

**North Branch Fire District #1
78 Dorr Fitch Road
West Dover, VT. 05356**

**Phone: 802-464-7560 x 110
Fax: 802-464-3040
E-mail: nbfd1@myfairpoint.net**

**THESE MINUTES ARE NOT OFFICIAL UNTIL APPROVED BY THE
PRUDENTIAL COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the North Branch Fire District #1, Prudential Committee, September 14, 2017.

This Meeting, having been duly warned, was called to order at 12:00 p.m. by Chairperson, Cyndee Frere.

Members Present: Cyndee Frere, Thomas Ferrazza, Karl Braunbach, Edward Barber and Brendan Ryan.

Also Present: Norma Rodemer, John Densmore, Mazhar Raslan, Lauren Harkawik, Scott Dupuis, Randy Capitani, Rebecca Snow, Bart Howes and Linda Holland.

Public Comment: Frere asked the public if they had anything to say. Not hearing any response, Ferrazza asked if Mr. Raslan was present. Mr. Raslan introduced himself. Ferrazza stated that he had looked at the letter as well as the petition and asked Mr. Raslan where he got the information that was submitted in the letter. Mr. Raslan responded "from my attorney". Ferrazza pointed out that there was incorrect information in the letter and the petition. Ferrazza proceeded to go through the letter to point out the errors. The first error in the letter is the statement "North Branch Fire District #1, has recently narrowly voted 3 for with 2 against to unilaterally terminate contracts with owners of parcels of and who have reserved and paid for the right to connect to the sewer system." Ferrazza explained that that had nothing to do with the two to three vote, it was a unanimous vote that took place in April. Ryan stated that he felt it was worth expanding on the vote in April, just to make sure everyone understands. Ryan explained that the termination of the gallonage is based on the fact that there is gallonage sitting idle that can be up to thirty years old. The old contracts need to be brought up to the current gallonage rate. The choice is to either forfeit the gallonage remaining and the funds outstanding will be returned or go to contract at the current rate. Ryan explained that anyone that went to contract with the Fire District could renew their contract one time only, at the same rate for an additional eighteen months. After that, the developer can renew on a yearly basis or request reimbursement for the portion of the project left unconstructed. Ferrazza said the second matter in the letter is the statement "the purpose of this decision by Nbfd1 is that they want to upgrade the existing sewer system and they do not have enough money to do so". Ferrazza explained that the funds collected from Hookup fees are not used to upgrade the treatment system. It goes into an account and

sets in that account until a project is complete. These funds are a liability to the treatment facility and cannot be used until a project is complete. Once, a project, or portion thereof, is complete the funds go into a Capital Account and can be used. Ferrazza stated the last thing in the petition is the wording “the Prudential Committee has voted to terminate the price guarantee and impose a substantially higher price, and has voted to return the price originally paid to the original owner, regardless of whether they are the current owner”. “That is not true”, stated Ferrazza. “Any funds that are returned are sent to the current owner”. Mr. Raslan explained to the Committee that he first came to the valley in 1990 as a skier and stayed in the hotels. He later became a renter, then an owner and since 2000 a developer. “The reason I am doing this right now is because I love this area and I want to see it prosper, I don’t want to hurt it,” stated Raslan. Raslan continues “in my opinion the effect of cancelling the old contracts is haphazard, some of the buildings in the existing contract have been honored, and this is now happening so suddenly and the price, for somebody that has already paid, such as me. I am not one of those thirty year contracts sitting around doing nothing; I only have seven or eight lots that are vacant; building a house today cost more than purchasing an existing home.” Raslan stated “it is not feasible to build at the current building costs I am not prepared to pay an increase (for gallonage). I would like to work with the Committee to come to a reasonable conclusion.”

Norma Rodemer stated that she had been recently informed by her real estate broker that she would owe North Branch \$1,800.00 for extra sleeping spaces. Mrs. Rodemer has four bedrooms in her house and two bedrooms in the apartment. A total of six bedrooms totaling twelve sleeping spaces. Mrs. Rodemer was informed by Holland that she **does not** owe the \$1,800.00 to North Branch Fire District. Holland also informed Mrs. Rodemer that the only thing she would owe if her home closed today would be an amount for a cellular meter.

Ryan stated that the plant does not have the funds needed to operate the plant. There are two ways the plant raises fees, the usage fee and the hookup fee. Ryan did some modeling on trying to be more “usage” friendly by creating a reliable revenue stream. Ryan handed out a chart indicating usage fees for a three bedroom using an average of 100 gpd for forty different communities. Ryan encourages those present to look at the figures carefully, he guarantees there may be errors do to the complexity of the research. Ryan also notes that each Fire District/Town is very different in their operations. Ryan’s hope is that this chart will spur some creative conversation regarding the North Branch fees. What Ryan is trying to point out is the total costs. A customer pays a hookup fee and a semiannual usage fee for twenty years, will feasibly pay approximately \$48,949.00 over a twenty year period on the average three bedroom house. This chart will help give us perspective as to where we are. Ferrazza stated that a septic system for a three bedroom house ranges from \$20,000.00 to \$30,000.00. The current hookup fee for the same three bedroom house is \$14,400.00 plus the metered usage. Scott Dupuis was asked how much he has paid to have a septic system designed/installed and he answered that he had paid a low of \$17,000.00 and as much as \$40,000.00.

