

Town of Fletcher – Select Board

<https://zoom.us/j/773096279?pwd=Y3JaV0pJOGQrUIZCTXRiNFILQU1HZz09>

Password: 714111

Monday, June 1, 2020

Meeting Minutes

Virtually Present

Members: Jon Bondy (Chair), Matt Gillilan, Christine E. Nilsen, and Jesse Wiens

Guests: Pam Jedlicka, Rachael Scarpa (Secretary), Karrie Sweet (Town Clerk), Tara Sweet, Aimee Tinker (Assistant Town Clerk).

1) Call to Order

- a. Jon called the meeting to order at 7:04pm

2) Board Business:

- a. Karrie emailed the Select Board the warrants that need approval. The Select Board unanimously approved.
- b. LEMP document revised by Eva Gillilan: Matt signed the emergency response plan, and Jon informed the Select Board that he signed it as well.
- c. High water level complaints (Metcalf Pond and Swamp): Jon hired someone to fly a drone from Metcalf pond to the swamp to survey it because complaints were received about flooding and the high water level due to beaver dams. There are 4 videos and many still photographs; the footage will cost \$250.00. The Select Board unanimously agreed to pay the fee for the footage since the area is difficult to access.
- d. Karrie and Jon sent the budget out to Select Board members for review. There is a \$35,000 surplus from current use property taxes. Jon asked the Select Board to review the budget and be prepared to discuss it at the next Select Board meeting.

3) Broadband Update:

- a. The Northern Borders grant application was submitted. Great collaboration and work from everyone!
- b. Many details were flushed out during the grant process that would benefit the town. Jesse will add an addendum to the current Q&A document. The beneficial findings are as follows:
 - i. Mansfield Community Fiber (MCF) will contribute \$109,570 towards the broadband build out. This is documented on MCF letterhead explaining that this is a part of the project. This means that the town was able to ask for under \$500,000 (less than originally anticipated) in grant money and that makes the grant application more competitive.
 - ii. MCF asked if the town wanted to receive a dividend from the project. Because the mission of the project is to provide broadband access to the town, MCF will make funds (credits) available and the SB will develop a policy as to how to distribute those credits. No policy has been approved yet.
 - iii. Jesse has been in conversation with residents on Facebook (Fletcher Folk page) to help answer questions. One primary concern is what happens if MCF defaults on the loan. MCF provided a verbal commitment from MCF that they would be willing to use revenue from other parts of their business to pay down the debt if necessary. Jesse is working to get this in commitment in writing.
 1. Another question is, what happens if they still default? The debt is always the towns responsibility since the town is taking out the loan. If MCF defaults, legally the Vermont Economic Development Authority (VEDA) cannot go after taxpayer

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money. If MCF defaulted, the town would own the infrastructure, which the bank can repossess. MCF said that it is an easy infrastructure to operate (so another company could come in and operate the infrastructure). It would impact the credit worthiness of the town and could increase the town's interest rate. A representative from Union Bank said that if the MCF defaulted on the loan, it would impact their relationship with Union Bank. Jesse is working to contact Union Bank and get clarity about this statement. MCF also shared that they have never missed a loan payment.

- iv. As part of the grant application, Jesse had requested letters of support from residents. Jesse received approximately one dozen letters of support broadband project not only from residents, but business owners as well.
- v. The Select Board discussed preparations for the informational meeting.
 1. The virtual (Zoom) informational meeting is 6/15/2020 at 7pm and the vote is 6/22/2020 8am-7pm
 - a. In the event that the Zoom meeting reaches capacity, there will be a secondary meeting the following day.
 2. Due to COVID-19, voting by mail is encouraged.
 3. Aimee will email the BCA for help for the vote. There is a new safety protocol for voting due to COVID-19. This includes but is not limited to social distancing markers on the floor, facility occupancy limits, and barriers for the sign in areas.
 4. Bond Vote Warning costs:
 - a. County courier \$265.98
 - b. Messenger \$405.70
 - c. Mailing \$175.00

The Select Board unanimously agreed to utilize all three resources for the Warning. Print copies of the Q&A will also be made available at Fletcher General and the Town Clerk's office.

4) Annual Timeline/list:

- a. Select Board members will review the annual timeline/list to see tasks that need to be completed or added.
- b. Heat pumps in the town office are budgeted to be repaired this year – Aimee will reach out to Rich for vendor information.

5) Roads

- a. Paving preparations were completed and paving is expected to occur this week.
- b. Guide rail repairs are expected to be completed on Thursday.
- c. Rugg Road and Ellsworth Road work was completed.
- d. There were some small wash outs on Friday, and the road crew will be working to make repairs.
- e. The box culvert price has increased to \$17,000 due to a concern about the footings.
- f. The Northwest Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) grant for the season was extended for Boozan Hill Road and we are waiting on the power company to move guide wires.
- g. Speed ordinances and signs are still in progress.
- h. Matt is going to revisit reclassification of the unpaved part of School Road.

6) Taxes:

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- a. Tax Due Date: The Town Clerk does not think we need to extend the tax due date past 6/15/2020
 - b. Karrie explained that tax bills are usually sent by the middle of July, because they have to be in hand 30 days before the first bill is due. Once we have the tax rates set, we can send out the bills as soon as possible and extend the deadline by 30 days.
- 7) **Face to face meetings:** The Select Board discussed when to resume face to face meetings and how to ensure safety precautions are taken. The Select Board discussed the idea that Select Board members to meet in person, but that residents would attend the meeting virtually through Zoom. No decision was made at this time and the Select Board will continue to evaluate this issue and the COVID-19 landscape in future meetings.
- 8) **Adjournment:**
- a. Meeting adjourned at 8:20 pm

Upcoming Meetings:

Broadband informational Meeting: June 15, 2020 at 7pm, Select Board Meeting to follow

Jon Bondy, Chair

Christine E. Nilsen

Rich Bidwell

Jesse Wiens

Matt Gillilan