

**Town of Fletcher – Select Board
Fletcher Town Clerk’s Office
November 6, 2023
Regular Meeting Minutes**

Present:

Members: Rich Bidwell, Jon Bondy, Bruce Douglas, Matt Gillilan

Guests: Brian Davison, Catherine Dimitruk, Michelle Frennier, Jen Getty, Leslie Nulty, Glen Packard, Karrie Sweet (Town Clerk /Treasurer), Tara Sweet, Aimee Tinker (Assistant Town Clerk/Treasurer, Select Board Clerk)

1) Call to Order

Jon called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

2) Regular Board Business

MTAP

Catherine Dimitruk from Northwest Regional Planning shared information about the Municipal Technical Assistance Program (MTAP). This program would provide technical assistance to municipalities to help access federal funds for various projects such as municipal water/sewer, housing, workforce development, energy/climate change mitigation, etc.

Michelle Frennier asked if this money could be used to fund broadband projects. Catherine said no. She will email additional information to the Board.

Michelle said that at a previous meeting, Senator Westman mentioned asking Agency of Administration about ARPA funds for broadband. Jon said he had not yet received an answer from Senator Westman.

Executive Session

Pursuant to 1 V.S.A. §313 (a)(3), Jon made a motion to go into Executive Session to discuss the evaluation of an employee and invited Glen Packard and Aimee Tinker to stay for this portion of the meeting. Matt G. seconded. The Board unanimously approved the motion and went into Executive Session at 7:13pm.

At 7:29pm, the Board exited Executive Session and resumed the regular meeting. No action was taken.

Newsletter

Tara Sweet shared that the first issue of the new joint newsletter was just about ready. The School Board and Select Board would equally share the costs, so Tara and Karrie/Aimee would work that out.

Broadband

Brian Davison and Leslie Nulty (both from MCF) shared a status update on the broadband project (see attached map). The section labeled “Fletcher B” is lit and there are eight subscribers ready to connect. Leslie shared the 2 two categories of infrastructure outside of town lines: 1) essential for service to Fletcher sites and, 2) inadvertently built and NOT needed for service to Fletcher sites.

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Rich asked if MCF was concerned that Consolidated Communications (CC) is building out in town and how that would impact potential customers. Leslie said they were certainly aware of it.

Michelle Frennier said she had previously been told that MCF service to her house couldn't come from Fairfax way, but now it appears it will. Brian said they set up an entirely new cable to reach Buck Hollow Rd from Fairfax. Michelle was disappointed that it's taken MCF so long to figure this out and now CC will be at her house within two weeks. Brian said MCF is working on her road now and should have that ready to be lit by end of 4Q2023 (December 2023).

Rich asked about the residences on River Road (past School Road to Fairfax line). Brian said he'd met with Aimee and there was no disputing those *are* Fletcher residences, but due to pole gaps the cost would be very expensive to build out that section.

Rich was also concerned about the red section of map only to be completed by 2Q2024. Leslie said winter weather delays were part of the cause for that estimate.

Michelle asked about the availability of crews to connect customers whose roads are lit, like the eight customers mentioned earlier. Brian said the current average lead time is 45 days. Jon asked that Brian send the Board an updated map each month.

Jon said the Board hired an attorney and he shared an updated project status (attached). Jon noted that NBRC and MCF disagree about how much of the outside-of-Fletcher infrastructure is within the scope of the grant contract. He is concerned that all parties may not immediately agree after the proposed Zoom meeting. He foresees MCF needing to adjust the project budget. Leslie feels that NBRC has refused to pay for multiple invoices. Jon said that NBRC did not refuse payment but rather put a hold on reimbursements while they completed their audit of the project. They hold the purse-strings, so they have the final say. Leslie said that MCF spent hours/months trying to craft a budget and is concerned that it may need to be restructured again due to NBRC's refusal to release more funds. Jon said if NBRC won't reimburse expenses for work done outside of Fletcher, then yes, the budget will need to be redone. After NBRC finishes their audit, they will give the Town a plan forward, will share with MCF and go from there.

Jon said that Karrie Sweet had shared information from Fidium with him regarding areas they will be servicing.

Karrie said she doesn't feel comfortable spending ARPA funds to install fiber over fiber. If CC hangs fiber now, why would we spend money to duplicate fiber, especially when we know we need money for other areas of the project. Jon said that MCF has already hung fiber in all of the area known as Fletcher 1, so that is a moot point for that part of town. Karrie reiterated that she doesn't want ARPA funds spent to have MCF hang fiber anywhere that CC has already.

