

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

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

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the North Branch Fire District #1, Prudential
Committee, May 3, 2021

This Meeting, having been duly Warned, was called to order at 10:00 a. m. by Moderator,
Sarah Shippee.

Members Present: Thomas Ferrazza, Daniel Facilla and John Snow.

Also Present: Representing Nbfd#1 was Bart Howes, Rebecca Snow, Linda Holland
and Helen Krzeminski and members of the public.

Ferrazza made a motion to allow Howes, Holland and Krzeminski to speak on behalf of
Nbfd. Motion was seconded by Facilla. Passed unanimously.

Article 1. To elect three members to the Prudential Committee and two Officers as
follows:

1. One Prudential Committee Member for a one-year term.
2. One Prudential Committee Member for a two-year term.
3. One Prudential Committee Member for a three-year term.
4. One Moderator for a one-year term.
5. One Clerk for a one-year term.

Shippee reminded the audience and members that voting for Article 1 will be by
Australian Ballot between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday May 4,
2021.

Note: [The results of voting for Article 1 are posted at the end of the minutes of this
meeting.](#)

Article 2. Patrick Lagrange moved to see if the Fire District will accept the Annual
Report. Seconded by Ferrazza. Motion moved to the floor. Julia Lagrange commented
that the Report was missing page 8. P. Lagrange amended approval subject to inclusion
of page 8. Jon Prial seconded. Passed unanimously.

Article 3. Steve Montello moved to see if the Fire District will vote to collect taxes by the Treasurer pursuant to Title 32, V.S.A., Section 4791. Seconded by Ferrazza. Passed unanimously.

Article 4. Cathy Kaufman moved to see if the Fire District will vote to collect \$400,000 from the “users” for Capital Funding. Seconded by Martin Conroy. Passed Unanimously.
Discussion:

Jon Prail asked about discrepancies between the \$500,000 Raise and Appropriate under capital budget and \$400,000 Capital Funding under Operations Expenditures. Bart Howes explains that Nbfd is taking \$100,000 of hookup fees from sleeping spaces account to reduce the amount to Raise and Appropriate while still showing the amount of funding required under the Capital Budget. Passed Unanimously. Motions carries.

Article 5. Jodi Keeler moved to see if the Fire District will vote expend \$1,387,566.00 for Operations. Seconded by Rebecca Snow. Passed Unanimously.

Discussion:

- Julia Lagrange asked for clarification of raises. Facilla and Ferrazza explained new employees were hired and a 3 % increase for existing employees.
- Patrick Lagrange asked about future inflow expectations. Howes answered that page 20 of Annual Report is what was billed and actual usage, not the flow to the facility. Total usage from the customers is lower than the flows that comes to plant due to infiltration in the collection system. Nbfd bills 60% of total annual usage in Spring and 40% of usage in Fall.
- Montello noted in the engineers report our sludge disposal will decrease. Howes explained the centrifuge is more efficient and disposal cost will decrease, but the line item is kept the same in case of an equipment malfunction and liquid sludge needs to be hauled away. If less money is spent, the savings will lower the amount needed to raise and appropriate next year.
- Montello asked to explain Renewable Energy at \$96,000. R. Snow explained it is a solar project Nbfd is part of and gives Nbfd a 10% savings on energy costs.
- Montello requested that Nbfd research any additional PPP funding available.
- Scott Stein asked what the wage increases looked like over the last three years. Howes explained they have been at 3% for the last 5 years.

Passed Unanimously. Motion carried.

Article 6. Bob stone moved to see if the Fire District will vote to Raise and Appropriate \$1,107,693.00 for Operations. Seconded by R. Snow. Moved to the floor.

Discussion: Stone asked how much was collected from sleeping spaces. Howes answered \$122,000.00 but \$100,000 was used to lower this year’s Raise and Appropriate.

Passed Unanimously. Motion carried.

Article 7. R. Snow motioned to see if the Fire District will vote to expend \$288,524.00 for Capital improvements. Seconded by Patrick Lagrange. Moved to the floor.

Discussion:

- Facilla explained Nbfd needs to raise that figure by \$63,000 to replace meters for a total of \$351,524. Further explaining it was an unbudgeted and unexpected expense this year due to 3G technology.

