

The Athenian

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Sponsored by Grafton Cares

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Happy New Year and Happy Hanukkah!

Bringing light into the darkness. What's your resolution this year?

The tradition of making New Year's resolutions originated with the ancient Babylonians, who celebrated the new year around 4,000 years ago.

Farmers would often promise to return borrowed tools at the start of each new year. The Babylonians celebrated the new year with a 12-day festival called Akitu, during which they made promises to the gods. These commitments were a way to start the year with a clean slate and gain favor from the deities.

The tradition has evolved over time, but its core remains the same: welcoming a new year with the hope of becoming better. Here are some other notable moments in the history of New Year's resolutions:

- **The Middle Ages:** Medieval knights would renew their vows to chivalry and knightly valor each new year.

- **The 19th century:** The habit of making and failing to keep resolutions became so common that it was satirized. Walker's Hibernian Magazine published an article in 1802 that included a series of fictitious resolutions.

- **1813:** The phrase "new year resolution" appeared in a Boston newspaper article.

So let's resolve to be good community members and help others where we can!

- *Ginger Maciejowski*

Select Board Meeting Tidbits

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

- A special Select Board meeting was held on Sunday, December 1, 2024 at 3PM for the primary purpose of resolving the issue of replacing a culvert in the area of Butson Circle, Taylor Hill that has caused ice flow problems on Brookline Rd. and hazardous conditions at a bus stop in the area. There was much



Hanukkah Candles - Laurie Indenbaum

heated discussion regarding motions for this work, and disputes about policies. In the end, 3 members of the Board approved a motion for the Town to purchase the culvert to be put in by the landowners. Detailed minutes and audio recording of the meeting are available at the town website.

- The Selectboard approved a draft application to the VCRD for Climate Economy Resilient

Communities Grant requested by Hannah Regier.

- A final draft of the town plan is hoped to be complete for presentation to the town at the Town Meeting in March.
- Krista Gay states that there will be a hike in school taxes this year for both Grafton and Athens due to the CLA being low in both towns.
- There was much discussion by the Board concerning the work being done on the Town Garage and how to manage contracting the job. It was voted to post the job as "Clerk of the Works" on the town website and in the Brattleboro Reformer.
- Hannah said that it is not clear at this point if there will be a town surplus for 2024. Most of the projected surplus is reimbursement from FEMA for Reed Rd. repair. Hannah also said that the budget is looking on target for even spending as some budget items have gone up and some have stayed the same.
- There was lengthy discussion about purchase or lease options for a new small town truck. It was agreed that the Board should approach other dealers to get a better price. There will be a special meeting to discuss leasing a truck once legal questions are answered.
- Robert Germon was hired as the new Highway Laborer. Further discussion continued regarding wages, insurance and evaluations of town employees.

- *Ginger Maciejowski*

Important Dates to Note

Hannah Regier, Town Clerk shared these important date notes:

Town Meeting Deadlines

- January 16th at 1:00pm: Last day to submit a petition for articles to be included in the Town Meeting Warning
- January 27th at 1:00pm: Last day to submit candidate petitions and consent forms for elected local official positions

Local Hazard Mitigation Plan Public Meeting

- January 23rd at 6:00pm at the Community Center
- Mike McConnell from the Windham Regional Commission will lead a meeting to discuss what the plan is and does, hazards common in Athens and updating the mitigation action table.

Ober Road Design Alternatives Meeting

- January 29th at 6:00pm at the Town Office or by Zoom:
- <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84859067553?pwd=1hEJ0v5QyGJjDscWymzWBLUMY3KrmW.1>
- The team from Dubois and King will present design alternatives and their impact on future flooding on Ober Rd.

- Hannah Regier

Notes from the School Board

On November 14 we held our second Community forum. There were three main concerns brought up. The first concern was over the closing of small schools. Andy Haas stated that the school board can call a temporary closure in the case of an emergency, such as lack of staffing. However, only the electorate can call for a local school to be closed.

