that are mandated by the state. As they are approved by all the boards they are being posted on the WNESU web site under "Central Office".

We are looking to rename our school district as Windham Northeast Union Elementary School District does not describe us well and is a large mouth full. If anyone has a name they would like us to consider please get it to Harold Noyes, Krista Gay or Lynn Morgan, or join us at the upcoming Community Forum on May 25th at 6:00 pm.

Currently there are 36 students in the Grafton Elementary School. 14 are from Athens, 21 from Grafton and 1 that is attending Westminster Central. There are 8 in the 6th grade, and next year there are 6 to 7 Kindergarten students coming in. A weekly Thursday pre-K play group has been started at the Grafton School and is being well attended.

The new playground plan has been completed and the bids are in. It is expected to be completed by the time school starts next fall.

Upcoming events:

- May 16th Kindergarten Play Night 5:00 pm
- June 20th Sixth Grade Success Night 5:00 pm

Next board meeting is scheduled for May 11 at 6:00 PM at the Grafton Elementary School.

If you have any questions, comments or concerns please contact me at 869-2227 or [lynn.morgan@wnesu.org](mailto:lynn.morgan@wnesu.org).

- Lynn Morgan

## Celebrating Joan Lake

The family of Joan Lake extends a warm invitation to her many friends and communities for a Celebration of Life Service on May 27th at 2 pm. It will be held at Grafton Trails & Outdoor Center (formerly Grafton Ponds). A community gathering will follow the service at the same location. Everybody is invited to remain and to share their personal memories of Joan. Interment will be private, at a time of the family's choosing.

Joan grew up in Athens on what is now Wild Shepherd Farm, and was a long-time board member of Grafton Cares. At the Athens Community Supper, she was often found overseeing the drink and dessert table, and known for her fabulous baked beans and community picnic organizing among many other contributions to the greater Grafton-Athens community. - Sherry Maher

## Grafton Cares Updates

For all its fickle weather, April was a month of modest activity and vigorous attendance at community meals.

Here are some of the services we were very happy to provide: Meals on Wheels to 6 customers, \$135 in gas cards for medical appointments, 3 sunshine baskets, and a loan of a pair of crutches plus a walker from our medical equipment supply.

The meals calendar for May is as follows:

Friday, May 5, dinner in Athens, 6 p.m.

Wednesday, May 10, lunch in Grafton, noon

Friday, May 19, dinner in Grafton, 6 p.m.

Wednesday, May 24, lunch in Grafton, noon

Have a great spring!

- Bill Toomey

## Grafton Rescue Honors Longtime Volunteers

The Grafton Rescue Squad recently recognized three of its longtime members who collectively have volunteered over 115 years of service as emergency medical responders. These three responders, Stan Mack, Eric Stevens, and Cathy Siano Goodwin, are well known in the region not only due to their service with Grafton Rescue but because of their involvement in various other community and emergency service organizations throughout the years. Stan was one of the founding members of Grafton Rescue when it was organized in 1981 as the First Aid Stabilization Team, or FAST Squad. Eric joined shortly after in 1982 and he and Stan were among the first members to become licensed EMT's. Cathy joined a few years later and became the first Advanced level EMT on the Squad.

In his comments at a recognition event, current Grafton Rescue President Keith Hermiz said that “over their years of volunteering these three responded to thousands of calls. They cared for the sick and injured, they tried to save the dying, and they acknowledged the dead and comforted their loved ones. Many, many people were touched by and are grateful for what they did. But as all First Responders know, doing these things for even one year can be punishing. They each did it for decades. The journey of the emergency medical provider is always uphill. We must constantly upgrade our skills to meet the changes in protocol and accepted medical practice. We must constantly train to keep our skills sharp, remembering that those that we don’t use often are possibly the ones most likely to save a life. We must face new risks and train to deal with them: swine flu, Ebola, Covid, monkey pox, terrorism, mass shootings. That uphill journey is challenging enough to endure for a year or two, Stan, Eric, and Cathy did it for 40 years.”

Hermiz went on to say that “beyond these considerable burdens of simply being a medical first responder, each of these three members moved our Squad forward in their own way. All three served as Squad President which meant they had to deal with all the things that sustain the Squad: membership, medical guidance, finances, and operations to name a few. They had to make decisions about equipment, our trucks, and where we called home. Stan was a founding member, recognizing the need for emergency medical services in Grafton and having the vision to help make that happen. Eric also had vision and drove the project that resulted in the construction of our solar powered radio repeater on Bear Hill, a critical communications link for our Squad, the Fire Department, and the Town, and he continues to be the force behind its operation. Cathy invested in training to become an advanced provider and, in so doing, enabled the Squad to upgrade its license and provide a higher level of care to the community. Stan, Eric and Cathy’s contributions serve as the pillars of our Squad’s foundation.”

