

# CHAPTER EIGHT

## COMMITTEES

Report of the Boards &  
Committees of the Town

**MEMORIAL BUILDING COMMITTEE  
FY16**

Town Bylaws Chapter IV, Section 1(b) states “The town hall building, dedicated as a memorial to Athol's soldiers and sailors of all wars, shall be known as Memorial Building. The Memorial Building Committee is responsible for the care, custody, and control of the entire Memorial Building Committee. The Committee shall consist of three Selectmen and four voters appointed by the Town Manager. This Committee with the aide of the Town Manager shall employ necessary janitors and caretakers, and attend to the lighting, heating, care and repair of the building, and make reasonable rules and regulations not inconsistent with these bylaws for the use and occupancy of said building.”

The Memorial Building Committee as needed July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016. The following are the highlights of the meetings:

- Ways to improve to lighting in the hallways at Town Hall. Committee suggested having the utility company do an assessment of the building
- Repairs at Town Hall included: Stairs on side of building repaired, replaced water tank and fire escape out back was taken down.
- Security System – Recommend replacing swipe cards and research cost for security cameras

Respectfully submitted,

Ben J. Feldman, Chairman  
Anthony Brighenti  
Nancy E. Burnham  
Lee E. Chauvette  
John R. Greene

**CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE  
ANNUAL REPORT  
JULY 1, 2015 – JUNE 30, 2016**

To the Honorable Board of Selectmen:

**Introduction**

The Charter Review Committee is a 9 member board appointed by the Board of Selectmen to review and recommend changes to the Town Charter which went into effect on July 1, 2000 and amended on April 4, 2005, April 3, 2006, April 2, 2007, and April 6, 2015.

**Summary of Review**

In February 2015, the Charter Review Committee began the task of reviewing the entire Charter to identify necessary changes. The Committee met eight times and completed the review in April 2016. Below is a summary of the review:

**Chapter 1 – Powers of the Town**

No changes recommended

**Chapter 2 – Town Meeting**

No changes recommended

**Chapter 3 – Board of Selectmen**

No changes recommended

**Chapter 4 – Elected Officer and Town Boards**

Recommended to change “School Committee” in Section 4-1-1 and 4-3-2 to “Athol-Royalston Regional School Committee”.

**Chapter 5 – The Town Manager**

No changes recommended

**Chapter 6 – Town Administrative Organization**

No changes recommended

**Chapter 7 – Elections**

No changes recommended

**Chapter 8 – Financial Provisions and Procedures**

No changes recommended

**Chapter 9 – Planning and the Environment**

Recommended to delete the current language in section 9-3-1 which states “The Town Manager may appoint a planning director from a list of two or more candidates prepared by the Planning Board, provided that funds have been

appropriated for that purpose” and renumber Section 9-3-3 which states “The Planning Director who shall be appointed and supervised by the Town Manager shall receive general policy guidance from the Board of Planning and Community Development” to Section 9-3-1.

**Chapter 10 – General Provision**

No changes recommended

**Chapter 11 – Transitional Provisions**

No changes recommended

**Final Recommendations**

The Charter Review Committee feels that the recommended changes are clerical, minor in nature and due to the cost and amount of work involved that the changes are not necessary at this time. We recommend the list of the changes be kept on file with the Board of Selectmen and Town Clerk.

The Charter Review Committee also proposes that the Town follow the recommendation in the Financial Management Review by the Division of Local Services from January 2014 which states that the Town conducts a full charter review every ten years and disband the current Charter Review Committee since the review is completed.

Respectfully submitted,

Ben J. Feldman, Vice-Chairman

Nancy E. Burnham, Clerk

Lee E. Chauvette

Heather J. Brissette

Joan M. Gross

Lawrence P. McLaughlin

Charles M. Ponusky

**CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE**

Athol Historical Commission

Annual Report July 2016 – June 2017

The Athol Historical Commission did not hold any formal meetings during the year.

