

# **Town of Fairfield Selectboard Minutes**

February 12, 2024

In Attendance: Gavin Ryan, Brian Dubie, David Persons and Ron Bocash

Roads: Absent

Town Clerk: Absent

Town Administrator: Cathy Ainsworth

Secretary: Melissa Manson

Visitors: NWATV, Lynda Ulrich, Albert Menard, Dawn Menard, Don Wells, Chuck Verderber, Vanessa Kittel, Julia Callan, Sarah Toof

1. Cathy shared, on behalf of Linda, that the printed Town Reports will be delivered to the Town Office the upcoming week. One File Clerk candidate was chosen and completed paperwork but accepted a different job. Three others applied, and applications are still welcome.
2. Cathy reported that the State's replacement of the Rte 36 bridge by Fairfield Market is scheduled for this summer and VTrans extended a \$19,655 local bypass grant to help with maintenance, dust control, signs and enforcing weight permits on local roads during the 28 day closure of Rte. 36. The Selectboard was concerned that the amount would not cover the entire cost of this. Still concerns about increased traffic over Chester A Arthur bridge during detour. A traffic study of Chester A Arthur was conducted in 2023 after our road construction season, by NRPC in preparation. Cathy to attend the Rte 36 bridges preconstruction meeting.

**Ron Bocash moved to accept the VTrans local bypass grant. Brian seconded. All in favor. Grant acceptance document signed.**

3. Cathy asked if the Selectboard wanted to appoint someone new to the Transportation Advisory Committee held by NRPC monthly. Chuck said it would be good for someone representing Fairfield to be there. The Selectboard agreed. Cathy to post the opportunity. Cathy asked if the Selectboard wanted her to engage a contractor to do hydraulic studies in preparation for grant projects. Gavin said this was a good idea. The Selectboard said she should when Mo identifies priorities. Requisition for last fall's work on Pumpkin Village Road will be submitted soon and new grant of \$31,000 needs segments identified by road foreman. Cathy will work on this with him. Estimated expenses from the December floods are being requested by the state to determine if Franklin County qualifies for FEMA funds.
4. Cathy reports that taxes are paid, W-4s and I-9s sent. Glitch with social security upload process resolved. She wrote a new job description for the File Clerk position, including extended Accounts Payable tasks. She advertised the position. She will begin the Workers Comp audit. Administered establishment of new insurance policy with VLCT.
5. A Consolidated Communications claim was forwarded to the previous insurance carrier for the downed telephone poles from November for a yet undetermined amount. No road crew were injured and no Town equipment was damaged. Insurance is trying to identify what happened. Gavin suggested that the road crew measure if lines are too low near roads.

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6. Cathy paid the municipal stormwater permit and drafted a lease agreement for a potential new tenant.
7. The 2021 truck was paid off this month. Cathy provided the balance of the Equipment CD, with funds approved in the budget each year, \$221K is in the CD and the new Freightliner was quoted at \$193K. The Selectboard discussed that this is not enough to also equip the new F600. No action needed at this time.
8. Cathy suggested that, in the next meeting, the Selectboard determine their Town Meeting talking points. There may also be a presentation and suggestion regarding the Common School, resulting from community meetings, and Rep. James Gregoire in attendance to discuss Vermont issues, if the Selectboard or others have questions.

**Brian made a motion to approve the minutes from January 22. Ron Seconded. All in favor.**

9. The Selectboard named the Northwest Vermont Communications Union District appointment, Cathy Ainsworth, and alternate, Ron Bocash, to continue. Document signed for this.
10. The Selectboard discussed whether to increase the Planning and Zoning board number. They noted that the Selectboard has the authority to decrease the number, if they so choose, as well. They discussed the dynamics of quorum (by statute, if only a bare quorum of 4 on a 7-person board is holding a meeting or hearing, a consensus is necessary to make a decision on any matter. If a bare quorum of 3 of a 7-person board is holding a meeting or hearing, a consensus is necessary to make a decision). They identified that, if they increase the board to 7, the new seat appointments may be able to participate in new hearings if they are fully informed.

**Gavin made a motion that the Selectboard go from a 5 to a 7 person Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Adjustment. Ron Seconded. All in favor.**

The Selectboard requested that Cathy announce the increase and new seats, with the intention of appointing new people at their next meeting. The new positions' terms will be a 2 and a 3 year appointment, minus the two months of January and February 2024, (thereafter, reappointment timelines would take place in December of 2025, to begin January 2026, and in December of 2026, to begin January 2027, respectively).

11. Lynda Ulrich is concerned that a reappointment on the Zoning Board wasn't warned in 2022 to begin again in 2023 so it appeared to be a vacancy. The Selectboard discussed this. Gavin explained that if a current member was interested in continuing, at the end of their term, they have been rolled over into their next term. He said this took place in this case, as that board member remained active. The Selectboard agreed to strengthen reappointment transparency. Cathy to add reappointments to the calendar: the Town Administrator is to verify whether those with terms expiring want to consider another term and will tell the Selectboard this at their second November meeting. If not, the advertisement would go out prior to the first meeting in December and the appointment would be made at that meeting to start the beginning of January.

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12. Vanessa Kittell introduced herself to Ron and she spoke about her vision for the future of Fairfield, including bringing more people into municipal conversations, especially people of diverse backgrounds, including women, and building public trust. She said these thoughts more fully express her interest in local government than her previous meeting's interview.
13. Chuck Verderber requests an executive session to discuss his decision to resign from the board.

**Brian made a motion to approve the warrants. Ron seconded. All in favor.**

**Brian made a motion to enter executive session to discuss a personnel issue with Chuck Verderber. David seconds. All in favor. Discussion only. On exit, no decisions.**

**Brian made a motion to enter executive session to discuss a legal matter. David seconded. All in favor. Discussion only. On exit, no decisions.**

**Brian made a motion to adjourn. David seconded. All in favor.**