Montello moved to amend the motion. Seconded by J. Snow.

Discussion:

- Jon Prail asked if there were an expense in reading meters. Howes reported no overhead for this.
- Cathy Kaufmann asked if owners would have to pay to have meters replaced. Howes answered that Nbfd will absorb cost as voters have asked not to be charged for meters.
- Bob Stone asked if there was a penalty given if owners have not changed out their meters. He asked if Nbfd could just shut off sewer service if they do not.
- Facilla stated that Nbfd does not have the right to cut off sewer service.
- Sarah Shippee clarified that the State supersedes any Nbfd's by-laws.
- Montello asked how many meters still need to be changed. Howes answered approximately 75.
- Ferrazza stated that there has been no penalty yet but said we will follow up with them.
- Montello states updating meters needs to be priority and recommended to have a concrete plan for meters not in conformity at the next board meeting.

Shippee confirms that the vote will pass, with recommendations, for \$351,521 for Capital improvements. All in favor. Motion carries.

Article 8. Patrick Lagrange moved to see if the Fire District will vote to pay the Prudential Committee members \$65.00 per meeting and all other Officers, the Vermont minimum wage for the coming year. Seconded by J. Snow

- Prail asked how many hours the meetings are. Ferrazza stated from 2-5 hours.

Passed unanimously.

Article 9. Martin Conroy moved to see if the Fire District will authorize the Prudential Committee to borrow in anticipation of taxes. Seconded by Cathy Kaufmann.

Discussion:

- Montello asked if we could not borrow from ourselves. Facilla stated that Nbfd had to borrow from banks during construction with short term loans since State funding was slower than anticipated.
- Howes explained the treatment plant's needs. P. Lagrange asked for a borrowing limit. Facilla stated this would be a cushion, just in case, but Nbfd would borrow from ourselves first.
- Linda Holland reported that has only borrowed from the bank one time.

Cathy Kaufmann calls the question. Seconded by Prail. None opposed. Motion carries.

Article 10. Ferrazza moved to see if the Fire District will vote to exempt the Dover Town Offices, West Dover Fire Department, Doer Police Department, Dover Elementary School, Dover Historical Society, West Dover Church and Twice Blessed, Inc. a 501c(3) from taxes for the coming year. Seconded by Cathy Kaufmann.

Discussion:

- Prail states it is inequitable or his taxes to cover 501c(3)s
- P. LaGrange asked what the cost for the District was. Ferrazza answered \$451.00. Montello stated that was only a 6-month bill for 2019.
- Julie LaGrange asked that we only allow town to be exempt. Ferrazza agrees.
- Cathy Kauffman notes that sewer plant is exempt from Town taxes.

P. Lagrange moves to amend article to exclude non-town entities such as W. Dover Church, Dover Historical Society and Twice Blessed. Seconded by Bob Stone.

- J. Snow asked why we would make the church pay. P. Lagrange stated the District should not be carving out our community organizations.
- Shippee explained it is a savings for the already burdened school and could keep them out of the penalty box.

Shippee asked for a vote to approve.

Ferrazza made a motion to allow Rich Werner to speak. Seconded by Facilla. Passed unanimously.

- Werner explained school board proposes a budget to tax school district, which is larger than Fire District. He reminded voters that Nbfd saved money by working with the school on the solar project. Jodi Keeler noted that it was a reciprocal relationship.

Ferrazza makes a motion to allow Pere Edwards to comment. Seconded by J. Snow. Passed unanimously.

Article 10 now reads: To see if the Fire District will vote to exempt the Town offices, Fire Department, Police Department and elementary school from taxes for the coming year.

