

**Town of Fletcher – Select Board
Fletcher Town Clerk’s Office
January 2, 2024
Regular Meeting Minutes**

Present:

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

Guests: Rich Amato, Craig Bushey, Larry Cota, Kelly Cummings, Keith Donahue, Pam Farmer, Jeremy Frederick, Jen Getty, Pam Jedlicka, Sandy Mayotte, Aimee Tinker (Ass’t Town Clerk/Treasurer; Board Clerk), Jeff Wells, Mike Wells

1) Call to Order

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

2) Regular Board Business

ATVs

Bruce handed out a document (Attachment #1), which laid out a suggested process and schedule for the ATV committee. He also offered to be a facilitator for the committee. Jon read the document out loud, which also referred to the outline (Attachment #2) handed out at the previous meeting.

Jon asked if Jen and Mike had thoughts on this. Jen said she was not opposed to having a facilitator, but would prefer to have someone who is more neutral on the topic. She suggested perhaps Rich or Matt S. Rich said he doesn’t feel the facilitator should be a Board member as it’s ultimately up to the Select Board even after a vote and he thinks Board members should stay out of it. Bruce said his intention is only to do what is best for the town and not push his personal opinion. Any decision would be based on facts and then presented to the voters. He feels having a Board member as a facilitator would enable the committee to access resources (VLCT, town atty) which they wouldn’t be able to do as they are not municipal employee.

Matt S. asked if this would be an appropriate role for Barry Doolan as he is Town Moderator. Jon said potentially but he wasn’t aware that anyone had asked him.

Mike agreed with Jen that a facilitator would be a good idea, but he doesn’t feel it matters that it’s someone on one side of the issue or not. He said the committee is balanced in its members’ opinions and they are tasked with seeking facts.

Kelly Cummings asked about how the committee would access resources like VLCT without Bruce. Jen said she has access to VLCT through her employer. Kelly asked how Mike (or anyone of the opposing viewpoint) would be able to access the same information. Jon said any Board member or Town employee could access VLCT on any committee member’s behalf. VLCT doesn’t deal in opinions - only facts (Statutes). They will advise the committee appropriately.

Rich said he wants to have a specific task for the committee. It’s important to have an end goal. Jen felt they were supposed to create an article which could be presented to the voters. Jon said the committee should answer any questions previously brought forth at meetings, answer any new questions and then create a proposal which can be brought to the Board. This would then be reviewed by the Town attorney and then put to the voters.

Kelly asked for clarification on the vote itself – would it be a “yes or no” vote? Jon said it would have to be structured as a “yes or no” vote, but the article would need to be some sort of detailed ordinance as opposed to a simple “Shall we allow ATVs on roads?”.

Bruce wanted “no action” on this issue as a possible option. It’s possible that the committee could come to the conclusion that no action *is* the best action. Matt S agrees the committee could come to that conclusion and should have that on their radar.

Matt S. suggested the committee have a set time frame for soliciting comments and questions (ex. 30 days) so the process will not drag on. Jen likes this idea of a set comment period. She also would like a

**Town of Fletcher – Select Board
Fletcher Town Clerk’s Office
January 2, 2024
Regular Meeting Minutes**

set timeline for committee. Jon said perhaps we could create an email address (something like atvs@fletchervt.net) and also accept hard copy comments as well.

Rich Amato said it’s important to look at this issue from an objective perspective. By default, ATVs are not allowed so that is our current “policy”. He feels this should be approached NOT as an all-or-nothing decision, but allowing for agricultural exceptions, sugaring during winter, etc.

Sandy Mayotte feels the facilitator should be a neutral party. If it’s determined they are NOT neutral, she asked what the mechanism would be to address that. Jon said if Mike and Jen feel the process isn’t working, they could approach the Board for assistance.

Jon made a formal motion:

- 1) The ATV committee shall consist of Jen Getty, Pam Farmer, Sandy Mayotte, Mike Wells, Larry Cota, and Rich Amato.
- 2) The outline handed out at the previous meeting will serve as a starting point for committee discussions.
- 3) The committee shall work with Bruce as facilitator to start and work with Karrie and Aimee to post agendas and minutes, and they will bring updates to the Board as needed and reach out for assistance as needed.

Bruce seconded this 3-part motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Kelly asked about the committee’s timeline. Jon said he was not exactly sure but it sounds like are focused and will stay on task. The Committee will be able to reach out to the Board at any time with updates.

Sandy Mayotte said she appreciates the thoughtful process the committee will follow. She feels it will lead to a better-informed vote based on fact and not opinion. Jon agreed. He said at some point there will be a time when people can share their opinions publicly, but committee meetings aren’t the place for that.

Jen and Mike will work with the other committee members to create a meeting schedule. They will let the Board know as soon as they have the first date set.

Personnel Policy

Discussion tabled until next meeting when a final draft will be available and all Board members can be present.

Generator

Discussion tabled until next meeting as the Board anticipates having quotes at that time.