The second concern was regarding students that were behind in special education services as we have come out of COVID. There is a new director of special education. Parents are welcome to reach out to this person with their inquiries. Contact Andy Haas's office at 802-463-9958 extension #4 for the contact information.

The third concern was regarding after-school programming. Grafton Elementary School lost its 21-C grant for after-school programming since we were unable to meet the staffing guidelines for that grant. For this school year the after-school programming in Saxtons River is open to the Grafton Elementary School students. Any students interested in attending will be bussed to Saxtons River for this program. Contact Angela if you have any questions.

At the December 12th board meeting we were informed that the two new teachers we had voted to hire had accepted our offer. Pen Weiss is our new art teacher, and Marge Savonte our new special educator working on regression.

There have been a number of school events that were well attended. November 12th the school hosted its annual Veterans breakfast. With the help of the community, the meal was delicious, and the students presented a very nice program honoring the 15 Veterans that joined the event. November 22 was the Circus Finale for the Families, and November 25th was the Thanksgiving Feast.

Be sure to check the Grafton Elementary School link on the WNESU.org web site for the upcoming school scheduling and events. The next school board meeting is scheduled for January 9th, 6 PM at Grafton Elementary School library.

Contact me with any questions or concerns that I can bring to the board meetings

- Lynn Morgan

Lily Pond Highlands Parking Lot and Trail Open

The Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association has opened a new parking lot at 466 Brookline Road in Athens for access to Lily Pond. In addition, the old woods road leading up to Lily Pond is now open to the general public for hiking, snowshoeing, and other non-motorized uses.

The WHPA received an Act 250 permit for the parking lot and a loop trail leading back from Lily Pond to the trailhead. The parking lot was constructed by local resident Danny Taylor in November.

A formal dedication of the old woods road, to be known as the "Massey Trail" leading to Lily Pond, is planned for the spring, and work on the loop trail will begin this year.

"We are delighted that residents of Athens and surrounding towns have a place to park and can enjoy this beautiful area, which includes a beaver pond and important habitat for wildlife," said Athens resident Jay Maciejowski, a retired forester who serves on the Pinnacle board and has helped oversee the Lily Pond project.



Parking area at Lily Pond – Dan Taylor & Bob Bova



Lily Pond – Jay Maciejowski checks the map

The WHPA signed a conservation easement with the Vermont Land Trust and the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board in May 2022 to protect the ecologically diverse 615-acre parcel in perpetuity, and Athens residents Kate and Bob Bova have been serving as stewards of the property. An ecological study is also available on the WHPA website: <https://windmillhillpinnacle.org/conservation>.

The parking lot, at the town line of Athens and Brookline, also serves the Town Line Trail across Brookline Road which leads to the Pinnacle cabin, where hikers can enjoy sweeping views of the Green Mountains in southern Vermont.

The nonprofit WHPA holds more than 2,800 acres of land and maintains 28 miles of trails that are free and open to the public in the towns of Westminister, Rockingham, Athens, Grafton, Brookline and Townshend. The WHPA pays property taxes in all six towns, and hunting is allowed on most WHPA land (including Lily Pond Highlands) with the exception of the Stephen Martin Memorial Wildlife and Bald Hill parcels in Westminister.

Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association

Grafton Cares

With all the excitement of the holiday season now past, we can settle into the comfort of our regular rhythm. So, here is the community meal schedule for this month:

- Friday, Jan. 3, dinner at 6 p.m.
- Wednesday, Jan. 8, lunch at noon
- Friday, Jan. 17, dinner at 6 p.m.
- Wednesday, Jan. 22, lunch at noon

There is no charge for the meals, and all are held in the Chapel.

It was wonderful to have so many youngsters and their parents attend the Grafton Cares dinner on Friday, Dec. 20, following the school play. Hopefully, both events will align again this year and a new tradition will be established.

Our other activities last month included providing Meals on Wheels to 8 customers, \$125 in gas cards for travel to medical appointments, 5 rides to medical appointments, 1 welcome bag, and 2 sunshine baskets. In the medical department we loaned out 1 shower seat, 1 walker, 1 raised toilet seat, and 1 cane.

