

**Town of Fletcher – Select Board
Fletcher Town Clerk's Office
February 5, 2024
Regular Meeting Minutes**

Present:

Members: Rich Bidwell, Jon Bondy, Bruce Douglas, Matt Gillilan, Matt Swartz (via Zoom)

Guests: Jennifer Getty, Mike O'Brien, Aimee Tinker (Ass't Town Clerk/Treasurer; Select Board Admin.), Mike Wells

1) Call to Order

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

2) Public Comment:

Mike O'Brien – Franklin County Industrial Development Corporation (FCIDC)

Mike is a Fletcher resident and member of the FCIDC board. The group is requesting a donation (\$100) from the Town. He brought in the group's annual report for 2023 (*attached), which details all that the organization has accomplished in Franklin County this past year. (As it was too late to add this to the Town Report, copies will be available on Town Meeting Day at the school.)

Jon asked if there was a vision for how Fletcher might partner with FCIDC for future projects. Mike said they have helped with broadband initiatives in neighboring towns but that may not be workable at this point for Fletcher. He said perhaps they could assist the Fletcher Historical Society in soliciting building preservation grants as well as soliciting grants for Fletcher Elementary School projects.

Bruce said he's known Tim Smith (director of FCIDC) for years and appreciates the good work that they do to support Franklin County communities.

Correspondence

The Board received an email from Bill Hannon (*attached) about culvert issues on Schoolcraft Road and the subdivision on Stone Lane. Matt G said he wasn't aware of any the issues just until recently. He will get in touch with Bill and his engineer to see what could be addressed by the Town.

2) Regular Board Business

ATV Committee Update

Jen Getty shared that the committee had their first meeting. They established the outline for their work and agreed to how their meetings will run. The next meeting is next week.

Jon asked how many non-committee members were in attendance. Jen said there were six at this first meeting.

Mike Wells said some of the committee's questions were of a legal nature and wondered if they should be directed to the Town attorney. Jon and Bruce suggested the committee collect the Q's and submit them all at once to save time and money.

Aimee suggested running the questions by VLCT's legal staff first as there's no additional cost and if we reach out to the Town attorney first, VLCT would not be able to assist with any follow up questions as we'd already retained other counsel. Bruce offered to be the conduit to VLCT for the committee's legal questions. Aimee could help in this regard as well.

Bruce said he'd emailed Aimee earlier with some questions from the committee:

- *Can committee use Zoom and Town laptop for meetings?* Yes, Aimee can help set up.
- *Is there a set digital place on website for committee to access any ATV documents?* Yes, there's an ATV tab on the Town website where Jeremy Frederick and Aimee have been adding and minutes and documents pertaining to ATV's.

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- *How are questions sent to the ATV email address (and those sent via the website) collected?*
The committee will collate them into a spreadsheet for their next meeting.

Jon asked if the committee was aware of the anti-ATV website. Jen and Mike said they were aware of it but did not know its origin and had no way to contact the creators.

Personnel Policy

This discussion will be tabled until the next meeting as not everyone has had chance to review it and Karrie Sweet and Craig Bushey are not here to participate in the discussion.

Surpluses & Deficits

Jon went over the document (*attached) which Jon had previously emailed to the Board. He wondered if it would be useful to have it as a slide at Town Meeting or if it would be unnecessarily confusing. He said this doesn't need to be decided tonight, so Board members should look it over and be ready to discuss it at the next meeting.

Bruce said it's important to remember that the highway budget is treated separate from the rest of municipal budget. Karrie said that was correct, as any surplus from the highway budget needs to be applied back to the highway budget. She said we always vote at Town Meeting regarding any surplus be put towards reducing taxes. Karrie and Matt both agreed that the highway portion of budget is usually in deficit and the surplus from the rest of budget compensates for that.

Select Board Seats at Town Meeting

Matt S said he's not yet made a decision as to whether he is running again. Jon asked that he let the Board know if he decides soon, so that they might seek an interested candidate, and Matt said he would do so.