Broadband

Rich shared that he spoke with a technician from Consolidated Communications who told him all Fidium installations were free. Matt S. said that Fidium also advertises a cheaper rate, but it’s only good for one year and rates increase afterwards. Rich just wanted to bring it to the Board’s attention that Fidium install was free whereas there may be a charge for MCF. He noted that homeowner grants for broadband was an agenda item tonight, and he feels that if the Town is ever able to access such grants, we should focus on parts of town that do not have the ability to access Fidium and their only option is MCF, as the initial goal of the broadband project was to provide broadband access to all residents.

Jon said that MCF was supposed to be at tonight’s meeting to provide a project update, but they were not able to attend. They hope to be present at next week’s meeting.

Website Updates

Aimee reached out to Jeremy Frederick on options for creating an email list to alert people to website updates. Jeremy said this would require creating a town mailing list, which could pose a problem for

**Town of Fletcher – Select Board
Fletcher Town Clerk's Office
January 2, 2024
Regular Meeting Minutes**

some recipients as bulk emails often go to spam folders. This wouldn't be an issue if we opted to utilize a service like MailChimp. This would cost about \$13-\$20 per month.

Jon asked about setting up a tab on website specifically for postings in the ATV issue. Jeremy said we could do that and will work with Aimee to set this up

Road Report

Craig said everything is going well with the roads. There were a few culverts that needed attention after the rain last week, but they've all been addressed by the road crew. Jon asked if this was due to a high furrow being left on the edge of the road, not allowing water to drain into the ditch. Craig said yes, but it was also due to rain coming so quickly in a short time period. He's working with the road crew to ensure they don't leave furrows after grading. The Road Crew also put extra rip rap in culverts areas today, trying to get ahead of future rain.

Jon asked how Dan was doing so far. Craig said he's doing great and things are going really well in the garage overall. There haven't been any major repairs. The Road Crew are now using binders for all vehicle paperwork to better keep track of maintenance. All of the Road Crew are using the white board in the office to keep track of daily tasks.

Jon asked if Craig had spoken with Matt G. and/or the Road Crew about the budget. Craig said he's been trying to connect with Matt and has chatted with the Road Crew a bit, but it's not really their area of expertise.

The Board and Craig briefly discussed the layout of the Roads section of the budget and how the numbers are derived. This will be discussed further at the next meeting.

Unwritten Class 4 Policies

Discussion tabled until next meeting when Matt G. can be here.

Broadband

MCF will attend the 01/08 meeting to provide updates on the project.

Metcalf Pond

Craig and Ed met with a man from ANR at the pond last week. The water level at the culvert had been at almost 30" after the recent rainstorms. The man from ANR said the Town cannot access the dams without landowner permission, which would be needed to trap beavers as well if that's the Board's wish.

Jon said the Board had previously told residents with pond frontage that the Town's responsibility was to maintain road and not private property. They would have to form a committee to address any issues on their own. Any issues downstream are not in Board's purview and would be up to those residents/landowners.

Bruce said the State doesn't allow Towns to do anything that would alter the water level more than 12" per day.

Keith asked what would happen if the water level rose to the point that it affected the road. Jon and Rich said the Board would be able to take action at that time. If the Road Crew needed to access private land, they would need landowner permission.

Jon said the dams between the ledges and the main pond are much harder to access, though they are the ones that would need to be addressed in order to alleviate water levels and drainage. It's not an easy situation.

Cambridge Rescue's Proposal

Bruce has been speaking with Mike Curtain who is CRS' acting interim chief. He was not able to attend the last Board meeting due to the flooding. Mike said that the lack of volunteers has been limiting

**Town of Fletcher – Select Board
Fletcher Town Clerk’s Office
January 2, 2024
Regular Meeting Minutes**

their ability to respond to calls. They want to pay their staff in hopes of attracting more people to serve. They are revamping their strategy and are increasing (doubling) their budget request of Cambridge. Anticipating a similar doubling request here in Fletcher, Bruce offered a 10% increase which was accepted by CRS. Bruce said this shows that CRS recognizes Fletcher is not part of their problem in attracting new staff. They know money is not the only way to address their issues.

Jon said he’d spoken with members of Fairfax Rescue, asking why they did not seem to have similar problems with staff. They told him they have more people willing to volunteer and they are able to provide appropriate training for those volunteers which helps in retention.

Bruce said he is also working with Brendan Blair (CRS member and Fletcher resident) to relay information on this issue and keep the Board updated.

Matt S. noted the recent news article said that if the Town of Cambridge didn’t fund CRS as requested, they may have to dissolve. The privatization of rescue squads is happening all over the state and it remains to be seen if CRS is supportable within Cambridge’s budget.

Bruce said Cambridge is working on emulating Fairfax’s well-organized training process but they still have a lack of volunteers. Bruce asked Mike how best to generate volunteers from Fletcher. Jon suggested putting a request out in a newsletter or a page in the Town Report.