Please start the New Year with a sense of optimism and an awareness of how very fortunate we all are to live in the towns of Grafton and Athens. Houses may often be far apart, but community spirit keeps us all close.

If you have any questions, please call Kate Bova at 802-869-1527 or Bill Toomey at 802-843-2397.

- Bill Toomey

January Library Corner

Smiles and Gratitude:

We are most appreciative for your response to our annual appeal letter. At this time, we are almost half-way to our budgeted goal for this fiscal year. The library is grateful to have received donations this month in memory of Russ Campbell, Luella and Harry Conklin, Karen Hall, Dorothy Heiser, Marge Prouty, Shelley Rice, and Bob Wright. We've also received donations in honor of Ramon Bautista, Nelson Cooley, Michelle Dufort, and Nancy and Larry Middleton. Our most heart-warming contribution to date comes from a local middle-schooler who wanted to make a donation this year, because she has many good memories of the public library from her time at Grafton Elementary. She asked her family to help and, putting together all she collected along with her own money, stopped by the library with her gift. Abby Mack-Dyer—you and your family have given us a very special memory as well. Thank you!

We've also received a lovely box of cookies from Nelson and Ramon, a beautiful Historical Society wreath for the door from our anonymous annual donor, a bunch of nearly new books from Tania Evans and Wendy Martin, and holiday decorations from Denise Martin—all items we very much enjoy sharing with patrons and visitors to town. Again, thank you for your generosity.

Finally, thank you to everyone who made the Gingerbread House Extravaganza such a successful event. Pat Mack, Ray Lisai and the Squires family did a

beautiful job making the library look festive. Pat Mack and Angel Squires were also a great help during the Silent Auction and Santa's visit. And once again, our gingerbread house contributors astounded us with their creativity and hard work: kudos to Marvie Campbell, Abram Hooke, Lynne Field, Margaux Kellogg, Rachel Laliberte, Pat Mack, Debe Plummer, Diane and Mary Thompson, and Otis Witkowski. We are grateful to our Silent Auction bidders and those who popped some money in the donation jar too—we made a little over \$400 for library programming. Last, but certainly not least, it was very nice to have Santa visit again and we hope he stops by next year too!

January Library Programming

Nature & Books Discussion Series on Zoom, Wednesday, January 22, 6-7:30pm, *The Invention of Nature* by Andrea Wulf

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

www.graftonpubliclibrary.org

- Michelle Dufort

Register for Winter Courses at Main Street Arts

This winter, Main Street Arts is thrilled to add nine NEW classes. Jumpstart your Ukulele with Stu Fuchs, Feldenkrais with Paris Kern, Unlock Your Creativity based on the Artist Way with Ashley Storrow, and Vocal Improv Workshop with Paris Kern.

MSA will also offer three Creative Aging Classes that are free to anyone over the age of 60. These classes include Booking Making Using Sewing Techniques with Amber Paris, Printmaking with Annie Quest, and Theater Play, with Michael Zerphy and Ham Gillett.

A class participant stated, "It enlivens me to see people of all ages, interest, and abilities filling the building. There's something here for everyone to explore their creativity and connect with one another."

Jumpstart your Ukulele with Stu Fuchs is on Tuesdays from 3:30-4:30, \$90 for six sessions. It runs from January 7 through February 11. Feldenkrais with Paris Kern will take place on Tuesdays from 9-10 am, \$120 for six sessions. It runs from January 14 through Feb 18. Unlock Your Creativity based on the Artist Way with Ashley Storrow, is on Tuesdays from 9-10 am, \$30 for six sessions. It runs from February 25 through April 1. The Vocal Improv Workshop with Paris Kern is on February 1 from 10-4 pm.

The Creative Aging courses:

Booking Making Using Sewing Techniques with Amber Paris is on Thursdays Feb. 6-March 27, 10 am-noon. Printmaking with Annie Quest is on

Tuesdays, Feb. 4-March 25, 10 am-noon. Theater Play with Michael Zerphy and Ham Gillett is on Tuesdays Feb. 4-March 11, 1-2:30 pm.

