

Town of Fletcher Select Board Meeting Minutes  
Meeting Location: Fletcher Town Office  
Meeting Date: 02/20/2023

Selectboard Members Present: Jon Bondy (chair), Rich Bidwell, Matt Swartz, and Bruce Douglas (recorded minutes)

Town Officials Present: Karrie Sweet, Town Clerk; and Aimee Tinker, Assistant Town Clerk

Guests Present: Martha Manning (Cambridge Rescue Squad), Tim Nulty, Leslie Nulty, and Brian Davidson (Mansfield Community Fiber), Kathy Lavoie (NRPC)

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1. Opened meeting at 7:00 PM
2. Rich provided an update on Town Garage heating system, stating that the town garage boiler came in at a lower cost than anticipated. It is a higher efficiency boiler that is better matched to length of radiant tubing in the floor.
3. Discussion of Cambridge Rescue Squad (CRS) article
  - a. Martha Manning stated that Nathan is no longer chief
  - b. Daytime people need to be certified at A level
  - c. Martha asked us about transition if article regarding CRS is approved
  - d. Jon explained that the transition would be July 1<sup>st</sup>.
  - e. Bruce asked if someone CRS would be able to come to Fletcher's Town Meeting
  - f. Jon stated that the board does not want to speak for them
  - g. Martha will attend and she will ask Rob if he can come
  - h. Martha left meeting
4. Discussion of Mansfield Community Fiber (Brian Davidson, Tim Nulty, Leslie Nulty, Kathy Lavoie and Aimee Tinker joined meeting)
  - a. Jon handed out one page overview of current project budget broken down by two sections of Fletcher (Section 1 = western section of town and Section 2 = eastern portion of town)
    - i. Section 1 – construction is well underway and a reasonable path forward depends on Fletcher Selectboard approving ARPA funding of \$80K
    - ii. Section 2 – construction has not yet been started. The draft budget for this section depends on:
      1. NBRC approving reallocation of materials to labor; and
      2. A Vermont Broad Band Commission Grant, which will require Consolidated Communications being willing not to serve Section 2.
  - b. Jon stated that an option is to just build out Section 1, but not Section 2. The Section 2 broadband service which would be funded internally by Mansfield as they get funding from payback of loan.
  - c. Jon stated that he and Kathy talked to executive director of a nearby Community Utility District (CUD). Jon stated that the outcome of the conversation was that it was not clear that joining a CUD would fix our money situation. There is no apparent reason why would they want to fund Fletcher's Section 2 broadband lines. Jon also explained that the CUD's approach is to hang the fiber network,

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and let others provide broad band service over the CUD's fiber, which is different from Fletcher's approach to have MCF hang the fiber and be the broad band service provider.

- d. Jon stated that he has been told anecdotally that Consolidated Communications (CC) plan on building out Fletcher's broadband. Jon stated that he has reached out to CC to ask CC what their plans are, and whether they would be willing to not to put broadband fiber in Fletcher. There has been on response from CC yet.
- e. Bruce asked what the level of service would be required to pay down the loan in the original Northern Borders Commission (NRBC)/Vermont Economic Development Authority (VEDA) broadband funding package
  - i. Tim stated that is something they can calculate, and Leslie stated that they are doing that modeling
  - ii. Leslie stated that VEDA has told MCF if the loan can be paid back they would consider a reduction in project scope
- f. Leslie stated that she was told by executive director of Vermont Community Broadband Commission that if we applied for a grant, we would have to have a statement or agreement between the Town and CC that CC would not install broadband fiber in Fletcher.
- g. Leslie stated that she is aware that there is a precedent for CC not building out in some locations, as CC did a deal with Bolton to allow Waitsfield Telecom to install fiber a portion of Bolton.
- h. Brian stated that they do not differentiate between poles on private roads and and poles on public roads. He explained that final drop on a line starts at the last shared pole.
- i. Jon proposed the following motion: The Town shall spend \$80K of available ARPA funds towards Fletcher section 1 and we encourage Mansfield Community complete section 1 as soon as is technically feasible. The following discussion followed:
  - i. Leslie stated that MCF would like to start splicing on what has been hung to start connecting customers
  - ii. Aimee will need to create a separate ARPA account
  - iii. Bruce stated that he would recommend that we to put all ARPA money in reserve until we have more information about service for section 2
  - iv. Rich asked about total broad band project budget, as it appears that we are about 30% over initial estimate
  - v. Leslie and Tim – MCF has purchased materials and pole licenses for section 2.
  - vi. Rich would like to think about section 2
  - vii. Tim wants to emphasis point that Brian made – what if put central trunk strand where ever possible and then it relatively easy to grow out as needed



