

The Athenian

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Sponsored by Grafton Cares

JUNE 2024

June - A Time of Renewal

As we move into summer, stop and notice the many wonderful smells and sounds of the season. Flowers blooming, fresh cut grass and birds of all kinds chirping and guarding their nests. It is a magical time of year when each day brings the arrival of new buds, birds and growth of all kinds. Barbecues, family gatherings, beach time, summer vacation are all on the horizon with much to enjoy, some of which are listed below. The Athenian wishes all of you a safe and happy summer. We will see you in the fall and watch for email with important or time sensitive updates in the meantime. *- Ginger Maciejowski*



- There was discussion about declassifying part of Ober Hill Rd given the Town's liability since it has deteriorated yet some GPS still send people through there. The Board will connect with Westminster and Rockingham.
- The Planning Commission has sent off the revised Town Plan to be reviewed by WRC. A July 2nd meeting is set to hear their review. Stay tuned for next steps to bring it

to a Town vote.

- A concern was noted about ATVs being driven on town roads by kids without helmets. David said to contact the Sheriff or State Police.

- Sherry Maher

Select Board Meeting Tidbits

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

- The recent transmission repair bill for the small truck puts it at 200% of the annual budget for that vehicle.
- Two properties are up for tax sale on July 11th.
- According to state police, the driver who damaged the stone wall at Valley Cemetery does not have insurance. VLCT will not cover the stone wall. The board will seek to appeal. There is a plan to put gates across the entrance when ground conditions make it wise to keep vehicles out.
- The Town Crew's summer hours (4-day week, Mon. - Thurs. from 6AM to 4PM) was posted by Sandi on the community Facebook page. This raised some questions including whether the board needed to approve that plan. After more discussion, the board voted with 3 approving, 1 opposed and 1 abstaining.
- The crew has been digging back banks, seeding and mulching on Walker Rd. Prices for some repairs and guardrails were discussed, concerns were noted about work close to blacktop and in the town right-of-way by a landowner that might impact runoff.
- The Local Emergency Management Plan was adopted.

Updates to Trash and Recycling Pickup

Starting June 3rd, the town is returning to weekly curbside pickup, alternating between trash and recycling. Please mark your calendars:

June 3rd & June 17th – Trash Pick-up

June 10th & June 24th – Recycling Pick-up

The dates for the whole year are noted on the calendar on the town website (athensvt.com)

Trash must be put out in the green "Athens" bags which are still \$3.50 each and can be purchased at the Town Office and Saxtons River Market. Recycling should be bagged in your own clear plastic bags.

- Hannah Regier

Notes from the School Board

This past month has been exciting at the Grafton Elementary School. The new playground is in and the children are having the best time playing on it. The equipment and installation were all paid for by a federal grant.

This summer the parking lot will be repaved. We have asked for bids for painting the school building this summer as well. Bids closed the end of May, so I hope to hear we have someone at the next meeting.

Summer school this year will be held at Westminster and Central Elementary Schools. Applications need to be sent in since there is limited space. Only two of the

four elementary schools are being used for this program due to lack of funding.

On June 10 at 5:00 PM our four 6th grade graduates will be recognized at the annual Moving Up Ceremony. This will be held in the Grafton School cafeteria.

Hope everyone has a great summer. As always, if you have any questions regarding the school please give me a call or send an email. - Lynn Morgan

[*Note* -All are invited to the GES End of Year BBQ on June 12th at 11:45. Menu is hotdogs, hamburgers, fruit salad, chips & baked beans. Price for adults is \$6, children are \$4, GES students are free. The PTO will help offset the cost for anyone needing financial assistance. Contact Sarah at sarah.nobel@wnesu.com]

Community Center Renovation

About a dozen residents came to a public input forum on May 9th to share ideas about future uses for the former Elementary School Building. The town's architect, Jon Saccoccio, was there to listen and consider how to incorporate the input into the building design. While the town has been thinking for years about moving the town office to this building, and there have been several iterations of how that might happen spatially, we now have the opportunity to have Jon design the details and get cost estimates for how it can really happen.