Matt G said he also was not sure if he would be running again, as it would depend on his commitments at the Fairfax Fire Department. He said Craig Bushey's assistance has been great. He (Matt) no longer needs to be in the garage as much as he had in the past as Craig is able to be there daily and has been keeping him informed.

Cash Flow /NEMRC Discussion

Jon said dealing with cash flow as a municipality is always a matter of timing. The in's and out's are constant throughout the fiscal year due to quarterly taxes, anticipated funds from FEMA and grants, ARPA expenses, etc. When NEMRC comes in to assist with our fund balance and other accounting topics (chart of accounts, payroll/accounts payable data, etc.) they can advise on this as well.

Broadband

There was a meeting last week with all parties (MCF, NBRC, NRPC, state officials, VCBB, Town, attorneys). Jon, Aimee and Kathy Lavoie (NRPC) will be meeting this week to discuss next steps.

Road Report

Matt G said there were no major breakdowns to report. The Road Crew hasn't needed to use much sand and salt due to the lack of snow.

Rich said he'd noticed how certain sections of Pond Road (and perhaps others) melt during sunny days, get wet but then freeze when the temperatures drop. He wondered if perhaps this is something the crew could address soon.

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Garage Generator

Quotes were presented at a previous meeting and though the Board had approved not to exceed \$10K, a decision was not made as not all Board members were present. Jon would like the Board to make a decision on which quote to go with. The Board discussed the options.

Matt G will ask Shawn Bishop to confirm that his quote was for a Generac brand unit and also inquire about the possibility of securing the generator atop a stand. He will also inquire if Town Office's generator could be placed on a stand and if the Town could purchase the generator directly so as to avoid sales tax. The Board agreed to not to exceed \$11K for the Town Garage generator and associated labor.

** Matt S sent a message to Shawn during the discussion. Shawn said he doesn't believe that particular model is meant to be installed on a stand due to its size, but he will look into it further. Shawn also said he will be able to use the Town's tax-exempt number for the purchase.

Slideshow for Town Meeting

The Board discussed this year's presentation. Bruce said he'd used PowerPoint to create the slideshow in past years. Karrie provided him a draft copy of the Town Report so he can begin creating this year's slides.

Broadband

Jon said he has asked MCF for a map of Fletcher, showing the miles that are lit and the number of customers, etc. Jon asked if Karrie could reach out to her contact at CC and get a map showing a map of the areas in Fletcher which they serve currently. These maps will be used to show areas in Town with NO providers at this time. Bruce suggested we reach out to NRPC to create a poster-sized map to show this data more clearly.

Jon asked how the Town might address those residences with NO broadband providers. He posed that we *could* use ARPA funds to acquire Starlink for these residences.

Rich suggested approaching both MCF and Consolidated Communications with that list of residences to see what they may be able to do for these folks.

Karrie said Jon's suggestion is not fair to people who've already gone with Starlink. Jon said that she had the ability to get MCF but chose not to. She said that was not the case as MCF still has not run past her house (and a few others) even though they said they would have by this point in time. Jon will reach out to MCF to see what happened.

Karrie asked if the Board will now shift the \$30K they offered to MCF for the completion of the Fletcher project and now use it for Starlink for not-served residences. Jon said no, that money was being contributed as agreed upon by the Board in order to ensure completion of Fletcher 1. Karrie asked if Fletcher 1 is now considered "complete" due to residents being able to sign up with Consolidated Communications. Jon said the \$30K is meant for MCF to finish Fletcher 1.

Rich again said that he would like to put the offer out to MCF and CC to see what they might be willing to do to provide service to these non-served residences.

Karrie asked what MCF stated at the last meeting regarding customers in Fletcher 1 and all of Town. Aimee read from those minutes:

"Brian Davison came to provide an update on the Broadband project. MCF had originally anticipated completing 20 miles in Fletcher 1 by the end of 2023. They are currently at 18 miles. Power outages from the recent storms, along with system troubleshooting, caused minor work delays. MCF expects to complete the remaining 2 miles by the end of Q1 2023 (March 31st). In that section, there are currently 16 subscribed customers, 3 of which are connected. They anticipate connecting those remaining 13 customers by the end of January."