Karrie also said that MCF told her at the last board meeting, she'd have it by her house by the end of October, but the map which MCF is showing now says it will not be until next summer.

Jon reminded everyone that Leslie had said in writing that the loan will be paid using income from all customers, and not just this Fletcher project.

Karrie said she feels options are important and agrees that MCF offers a good product, but people will likely go with whichever provider gets there first.

Rich said that current CC customers may not have to pay for fiber installation since they are already customers. He asked if MCF would consider providing a better deal on installation or cheaper rates as a way to respond to this competition and encourage the MCF take-rate. Brian said they are working on a response to addressing that but are not ready to release that publicly. Leslie said they are trying to assess connections and are using field surveys to prioritize.

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PACIF Insurance

VLCT requested the Board choose whether they wanted the Town’s insurance coverage for uninsured/underinsured motorists to have a limit of \$250K or \$10M per occurrence. The Board chose the \$250K amount and authorized Karrie to sign the necessary document on the Board’s behalf.

Shaw Road

It was determined that the Class 4 portion of Shaw Road ends just past the driveway to Rick Russell’s workshop (#668). The Town is maintaining the road as required.

ATV Meeting

The meeting on November 27th for the ATV discussion will be held at Fletcher Elementary School to accommodate a larger audience. The request form for the space has been filed and the school will have tables and chairs set up as needed.

Road Report

Matt G. and Matt S had planned to meet with the Road Crew, but that has been postponed until next week.

Matt G. received an email from the guardrail company. He will respond to their email and send photos as they’ve requested.

Discussion of generator at Town Garage tabled until next meeting. Aimee will reach out to Reliant Electric to solicit a quote.

The speed indicator sign for School Road has arrived at the garage. Aimee will assist road crew with programming it once the post is installed. *Earlier in the meeting, Tara shared that the School Board was not interested in paying for an additional sign (for traffic in the opposing direction) at this time.

The new one-ton is at the garage and has been used by the road crew already. The board discussed what to do with the old one. Matt G will send Aimee photos and a description in order to craft an ad to post on Front Porch Forum and Facebook.

Grader Motor

Matt G has spoken with representatives from John Deere and there is no change to the motor repair invoice, so we will need to pay it in full.

After discussion, the board unanimously agreed to pay the invoice using 30K from ARPA and 30K from the general fund.

Meunier Property

Cory Getty shared that he had spoken with David Clark about the status of the state’s inquiries. The Board will reach out to David for more information.

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Broadband Continued

Michelle Frennier asked if the Board had the attorney submit a FOIA request of NBRC’s records. Jon said the attorney advised the Board should await the response from NBRC after their “audit” of the project.

Executive Session

Pursuant to 1 V.S.A. §313 (a)(3), Jon made a motion to go into Executive Session to discuss the evaluation of an employee and invited Aimee Tinker to stay for this portion of the meeting. Matt G. seconded. The Board unanimously approved the motion and went into Executive Session at 9:49pm.


At 10:35pm, the Board exited Executive Session and resumed the regular meeting. No action was taken.

3) Adjourn

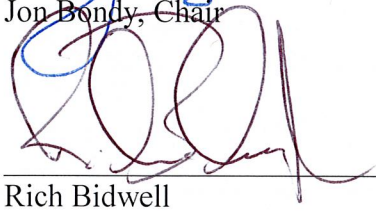
The meeting was adjourned at 10:40pm.



