

# The Athenian

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Sponsored by Grafton Cares

SEPTEMBER 2023

## Honoring Dennis Hunt

On Friday, August 18th, we learned that my good friend and co-creator of this community newsletter, Dennis Hunt had passed away the previous day following a sudden and steep decline in his health. Those who knew Dennis, know that some of his greatest joy came from bringing people together and building community. He loved to see and be a part of those gatherings. He knew how important it was on so many levels, and today, we reap so many of the benefits from his time with us. Our hearts go out to his beloved wife, Karen, their two children and their families. Below is a beautiful tribute to Dennis from Bill Toomey. We urge everyone to relish as did Dennis, the many wonderful opportunities in our area for connecting with neighbors both old and new. The upcoming Fall Tag Sale by the Grafton Fire and Rescue Auxiliary was always one of his favorites. I've never made it to this event in my 30 years here, but will be sure to do so this year and will think of him.

R.I.P my friend.

- Sherry Maher

### Select Board Meeting Tidbits

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

- Residents had questions about runoff, culverts and road maintenance; concerns related to lack of follow up from the Board; the need to address a long noted issue with garbage accumulating on a property in Town; compliments and criticism of the road crew; questions on the legal matter regarding Taylor Hill; questions about the frequency of executive sessions; and the status of the Planning Commission.
- Chris Campany of Windham Regional Commission (WRC) presented on the Municipal Assistance Program (MAP) which can help small towns like Athens with limited human resources, to access funding opportunities. Also, WRC will be serving as project manager for Ober Hill bridge scoping.



- Hannah Regier presented the monthly Treasurer's Reports giving the Board a walkthrough of the budget report and balance sheet. Tax payments are being collected and grant payments for various road work has put the General/Highway fund in the black again. Concerns were noted about needing more complete information for materials accounting from the road crew, and trash bag sales have been lower than predicted.

- Five land record books have been scanned to microfilm and Hannah recommends not paying more for digitizing until the Town has a plan to digitize everything.

- The Municipal Tax Rate was set at 1.26 at a special meeting on July 6.
- Also at that meeting Harold Noyes resigned from the Select Board, and after a lengthy deliberation, at their July 20th meeting, the Board voted 3 to 1 to appoint Krista Gay to finish out his term.
- The Board unanimously approved a detailed statement in support of adopting a Town Plan, stressing that it would NOT include zoning.
- The Athens Weather Emergency Committee is concerned about the need for a cooling shelter with forecasts for increasing heat waves. Members of the committee responded to the early July flooding that temporarily displaced some Tenneyville residents, but everyone had a place to go so there was no need to open a shelter.
- Hannah requested clarity with communications and leadership during emergencies, and asked to be kept in the loop as numerous agencies are contacting the Town Office for status reports.
- James Trimble was appointed Town Agent and Town Grand Juror. John Oberling, Mark Berman and Andy Toepfer were appointed to the Planning Commission.
- Appreciation was noted at the July meeting for the long hours and work Eugene had to put in related to the severe rain storms and clean up. A significant

concern was noted with a bank beginning to slide on Reed Rd due to all the heavy rain that will likely force closure of the road to through traffic.

- A number of grant applications and opportunities are being explored or in the works for funding related to Town buildings or roads.
- The Board approved an access permit for the Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association for the Lily Pond Highlands trailhead parking area.
- WRC has hired a consultant, Maggie Foley, who has been assigned to work with the Town to prioritize projects, grant writing and management.
- A special meeting was held on July 28th to address the situation with Reed Rd. An RFP was put out and at the August 17th meeting, the bid from A.S. Clark was accepted and a release was signed for a temporary road to be built on the Cersosimo property while the slide is being repaired.
- An ARPA Fund Informational meeting was held on Aug. 22nd and 4 members of the public joined the Board in discussing priorities. Athens received a little over \$130,000 in ARPA funds. Priorities for these funds were the Town Garage work, the Community Center and getting a vault for storing Town records. In the end, those present seemed to all agree that focusing on the garage was the top priority, with concerns about mold and roof repair as well as the addition of a bathroom and office. There may be more grant opportunities for the other buildings, but the conditions in the garage are dire. Some of the ARPA funds could be held aside as a grant match related to a vault for record storage.

- Sherry Maher

## A Champion of Community

Dennis Hunt was wise, soft-spoken, and humble. He loved people, and they in turn, loved him. No one, however, loved him more than his wife Karen. They were constant companions, and the depth of their devotion was an inspiration to all who knew them.