Letters in support of a MA Historical Rehabilitation Tax Credit for the UTD complex at the request of Cindy and Chuck Hartwell were sent to MA Historical Commission on August 22, 2016, January 9, 2017, and April 18, 2017. Two awards of tax credits have been received for this project to date.

Members and Officers continued in their positions from the previous year.

Chair – J.R. Greene

Clerk – Jean Shaughnessy

Carolyn Brouillet

Shelley Small

Vincent Cerez

Respectfully submitted,

Jean Shaughnessy, Clerk was sent in January 2016

Athol Orange Joint Cable Advisory Committee  
Annual Report FY 2016

The Athol Orange Joint Cable Advisory Committee (CAC) continued its work throughout fiscal year 2016 towards the final goal of submitting a suggested License Agreement between the Town of Athol Board of Selectmen (the Franchise *or Licensing* Authority) and Time Warner Cable Corporation (the Franchisee *or cable operator*.) An identical license was presented to the town of Orange. 2015 was the third and final year of the three-year license renewal process outlined by the informal process under FCC guidelines. Having held public hearings and opened an ascertainment record in year one (2012) collection of data and ongoing negotiations ensued throughout the entire process with the CAC meeting monthly until the process was complete. The CAC recognizes the work of special cable counsel William August of Epstein and August LLP of Boston.

During the license renewal process, Comcast Cable Corporation sought congressional approval to merge and purchase Time Warner Cable. The CAC spent considerable time researching the possible impacts that such a merger would have on the town's final position and recommended, after consultation with special counsel, that the Board of Selectmen take no action on Comcast's requests for signed approval. This strategy would allow the towns to not endorse the takeover, but would not deny federally mandated license transfer under current protocol of FCC regulations. After several months of consideration, FCC regulators and the U.S. Congress called for testimony on the subject. Comcast eventually rescinded its request and the merger deal fell apart. As of the writing of this report, a similar process of merger is nearing completion, this time with Charter Communications as the buyer. Charter intends to keep the system in the Athol Orange area as its own once the transfer is complete.

Lengthy negotiations between CAC members, Time Warner executives and special counsel continued from December 2014 right up to just four weeks before the existing Franchise License was due to expire in June of 2015. Ultimately an agreement was reached and after formulation and composition by the CAC and special counsel, a final recommendation was delivered to the Board of Selectmen and town counsel. The Board of Selectmen reviewed, discussed in open session and approved the recommended license. The license is filed with the state of Massachusetts and the FCC. A copy is available for reading at Athol Memorial Hall, Office of the Selectmen. This License to Operate a Cable Franchise (a form of contract) is likely valued at approximately \$80-100 million over its ten-year term.

After acceptance of the new Cable Franchise License(s), the role of the CAC turns from an advisory role to one of compliance review. The Franchisee must submit periodic reports that show metrics related to customer service (Form 100) as well as annual reports. The CAC meets periodically to review these forms and helps address relations between the Franchise Authority (the Board of Selectmen) and the Franchisee (currently Time Warner Cable.) Complaints concerning resident's cable service, quality or billing

must be addressed to Time Warner Cable. Complaints regarding negligence or the inability to reach or be responded to in a reasonable time frame or manner by the cable operator may be made in writing to the Licensing Authority of the town in which the subscriber lives.

The CAC would like to thank the Board of Selectman for its attention, assistance, and diligence concerning the license renewal process and looks forward to continuing its compliance role.

Respectfully submitted:

Mark Wright, Chairman  
Nancy Blackmer, Secretary  
Daniel Carey  
Walter Owens  
Carolyn Salls  
Robert Schwein  
Marie MacDonald, ex officio  
Carol Courville-Brigley, ex officio

**Board of Planning and Community Development  
FY16 Annual Report**

The Board of Planning and Community Development (BPCD) consists of the following members:

David Small (Chairman)  
Jacqueline M. Doherty (Acting Secretary)  
Kathy Norton  
Aimee Hanson  
Rick Hayden  
Duane Truehart  
Calvin Taylor  
Steve Wills (former member)

Eric Smith, Director of Planning and Development

Richard D. Godin had served as an *ad hoc* advisor and provided valuable advice on zoning, among other things. He is no longer part of our committee.