Each of the honorees spoke to the group sharing memories which brought forward laughter and tears, and stories that couldn’t be shared anywhere else. Eric Stevens may have summed up the commitment and dedication of all three when he said simply “I like to help people.

Athens Emergency Services March 25 – April 24  
Rescue Squad

2 medical responses

- Dave Ross

### **New Tree Warden**

The Athens select board recently appointed Jay Maciejowski to the post of town tree warden. He replaces Bob Anderson who had devoted many years of

service as tree warden for the residents of Athens. Maciejowski is a professional forester, who worked for the State of Vermont, Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation for more than 35 years before retiring in 2013. While working for the department, he was responsible for a number of state programs in southern Vermont including the county forester program, forest resource protection program and management of state owned land. One of Maciejowski’s top priorities as the new tree warden will be to inventory the locations of all ash trees along town roads and on property owned by the town to help Athens prepare for the eventual appearance of Emerald Ash Borer (EAB). Although not found as of yet in Athens, this destructive wood boring invasive insect has infected and killed ash trees in 36 states including Vermont.

The insect can only travel a couple of miles per year on its own but after being first detected in Michigan in 2002, the spread of infection dramatically increased throughout the country by people moving firewood, logs and nursery stock. Once established in a community, the insect will kill almost 100% of the ash trees within 3-5 years.

Once an inventory has been completed, Maciejowski

would like to develop a future plan for dealing with the damage caused by Emerald Ash Borer in cooperation with the select board and town residents. Anyone who is interested in volunteering to help conduct the ash tree inventory should contact Jay at 802-869-2405.



Healthy Ash Trees

- Ginger Maciejowski

### **Annual Plant Sale at the Athens Brick Meetinghouse**

Be sure to come to The Athens Meetinghouse for our 6th Annual Plant Sale! We will have many perennials, annuals and vegetable plants for sale. We will also have several donated items for raffle. The sale will be from 10 am to 12 noon on Saturday May 27th.

If you have any plants you would like to donate please contact Sherry Maher 869-2141 or Ginger Maciejowski 869-2405. We will make arrangements to get the plants to the meetinghouse. Hope to see you there.

And stay tuned for details on other upcoming events at the Meetinghouse this spring and summer! Details will be posted here as they are confirmed: <https://www.facebook.com/athensmeetinghouse>

- Ginger Maciejowski

## Memorial Day Observance

The 2023 Memorial Day Observance in Grafton will take place on Tuesday, May 30th at 1:30PM, beginning with the traditional Memorial Procession from Grafton Elementary School up to the Village Cemetery and then down to the Village Bridge, followed by a Memorial Program on the Library Lawn. (In the event of inclement weather, the Program will take place in the Grafton Community Church). All veterans and first responders are welcome to march in the Procession. The Grafton Historical Society will host a reception immediately following the Program. Anyone wishing to support this observance either as a member of the Veterans' contingent, driver, speaker, reader, wreath maker, or assist with set-up, seating, sound, or flowers, or for more information, please contact Chris Wallace, Grafton Grange #117, 802 843-1146. - *Chris Wallace*

## Grace Cottage Happenings

It's Spring - time to get moving! Join us on the Townshend Town Common for the Grace Cottage Family Health & Hospital 5K, Saturday, May 13, with an 8:30 am shotgun start. You can run, walk, roll, stroll, or push your baby carriage for this fun, family-friendly event!

Registration is \$20 per participant; children younger than 18 are free with signed parent/guardian permission. Registration is open at [gracecottage.org/events](http://gracecottage.org/events). A virtual option is also available. Register at the same link.

For more information, contact Grace Cottage Foundation at [info@gracecottage.org](mailto:info@gracecottage.org) or call 802-365-9109. All proceeds from this event will benefit healthcare services at Grace Cottage.

In other news from Grace Cottage, a public forum to unveil plans for a new primary care clinic building will be held on Wednesday, May 10, at 5 p.m., at the Townshend Town Hall.

The current clinic operates out of two adjoining houses built in the 1850s. With more than 31,000 patient visits annually (up from 20,000 in 2018), it is essential that Grace Cottage moves forward with this project, in order to meet the access needs of the community, and the recruitment of additional primary care providers that will allow for future growth.

During the past year, Grace Cottage has been working diligently on the steps required to begin what the Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation and the Bennington County Regional Commission have named a "Vital Project" for the region's vitality and economy.

Grace Cottage is embarking on a \$20 million capital campaign for the construction of the new clinic building adjacent to the existing Grace Cottage Family Health. This project, fulfilling a long-held dream, has been initiated by generous donors who have pledged \$5 million.