It was about 25 years ago that the Hunts, both having retired from a working life as educators, decided to search for a home in which they could happily spend their remaining years. They had every intention of “down-sizing.” Anyone who had the good fortune to visit the place they ultimately found in Athens, Vermont, would have to laugh at that idea. Located on McCusker Road and looking down over a broad meadow and onto the wooded

hillside opposite, the house they chose was a historic, well-preserved tavern that had been built shortly after the Revolutionary War. This gracious estate (hardly “down-sizing”) gave Dennis plenty of space to pursue his passion for woodworking and gardening. The large barn, probably built no more than 50 years ago, harbored a workshop, a winter’s firewood, and plenty of room to host their daughter’s wedding of over 100 guests.

As teachers, the Hunts had spent decades in service to others, and it was in their nature to continue giving of their time and talent in their Vermont community. This they did in both Athens and Grafton, starting with Grafton Cares where they were board members for many years. For much of that time, Dennis was president. In that role, his strong sense of compassion and wise leadership saw to both strengthening existing programs and creating some new ones. One example is the “Over 80 Luncheon”—a festive occasion honoring Grafton and Athens seniors. Expanding on the idea of community and communications, Dennis and his Athens neighbor Sherry Maher created [this] small monthly newspaper, “The Athenian,” that has helped build stronger ties in [Athens]. The paper is now entering its 14th year of publication.

Only a few months ago, Dennis began to show symptoms of what was diagnosed as Parkinson’s Disease. Being as wise as he was, it became clear that the work of hauling firewood, gardening, shoveling, etc., was soon going to be too much. So Karen and Dennis made the decision to sell their beloved house in Athens and move to a senior community in Maryland close by their daughter and her family. Shortly after they had settled in there, Dennis’ health went into a steady, then steep, decline. It was only a couple of weeks ago that Dennis passed away, and the expressions of shock, sympathy, and love poured out to Karen and family. That love is clearly being returned as Karen has

announced that, according to his wishes, Dennis will be coming back to us. His memorial service will take place on Saturday, September 23, at 11 a.m. in the Grafton Community Church, and burial is to be in Athens. Following the church service, there will be a celebration of life reception in the Chapel, hosted by Grafton Cares.

- Bill Toomey



## Notes from the School Board

At the May 25th Community Forum there were only 4 parents and 1 community member that attended. Concerns brought up were discussed by the board and those in

attendance. This provided information the board can use in future decisions. Thank you to those who attended. The next Community Forum will be Monday, September 18th at 6:30. Meet at the Grafton Elementary School (GES).

The Principal and the Kindergarten interview committee recommend Danielle Wassertzug (Ms. W) to the board for the GES Kindergarten position. Her appointment was unanimously approved and she has accepted the job. The SU has been able to hire Special Education teacher Erin Jamieson who will fill the open position at GES. The board unanimously approved the appointment Ms. Clouet as our Librarian. She will work on Wednesdays throughout this coming school year. The board as of August 24th voted to offer the 0.4 music position to Jesse Peters. We are excited to have him on board. He was the music teacher last year hired through an agency and was very well liked by the students and the staff.

The Grafton Elementary School is still looking for an After-School Program Coordinator. Once a written description for this job is available it will be posted on the town's web page. Until then if you are interested in this position please contact Angela at the Grafton Elementary School or the SU for details on this position.

Due to health issues, Harold Noyes had to resign as a school board member. We are currently looking for someone to replace him. Any one that is interested please contact the Supervisory Union office and leave your name and phone number with Nicole.

Currently GES has 33 students enrolled for the 2023-2024 school year. Of the 33 students, 7 will be incoming kindergartens.

The new replacement septic pumps have arrived and were scheduled to be installed August 17th. This should have the septic system in full working order and ready for the first day of school.

The research for playground designing and equipment has been completed. The equipment components that were decided upon have been ordered. They are expected to arrive in January 2024 and will be installed as soon as the ground thaws.

August 28th the teaching staff did a Party Bus ride through Grafton and Athens between 2:00 and 3:00 handing out cookies and goodie bags to the GES students.

The first day of school was August 30th. The kindergarteners will have only half days the first week of school then start full days on the second week.

