

**Town of Fletcher – Select Board
Fletcher Town Clerk’s Office
December 4, 2023
Regular Meeting Minutes**

Present:

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

Guests: Theresa Blake, Craig Bushey, Kelly Cummings, Keith Donahue, Jeremy Frederick, Jen Getty, Jody Massa, Darren Severance, Karrie Sweet (Town Clerk/Treasurer), Aimee Tinker (Ass’t Town Clerk/Treasurer, Select Board Clerk), Jeff Wells, Mike Wells

1) Call to Order

Jon called the meeting to order at 7:02pm.

2) Regular Board Business

Cambridge Fire Department

Darren Severance came in to introduce himself as the new chief of the Cambridge Fire Department. He said they just finished working on their new budget which will include an increase of \$500 to Fletcher’s retainer.

Jon asked if the Town has exceeded our retainer in recent years. Darren wasn’t aware of this occurring. Aimee said she could check the AP records, but she didn’t recall having to pay over the retainer in recent years either.

Darren said that CFD sends information to the Town on all calls and gives an update on status of the retainer.

ATVs

Regarding the ATV meeting last Monday, Jon said that he knew some folks would be unhappy no matter what. He feels that forming a committee makes sense. He personally thinks the Board should not make the decision and that it should be decided by the voters.

Rich just wanted to clarify that the Board *could* make the decision on their own, but he agrees with Jon that it should be a vote of the people.

Jon said a petition could be brought forward, but feels it needs to be specific. He feels the role of a committee should be to come up with a proposal which can be voted on.

Jen feels that all the questions brought up at last Monday’s meeting should be addressed. She thought the point of the committee was to present something to the Board that could be voted on. She wondered how we would vote on the issue, at the Town Meeting or a separate meeting?

Aimee said she reached out to VLCT to determine possible scenarios. These are:

- 1) The Board could decide the issue on their own right now.
- 2) The Board could bring forth an article (Ex. “Shall ATVs be allowed to operate on Fletcher roads?”) at Town Meeting to be voted on from the floor.
- 3) Residents could bring a petition to the Board to force them to bring forth said article at Town Meeting to be voted on from the floor.

If the article passed through either method 2 or 3 above, it would still be considered a non-binding and advisory vote only. The Board has ultimate jurisdiction on the issue.

Kelly asked about voting by Australian ballot. Aimee said that since we are a town that votes all of our budgets and articles from the floor at Town Meeting, there would need to be a floor

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vote *first* at Town Meeting that would authorize the Board to hold a future Australian ballot vote on a given issue. This could happen in one of the following ways:

- 1) The Board could choose to bring forth an article (Ex. “Shall the voters of the Town of Fletcher vote on allowing ATVs on Town roads by Australian ballot?) at Town Meeting to be voted on from the floor. **OR**
- 2) Residents could bring a petition to the Board to force them to bring forth the above article at Town Meeting to be voted on from the floor.

If the article passed through either method 1 or 2 above, the Board would have to schedule a special meeting to vote by Australian ballot, following all statutory guidelines regarding dates and warnings.

Bruce sees this as a big issue for the Town. He thinks it should be a thoughtful process where we listen to all sides as well as get the opinions law enforcement. He feels we should not rush to have this decided at Town Meeting and it should be brought to a vote at a later date. He feels the committee should have a specific charge and should be balanced in opinions on ATVs but still have a clear directive. A petition would have to be brought to the Town Clerk 47 days prior to the Town Meeting for the article to be included on the Warning. He feels there’s not enough time to do a thorough job crafting an article within these statutory confines.

Craig Bushey feels the charge of the committee would be to lay out the pros and cons of allowing ATVs on Town roads. Jon disagrees and feels it should be to lay out a specific, detailed proposal. Those details are important as they will be what makes some people vote one way or the other.

Matt Swartz said that there are two methods of bringing this to the voters: Board can craft an article for the Warning or voters can bring forth a petition to force the Board to add an article to the Warning.

Rich feels the Board should act as soon as possible since any persons using ATVs for farming/maple sugaring are currently violating the law.