Extensive feedback from employees who work in the clinic has been incorporated into the interior plan. Final exterior and interior designs have been completed for this new 23,000 sq-ft. building, and these will be shared with community members at the May 10 event.

For more information about the new clinic and the forum, call 802-365-9109. - *C.J. King*

## Andy Toepfer Honored at WHPA Annual Meeting

At their annual meeting on April 22, The Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association presented Andy Toepfer with their Volunteer of the Year award. Andy is a former longtime board member who continues to remain active in supporting the work of the WHPA.

Andy is a passionate conservationist and highly skilled mapmaker, having mapped much of the 2725 acres of land now owned by WHPA. He has been the principle writer of the conservation management plan for the Pinnacle lands for Vermont's Current Use Program and has extensive knowledge of the natural communities, wildlife resources and historic sites found on that land. Another one of Andy's contributions has been keeping invasive plants out of natural communities and he is often organizing and leading volunteers to remove these plants.



Locating, marking and mapping boundary lines on the WHPA land is another of the many volunteer jobs Andy has taken on. You'll often find Andy going off trail to look at an old foundation or road to gain more knowledge of the history of an area. He continually wants to know more about the living complexities of the land and while pursuing this he is always working to protect special places and rare species of plants and animals.

Andy is highly regarded by his peers. While being known as kind of quiet and unassuming, when he shares, often after everyone has spoken, he can be pretty convincing and persuasive. The WHPA has been extremely fortunate to have Andy Toepfer as an advocate for conservation in the region.

- *Jay Maciejowski*

## May Library Corner

### Smiles and Gratitude:

Many, many thanks to Steve Nolan for repairing the railing on the handicapped ramp with speed, skill and generosity. We are also very grateful for the ongoing support of David Ross and Ray Lisai with various building projects and tasks.

Please give a big smile and thank you to our volunteers working at the library during the month of May—they will be busy giving the librarian some vacation time. We are most grateful for their help and involvement here.

We received a memorial contribution in honor of Catherine Wright—thank you!

### Library Programming and Services

Join us for Born to Read Preschool Story Hour on the 4th Saturday of each month, filled with 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.

Walks of Wonder return! Join us for outdoor adventures organized by the library and enjoy the company of others in beautiful natural settings around our area. Or join us for our final session of the Nature & Books Discussion Series before we break for the summer.

Museum, Parks and Next Stage Bandwagon Passes are coming soon! Stay tuned for announcements about this season's offerings.

Do you have a group that needs a space to meet? Contact the library to see what we have to offer.

Did you know that the library teams up with Grafton Cares to offer a book bag filled with board books, along with a knitted blanket, to all newborns and their families in Grafton and Athens? The Russell/Paulsen family offers financial support for this lovely program and we've distributed 8 book bags in the past few months!

Interested in downloading audio books or e-books 24/7 for free? Contact the library about use of the Libby app via ListenUp! Vermont.

Finally, a large adult book order has arrived with many, many titles for your reading pleasure. Drop by and check them out or reserve on our automated catalog.

### Library Building

The library trustees have been very busy assessing bids from insulation contractors with advice from an energy analyst. They are close to making a selection and it appears that insulation upgrades to the library may begin in mid-July. We are very grateful to donor Liz Bankowski and everyone who contributed to the capital campaign, making these vital improvements to library

infrastructure possible.

### Library Programming

-Spanish Group on Zoom, Tuesdays, 11:00am-Noon on Zoom. Intermediate level.

-Nature & Books Discussion Series: Wednesday, May 24, 6-7:30 pm on Zoom (The Sea Around Us by Rachel Carson)

-Born to Read Preschool Story Hour 4th Saturday of the month, May 22, 10-11am, Ages 0-5.

-Walks of Wonder, Sunday, May 21, 1pm: Spring Wildflower Walk, Bonnyville Environmental Education Center.

[www.graftonpubliclibrary.org](http://www.graftonpubliclibrary.org), 802-843-2404

- Michelle Dufort



### A Vermont Gardener,

A couple of months back, I wrote about creating meadows out of lawns and thereby saving a lot of work for yourself by giving up mowing. Now I have another great labor-saving principle which is to have a “no-dig” garden. We have all been trained to rototill or dig over our gardens in the spring to prepare for planting. After many years of research, it has been discovered that doing this actually harms the soil structure and disturbs the natural microflora within the soil which are the organisms required for optimal growth of our crops.