Following a ruling from the state that all schools needed to be checked for PCB contamination, most of the Vermont school districts have joined a class action lawsuit against Monsanto, who is responsible for the PCB contamination in school building products from 1930 to 1978. The Windham Northeast School Districts

are also a part of this lawsuit. The high school has been tested and there are currently 3 spaces, the gym, auditorium and stage, that cannot be occupied due to high PCB contamination. More testing is needed and consulting will be done to determine how to mitigate the contamination.  
*- Lynn Morgan*

## Grafton Cares Update

The big news from Grafton Cares is that our two-month summer break is over, and we are eager to start the kitchen humming again. The community meals calendar for September is as follows:

- Friday, September 1, dinner at 6 p.m. in Athens
- Wednesday, September 6, lunch at noon in Grafton
- Friday, September 15, dinner at 6 p.m. in Grafton
- Wednesday, September 20, lunch at noon in Grafton

All community meals are free of charge and open to all. Donations are gratefully accepted, of course.

Other than community meals, our activities continued as usual, and over the past month we provided Meals on Wheels to 11 customers, \$185 in gas cards for medical appointments, 1 sunshine basket, and 2 rides to medical appointments.

Please step carefully over the threshold into autumn. Be well,  
*- Bill Toomey*

## Summer & Fall Happenings at the Meetinghouse

The Athens Meetinghouse Committee and the Athens Historic Preservation Society have had a busy summer of events at our beautiful 1817 Brick Meetinghouse...and there's still more to come.

As in the past, we kicked off the season with our 6th Annual Plant Sale on the Meetinghouse lawn in late May. In June, we hosted an enthusiastic group of visitors for an Open House taking folks on tours of the building and sharing much of its story. The end of July brought about a delightful Sunday afternoon for an Ice Cream Social, followed rapidly by two weekends in a





row of concerts, both featuring a resident musician or two!

All events saw new faces and some regular locals enjoying the history and architecture of our beautiful building, as well as the amazing acoustics. We will be looking forward to planning more concerts for next summer!

The Harvest Dinner scheduled for September 23rd has been postponed until a mid-October Saturday to be determined due to the memorial for Dennis Hunt in Grafton on the 23rd.

However, we are pleased to have Roger Albee, near neighbor of Athens, and former Vermont Secretary of Agriculture, joining us for a talk on the history of farming in Vermont, and he might even have some insight on how Vermonters fed themselves 100 years ago during that pandemic. The talk will take place on Thursday, September 28th at 4 PM. We especially hope all you Athenian gardeners and farmers can take the time to join the conversation.

And as for continued restoration efforts on the Meetinghouse, the new storm windows have been installed, and thanks to Bob Bova, we now have the needed simple wooden supports to hold open all of those wonderful new windows to let the air flow through. We anticipate the planned work under the floor to commence come the fall. This work is funded in part by a 2023 Historic Preservation Grant from the VT Division for Historic Preservation along with other generous donations to the AHPS. - Sherry Maher

### First Annual Chili Cook-Off!

Announcing Athens' First Annual Chili Cook-Off! I've been wanting this to happen for years, and am so excited that it will finally happen.

The Chili Cook-Off is happening on September 30, 2023 at 5pm at the Athens Community Center (formerly the Athens Elementary School on Brookline Road).

It's FREE to submit a chili to the cook-off (we would love a variety of chili bases: beef, chicken, vegetarian, game). There will be a \$5 admission to taste the chili and vote on the winner.

First Place will receive a \$100 gift card to J&H Hardware; Second Place will be a \$50 gift card to J&H Hardware; and Third Place will receive a \$25 gift card to J&H Hardware.

All money raised will go towards the community center. To enter, please email Krista Gay at [Krista.Ann.Gay@gmail.com](mailto:Krista.Ann.Gay@gmail.com). And please share to help us get the word out!

- Krista Gay



### Time to Think Tag Sale

In about three weeks collection will begin for items to sell at the Grafton Fire and Rescue Auxiliary annual Fall tag sale to benefit the local volunteer fire department. This is the major fundraising event for the firefighters and is one of the biggest events in the community. For over forty years people have come forward to generously donate their time and their goods to make this sale one of the best in the region. Once again it will take place under the tents at the Grafton Fire Department, 711 Route 121, East of Grafton Village, during the Fall holiday weekend, October 7th and 8th.

The collection of donated items for the sale will begin Saturday, September 23rd and continue until Thursday, October 5th from 9 -1 each day at the Firehouse. While all manner of things are accepted there are certain items that will not be, including: refrigerators, computer equipment, tube type televisions, mattresses, ski equipment, exercise equipment, clothing, tires, VHS tapes, encyclopedias, text books or any item not in usable condition (broken, missing parts, dirty, moldy, etc.). The sale provides a great way to clean out unused or unwanted things and recirculate them in the community but things that will cost to be disposed of defeats the purpose of the sale.