Scott Dupuis stated that he had done some research and checked eight Towns to see what the hookup fees were for each of those Towns. The results were that the North Branch Fire District has the highest hookup fees of the eight Towns checked. Dupuis asked the Committee if they had any consultants to assist with the costs of operating the plant and mentioned Otter Creek Engineering. Dupuis also stated that he represents Boulder Ridge, Peaks and Raslan. "If they (the developer) cannot build due to the hookup fee it effects the contractors and subcontractors, it has a domino effect."

The Committee had set aside a deliberative session but have decided that they will not hold one at this time.

Letters: For James K. Gooch a Land Use Permit amendment. The permit, 2W0052-48 specifically authorizes the Permittee to connect a single-family residence with 1.5 bedrooms to the North Branch Fire District's sewer line. The project is located at 348 Dover Hill Road (DM004). Holland will prepare Mr. Gooch another contract, at the rate of \$30.00, because his current contract expires September 15, 2017. (Additional fees due at the \$30.00 rate \$2,520.00).

Dated September 11, 2017 a letter from Holland to Robert Antonucci, Clock Tower Development, LLC. Reminding them that their contract for the Clock Tower Development/Outlook, will expire on October 13, 2017.

Dated September 8, 2017 a letter from Holland to John Ridgway reminding him that he must install a water meter in the house located at 6 Margit Ridgway Road prior to the house being occupied. In addition Ridgway will need to renew his contract with the Fire District to complete the proposed houses on SR003R, SR004R and SR005R.

Dated August 21, 2017 a letter from Jerry Lerner regarding his broken meter and the associated bills from North Branch Fire District and the Plumber. Committee directed this matter to the Board of Abatement.

Dated September 14, 2017 and amendment to the contract dated July 13, 2017, to add 60 gpd to 43 Woodsman Road. (TV030) Attached to the contract is a check in the amount of \$1,800.00. Contract expiration date is January 13, 2019.

Dated October 20, 2017 a contract for John and Joseph Angeleri to construct three buildings with three units each. Each unit will be a four bedroom unit for a grand total of 36 bedrooms for Phase I. This contract for 4,320 gallons will expire on October 20, 2018. Attached is a check in the amount of \$300.00.

Dated August 24, 2017 an E-mail from Ed Floyd letting Holland and Howes know that Benjamin Green, the dam engineer is interested in scheduling an inspection of the North Branch Fire District #1 dam. The dam was last inspected in 2012 and since the Fire District is considering rehabilitation, Mr. Green thinks it makes sense to inspect it so any items can be addressed.

Dated August 23, 2017 from Holland to Mr. & Mrs. Russell Murphy a friendly note to remind them to have a meter installed in their new home located at 268 route 100. (RT098).

Dated August 15, 2017 a memo from Marc Bradley, in response to a letter from Holland, stating he has left a message for Lane Plumbing to call him back to schedule the installation of a new meter as soon as possible. Mr. Bradley has also agreed to make payments in the amount of \$250.00 per month. (Meter was installed on August 29, 2017).

Dated August 22, 2017 an E-mail from Phyllis Fischetto stating she will pay in installments so her bill will be paid off soon. She thanks Holland for going over her account with her.

Dated August 21, 2017 a letter from Holland to Shaw Funding stating that they have not installed a water meter in the property located at 23 Spring Hill Road. (XS012) On August 30th Holland received a response stating Megan from Lane Plumbing has scheduled an install date with in three weeks.

Dated August 23, 2017 a letter from Holland to Michael Burke giving notice that he must install a water meter in his home by September 23, 2017. Also attached is a statement in the amount of \$2,033.50, estimated based on other part time residents, for the past six billing periods. To date, there has been no response.

Dated September 12, 2017 an E-mail from Becky Pappas Clark stating they have 480 gallons for a four bedroom house on each lot DO024 and DO024A that was purchased at a rate of \$7.00 per gallon. At this time they have no plans to build on either lot and are asking for a refund on the gallonage for both lots. Mr. and Mrs. Clark have signed and attached the Revocation of Gallonage.

Dated September 13 a letter to John Dupras of Trinity Engineering with the flows allocated to the various buildings at Sawmill Farm. (RT037, RT037a and RT037b).

Ferrazza moved to reimburse Timothy and Rebecca Pappas Clark \$6,720.00. Seconded by Ryan. Passed unanimously.