Jon Bondy, Chair



Bruce Douglas

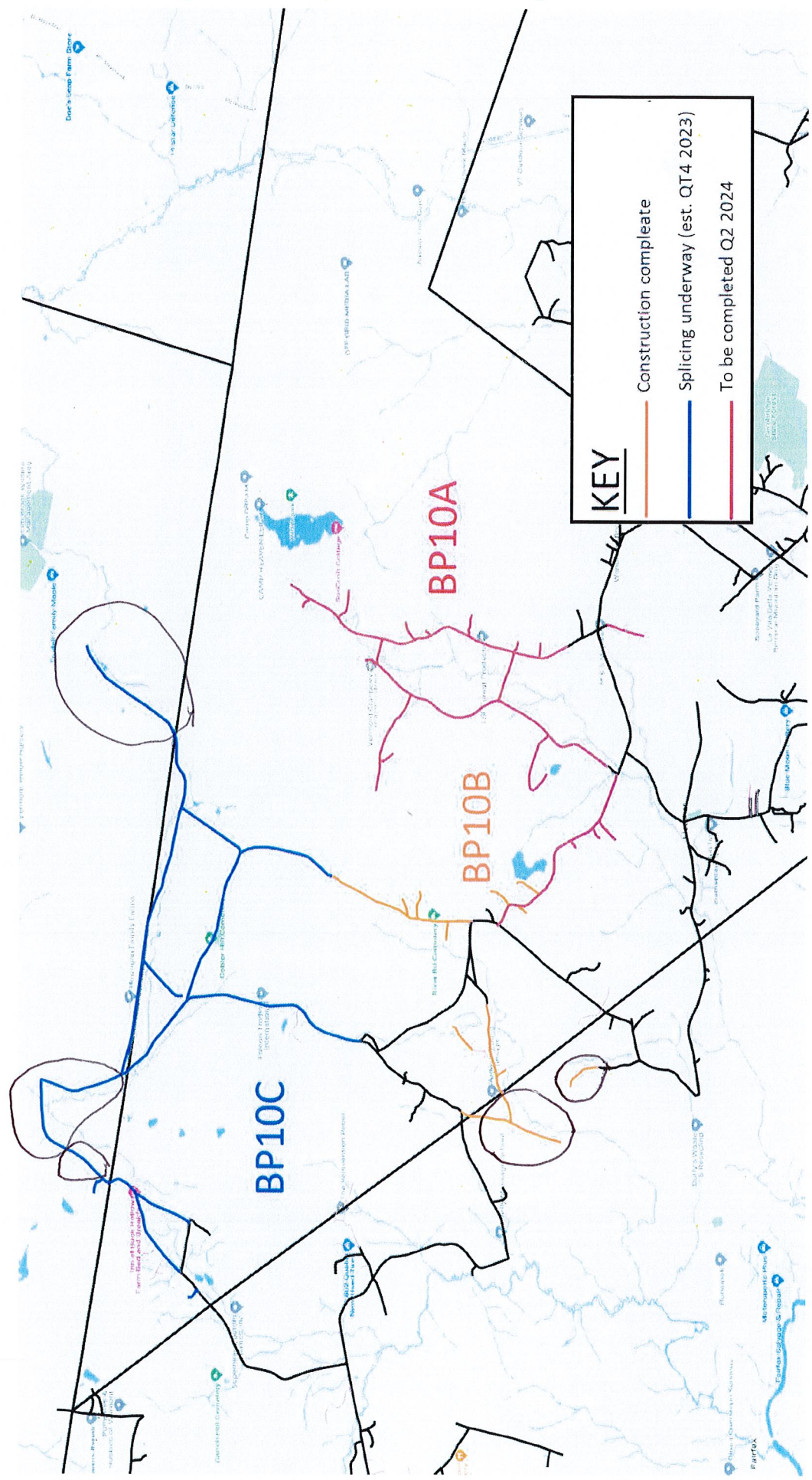


Rich Bidwell



Matt Gillilan

Broadband Project Map - submitted by MCF at 11/6/23 S.B. Meeting



KEY

- Construction complete
- Splicing underway (est. QT4 2023)
- To be completed Q2 2024

— = lit but not part of project

Submitted by Jon at 11/6/23 S.B. Meeting

November 2023 Broadband and Attorney Status

Note that our attorney has both TeleCom and PUC experience.

VCBB confirms that they cannot grant money to ISPs (MCF) or towns, but rather only to CUDs.

So, we are exploring joining a CUD; there are only 3 adjoining CUDs.

NW Fiberworx (NWCUD) (one of 3 adjoining CUDs) said no, primarily 99 year lease vs open access.

Trying Chittenden County CUD next.

For Fletcher to get some of the \$200M BEAD money (through VCBB), we need a waiver from NTIA; should not be a problem.

Once SB approves *MTAP* our attorney will reach out to VLCT.

Andrea and Chris: NBRC will not pay for any infrastructure outside of Town.

NBRC: it was the build out beyond the Town limits that triggered the "audit".

NBRC: If MCF knew they needed to build outside of Town, that needed to be included in the original NBRC grant application.

MCF and MCF's attorney do not agree with NBRC's take on infrastructure outside of Town

We will try to gather all parties in a Zoom meeting to resolve this issue.

If no NBRC money can be used outside of Town, then revisions to The Spreadsheet (and budgets) seem unavoidable.