Some of the questions and ideas that came up were:

Q: How will the town pay for the renovation work?

A: The plan is that it can be funded with a variety of grants. This architectural scoping work, which is a required input for most grants, has itself been paid for by a grant from the Vermont Agency of Administration (the governor's office).

Q: The town really needs a new town office! Can this be prioritized?

A: Yes. And there are certain grants that will apply to the town office infrastructure and some that will apply to the community center infrastructure, so both uses are being looked at together.

Q: What would happen with the current town office?

A: This hasn't been fully considered yet, but is important for the town to think about.

Several ideas were generated by this group and are listed below:

*It's important to have flexible spaces for community gathering, kids' camp, private rentals and events.

*The town office and community center should have separate entrances and occupy separate spaces in the building.

*A full kitchen would support many of the community uses people are interested in.

*Make the building as efficient and accessible as possible.

*Improve the parking.

*Put the town office in the basement so there is more room upstairs for gathering space and the kitchen.

*A rec room in the basement for kids and teens.

A concern was expressed that the renovation might be too extensive and expensive for what the town can handle.

If YOU have any ideas or questions, please stop into the town office, or email townoffice@athensvt.gov so they can be included.

Next steps: Jon's studio is working on two different design directions now which he will share with the town in the coming weeks. There will be another public meeting where he will present the designs and receive feedback from all of us. Stay tuned! - Hannah Regier

Grafton Cares News

Having found myself suddenly confronted with the deadline for the Grafton News (not that Wendy doesn't give plenty of notice), I will forego the usual intrigue associated with Grafton Cares and cut straight to the chase.

This past month, we provided the following: Meals on Wheels to 9 customers, \$125 in gas cards for medical appointments, 3 rides to medical appointments, 2 sunshine baskets, 2 welcome bags, and 1 lap robe and 1 shawl from our knitters.

The calendar for community meals in June is as follows:

- Friday, June 7, dinner at 6 pm in Athens is (Hot dogs, baked beans, potato salad, pasta salad, garden salad or coleslaw, deviled eggs, watermelon.)
- Wednesday, June 12, lunch at noon in Grafton
- Friday, June 21, dinner at 6 pm in Grafton
- Wednesday, June 26, lunch at noon in Grafton

As a heads up, Grafton Cares will be taking a vacation from community meals during the months of July and August.

If you need to contact Grafton Cares you can do so by calling Kate Bova at 869-1527 or Bill Toomey at 843-2397.

Wishing you all a glorious summer--what's that I hear about frost next week? Ha ha! - Bill Toomey

Our Community Dinners Need Your Help

June 7th is our last Athens Dinner before our traditional July and August summer break. Grafton Cares has been putting on these dinners for 14 years now. There has been a decrease in attendance and cooks from Athens. A lot of planning and work goes into these dinners. These community dinners bring our town together and we need a person from Athens to organize

the menu and find Athens people who want to cook. We also need attendance that makes the effort worthwhile. With the present lack of interest and attendance, we plan on discontinuing the dinners. If you are interested in helping with organizing and planning meals please contact Kate Bova at 869-1527. - Kate Bova

Mark Your June Calendars

Open House at the Athens Brick Meetinghouse: Sunday, June 9th – 2-4PM – Members of the Meetinghouse Committee and the Athens Historic Preservation Society will be on hand to share information about the building.

Summer Solstice Stroll Fundraiser at the Capponcelli's for the Community Center: Saturday, June 22nd 10AM – 2PM, 142 Reed Rd. Handmade items & plants by donation and garden themed raffle prizes.

How the Fire Chiefs Saw It

In its 100 years history there have been 14 individuals who have been willing to accept the singular responsibility of being the Fire Chief in a small town. Some of those who held this special role in Grafton served for a short time while others served for a decade or more. All served the Grafton Fire Department in other capacities when not being its Chief as well serving in other roles in the life of the town. Comments made in Town Reports over the years display common concerns that these especially dedicated volunteers had and which continue on to this day: cooperation from the community, fire prevention, need for new members, and the dedication of the volunteers themselves. No further introduction is necessary as their words speak for themselves.