Ferrazza moved to accept the one year extension of the Angeleri contract. Seconded by Barber. Passed unanimously.

Ferrazza moved to accept the amended contract for Yuriy Strus. Seconded by Braunbach. Passed unanimously.

Minutes: Ferrazza moved to approve the Minutes of August 10, 2017 and August 24, 2017. Seconded by Barber. Howes stated although the Minutes are correct he would like to clarify that the plant has approximately 106,000 gpd less what is currently on the

commitments list bringing the total down to approximately 20,000 gallons. Passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report: Ferrazza moved to pay the monthly bills totaling \$117,817.65. Seconded by Braunbach. Passed unanimously.

The Committee briefly went over the Fund Balances and the Profit and Loss Statements.

The last Operational check written is check #28147

The last Capital check written is check #1172

The last Petty Cash check written is check #868

Snow reported that the current prudent reserve is \$317,042.09.

Chief Operator's Report: Howes reported that Vermont Sewer and Drain performed the scheduled rebuild of the Ellis Brook pump station. The work included cleaning the wet well, installing new pump mounts, guide rails, lifting chains and all piping from inside the dry well to inside the wet well.

Howes also prepared the estimated bond bills based upon usage for review again. These estimates were created using the 2016 usage rates.

Ryan stated that we need accurate data pertaining to flows, and asked Howes how old are the flow meters? Howes said the meters were new in 2008 when the new head works were installed. Ryan asked Howes if this was on his radar for the 4.7 million dollar upgrade. Howes replied no. Frere asked Howes if this refurbishing of the plant will lower operational costs. Again, Howes stated no, due to the costs of shipping sludge, chemicals, electricity etc. Ryan suggest Howes contact Roger at Vermont Pumps he does all types of water systems as well as snow making and may be able to assist with the flow meters.

Review Warning & Ballot for Town Exemptions & Proposed Reserve Fund:

Ferrazza moved to approve the Warning for the Town of Dover exemptions and the proposed Reserve Fund for the November 9, 2017 vote. Seconded by Barber. Passed unanimously.

Ferrazza moved to go into deliberative session at 1:27 p.m. Seconded by Barber. Passed unanimously. Ferrazza moved to come out of deliberative session at 2:05 p.m. Seconded by Barber. Passed unanimously. No decisions were made.

Ryan questioned how the bond will be billed. Would it be added to the existing bond? How do we make it affordable to everyone, questioned Ryan. Howes stated that we are held to a higher level of treatment because we are an indirect discharge treatment facility. Ferrazza stated that he did not see any way to drop costs. Sludge disposal is a large cost as well as the chemicals and electricity.

Randy Capitani/Website/Facebook: Capitani has been in touch with Municipay and feels that it will not be difficult to interface with them. Holland stated that she has a “Go meeting invitation” on September 21, between 8:30 a.m. and 9:30 a.m. Capitani stated he would like to attend the meeting. Capitani will reach out to the Town to interface with them. Capitani found a North Branch Facebook page, with nothing on it. Capitani would like to list the staff and members of the Committee, perhaps with photos. Capitani will come back to the next meeting to update the Committee.

Executive Session: Ferrazza moved to go into executive session at 2:20 p.m. to discuss personnel. Seconded by Ryan. Passed unanimously. Ferrazza moved to come out of executive session at 2:46 p.m. Seconded by Ryan. Passed unanimously. **DECISION:** to hire John E. White as soon as possible at the rate of \$14.00 per hour. Howes stated that White wanted to give his current employer two weeks’ notice.

Old Business: None

Other Business: None.

FYI

September 26, 2017 at 12:00 Noon. Special Meeting of the Prudential Committee.

October 12, 2017 at 12:00 Noon. Regular Meeting of the Prudential Committee.

November 2, 2017 at 7:00 p.m. Hearing Regarding the Proposed Bond/Dover Town Hall.

November 9, 2017 Bond Vote from 10:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. North Branch Fire District.

Frere adjourned the meeting at 2:48 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Linda L. Holland,
Administrative Manager

cc: C. Frere, E. Barber, K. Braunbach, T. Ferrazza, B. Ryan, Bart Howes, Ed Floyd, H. Terhune, Joe Mahon, Amiee Pritcher, Arlene Palmiter, Donald Albano, Linda Anelli, Adam Levine, Jeannie Flanagan, Leslie Fraser, Ashleigh Perkins, Laurie Newton, Robert Rubin, Ray Reed, John Densmore, Cliff Turpin, Rolf Parker-Houghton, G. Golet, S. Mac Dougall, L. Harkawik, R. William, Deerfield Valley News and the Brattleboro Reformer.

Posted: North Branch Fire District #1, Wastewater Treatment Facility & Administrations Building. Dover Town Office.