The BPCD and Planning Board merged into one committee and retained the name of BPCD.

The BPCD routinely met on the first Wednesday of the month, for 1-2 hours. There were however months when the group met twice a month depending on the agenda items and the project being worked on.

The Master Plan (MP) for the Town of Athol had originally been the main topic of discussion during the meetings. However, since the merging of the two committees, the BPCD has taken on additional responsibilities reviewing and signing off on ANRs, zoning plans and other town projects.

Mr. Eric Smith took over the Director of Planning and Development job after Andrea Buglione left. He has been instrumental in making sure the BPCD moves forward and continues to make progress. Mr. Smith has a lot of experience with planning and he continues to do research on each of the chapters in addition to ensuring that the committee has all of the material and information it needs to make informed decisions on the many projects being done in Athol. The Master Plan chapters include: Transportation, Natural Resources, Community Facility Services, Housing, Historic/Scenic, Economic Development, Land Use and Zoning, Open Space, Education, Cultural Resources, and Community Wellness (Community Health). Each member of the committee continues to work on his or her assigned chapter(s).

The BPCD has been involved in the Athol Hospital expansion project, the Templeton Solar project, and several land lot zoning changes. There is continued development in the North Quabbin Market Basket area and other areas in the Town of Athol.



# CAPITAL PROGRAM COMMITTEE

**To the Honorable Board of Selectmen & the Citizens of the Town Athol;**

The Charter for the Town of Athol states the Capital Program Committee shall study proposed capital outlays involving the acquisition of land or an expenditure of twenty-five thousand (\$25,000) or more having a useful life of at least three years. The Committee is further charged with studying the need, timing and cost projection of these projects and the effect each will have on the financial position of the Town.

The budget is typically funded from a combination of taxation, free cash and occasionally from unspent balances in prior year Capital Planning accounts. It is the committee's practice to meet with each department head to review the department's current status and future needs. After all of these assessments the Committee meets again to deliberate and form its annual budget for the upcoming fiscal year. The Capital Program Committee meets jointly with the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Warrant Advisory Committee each April to present its annual budget in preparation of the June Annual Town Meeting.

Lastly, the Capital Program Committee will meet to make recommendations on other projects as they relate to the overall infrastructure of the Town of Athol, for example the renovation to the Athol Public Library and the Town of Athol Five-Year Energy Use Reduction Plan. Members serve five year terms and include representatives from both the Planning Board & the Finance & Warrant Advisory Committee. Current members are Chairman Robert Muzzy, Vice Chairman James Smith, Michael Butler, John Lambert, Linda Oldach, Planning Board representative Kathy Norton and FWAC representative Erik Euvrard.

The Capital Planning Committee presented the FY17 Budget to the Board of Selectmen, per Charter, in April 2016. This year the Capital Planning Committee spent just over \$300,000 on capital and infrastructure improvements including \$130,000 for DPW vehicles, a pick up for the Fire Department and a new cruiser for the Police Department.

Respectfully Submitted;