Kelly Cummings feels we should take a slower approach and vet things thoroughly. She thinks the committee should have representation from all sides of the issue equally and thinks the original meeting should’ve been warned a bit better to gain a larger audience. She said she has been researching this issue in other towns and feels the key piece is enforcement. It’s irresponsible to create an ordinance that we know won’t be enforced because the current law is not enforced.

Jon still feels the charge of the committee would be to bring a proposal to the Board. Kelly said there should be another informational public meeting that would be better warned to gain larger audience.

Bruce said the committee should be set up by the Board and be tasked with a specific scope of work. Matt S. agrees that a committee is a good idea, but he’s not sure how to frame the scope. He wondered how there could be a balanced committee if those with opposing views couldn’t agree on a proposal for the Board. Jen volunteered to try to form the committee.

Jon said that the Board needed to move on to other topics as they had a lot to discuss tonight. The discussion will be tabled until the next regular board meeting.

Craig said he thought the Board was originally looking for input on the topic so they may decide as a Board, but now it sounds like the Board won’t decide and want it to be brought to voters. Jon said the Board did not intend to decide themselves and do want the voters’ input.

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Kelly said that holding another meeting is the best way forward.

Matt S. said he appreciates all this discussion, but he cautioned against having meeting after meeting until achieving the answer one wants. He feels the recent meeting was appropriately warned.

Mike Wells said there were multiple questions asked at the meeting that have not been answered. He gave the example of wanting to see maps of current trail systems in other towns to learn what Fletcher roads would be used to access those trails. Jon said the Board could provide answers to those Q’s at the next meeting.

Jen suggested that members of the public could email their questions to the Board in advance of the next meeting so they could be researched and addressed. Jon said that would be helpful.

Jeff Wells asked what had changed from the 2019 meeting to this recent meeting. He was expecting to have all of the same parties at this recent meeting (ATV club, law enforcement, Fish & Wildlife, etc.) Jon said the origin of the meetings was different. In 2019, there was an ATV club wanting to use a certain road (Kinsley Road) only, whereas the current request is for the entirety of Fletcher.

Jon reiterated that the Board had a lot on their agenda this evening and the discussion would have to be tabled until the next regular meeting on 12/18. He will devote time from 7-8pm at that meeting to this topic. It will not be a time to discuss pros and cons, but rather to decide on how to proceed.

Karrie asked for clarification from Kelly regarding warning of future meetings, as she’d said she felt the last one wasn’t sufficiently warned.

Line of Credit

Karrie said the Town’s line of credit through Peoples Trust Company was up for renewal. The Board unanimously approved renewal of the Line of Credit and authorized Karrie to sign the necessary paperwork on their behalf.

911 Dispatch Increase

The St. Albans Police Department sent the contract for FY2025 Dispatch Services. The cost will be \$17,517.00, an increase of \$834.00 from last year. The Board unanimously approved the contract which Jon signed on the Board’s behalf.

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 potential employment of a new employee. They invited Craig Bushey and Aimee Tinker to stay. Rich seconded. The Board unanimously approved the motion and entered Executive Session at 7:41pm

At 8:40pm, the Board exited Executive Session and resumed the regular meeting.

Jon made a motion to hire Craig Bushey as the Assistant Road Commissioner at a rate of \$600/week plus an additional \$35/hour for plowing, retroactive to 11/16/2023 and until 05/15/2024 when the Board will reassess as needed. Rich seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

A committee consisting of Jon, Matt G and Craig will meet this Wednesday with prospective applicants for the open Road Crew position.

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One-Ton Bids

The following bids were received for the 1998 Chevy one-ton truck:

- \$2,500 Keegan Gillilan
- \$2,000 Lesley Combs
- \$1,775 Craig Bushey
- \$1,475 Matt Anastacio
- \$1,251 Garrett Bushey
- \$1,000 Lee Meunier


Matt G will contact the high bidder to arrange payment for and transfer of the vehicle. Aimee will prepare the appropriate paperwork.

Personnel Policy & Job Descriptions

The Board reviewed the job descriptions for Highway Supervisor and Highway Maintenance Worker as well as the Personnel Policy. These should be ready for final approval at the next meeting on December 18, 2023.

3) Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 10:45pm.



Jon Bondy, Chair

Matt Gillilan



Rich Bidwell



Matt Swartz



Bruce Douglas