Discussion:

- Peter Edwards suggests accounting of cost ratio of entities involves in the reciprocal arrangements.
- Facilla states the motion is illegal. Twice Blessed has reciprocal reasons, it was put back on the Articles. J. Lagrange asked what is legal. Facilla explained you do have a right from the floor.
- Facilla stated that the Historical Society was taken off in 2016 and vote back on in 2017.
- Facilla stated (about the motion) that Nbfd should not be giving anything free to anyone but could be made legal by voting.
- P. Lagrange asked if a motion from the floor would override anything illegal. He asked if a floor vote contradicts state law.
- Shippee asked where it is illegal. Facilla states VSA section 485.
- Bob Stone asked if Article 10 is legal or illegal. Facilla states Nbfd wants to be a good community member, but we are not allowed to give anything away for free.
- Shippee suggests that we vote on it today and research for next year. Give time for these entities to be warned about being eliminated and budget.
- Burt Murrow said it did not make sense to throw out Twice Blessed, Dover Historical Society and West Dover Church

- R. Snow suggested we wait a year until all research is done.
- Montello stated that a sewer business is not in the business to gift money.

Shippee suggested making a motion to table Article 10 to research legal and cost benefits.

Keeler made a motion to table Article 10 until October 14th. Seconded by P. Lagrange.

- Burt Murrow clarified that this was tabled as amended.
- Cathy Kauffman asked if this was legal or not. She wanted clarification that the meeting will be warned as a continuation of this meeting. Same Warning, Article 10 as amended to include Twice Blessed, the Church and the Historical Society.
- Jon Prail asked if Nbfd needed to send notice to every nonprofit. Ferrazza says no, need to determine legality first.

Continue vote on Article 10 to October 14, 2021, subject to research of legal and cost benefits. All in favor. Motion carries.

Article 11. Other Business:

- Montello asked who comprises the review committee. Ferrazza stated there was to be three additional members to be added. He stated we would go to the Select Board. Currently no review board because you do not have a review board until you need it. Montello stated that in the bylaws it says there is one. Ferrazza stated Nbfd was going by the current ordinances. He stated that the Prudential Committee makes their decisions based on those ordinances. He noted the bylaws need to be updated to reflect new ordinances.
- Rich Werner suggested a financial committee. He questioned charging by bed counts. He suggested getting rid of inspections He said he would be willing to work a committee. Ferrazza suggested Werner or anyone else put together a committee and send a representative to the Nbfd's Prudential Committee meetings to voice concerns or suggestions.
- Werner suggested a system of mass email for communication. He stated Nbfd's webpage lacks information.
- Burt Murrow wanted clarification on the name Fire District. Howes explained it was a term given by the State for municipal entities that are separate from the Town and is based upon the watershed of the Deerfield River. Rich Werner further explained it was started with the fire departments to create a separate municipality to allow for fundraising as they were not funded by the Towns. J. Snow also added explanation on how the Fire District was originally formed.

Montello moved to continue Article 10 as amended, on October 14, 2021 and recess at 11:40. Seconded by J. Lagrange.

Passed unanimously.

[Voting Results from May 4, 2021: 869 Registered Voters; 124 ballots cast.](#)

Prudential Committee for a one-year term; Jon Prail with 76 votes.
 Prudential Committee for a two-year term; Steve Montello with 68 votes.
 Prudential Committee for a three-year term; Bob Stone with 69 votes.
 Clerk, for a one-year term; Catherine Kaufmann with 109 votes.
 Moderator, for a one-year term; (Tie) Sarah Shippee and Kevin Ryan with 4 votes each.

Respectfully Submitted:

Linda Holland,
Administrative Manager
Assistant Clerk

cc: T. Ferrazza, D. Facilla, J. Keeler, J. Snow, K. Braunbach, E. Floyd, B. Howes, H. Terhune, R. Stone, A. Pritcher, A. Palmiter, A. Perkins, A. Havreluk, C. Helmstetter, C. Turpin, G. Henry, G. Golet, Grayghostinn, J. Gooch, J. Eckert, J. Flanagan-Marchese, J. Mahon, J. Densmore, J. Brunen, J. Redd, L. Harkawik, L. Fraser, M. Hamilton, M. Formel, M. Hathaway, M. Garber, P. Fisher, P. Fitzpatrick, R. Reed, R. Caplan, R. Rubin, W. Ruane, S. MacDougall, S. Dupuis, S. Joyce-Albano, T. House, Weathervane Lodge, Y. Strus, Deerfield Valley News and Brattleboro Reformer.

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