

Town of Fletcher Select Board Meeting
Fletcher Town Offices
Select Board Meeting Minutes
03/21/2022

Select Board: Jon Bondy, Rich Bidwell, Bruce Douglas, and Matthew Swartz.

Attendees: Jeremy Ayotte, Brenden Blair, Martha Manning, Nathan Pickard, Marlena Valenta, and Rachael Wilson (Secretary).

1. Call to Order: 7:00pm
2. Window Dressers: Marlena is the Climate and Energy Planner for Northwest Regional Planning Commission. Marlena spoke about Window Dressers, a non-profit organization that makes window inserts that can be used to winterize homes. They also provide free inserts to low-income homes (without income verification). The product is available to anyone, and information can be found on windowdressers.org. Homeowners and renters can sign up to have their windows measured online. Jon recommended that Marlena email a write up to the Select Board and it can be put up on the town website and pushed out to social media.
 - a. Doug asked if there is an income threshold for getting these at reduced or no cost. Marlena explained that there is no income verification, many people tell us what they can pay, and people can get a rebate from Efficiency Vermont as well.
 - b. Rich asked if the inserts are clear; Marlena said they are clear and showed a sample insert.

Marlena left the meeting

3. Cambridge Rescue: Martha, Brenden, and Nathan from Cambridge Rescue came to speak about the cost increase to Fletcher for Cambridge Rescue services (from \$4,000 in FY22 to \$15,750 in FY23).
 - a. Martha opened by stating that after her conversation with Jon, she did some research and found that the voters approved the budget for FY23 and in turn approved the cost increase. Jon explained that it was put in the budget because the Select Board did not have a choice. Martha said the conversation about the increase has been going on for over a year and explained that the previous chief had a conversation with a Select Board member (she did not know who). Jon explained that one Select Board member cannot speak for or make formal decisions for the town.
 - b. Nathan explained that he sent the bid over the Summer, and he figured that someone from the Select Board would reach out to discuss it but didn't hear from anyone. Then, he saw the bid was in Fletcher's budget. Matt Swartz explained that the Select Board did reach out to Nathan before putting it into the budget. Nathan said he responded to the Select Board that he was not willing to change the amount. Nathan explained that for years Fletcher has been getting Cambridge Ambulance services for a miniscule amount. Jon explained that, a few years ago, the Select Board asked if the cost should go up and Cambridge Rescue told them no. Nathan explained that was under a previous administration and that he came in and is trying to make it square.
 - c. Nathan explained that the reason for the increase is the economic impact, equipment wear and tear, and that Cambridge Rescue covers the worst part of Fletcher. He explained that Fairfax can keep their rates down because they have a good part of Fletcher that is more populated, and therefore they receive more revenue. Nathan said that \$15,750 works out to cost \$11 per resident in town. Jon pointed out that Cambridge Rescue serves 20% of Fletcher not 100%. Nathan said that doesn't matter and reiterated that the voters approved the amount.
 - d. Jon explained that the Select Board put the \$15,750 in the budget because this was not resolved in time; that the Select Board should have started conversations with Cambridge Rescue in the Fall. The Select Board put the amount in the budget to be prepared to pay it, but no one on the Select Board thought the amount was fair. Jon explained that the Select Board agrees that the cost should go up, but they do not agree with the amount. Martha said that an increased amount

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was agreed upon years ago by a Select Board member and if there was a miscommunication that was not Cambridge Rescue's issue. Jon reiterated that a single Select Board member cannot make a decision for the town and that if Cambridge Rescue wanted to discuss it, they should have attended a Select Board meeting. Martha said they were not invited, and Jon explained that no one needs to be invited because the meetings are public. Nathan said that he would not attend a Select Board meeting without being invited or asking first.