For registration and to view all of our course offerings, visit mainstreetarts.org. Main Street Arts is located at 35 Main Street in Saxtons River, Vermont. Main Street Arts has a ramp, elevator, and accessible bathrooms.

- Ashley Storrow

Reflections on a Successful Year

Community and connection are at the heart of our work at The Nature Museum. Our camps, events, workshops, and Fairy House Festival bring together a network of families and individuals with a common love for the natural world.

Our careful restoration of the Chapman meadow, pollinator gardens, and wetland supports a vast web of plant and animal life that connects the watersheds all the way down to the Connecticut River. Grafton may be a small town, but the ripples of the interconnected community are huge.

In 2024, we continued to set new attendance records for our programs and build our vision of the future. Summer Unplugged, the Bellows Falls Fish Ladder, and adult programs, such as the evening with Dr. Robert Pyle and the Climate Future Film Festival, continued to gain new interest and engagement throughout our region.

With the addition of our new outdoor teaching



Nature Museum Staff excited about new Teaching Pavillion

pavilion and the new elements of the Magic Forest Playscape, we have more space for nature play, exploration, and learning. The Nature Museum's presence in the Grafton community continues to deepen in our 35th year.

Your support of The Nature Museum makes a difference. Help us provide inspiring and educational experiences for children and adults while restoring

important native habitats that provide a home for creatures big and small.

Thank you for an amazing year! - Nik Katrick

Athens Cabin Fever Cookoff

Do you have a recipe that will chase away cabin fever and the winter’s cold? Something delicious that makes you smile while you cook it up for friends and family? Would you like to share it with others? The Athens Community Center is sponsoring a Soup, Stew and Chowder Cook-Off February 8, 2025 from 5pm to 7pm. All types of soups, stews and chowders are welcome. There is no cost to enter and a \$5 fee to join in on tasting these delicious concoctions and determining who the winners are. There will be cash prizes, 1st-\$100, 2nd-\$75 and 3rd-\$25 plus handmade aprons and wooden spoons for our winners.

We are also including with this event a basket raffle. So far the baskets we will have are, snack, candle, art supplies, soup, dog, chocolate and gardening. We would like to have 20 baskets for the raffle if at all possible. Remember any monies raised will go to events coming

being worked on. Watch “Athens, VT My Hometown” page on Facebook plus other local pages for further information.

You can contact Tina White at tinamw@vermont.net or Sandi Capponcelli at vtplntldy@hotmail.com if you need more details or would like to donate a basket. Please remember a basket can be anything that will hold your items for the raffle. Thank you!

-The Athens Community Center Committee

Reed Road Weather Summary

December brought more ups and downs in terms of precipitation and temperatures. In the 4th week, we had 2 nights that gave us below zero readings for the first time in the whole of 2024, a notable occurrence. Snow fell in amounts somewhat unusual for recent Decembers as well.

High temp.: 51.6 degrees

Low temp. : -5.8 degrees

Rainfall: 3.8”

Snowfall: 9.5”

- Treah Pichette



ATHENS COMMUNITY CENTER
CABIN FEVER
CHOWDER/SOUP/STEW
COOK-OFF
AND
BASKET RAFFLE

FEBRUARY 8 5 PM TO 7PM

28 BROOKLINE ROAD ,ATHENS,VERMONT
\$5 ADMISSION

IT'S FREE TO ENTER A CHOWDER/SOUP/STEW INTO THE COOK-OFF. THE \$5 ADMISSION IS FOR THOSE WISHING TO PARTICIPATE IN THE TASTING AND JUDGING

up in 2025. (The next one will be the Easter Egg Hunt and a date yet to be determined) If you would like to donate a basket (filled please) it has to be done by January 11th so we can have pictures of them online for everyone to see and buy tickets for. Tickets will be \$1ea or 6 for \$5. You can spread those tickets out among the baskets or put them all in for one basket. We are hoping to set up a pre-purchase for the tickets, but that is still

Thoughts to Ponder

“New Year’s Day is every man’s birthday.”