Chief Jesse Lawrence got right to the point in 1960 how a better Fire Department benefitted the community when he wrote that the “general improvement program of the Fire Department instigated in 1959 has progressed entitling the Fire Department to be approved by the New England Fire Insurance Rating Association which will provide property owners with a 7% decrease in fire insurance premiums”.

In 1963 Chief Frank Jones thanked the townspeople for their cooperation and the firefighters for maintaining their equipment noting that “God’s will and this kind of cooperation should keep our hills green and beautiful”. And in 1977 Chief Ed McWilliam wrote “we who live in the country have got to establish a personal fire prevention program. By keeping all wiring in proper repair and handling combustibles in the correct way, many fires can be prevented or minimized. It should be remembered that the first five minutes after a fire has started are the most crucial. The best way to fight fires is to prevent them.” Two years later, in 1979, Ed reinforced this message when he wrote “we continued to escape major structural fires. This speaks well for the

fire prevention measures the people of Grafton must be taking. Also, the hand of a kind of Providence should not be ruled out.”

Lack of a suitable firehouse and funding faced the Fire Department in 1989 when Chief Stan Mack pleaded with the community to “pull together, using a little imagination and help to make this project a reality.” Being successful in building a new firehouse his focus was on new members when he wrote in 1992 “we need your help!!! We need your body and your mind with your willingness to learn and do something very exciting for your community. Please join us and train to become a firefighter. It is not easy but it is very rewarding.”

A few years into the future, 2007, Chief Eric Stevens approached the topic of aging firefighters and the need for younger members when he wrote “we white headed fossils started serving when juggling child care commitments were the major constraints...now we juggle bottles of arthritis medicine.” By 2019 the focus was back on firefighter preparedness when Chief Rich Thompson wrote that “as always, Grafton Fire is busy keeping up with training so as to better prepare our responders for that inevitable call in the middle of the night. Again this year, we had two trainings a month and weekly equipment checks on top of calls to respond to emergencies, so there is plenty to fill our volunteer time.” Chief Stevens has also helped set the record straight regarding the fire engines described in the first installment of this history. He notes that the 1959 B95 Mack engine was the one that needed an enclosed cab installed along with a hose bed and water tank as it had been stripped for use as a “parade” truck at the Long Island, NY department from which it came. The 1973 Telesquirt ladder truck, which also came from Long Island, did have an enclosed cab but had a manual transmission geared for the flatter terrain there which made it challenging to drive here.

The commitment to serve the community was Chief Robbie Sprague’s message in 2021 when he wrote “ as I close this report, I would like to thank all of the volunteers, past and present, that take the time to help out their neighbors in their time of need. Please remember: if you feel you have an emergency, big or small, call 911. That is what we are here for.”

Grafton Fire Chiefs 1924 - 2024

Harry Farnsworth 1924-25	Edgar McWilliam Jr. 1969-84
Frank Wilbur 1926-27	Stanley Mack 1985-95
Guy Blood 1928-29	William Brown 1996
Earl Wright 1930-50	Stanley Mack 1996-2005
Edward Willard 1951-54	Eric Stevens 2006-14
Jesse Lawrence 1955-65	Richard Thompson 2015-20
Frank Jones 1966-69	Robbie Sprague 2021-

Thank you Grafton Fire Chiefs for your insight, your candor, your dedication, and your service to the community. - Dave Ross

June Library Corner

Smiles and Gratitude:

Many thanks to library volunteer Pat Mack for taking on weekly recycling and garbage disposal for the library. Former board trustee David Whittall handled this job for years for the library and now Pat has taken over! We thank them both—it's a most appreciated kindness. Hats off to both Austin Powers and Enzo Squires-Restino for help setting up and breaking down the program room for events. Thank you to Ray Lisai for window washing, porch painting and ramp touch-up work. And lastly, we are pleased to announce that Donna Alexander and Galen Johnson have joined the ranks of library volunteers and are working on their training. Expect to see them behind the desk at the library soon!