- e. Rich explained that the Select Board wants to come to a compromise and that the issue is how the increase was presented. The increase is a huge increase. Martha explained that the number didn't come out of nowhere; the Cambridge Select Board said that Cambridge Rescue had to increase their fee for Fletcher (in addition to a list of other things) or they would withhold their funding. Jon said that he read a document that said Cambridge Rescue intended to increase Fletcher's cost by at least \$6,000. Nathan disagreed and said he spoke with the Cambridge Select Board today and they are on board for the \$15,750 fee. Nathan said that Fletcher Select Board discussed \$10,000 with Cody Marsh and George Putnum. Nathan said that Cody and George agree with the \$15,750 amount.
- f. Nathan explained that Cambridge Rescue's revenue is based on the number of transports; the more transports they get, the lower they can make the cost to the town. Nathan said that every year medical supply costs increase by 7% each year and that he is not just asking for an increase because Fletcher's rates have been too low, but it is because of other factors. Jon requested a lot of data to support the cost increase request (non-profit reports for the last 5 years to understand how the business is run) but did not receive anything. Nathan asked to see the policy that says this information is required to be provided by non-profit agencies. Jon explained that there is not a policy. Matt Swartz explained that the Select Board completes their due diligence and research on any company the town is going to work with, so that they can understand where the money is going and it can be explained to voters. When Cambridge Rescue sent the request for \$15,750 the explanation for the increase was that Cambridge Rescue serves half of Fletcher and should receive the same amount of money as Fairfax Rescue; this explanation was not backed by data.
- g. Nathan explained that a transport reimbursement differs based on the insurance company. Rich asked if Fletcher could have a retainer with Cambridge Rescue. Nathan estimated that this would be more expensive for the town.
- h. Jon asked if Cambridge Rescue could put together a report without names or addresses that shows the type of run, the mileage, and what Cambridge Rescue was reimbursed. Martha said this can't be done because of HIPAA law, you would be able to identify the people since Fletcher is so small. Nathan said that the billing reports cannot be broken out that way.
 - i. Jon asked if they could provide the number of total runs broken out by run type, mileage and what Cambridge made in revenue. Nathan said he cannot break it down by insurance company (Medicaid or Medicare). Jon explained that if Nathan cannot show why Fletcher received a four times increase in cost, it makes it difficult for the Select Board to explain the increase to voters. Nathan said he can give a breakdown of total calls/year.
 - ii. Martha explained that the 20 calls they had in Fletcher, do not count the calls they respond to that don't have a transport; those calls are not billed to anyone. Nathan also explained that Cambridge Rescue does not bill families if there is a loss (death).
- i. Jon asked for the rest of the Select Board to share their opinion:
 - i. Rich introduced himself and explained that the main reason they asked to have this meeting with representatives from Cambridge Rescues is because of how the increase

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was presented. Nathan said that there was a page long email that included the reasoning for the increase. Rich also said that Cambridge Rescue made a mistake by speaking to one Select Board member and not approaching the entire board at a meeting. Nathan said that going forward he thinks that they should meet quarterly. Jon agreed. Rich said you can pop in anytime.

- ii. Bruce introduced himself and said he appreciates that Nathan emphasized the amount of services Cambridge Rescue provides. Bruce asked what the appropriation is from the town of Cambridge to Cambridge Rescue. Nathan said that the town of Cambridge pays 50% and they provide the town with Cambridge Rescue's financials quarterly. Jon asked that this information be provided to Fletcher quarterly as well. Nathan agreed.
 - iii. Matt Swartz introduced himself and thanked Cambridge Rescue for their service. Matt said that he did read the page long email Nathan referenced, and that there was some information about equipment wear and tear, but the data you provided was that Cambridge Rescue serves half of Fletcher. This was hard for the Select Board to understand because Cambridge Rescue responded to 20% of the calls in Fletcher. Matt explained that is why it would be helpful if Nathan could provide the data they requested, so that the Select Board can better understand why there was a high increase.
- j. Martha asked if there was data to show the population change in the Summer because of Metcalf Pond, because there are a fair amount of camps. Bruce said they can get the number of camps (not people who reside in them year-round) from the Northwest Regional Planning Commission. Martha also asked if there is a process for new builds that makes sure there is a way for emergency vehicles to access them? Bruce explained that he developed plans for a 5 house development in Fletcher and the Fairfax Fire Chief came and said that they had to change the plans to accommodate fire truck access. Jon said that the Select Board can consider doing an evaluation of residence access in town for safety reasons.
- k. Rich would like to talk about snow maintenance and what would stop the rescue vehicles from being able to drive on the roads. Martha said they have the highway department on their radios. Rich explained that the Select Board has been looking at putting in a policy for snow removal (since the Road Crew can't be working 24/7 regularly) and that he wants to know their take on what the Select Board should take into consideration for safety reasons. Nathan said a good rule of thumb is if the snow is above 4" it starts to get difficult for an ambulance to get through. Martha mentioned that it might be good for dispatch to have the Road Crew numbers, but radio service is also a problem. Jon asked if there is something the town can do to help that. Nathan can do some research on repeaters and get back to the Select Board because it might be eligible for ARPA funds. Jon said that the Select Board wants to be cooperative and make things better for Cambridge Rescue.
- l. Nathan said that he wants to offer better service to Fletcher and that every quarter he will provide the same information he provides to Cambridge to Fletcher. He will also provide the number of calls they take or don't take in Fletcher and he will attend a Select Board meeting every quarter.
- m. Jon suggested that Cambridge Rescue try to program their radios so that they can reach the Road Crew if needed. Jon asked the Nathan let the Select Board know if there is anything they can do to help make things better. Nathan asked for the Select Board email address: SB@fletchervt.net and town@fletchervt.net. Jon mentioned that there is the Cambridge Rescue website email that he used and did not get a response. Nathan and Martha explained that the old chief has the