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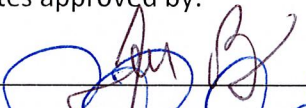



- j. Matt stated that he does not want to commit a bunch of money. In theory he wants to get the project done if we have money available. At the same time the ARPA money can be used to reduce tax burden. We owe it to the Town to get the broadband project done. Would like to know how the money will be spent in Fletcher section 2.
  - k. Jon stated that MCF has offered to pay back all of the infrastructure outside of Fletcher. This offer needs to be approved by Northern Borders Regional Commission (NBRC)
  - l. It was pointed out that Fletcher owns the fiber cable that was already purchased
  - m. Jon – proposed amending the motion in item # 4.i above, with “...and the Select Board will defer decision on Fletcher 2 until we have more information.”
    - i. After additional discussion, this motion passed unanimously
  - n. Leslie stated that there is a broadband funding program called: Rural Development Opportunities Fund (RDOF)– Consolidated was awarded grant money for underserved areas all over VT – Fletcher 2 is on that FCC map as an area that could potentially receive those grant funds.
    - i. VCBB grants are from a different pot of money
    - ii. Tim stated that under RDOF CC has 10 years to install the fiber cable.
    - iii. Consolidated has overbuilt in other territory
  - o. Aimee asked if a change in scope in how Sections 1 & 2 are addressed would require modifying the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Town and MCF. Matt stated that it appears likely will need an amendment.
  - p. Next steps
    - i. Jon will reach out to Consolidated Communications
    - ii. Leslie will write up Narrative to support her spreadsheet
    - iii. Jon asked MCF to read MOU to see what is needed.
  - q. Aimee, Kathy, Tim, Leslie and Brian left the meeting.
5. The Select Board reviewed the draft slide show for Town meeting
- a. Bruce will incorporate review comments and divide the presentation into three segments: Article 3 Article 6 and article 7, and distribute to the Selectboard for review
  - b. The assignment of who will present what sections of the presentation at Town meeting were discussed
  - c. Jon offered to draft a broad band slide
6. The Listers were discussed. Jon stated that he will call Spencer Potter and will ask him to:
- a. Meet with listers
  - b. Confirm the scope and budget
7. Road issues were discussed.
- a. Cambridge Road – Rich stated that when we approved the speed limit ordinance, it was his understanding that the speed limit would stay at 40 miles per hour from Blair barn to Cambridge. Jon confirmed that we did not increase the speed

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limit on Cambridge – only posted the actual speed limit. It was agreed that this topic will be discussed at a future meeting with Matt Gillilan present.

- b. Gravel road potholes were discussed, particularly Terry Rigg's grader teeth approach
  - i. Glen is reaching out to other towns and gather information.
  - ii. Rich mentioned that many of Fletcher's Roads are harder than Fairfax's
- 8. The Board discussed the bigger picture issue pertaining to what is reasonable to ask of Town Clerk and Assistant Town Clerk, such as acquiring a phone for the road foreman. Rich offered to take the lead on getting a phone for Glen.
- 9. Rich brought up need to house the next truck and suggested the possibility of building a lean-to on the back of the Town Garage, as there is not enough room inside for another truck.
- 10. Next meeting will be March 6<sup>th</sup>, the day before Town Meeting.
- 11. Meeting adjourned at 9:29 pm

Minutes approved by:

	____	Jon Bondy, Chair
	____	Rich Bidwell
	____	Matt Swartz
	____	Bruce Douglas