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Bruce asked: of those connections, what was the percentage choosing to connect out of those who COULD connect? Brian said that Fletcher 1 has 66 customers out of a potential 208. He said the map on the MCF website still needs to be updated to reflect recent connections."

Karrie shared that she'd spoken with her contact at CC who said they are on track to have all of Fletcher covered by end of 2024, except for a few addresses in the southeastern portion of town. Karrie will reach out to him again for further clarification on exactly how many.

Rich wanted to address the fact that providing Starlink for non-served people would not only involve the actual device but potentially the cost for installation, as not everyone has ability to do it themselves.

Jon would like to have as much data as possible from MCF and CC so a decision can be made at the next meeting. Karrie asked Jon to clarify the Board's intent. She said it was possible that people would not be agreement with the Starlink option and could share their concerns at Town Meeting. Jon said the issue could certainly be discussed under "other business" at Town Meeting and he would like the Board to be able to present the data and that option.

Matt S feels that all we can say is that the Board is trying to do what we can to bring Broadband to all of the residents, though he does think purchasing Starlink for residents seems a bit much.

Jon feels it's important to give the residents a clear choice, and not simply say "we are researching it".

Rich said that making a snap decision in two meetings' time is not good for the Town. He feels the Board needs to do the research and provide the residents with a thoughtful response.

3) Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 8:22pm.

Jon Bondy, Chair

Matt Gillilan

Rich Bidwell

Matt Swartz

Bruce Douglas



**FRANKLIN COUNTY
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT
CORPORATION**

FCIDC Annual Report for 2023

The Franklin County Industrial Development Corporation (FCIDC) was established in 1971 when our region was experiencing double digit unemployment levels. We have come a long way since then to the point where Franklin County has one of the strongest economies in the State. With that said, it is important to note that if we cannot start to fill job vacancies in all sectors of our economy then we will begin to take steps backwards. Recently we learned that Kaytec located in Richford will be closing their doors in 2024. Kaytec produces vinyl siding and it is recognized as a quality product in the construction industry. The company has been struggling to find employees for a couple of years now and they were forced to operate at less than half of their capacity. In addition to the workforce issues dairy prices remain stagnant in the \$23.00 per hundredweight area and the price continues to be less than the cost of production for many farms.

The workforce shortage is probably the number one issue that all businesses are faced with. It doesn't matter if it is manufacturing, agriculture, Main St., retail or the service industry there are help wanted signs everywhere. On average 50% of graduating seniors choose not to go on to the trades or college. Now is the prime time for high school students and graduates to begin developing their work resumes. Businesses, unlike 10 years ago, are much more flexible with part-time employees and their work schedule needs. In addition to the job flexibility, the pay scale has never been higher. So, encourage your kids to find a job and start supporting our local economy. FCIDC has been collaborating with our five county high schools to educate our students as to what employment opportunities exist for them. We will be coordinating business tours in 2024.

FCIDC has been active in the redevelopment of the Perley Block located at 366 Main Street in Enosburg. The retail space on the first floor was vacant for more than five years. The building has eight apartments upstairs and there was an attached cold storage warehouse on the backside of the building. FCIDC invested \$1.9 million to purchase and renovate the existing building and convert the back warehouse into office space and hopefully soon to be four more apartments on the second floor. The building now has two retail businesses, Healthy Nutrition and B's Flowers, and 4000 square feet of office space that is mostly occupied by Franklin Northeast Supervisory Union also has two offices being rented by Northwestern Counseling and Support Services. This project took about 18 months to complete and has been a great addition to downtown Enosburg. If you have a chance please stop in to support the two retail businesses. This project would never have happened had it not been for the vision and leadership of Jim Cameron and Green Dolphin Construction.