Budget

The Board had a brief discussion on the upcoming budget. This will be discussed at the next few meetings until complete.


*** Bruce shared that he will not be able to attend the 01/22 meeting in person. The Board will set up Zoom for that meeting.

3) Adjourn


The meeting was adjourned at 8:45pm.



Jon Bondy, Chair

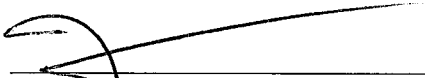


Rich Bidwell



Bruce Douglas

Matt Gillilan



Matt Swartz

Attachment #1 from Select Board Meeting 01/02/2024

The Town of Fletcher Selectboards want this All-Terrain Vehicle Policy study group process to work in a constructive and collaborative manner. It is clear that there are strong opinions on both sides of this issue. The committee shall follow the attached outline of a scope for the study group, which will provide a clear process to inform the Selectboard and voters of Fletcher, with the following additions as noted below:

The committee shall carry out duties on the following schedule:

- Meet monthly on each topic ^{IN THE} outline, for a minimum of six monthly meetings plus a public informational meeting as follows:
 - Comply with the Vermont Open Meeting Law
 - Hold four monthly meetings before a public informational meeting
 - Between these four monthly meetings, collect information over the course of three weeks and share the collect^{ed} information with the study group at least one week prior to the next meeting
 - Organize and hold a public informational meeting In May or June of 2024, with presentations as described in attached outline
 - Hold two monthly meetings after the public informational meeting
- The committee shall have an agenda for each meeting and keep draft and final minutes of meetings for publication on the town website
- By September 1, 2024, provide a written report to the selectboard addressing the scope as described in the attached outline

The study group shall have a member of the selectboard as a facilitator, who is willing and able to manage time during meetings, maintain neutrality on the issue, make sure all voices are heard, be a resource regarding open meeting law, and be a conduit of information between the study group the Selectboard.

Attachment #2 From Select Board Meeting 01/02/2024

Outline of a Proposal for Town of Fletcher to Explore Off-Road All-Terrain Vehicles Policy

We, as residents of the Town of Fletcher, and stakeholders in the decision whether to open town roads to the use of off-road vehicles strongly recommend the Selectboard appoints a Study Group to research any and all potential positive and negative impacts stemming from the decision. In this document, we have outlined the Group's structure, scope of work, and deliverables by which the Selectboard will be able to make the most reasonable and well-informed decision. We propose the Study Group be created as follows:

1. Structure

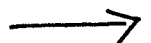
- a. The Study Group shall be made up of 6 or 8 residents with an even number of proponents from each of the two positions.
- b. There shall be two co-chairs, one representing each position
- c. There shall be one selectboard member who will act as a purely neutral facilitator and liaison for the board.
- d. The Study Group shall be disbanded after reporting its findings in no less than 6 months-time.

2. Scope

- a. The Study Group shall evaluate all impacts of either maintaining the status quo or allowing off-road vehicles on town roads. Main areas of study should include;
 - i. Safety regarding all parties (operators, pedestrians, on-road vehicles, etc.)
 - ii. Enforcement
 - iii. Cost of all related operations (registration programs, enforcement, maintenance, etc.)
 - iv. Other consequences as discovered by the Group (eg. potential business income, non-compliance impacts, noise, erosion, property values, etc.)
- b. The Study Group shall seek input from the following organizations, entities, and stakeholders;
 - i. Vermont Law Enforcement, including;
 1. State Police, Game Wardens, Franklin County Sheriff, Town Constable, and Franklin County State's Attorney
 - ii. Vermont Department of Transportation
 - iii. Relevant transportation and insurance providers
 - iv. Other Vermont municipalities that have opened town roads to off-road vehicles. This shall include the following;
 1. Relevant municipal governing officials
 2. Residents of the municipalities representing both sides of the issue where possible. And;
 - v. Other Vermont municipalities that have repealed or rejected opening town roads to off-road vehicles, including;
 1. Relevant municipal governing officials,
 2. Residents of the municipalities representing both sides of the issue where possible.
- c. The Study Group shall present its findings at a Town-wide Informational Meeting, summarizing the results of the inquiries above.

3. Deliverable

- a. The Study Group shall deliver a report summarizing all positive and negative impacts of allowing off-road vehicles on town roads under the status quo and multiple levels of permission.



After delivering the report to the Selectboard, we recommend it be reviewed closely with the Town's legal counsel to discern which outcomes may be allowed under state statute and what the Town cannot directly legislate.

We hope this recommendation is adopted by the Selectboard. We see the option of a Study Group as a way to provide the best, most unbiased information possible to the Board while promoting the ideals of the democratic process through resident involvement and placing the least burden possible on the board, itself. The purpose of this proposal is simply to achieve the best outcome possible for all residents. By structuring the Study Group in this way, we intend to keep the fact-finding process as unbiased as possible, relieving some of the tension built up by this historically emotional policy.