

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

Website: <https://www.northbranchfiredistrict.com>

Phone: 802-464-7560 x 110

Fax: 802-464-3040

E mail: administration@nbfddwwt.com

**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, October 13, 2021.

This Meeting, having been duly Warned, was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Chairman, Steve Montello.

Members Present: Steve Montello, Bob Stone, Jon Prial and Ken Westby. Peter Edwards was absent.

Also Present: Bart Howes, Rebecca Snow, Helen Krzeminski. Public members: Tom Ferrazza, Barbara Hyde, and Geri Golet.

Public Comments: Geri Golet stated that she did not understand why nonprofits could not be exempted from the taxes on the water that they use. She stated that there will be questions and statements from the public and her church, at the meeting tomorrow, where there will be a vote on the matter. She also stated that she appreciated all the work that has been done to collect back taxes, etc.

Barbara Hyde, Geri Golet and Tom Ferrazza asked for a written documentation from the attorney about the decision not to exempt entities. Montello noted that it was shared, with the Town of Dover, when it was requested. That information will be forwarded to them after the meeting via email.

Minutes: Stone moved to approve the minutes of September 8, 2021. Seconded by Prial. Passed unanimously.

Letters: Diesel Fuel Exemption Certificate Application and a letter from the West Dover Congregational Church, regarding their exemption status.

Treasurer's Report: Stone moved to approve to pay bills in the amount of \$249,169.84. Seconded by Prial. Passed unanimously.

Chief Operator's Report: Howes reported the following:
Operations

- Daniels has completed the pump base and guide rail replacement at the Mt Snow pump station.
- Champlin Associates has completed replacing pump 2 and its check valve at the Rt 100 pump station.
- One of the VFD's at the Rt 100 pump station has faulted. A new one has been purchased through Champlin Associates, includes installation for \$4,708.34.
- The new coded locks have been installed, on both the operations and administration's front door, by Rice Lock.
- Joyce Land Surveying has performed the survey of the new monitoring wells in the subsurface field.

Westby asked if we had any update on receiving the cell heads for the meters. Howes stated they are still on back order.

Finance Committee: Westby stated that they have submitted the September 30, finance results, the reserve study has been completed, accounts receivables have gone down significantly and completed the 6-month budget ending June 2022 as Nbfd attempts to move to a fiscal year. Montello asked if the management representation letters have been signed and sent to the auditors. Westby stated they will be doing that to get the 2020 and 2021 6-month audit completed and sent to Nbfd.

- Montello stated that it has been one of the goals of the Prudential Committee to consolidate accounts. Montello commended the finance committee for their work.
- Montello also stated that the current reserve study validates the reserve studies done in the past.
- Westby moved to approve the 6- month budget ending in June 2022. Seconded by Stone. Passed unanimously.

Employee Handbook: Montello said the handbook was three months in the making. He thanked everyone for efforts to complete it. Stone moved to approve the new Nbfd Employee Handbook. Seconded by Prial. Passed unanimously.

Technology Update: Prial stated that Duncan Cable will be installing fiber. Arcomm Communications will be present and still needs to be coordinated. He stated that once that work has been done, Nbfd can move forward with other projects including backup services and email services. The new website will be launched in the next week or so. Prial explained the new online payment system that will linked to the website is Invoice Cloud. Stone asked how we were coming with obtaining email information from customers. Snow responded that there will be an additional line on the bills asking customers to update contact information. Snow said she will reach out to Harris Communications to add a report, on our Muni Smart, system that will tell the number of accounts that have emails.

Sleeping Spaces: Stone reported that the Sleeping Space Committee met in person once and then on Zoom. A poll was taken, and the consensus is that they recommend eliminating sleeping space charges. He stated it is a system that is programmed for

failure, that there was cheating going on and it just doesn't work. Montello thanked the Committee for their work. He explained that the Prudential Committee will take their recommendation into consideration while reviewing the Ordinance, budgets, and finances in the next couple of months.

The Board allowed Ferrazza to comment. He stated that the Prudential Committee is about to give back \$200,000 dollars to the users over the next five or six years. He commented that it was sleeping space money that will allow them to lower the rates. Ferrazza asked how they are going to compensate for the loss of the sleeping space funds in year five or six of the Operations plan. He stated that he was concerned there will be no way to replace that loss of revenue. Golet added to the question as to what will replace the income of the sleeping spaces, should it be eliminated. Montello stated it would come from gallonage or usage. Ferrazza commented that he appreciated how the Prudential Committee was following the rules, noting the removal of the amendment to the Ordinance.

Meter reads: Snow gave an update on where we were at for hand entering meters that are not communicating with our Muni program. She also asked what the Committee expected to do for charging meters that have not worked in years, since they do not want any estimated reads. Montello stated that at the last meeting it was determined not estimate any reads, install new meters then back charge for gallonage used. He stated that estimated reads, going on for years, was unacceptable. Howes noted that there is a policy in place for estimated reads, but that it was intended for short term, included follow up and fines imposed if not corrected or ignored by the user. Westby suggested to estimate at 125 % of historical, not just average of historical. Stone moved to adopt a policy for non-working meters, to be estimated by 125% of a two-year historical data, based on similar billing periods, in addition to issuing a 30-day notice to replace the meter or fines will commence based on Nbfd's Ordinance. Seconded by Westby. Passed unanimously. Geri Golet asked how the users are notified about the Eye on Water program, which lets them monitor their usage remotely. It was explained a letter went out when the program was first initiated. It was suggested to add the information on the bills and put it on the website. Montello asked how many users are waiting for new cell heads. Snow responded about 50 need new cell heads.

Montello stated the need to have a specific meter read date, for bills, so that information to annualize gallonage is easily accessed. Going forward it was suggested to use the read dates 30 days before bills go out.

Other Business: Ferrazza stated that he understands Nbfd's stance on Article 10, that will go before a vote tomorrow, is that it is illegal. He asked how NB was going to handle the vote if the public wants these exemptions. Montello said the attorney would be there, and it may be possible to vote, from the floor, to remove the Article in question. Montello stated that having working meters at every property is NB's duty. Montello stated that if

Article 10 passes, by the voters, the Attorney General can step in a require Nbfd to charge these entities for usage of the plant, just as with any other utility.

Executive Session: Stone moved to go into executive session at 10:50. Seconded by Prial. Passed unanimously. The Prudential Committee came out of executive session at 11:45.

DECISIONS:

Prial made a motion to keep employee's benefit package, through Lincoln Financial Group, with the same limits on life, AD&D, LTD and STD. Seconded by Westby. Passed unanimously.

Montello adjourned the meeting at 11:50.

The next Regular Prudential Committee meeting will be on November 10, 2021, at 10:00 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Helen Krzeminski

Helen Krzeminski

Administration

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