In addition to the Perley Block renovation we have also been busy in FCIDC's St. Albans Town Industrial Park. We sold three acres to Purpose Energy in April and since then the company has broken ground on constructing an anaerobic digester. Their mission is to capture millions of tons of food waste flowing from our local value added food producers (i.e. Ben & Jerrys, Franklin Food etc) and convert it to renewable energy, clean water and healthy soil amendments. With the construction of the Purpose Energy facility our industrial infrastructure is that much stronger as waste will be diverted from our waste stream while energy is produced. FCIDC has had multiple conversations with other interested parties regarding the purchase of lots in the Park and we are optimistic for additional sales in 2024.

P.O. Box 1099

St. Albans, Vermont
05478-1099

(802) 524-2194
Fax: (802) 524-6793

E-mail: info@fcidc.com
tim@fcidc.com
Web Site: fcidc.com

Respectfully submitted by


Timothy J. Smith

Fletcher Town Clerk

From: Jon Bondy
Sent: Thursday, February 1, 2024 9:36 AM
To: Fletcher Town Clerk
Cc: Fletcher Selectboard
Subject: Fw: Stone Lane/Schoolcraft Rd. And Oustinoff Rd.

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Let's discuss this on Monday night.

From: William Hannon <hannon.vtls594@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 1, 2024 8:58 AM
To: Fletcher Selectboard <selectboard@fletchervt.net>
Cc: Peter Mazurak <aevermont@gmail.com>; Thomas Hannon <tomhannon65@yahoo.com>; Nancy Hannon <fletchermt7@gmail.com>
Subject: Stone Lane/Schoolcraft Rd. And Oustinoff Rd.

 Some people who received this message don't often get email from hannon.vtls594@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Jon Bondy, Et al.

Hi Jon, hope all is well.

At times over the past several years Peter Mazurak P.E. and I have tried to contact Matt Gillilan regarding issues on Schoolcraft Road for proposed building lots located on Stone Lane.

1. There appears to be a plugged culvert crossing Schoolcraft Road causing a water backup which may be creating maintenance issues for said road.
2. Green Mountain Power suggested an underground, Schoolcraft Road, crossing for power to one of the proposed lots.

I believe the town has some responsibility and jurisdiction regarding said issues.
Please advise.

I also have one other issue.

I did a Highway Survey of Oustinoff Road for a proposed subdivision by Daren Sizen about 5 years ago. I believe per select board requirement, the landowner was responsible for fees incurred. An invoice was submitted to Darren Sizen but I have not receive payment. See attached invoice.
What is the status of the proposed highway extension, maybe the Town of Fletcher is responsible for payment.
Please advise.

Thanks, Bill Hannon

Accounting for Surpluses and Deficits

Thankfully, we are fairly used to seeing surpluses in the Town Report. In an over simplified way, they look like this (A):

	Budget	Actual
Revenue		
Taxes Raised	\$100K	\$100K
Expenses		
Road Work	\$100K	\$95K
Balance	0	\$5K

If we had such a surplus in a previous year, we might want to reduce taxes by that surplus amount, to return the money to the taxpayers. That could look like this (B):

	Budget	Actual
Revenue		
Taxes Raised	\$95K	\$95K
Expenses		
Road Work	\$100K	\$100K
Balance	-\$5K	-\$5K

This certainly is alarming. It seems as if we are planning to have a deficit! How about this (C):

	Budget	Actual
Revenue		
Taxes Raised	\$95K	\$95K
Surplus	\$5K	\$5K
Expenses		
Road Work	\$100K	\$100K
Balance	0	0

Boy! That looks better! No deficit! But notice that we are claiming that we have \$5K in revenue from "Surplus" when in fact that money did not arrive in the year in question, but rather in a previous year. Our books will show \$5K in revenue that we never received, and our account balance will be wrong. How about this (D):

	Budget	Actual
Revenue		
Taxes Raised	\$95K	\$95K
Surplus	\$5K	
Expenses		
Road Work	\$100K	\$100K
Balance	0	-\$5K

That reflects reality better, but now we show a \$5K deficit for the actual for the year. This is in fact correct, because we are using money that was received in a prior year. Karrie and NEMRC lobbied for the D approach, which is correct; I insisted on the C approach, so as to not show a deficit.