Think about your garden as a layer cake which constantly has a renewed “frosting” so that the soil is always covered with mulch or growing plants. In the spring, you uncover a space for your row or bed, disturbing the soil as little as possible. Access areas in between crop rows are always covered in order to keep in moisture and suppress weeds. Most importantly, mulches keep the soil at the best temperature for the microflora to flourish and provide the best growing environment for the plants. Any weeds that do come up are easy to pull out which you can then place on top of the mulch to dry out and rot down to provide more nutrients to the soil. It's the best “weed and feed” regimen you can develop! Never let there be bare soil. It should either be mulched or planted, and come fall, make sure there is a good 3-4 inch covering over the whole garden which will rot down slowly over the winter until spring when you can start another layering process. So go put up the hammock instead of starting up the rototiller, and get ready to enjoy a more productive garden this summer!

April weather summary:

High temp. 84.0 degrees

Low temp. 19.4 “

Precip. approx. 5 ½ inches (3" in one storm)  
- *Treah Pichette*

## COMMUNITY INFORMATION

**Select Board Meetings:** 3rd Thursday 7:00 PM  
**Budget Committee:** 2nd & 4th Tuesday 7:00 PM  
**Meeting House:** 2nd Monday virtual 10:00 AM  
**School Board:** 2nd Thursdays 6:00 Grafton School  
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: MAY 15, 29**  
**RECYCLE PICK-UP: MAY 8, 22**

### Thoughts to Ponder

“The sun was warm but wind was chill. You know how it is with an April day. When the sun is out and the wind is still, you’re one month on in the middle of May”  
- *Robert Frost*

“Spring fever, spring is here at last. Spring fever, my heart’s beating fast. Get up, get out. Spring is everywhere.”  
- *Elvis Presley*

### Charles Perham Journal May 1868

*Transcribed by James Trimble*

1. Have been mending fence by the Goodman place in the forenoon. In the afternoon by the Renney lot.
2. Have been to the examination of teachers today. Mr. Watkins drove 154 sheep here.
3. In the forenoon with father to our meeting house to meeting. In the afternoon on the hill to the funeral of Mr. Shafter. Received a letter from M.N.H
4. Mended fence and grafted some.
5. Mr. Whitney has been grafting for us today. Paid him 75 cents. In the afternoon mended fence.
6. Have been getting out manure today. Father has been hewing timbers. Mr. Pomroy from Townshend here. Ella Farr here.
7. Have been to Saxtons River to buy some salt. Mr. Cobb came today.
8. The ground was covered in snow this morning tonight it has mostly gone. In the afternoon went with father and oxen to mend fence by the Stickney place for Mr. Cobb.
9. Mended fence in the forenoon next to Mr. Cobb. In the afternoon grafted some.
10. Have been up on the hill to meeting. Called to Amos Balls.
11. Mr. Smith works for us today. Finished mending Mr. Cobbs fence in the afternoon.
12. In the forenoon mended fence between us and Mr. Whitney. In the afternoon hewed timbers and Mr. Smith works for us today. Turned out on the hill 6 sheep.
13. Plowed the oat ground today. Ella here. Had a hard time to get up the sheep today.
14. This morning had quite a time to get a sheep that ran away. Just night Jerrie here today.
15. Father has been to Cambridgeport to the mill. I have been getting out manure. Mrs. Ranney here.
16. Have been over to Mr. Howes in Townshend to get some butter tubs. In the afternoon got out manure. Just night went and salted Mr. Cobbs sheep.
17. Have been with father to Meeting.
18. A very rainy day. In the afternoon went down the hill called to the sawmill Mr. Dodges, Smith.
19. Have been to Cambridgeport called to Royals to see aunt Nancy. In the afternoon Mrs. Bennett here to let us have her horse to keep.
20. Got out manure plowed some today.
21. A rainy day have been reading today.
22. Have been to the Post Office went to Melvins to dinner. Called to Merrils Sent a letter to Eastman and ----- Boston.
23. Have been with Father down to Ranney Lot and cut a tree and drew it to the mill. Ella Smith here in the afternoon.
24. At home all day a rainy day. Sent to Wiggin ----- \$2.00 for goods.
25. Ida Ball comes here to board today. Mr Watkins drove 95 sheep and 45 lambs
26. In the forenoon got out manure. In the afternoon went with father and called Mr. Cobb sheep up on the hill and fixed the fence next to the Ranney lot.
27. Sowed the oats today. Worked in the garden some. It has been a very pleasant day.
28. Have been getting out manure. After supper went to Cambridgeport carried Ida Ball down. Called in to see Emma Ball her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. Aunt Nancy went home with me.
29. Got out manure it has been a rainy day.
30. In the forenoon got out manure. Father carried aunt Nancy home. In afternoon went to Cambridgeport after express bundle no one had come
31. Sent another letter to Wiggins. Have been to Meeting with father. Have taken a class in the Sabbath school.