*Robert Muzzy*

**CAPITAL PROGRAM PLAN  
FY17 -- SUMMARY**

<b>Department</b>	<b>Item/Project</b>	<b>Dept Req. FY17</b>	<b>CPC Budgeted FY17</b>	<b>Transfer FY17</b>
COA		0.00	0.00	
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	
Library		0.00	0.00	
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	
Town Hall		0.00	0.00	
Town Clerk	Voting Machines	32,565.00	32,565.00	
Town Manager	Econ Development Grant Match	25,000.00	25,000.00	
	Town Vehicle	25,000.00	0.00	
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>82,565.00</b>	<b>57,565.00</b>	
Fire - vehicles	Pick Up Truck	45,105.00	32,136.00	
Fire - projects		0.00	0.00	
Fire - equipment		0.00	0.00	
		0.00	0.00	
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>45,105.00</b>	<b>32,136.00</b>	
DPW - Vehicles	SUV and 1st yr lease payments for 2 dump trucks	130,827.00	130,827.00	
DPW - Buildings	DPW Garage Roof	50,000.00	0.00	
DPW - Projects	Infrastructure Improvements	500,000.00	50,000.00	
DPW-- Water	Improvements	250,000.00		250,000.00
DPW-- Sewer	Improvements	60,000.00		60,000.00
DPW-Transfer Station				
	<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>990,827.00</b>	<b>180,827.00</b>	<b>310,000.00</b>
Police - Vehicles	Cruiser Replacement	38,000.00	38,000.00	
Police - Equipment				
Police - Project				
	<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>38,000.00</b>	<b>38,000.00</b>	
ARRSD		0.00	0.00	
Buildings		0.00	0.00	
Equipment		0.00	0.00	
	<b>Total CPC Budget</b>	<b>1,156,497.00</b>	<b>308,528.00</b>	<b>310,000.00</b>

## **ATHOL CONSERVATION COMMISSION**

**To: The Honorable Board of Selectpersons and the Citizens of Athol,**

The Athol Conservation Commission meets on the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of every month at our new time of 6:00 p.m. in Liberty Hall in the Memorial Building.

We are now responsible for just under 2,000 acres of property, since the Town of Athol acquired 198 acres of property from the Stoddard and LeBlanc families in the South Athol area.

We are also responsible for the properties known as Bearsden Conservation area, Cass Meadow, Comstock Con. area, (formerly Byrd Ave.), Von-dy Rowe, Minnie French on Benton Place, Newton Reservoir and South Athol Con. area.

Since the retirement of our constable Elwin Bacon and the huge increase in properties, we now have four part-time Conservation Land Agents. Nick Tarara maintains the Bearsden main gate area and Paige Cabin. Bill Wheeler oversees the eastern side of Bearsden consisting of 700 acres at Newton Reservoir. Jaimee Briggs is in the process of building up the new South Athol Con. area. Dave Small is our web-site master, along with our reservation agent for Paige Cabin and the two Adirondack shelters and helping where ever he's needed. Brian Hall oversees all the remaining conservation properties keeping them clean and generally maintained.

Vegetation Control is in the process of eradicating Glossy Buckthorn and Bitter Sweet, which are invasive plants, from Newton Reservoir. This will be done in three phases over a two-year period.

A couple of Boy Scouts, working on their Eagle Scout badges have constructed two privies for the Adirondack shelters, cleared existing trails, marked the trails, hung signs and maintained the look-out tower.

Bill's crew along with a neighbor was instrumental in restoring the Pipeline Trail and posting several trail signs.

Many new signs have been erected through out most of the areas, making sure the trails are easier to follow. New kiosks have been placed in South Athol and other areas.

This was a very busy year with six Notices of Intent and 12 Requests for Determination of Applicability, several Cease & Desists, several Certificates of Compliance, and four Conservation Restrictions on the Stoddard, LeBlanc, Feldman and Blakley properties.

We oversaw seven timber sales, which brought in \$88,487 to the general fund. We only spent out \$17,300 to the foresters for the sales and management of the projects.

We are commissioned to carry out the Wetlands Protection Act and 310 CMR 10.05(5) for the state of Massachusetts.

We look forward to working with the new businesses coming into North Quabbin Commons and other areas as well.

The Voting Members are:

Robert Muzzy, Chairman, James Smith, Vice-Chairman, J.R. Greene, Walter Lehman, Dennis Killay, M.Katheryn Harrow, and Laura Smith.

Associate Members/Conservation Land Agents are:

Jaimee Briggs and Bill Wheeler.

New Associate Members/Conservation Land Agents are:

Nick Tarara, Dave Small and Brian Hall.

Wetland Agent: Ward Smith.

Conservation Secretary: Cathy Muzzy.

Respectfully Submitted,

Robert Muzzy, Chairman