Summer News @ the Library

You may have noticed the rapid deterioration of the library porch last fall and winter due to damp and rot. In late June, renovation work will begin on the porch and all will be repaired. The contractor awarded the bid is Rich Leavy of Southern Vermont Home—who comes to us with wonderful references, experience and competitive pricing. Rich also won the bid for needed interior work; replacing the rotting emergency exit door that leads to the outside fire escape stairs and furthering insulation work in the attics with replacement of interior doors and more. The library would not be able to make these important repairs and improvements without the support of Liz Bankowski, the Bodman Foundation, The Windham Foundation, Steven Schmidt and Paul Bellaff and all of the many folks who contributed to the Capital Campaign to match Liz Bankowski's initial gift for energy upgrades to the library.

It is our goal to remain open as much as possible during the renovations, but there will be some disruption at the library—including to our lovely gardens. Sarah Yarosevich will be heading up an effort to preserve as many of the perennials as possible, and we will do all we can to keep the library up and running for our visitors and patrons. But it is going to be a summer filled with construction activity.

In addition, beginning in late June, I will be out of the library for four weeks or so on medical leave, attending to my own right knee repairs. I will be doing library work remotely for most that time and you can contact me via email. Basic operations at the library will be handled by library volunteers and assistant Angel Squires.

Your Library Is a Municipal Library

The story of the Grafton Public Library is an interesting one. I will be working on a series of articles for the Grafton News over the summer and fall, detailing the rich history of your municipal, community library. Do you have a story about the library? Please contact me!

Library Programming

Spanish Conversation Group, Tuesdays, 11am to noon on Zoom, Advanced Beginner to Intermediate Level.
Neighbor to Neighbor Lecture Series: A Trip to the Border with Barbara Carey, Wednesday, June 5, 6-7:30pm in person @ the library. - Michelle Dufort

News from Grafton Elementary School

Grades 1-4 at the Grafton Elementary School celebrated the earth by performing a variety of movement pieces called, "A Celebration of Spring" in the Kidder Hill Forest next to the school. Students spent three weeks working with Artist in Residence, Ashley Hensel Browning, to develop dances and vignettes that reflected their knowledge of the woods in springtime. Third and fourth graders also presented their poetry and paintings about their movement pieces, making the event a multimedia experience for the audience. Prior to the residency, they worked with staff from The Nature Museum at Grafton to get to know the forest better, and to explore the concept of interdependence in ecosystems. Through this collaboration, students experienced what it means to be interdependent in a community. Each one had to fully commit to their role to ensure cohesion of the performance for all to enjoy. - Vanessa Stern



Bear Creek Commons Land Summer Events

Summer Solstice Community Walk on Bull Creek Headwaters Land - June 22, 10:00am – 12:00pm

Learn about Bull Creek Common Lands' conservation and restoration plans for this important 230-acre diverse forest ecosystem. This will be a moderate to difficult hike on uneven ground. Wear sturdy hiking shoes and bring hiking poles, water and snacks. Free to attend / no registration needed. Meet at the top of Sam Farr Road in Athens, VT (please carpool if possible)

Meet up with the Southern Vermont Young Professionals - July 27, 10:00am – 12:00pm

The public is invited to join the SVYPs and the BCCL board for a walk in the Raymond Bemis Community Forest and a discussion on the nuts and bolts of land conservation. Learn what it means for land to be protected, how it happens, what skills are needed and what opportunities exist to get involved. Bring a sitting mat, if you want, for settling into the outdoor conference room. Free to attend / no registration needed. Meet at Raymond Bemis Community Forest, 315 Brookline Rd, Athens, VT

Reptiles and Amphibians of Southeastern Vermont with Jim Andrews Part one: August 3, 10:30am – 12:00pm