The other thing that makes this sale such a great community event is the people who come forward to put it on. Their dedication and high spirits make this a special time in the community. If you'd like to join in then just show up or contact Auxiliary President Amber Stevens at [istevensgm@vermontel.net](mailto:istevensgm@vermontel.net) or call 802-376-5646. Updates will be posted along with other Fire and Rescue information on the Grafton Fire and Rescue Facebook page. - Dave Ross

Emergency Service Activity in Athens  
April 25 - August 24

- Grafton Rescue Squad
- 8 medical
- 1 motor vehicle collision
- 1 CPR class
- Grafton Fire Department
- 1 motor vehicle collision
- 1 flood evacuation

### Age Successfully Health & Benefits Fair

Senior Solutions, Council on Aging for Southeastern Vermont in partnership with Bellows Falls Area Senior Center and Parks Place Community Resource Center will be holding an "Age Successfully" Health & Benefits Fair on Friday, September 22, 2023, from 10 AM to 2 PM, rain or shine. The Event will be held in the Waypoint Center 17 Depot Street in Bellows Falls, Vermont. A FREE BBQ will be available from 11AM - 1PM.

The Fair is an opportunity for visitors to learn about wellness-based goods and services to help older Vermonters to Age Successfully!

Exhibitors include teams from Senior Solutions Council on Aging for Southeastern Vermont, 3SquaresVT Food Program, Meals on Wheels, Parks Place Community Resource Center, the Bellows Falls Senior Center, AARP Fraud Watch Network, The Gathering Place and Springfield Adult Day Care Services, Brattleboro Area Hospice, Dartmouth Cancer Center Community Outreach and Engagement, Fire Safety with the State of VT Fire Marshals office, Green Mountain RSVP, HCRS, Lifeline Phones and services, Main Street Arts, The MOOVER transportation services, NorthStar Health, the Rockingham Free Library, SEVCA, Tai Chi Vermont demonstration, Valley Health Connections, Visiting Nurse and Hospice for VT & NH, and WOOL-FM will be broadcasting a portion and more!

For questions and more information, please contact: Suzanne Burge, Senior Solutions (802) 822-0498, [Sburge@seniorsolutionsvt.org](mailto:Sburge@seniorsolutionsvt.org) Teagen Kosut, (802) 463-3907, Bellows Falls Area Senior Center, [bfasc@sover.net](mailto:bfasc@sover.net) Julie Cermola, Parks Place Community Resource Center, (802) 463-9927, [Julie@ParksPlaceVermont.com](mailto:Julie@ParksPlaceVermont.com) -Joann Erenhouse

### **Athens Author Giving a Book Talk**

Tim Stevenson will be giving a talk at the Putney Library about the recent publication of his book, *Transformative Activism: A Values Revolution in Everyday Life in a Time of Societal Collapse*.

The talk, will be held on Thursday, September 21 at 6:30 PM, and will center on the book's central theme that human liberation cannot be realized by a practice that opposes and tries to change the world, but rather by one that accepts and learns to live with life as it is as a free human being.

Signed copies of the book will be available for purchase. - Tim Stevenson

### **Heather Chase Represents VT in Ireland**

I am proud to announce that I am representing Vermont in Ireland during the end of August, 2023 as a member of a group of American State Legislators from across the United States who are participating in the American Irish State Legislators Caucus to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement. The Good Friday Agreement, signed on 10 April 1998, ended most of the violence of the Troubles, an ethno-nationalist conflict in Northern Ireland that had prevailed since the late 1960s. This Agreement was a

major development in the Northern Ireland peace process of the 1990s.

The trip includes a visit to the Peace Walls and a visit with the Northern Ireland Assembly in Belfast. In Dublin I am meeting with Irish Government officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs, touring Trinity College, the oldest University in Ireland and visiting the Irish Parliament.

It is with profound honor that I represent our amazing state of Vermont in this celebration and have the opportunity to learn more about the strong bond between Ireland and the United States. I look forward to sharing my experiences with you after my return to Vermont.

Contact Rep. Chase at [hchase@leg.state.vt.us](mailto:hchase@leg.state.vt.us) or by phone at 802 875 4663 . - Heather Chase

[NOTE - Rep. Chase will be at the Grafton Public Library to meet with Grafton and Athens constituents on Tuesday, September 19th, from 5-6PM.]