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domain. Nathan said that the new website is cambridgerescue.com. Jon asked if there was anything else they needed to talk about. There was nothing else, so the Select Board thanked Cambridge Rescue for attending the meeting.

Martha, Brenden, and Nathan left the meeting

4. Board Business:


- a. Randy left with approximately \$2168.40 in unpaid vacation time. The policy says that unused, accrued vacation time will be paid if you leave employment (this does not include sick or personal time). Karrie would like the Select Board's approval. The Select Board unanimously approved this to be paid. Karrie and Aimee said that there were things about the policy that concerned them. Jon asked that they come to the next meeting with policy edits. Aimee and Karrie suggested that it is updated before anyone new is hired.
- b. There were two applicants for the Road Crew position. Matt Gillilan knows them and can schedule time to meet them. Jon asked Rich to meet them as well. Bruce said that it is important to move quickly because of the current labor market.
- c. ARPA planning: The school sent out a solicitation on social media for ARPA money. Jon had a conversation with the superintendent and learned that there is an infrastructure above the school that is reviewing the ARPA money guidelines and making recommendations. The Select Board does not have this resource. Jon mentioned the idea of having a joint meeting with the School and Select Boards where they can discuss ARPA funding with residents. Rich said someone had the idea of using the money to pay for the green 911 number signs for residences.
- d. Broadband: A couple of invoices were sent in by Mansfield Community Fiber. Since Northern Borders said they can only submit invoices once a month, there is a situation; things are okay right now, but it is likely going to be an issue in the future.
- e. There was discussion about the Fairfax Rescue subscription solicitations. Fairfax Rescue sends solicitations to the entire town, instead of just the part of town they serve. The idea is that Karrie and Aimee can provide the mailing addresses for the area they serve. Karrie and Aimee will get back in touch with Jon about this.
- f. Roads: Rich mentioned that the Sap trucks are killing the dirt roads. Rich understands that because it is agricultural, they are exempt from road restrictions. Jon said the first step is to confirm if the trucks on the roads are considered agricultural and then writing a letter to the state. Jon asked Rich and Bruce to work together to write a letter to the legislative committee on agriculture. Bruce said that he had to redo his class 4 road because of Sap trucks. Rich said that Fletcher does not post the roads, because most of the traffic is agricultural.
- g. Jon said he was grateful that the meeting with Cambridge Rescue ended well. The Select Board discussed Cambridge Rescue's budget. Rich said he felt better after the conversation.
- h. Matt Swartz asked if the Road Crew candidates will come to a Select Board meeting. Jon suggested that the final candidate come to a Select Board meeting. The Select Board discussed utilizing the backup person for the Road Crew.

5. Public Comment:

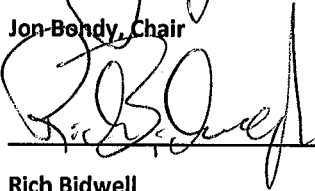
- a. Jeremy said he appreciates the conversation tonight and thanked the Select Board for standing up for the town. Jeremy also wanted everyone to know that you can call Fairfax Rescue directly if you would like them to respond to your emergency.

6. Adjournment: 8:56pm


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Jon Bondy, Chair



Rich Bidwell



Bruce Douglas

Matt Gillilan

Matt Swartz