Presentation at the Grafton Inn's Homestead Room, 91 VT-121, Grafton, VT 05146

Bull Creek Common Lands is partnering with the Grafton Nature Museum to host Jim Andrews of the Vermont Reptile and Amphibian Atlas. Jim will be sharing his vast knowledge of Vermont's "herptiles." Sliding scale registration will be at <https://www.nature-museum.org/>

Part two: August 3, 12:30 – 3:00pm

In Field Workshop at the Nature Museum. Following the morning presentation, we'll regroup and head out into the field to investigate a diversity of nearby habitats to continue learning more about local herptiles, hopefully locate some specimens, and discover how we can help them survive & thrive in our own backyards. This workshop will happen rain or shine. Please be prepared for off-trail hiking and being away from facilities for the entirety of this workshop. Sliding scale registration will be at <https://www.nature-museum.org/>. - *Hannah Regier*

The Bellows Falls Fish Ladder Opens

Fish migration is well underway down the river! We're excited to welcome back the sea lamprey and American shad as they make their 174-mile journey from the Long Island Sound all the way to Bellows Falls. Beginning Friday, May 24th and continuing through August 31st, The Fish Ladder will be open to the public every Friday and Saturday from 10 AM to 4 PM. Visitors can observe the fish ladder from above and below and the center is full of interactive and educational exhibits about our local watershed.

Located on Bridge Street in downtown Bellow Falls, there are local hikes, coffee shops, and ancient petroglyphs to explore to make a full day of learning and adventure. - *The Nature Museum*

2024 Green Up Report

A big thank you to all those who were able to help out this year. With the 29 volunteers we were able to green up all the through roads in town except two, McKusker Rd. and Mill Hill. We cleaned approximately 13 miles of road and removed 70 bags of trash and 30 large items. Of the large items the most unusual were an office chair, a printer and a canoe.

For those new to the area, Green Up is a yearly state function that happens the first Saturday of May. Anyone interested in joining the Athens Green Up team please contact me at 802-869-2227 and I'll get you on the call list for next year. - *Lynn Morgan*

Heather Chase ReElection Announcement

Representative Heather Chase is pleased to announce that she is running for re-election for State Representative of the Windsor-Windham District. A

Democrat who resides in Chester, Vermont, Heather is completing her first term in the Vermont State House representing the towns of Athens, Chester, Grafton and Windham.

Please, reach out to Heather to discuss legislative issues of concern either by phone at 802 875 4663 or by email hchase@leg.state.vt.us. - *Heather Chase*

Grace Cottage Hospital Fair Day – Donations Needed

Grace Cottage is now accepting donations of furniture and other auction-worthy items, jewelry, books, and White Elephant items to be sold at this important fundraising event. To arrange for a donation email gracecottagefair@gmail.org.

The fair is a free, all-day, family-friendly event, now in its 74th year. It will be held rain or shine on Saturday, August 3, from 9AM – 3PM. - *C.J. King*

Reed Road Weather Summary for May

With a more than 50 degree difference between May's high and low temperatures, we experienced the continuing unpredictability of our current weather this month. But a normal amount of rain combined with stretches of hot weather have made the plants in our gardens happy! And at least here on Reed Rd., we did not have a frost as we often do in May.

High temperature: 93.5 degrees

Low temperature: 41.9 degrees

Rainfall amount: 4.5 inches - *Treah Pichette*

Thoughts to Ponder for June

"It is the month of June, the month of leaves and roses, when pleasant sights salute the eyes and pleasant scents the noses." - Nathaniel Parker Willis

"There are two seasons when the leaves are in their glory, their green and perfect youth in June and their ripe old age." - *Henry David Thoreau*

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 Thursdays 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: 6/3, 6/17