### **Grafton Playgroup**

Join us for playgroup in Grafton! It is geared towards newborns – 5 years old and their parents or caregivers. We meet inside the Grafton Elementary School gym or playground on Thursdays from 9:30-10:30AM, following the school calendar for the days the school is open. During playgroup, we have lots of free active playtime with toys and gym equipment. No registration or fee is required. If you have any questions please contact Heather Rodrigues by email at [Heather\\_michaud@yahoo.com](mailto:Heather_michaud@yahoo.com) or at her home phone 802-843-4792. -Heather Michaud

### **Reed Road Weather Summary**

Here are the Reed Road weather totals for August:

High temp. 87.2 degrees

Low temp. 46.5 "

Total precipitation 6.75 "

This has been a wet & cool summer for sure. The total rainfall for June, July & Aug. was 27.75 inches which is about 10 inches above normal. Good for slugs, NOT for tomatoes! - Treah Pichette

### **Thoughts to Ponder**

Some wise quotes to share in Dennis' honor....

“You must be the change you wish to see in the world.”  
- Gandhi

“We are what we repeatedly do; excellence, then, is not an act but a habit.”  
- Aristotle

“Strive not to be a success, but rather to be of value.”  
- Albert Einstein

## 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 Wednesdays 6:00 Grafton School



**TRASH PICK-UP: SEPT 4TH**

**RECYCLE PICK-UP: SEPT 18TH**

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

### CHARLES PERHAM JOURNAL - AUGUST 1868

- 1 Mowed and then doctored the sheep today.
- 2 Have been to meeting. Mr. Learing from Saxton River preached. Went to Mr. Cushings to dinner took supper at Royals. Went to sing with Abbie and Adelia, Lou Stearns, Mr. Woods. Found Father sick when I got home.
- 3 Have had to get in hay alone. Got in two loads. Father sick today.
- 4 Mowed some today a rainy day.
- 5 Do not feel very well today. A rainy day mowed some.
- 6 Have been to Saxton river called to see Lilla. Cart C. Post. A rainy day.
- 7 To home all day. Went to see about the oxen and horse and salted the sheep in the Ranny Lot. Frank Oaks here just a night to pay school taxes. Mother is sick tonight.
- 8 Went down to Amos Balls and paid in the treasure 82.50. Called to Merrills. Mr. Cobb came today in the afternoon doctored our sheep again.
- 9 Have been to our Meeting House to meeting.
- 10 Mowed and turned hay today.
- 11 Got in three loads of hay in the forenoon. In the afternoon went to see Jerrie called to Mr. Dodges. Mr. Bissell of Wardsboro here.
- 12 Have been mowing most all day.
- 13 Had a hard time finding the oxen this morning. Got in three loads of hay.
- 14 Finished haying today. Mother finished making cheese. A----, ----- Marsh here.
- 15 Father has been to Cambridgeport in the forenoon. In the afternoon got up the sheep and doctored them.
- 16 Have been up on the hill to meeting. Received a bundle from Ed Ackerson. Sam ----- folks all here today.
- 17 Have been to Cambridgeport to get the oxen shod. Brought Eller and Ellas and --- Smith home.
- 18 Mowed brakes most all day. Lowell and Larerett here. Aunt Nancy sent us some Tomatoes.
- 19 Worked getting out birch in the forenoon. In the afternoon John, Mary, Fannie here they headed home in the rain.
- 20 At home in the forenoon. In the afternoon went to cambridgeport received stationary from Ackerson and a letter from ---- Boston. Called to see Silas Powers and to Amos Ball.
- 21 In the forenoon mowed brakes. In the afternoon went and doctored our sheep over at Mr. Cobbs. Mr. Cobb and Watkins came today to doctor their sheep.
- 22 Mowed the oats today. The minister Mr. Enright and daughter here just at night. Will stay all night.
- 23 Mr. Enright and daughter here this morning. Have been to meeting alone. After meeting went to the grave with Mary Powers and ---- ----.
- 24 Got in brakes. (Brakes: an Old English term for an area of a field that is overgrown with brush or fern) Jerrie here to dinner.
- 25 Got in brakes and oats. Mr. Cobb came to see about his sheep.
- 26 Pulled weeds out of the turnip yard in the forenoon. In the afternoon went to Cambridgeport. Sammie Upton died today about six.
- 27 Have been to Weston today for Mr. Enright. To Mr. Enrights to dinner. Called to Chester to the Mass Meeting. Heard that Aaron Ball and David Farr was dead when I got home.
- 28 Have been with father and mother to the funeral of Sammie Upton. Have been and sat up with Silas Powers with the corpse of David Farr.
- 29 Came home this morn. To home in the forenoon. In the afternoon went to the funeral of David Farr with father and mother. In the evening wrote to Ed Ackerson.
- 30 Have been with father and mother to funeral of Aaron Ball.
- 31 Have been fixing fence around the grafted trees today.