-Charles Lamb

“The new year stands before us, like a new chapter in a book, waiting to be written.”

-unknown


“January is the perfect time to reflect on the past, appreciate the present, and look forward to the future.”

-unknown

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: JAN 13, 27
RECYCLE PICK-UP: JAN 6, 20

Charles Perham Journal December 1873

Transcribed by James Trimble

1. Have finished getting hay home from Jim Eagers. A very cold day.
2. Snowing all day. Got down what wood was cut today.
3. James Smith is chopping today. Worked the steers today. Put the bit in Nelly. Jim Eager and wife here after money let him have \$5.00. Warmer today something of a thaw today.
4. Went and got one load of wood today. It rained so had to give it up.
5. Have been getting down wood today. Mr. Smith was chopping.
6. Mr. Hollis Wyman came after the Renny oxen today. Went down to the towns clerk office and had them put on _____. Went to Cambridgeport to get medicine for the baby.
7. To home all day. Charles Cobleigh here all day. Jim Smith here let him have \$2.00.
8. My birthday today. Have been down to Uncle Daniels to get the sleigh mended.
9. Have been to Saxtons River. Brought home three hundred of meal. Let Jim Smith have a hundred for 1.75.
10. Went up on the hill and cut and ash. Drawed it to the mill with the old mare. In the afternoon went and took Nelly Colt down to Ralph Dodges to brake. He is to keep her for a month for \$20.00. In the afternoon took mother down to Merrills.
11. Have drawed home the stuff for the shed and rolled up the logs to the mill. Went and got mother down to Merrills.
12. Ralph Whitney has been here to work on the sled today. Fix the cow stable so could get up the steers in the oxen place.
13. Ralph Whitney has been here to work on the sled. Took out the water box and put in a new one.
14. Have been to meeting today. A quarterly meeting. Just at night Jim Eager and wife here. George Eager here in the evening.
15. Mr. Whitney finished making the sled and fixed the backhouse. He asked \$3.50. In the evening went down to George Eagers.
16. Have been to carry mother down to Brookline to see grandmother. Came home alone.
17. Have been around by John Oaks and paid him .75 for the cart Ex. Stopped and helped put up the Abner house. Paid into the town treasure today 85.00. Went to see Nelly Colt. Paid Ralph Whitney his due for fixing sled \$3.50.
18. Have been down to Brookline after mother. Have agreed to pay Wright for 3 sheep and one calf \$14.00 and interest after one month.
19. Have been down to Alvins with Elizabeth and the baby. Came home in the snow storm.
20. Have been down to Brookline after sheep and calf bought off Wright. Henry come home with me.
21. To home all day. Today Henry goes tonight.
22. Have fixed a pen for the lambs. Picked up some corn. ----- up the steers. In the evening went and settled up with Jim Eager.
23. Have been to Bellows Falls. Carried the chairs done. 29 get paid for them. Paid out today \$5.86. Brought home 48 cottage frames and some oak splines.
24. Mr. Dustin Ball came to look at calf this morning. In the evening went down to our meeting house to a Christmas concert.
25. Have been to Saxtons river to the mill. Got 200 weight of meal. This makes 600 weight got.
26. Henry Wiley here after my wool. He offered 44 cents with 3 fleeces. Not very cold but snowing some today. Dustin took the calf back today.
27. At home all day. Worked on chairs some. It snowed all day into the evening.
28. Blustery but not very cold today. No road out today. Wrote a post card to Henry Allen Walpole NH
29. Have broke out the road some with the steers. Thrashed a little. Mr. Whitney worked here fixing the sled paid him .75.
30. Went down to Cambridgeport to see Nelly Colt. Went to see the oxen but did not see them.
31. Have been to Saxtons River to Mill. Stopped and rode after Nelly Colt. Brought home 100 weight of meal this makes 700 weight got home. Paid him for it \$11.20.