RECYCLE PICK-UP: 6/10, 6/24

Charles Perham Journal May 1873

1. Have mended fence today. In the forenoon down the south line next to Mrs. Bennetts. In the afternoon finished between the pond and the hill and the Ranney Lot.
2. Have been mending fence with James Eager did not quite get done by noon. It commenced to rain at noon so did not mend in the afternoon.
3. Mended stone boats in the forenoon. In the afternoon went to Cambridgeport paid to town treasure \$35.00. Charlie went down to the mill and drew home 280 feet of Hemlock plank at \$12.00 per thousand. There was 200 feet of Basswood let George Eager have at \$15.00 per thousand.
4. Have been to meeting with Charlie Wyman. Went with Jim. The first time this year having him pull the wagon.
5. Have been down to Brookline to the funeral of Uncle John. Called to Charles Stickney and put up the horse and took dinner. To Uncle Hiram's to Supper.
6. Have been mending fence for and with James Eager. Have done enough for him for two days work. Sylphia and Jerrie here today.
7. James Eager is to work for me in exchange for me working for him. Have mended the fence next to Mr. Whitney's and one half of the Goodnow fence.
8. Have been mending fence around the upper mowing out to the gate. Went and got Mrs. Bennetts cow up here. Mr. Cobb drove 116 sheep here today. After supper went to Cambridgeport after meal. Got 200 pounds off Mr. Clemmens for 165 per hundred weight. Collected tax of Mr. Ball
9. Tagged the sheep this morning. A very rainy day.
10. Left word with Mrs. Dunham about Mrs. S.E. Davis taxes. Took school order of Mr. Dodge \$11.00
11. To home today a very rainy day. Went down to Mr. Whitney's to see Viarna. Had a hard time to get up the sheep tonight.
12. Got out some manure. Mr. ----- from Townsend here to see about grave stone. Went down to the grave yard with him. Collected Ball taxes.
13. Have been mending fence around the Cox pasture today. James Eager is to work for me today. Mr. Cobb came to mend fence. Made out the bill for Edwards for work I have done on the highways. 5 days and 9 hours.
14. Charlie has been to work for James Eager with Mr. Cobb mending fence. In the afternoon got out manure.
15. Turned into Merrills pasture 20 sheep. Sowed the oats and the grass seed here by the house. In the afternoon plowed and sowed the piece on the hill with oats. In the evening went down to Jim Smith's to buy some hay.
16. Charlie got out Manure. Mr. Cobb drove 31 sheep and some lambs here. He also drove cattle to the Stickney farm.
17. Went and got the hay of James Smith. 611 pounds at 75 per hundred. Drew down a pine log.
18. Went and got Cobbs colt out of my pasture. Went and salted the sheep. Toward evening went down to Jim Eager's with Elizabeth. Received a letter from Mr. ---- Townsend saying could have monument for \$112.50.
19. Have been getting out manure some today. Mr. Whitney worked for me with his stone digger two hours. In the afternoon drew them away. Phebe Bemis here to pay her fathers taxes.
21. Have been breaking up for potatoes and commenced to plow for corn. In the afternoon went and borrowed Mr. Balls stone drill. Planted some potatoes in the garden this morning.
22. Have been to get Jim shod .38 mend chain .08 total .46. Paid to town treasure \$83.42
23. Plowed the ground for corn. Moved the backhouse. Had a hard hunt after the cows did not find.
24. Went and found the cows. Got up the sheep and washed them. Mr. Bemis and Derry here to see Jim colt did not sell.
26. Turned out the Jim colt today. Have been to work in the garden all day.
27. James Eager has been here to work today planted corn. I have been plowing and harrowing. Just at night got word grandmother was sick. After supper went and carried mother down there.
28. Have been to work for James Eager with the oxen and Charlie all day.
29. Have got the manure into the field in the upper mowing got it plowed and harrowed in. The Palm leaf peddler was here today.
30. Planted corn today in the upper mowing. Elizabeth went after mother.
31. Finished getting out manure today. Have got out about 30 loads about 10 under the hog pen. Elizabeth has gone up to see her sister today and to Charles Whites.

Transcribed by James Trimble