

**North Branch Fire District #1  
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West Dover, VT 05356**

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**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, January 12, 2022.

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

**Members Present:** Steve Montello, Pete Edwards, and Ken Westby. Bob Stone and Jon Prial attended via Zoom.

**Also Present:** Rebecca Snow, Helen Krzeminski. Public members: Tom Ferrazza and James Valente.

**Public Comments:** Ferrazza wanted clarification on the new rate system as to the excessive use charge, and whether the gallonage would be added to the property. Montello stated that the new ordinance would detail how excessive use would be charged and that any additional gallonage bought would stay with the property.

Returning to public comments after operator's report.

Ferrazza referred to the letter he sent. He stated that NB was in the middle of construction in July of 2019, and they were waiting for funds from the state. The board and staff of NB, at that time agreed to hold off on salary and increases until those funds came in. He stated that he had not been paid for 24 meetings, from July 2019 until July 2021, when he left the board, which was confirmed by Snow, to him. He named other board members who he thought had have been paid, and that he had asked to hold off payment at that time. He stated he is asking for \$1,560, for that backpay.

**Minutes:** Edwards moved to approve the minutes of December 8, 2021, with changes, noted under the public comment section. Where it says "He (Westby) stated that after this bond was paid off, there could be a need for a special assessment or other bond, according to the study". Was changed to "He stated that once the bond is paid off, the capital study determination of a 'Risk of a special assessment' is in reality, a risk of a special assessment, a higher rate, a new bond issuance, or any combination, as determined by the Prudential Committee and the voters". Seconded by Prial. Passed unanimously.

**Letters:** An application was presented from Low Income Housing Water Assistance Program to see if the Prudential Committee wanted to participate in the program. It was determined would be beneficial to some of our customers and North Branch would participate as a provider utility. A letter from Tom Ferrazza was presented about back pay.

**Tom Ferrazza: Backpay:** Montello stated that it would be discussed under executive session.

**Treasurer's Report:** Edwards moved to approve to pay bills in the amount of \$40,651.29. Seconded by Westby. Passed unanimously.

- Westby stated that NB would be making the adjustment from a cash basis system to an accrual system, next month.
- Westby summarized the financial report. North Branch had excess revenues, over expenses and capital reserves of \$183,215, based on cash basis of accounting. Adjustments to that amount will be made to bring the financials into the accrual basis, but he noted that those adjustments should not be major. Actual revenues, over expenses, were \$515,114, which includes amounts authorized for capital reserves (\$500,000), less expenditures of capital reserves (\$168,101). The \$183,215 is the amount that is available to reduce future rates.
- Montello stated that NB's year end reserve account will be over 1 million dollars. He noted that he signed off on the financial reports and should be seeing the audits from the accountants, soon.
- Westby stated that the bills, going out, would no longer be broken down into bond and usage. It will be easier for the consumer to understand and that there was no need to separate the bill for North Branch's accounting purposes.
- Westby asked Snow to close out the bond repayment account and put those funds into the operations account.
- Montello asked Krzeminski for an update on the HRA accounts and refunds requested by North Branch. She stated that 40,000 of the 121, 000 would be refunded immediately, as a courtesy by the group, but that the additional funds will not be released until their yearend, in March.
- Montello wanted the board to recognize that this will be additional cash received, not on the financial report.
- Edwards asked if, going forward, was the process that led to such large amounts of refunds, changed, so that there would be no need to request refunds of this amount. Krzeminski replied "Yes."

**Chief Operator's Report:** Howes presented the following report:

Water Meters

- I have 150 endpoints and 50 registers with endpoints on order since June. I was informed 72 were shipping in January.
- Badger recommends that we create draw schedule for the 1050 CDMA endpoints we need to swap over before the service is no longer provided. I think we should get 300 every 4 months. We will not be able to install them that quick but if we can get them, but I believe we should be due to the supply issues.

Operations

- The backup float control for Rt 100 pumpstation has been installed.

- The aeration mixer for closed loop reactor 2 has faulted. It has been sent out for repair at the manufacturer to replace the spare mixer.
- I have hired Bernard's Electric to replace a broken shop light, install the VFD on our chlorinator, and wire in our spare mixer for CLR 2.
- Our year 2021 Commitments and flows
  - Average daily influent - 157,479 gpd
  - Yearend commitments - 52,797gpd
  - Uncommitted Reserve (gallons available for sale)- 264,724gpd
  - Howes stated that this has been fairly consistent from year to year. He also noted that, historically, the first week in January has been a peak flow week. This year it was not, probably due to the rain. He expects President's week to be our peak flow week.
  - Howes also stated that he is putting out bids for sanding and researching options for garbage disposal.
- Montello noted that operations was now fully staffed, inquired about general maintenance, who had attended to certain duties in the past and asked to plan for fence repairs, painting, weather proofing and other tasks needed to be done now and going into warmer weather.

Ferrazza noted that he was on the agenda and would like an opportunity to discuss his letter. Montello said the board would return to public comments.

**Technology Update:** Fiber internet is now at full speed. 100 Mbps/down and 60Mbps/up. Prial will work with Arcomm Communications in the coming weeks to set up board member's emails and data backup.

- North Branch is still working with Harris Computer and Invoice Cloud to integrate the online payment system.
- Montello asked to have emails for all customers by next billing period. He noted the cost savings by going paperless.
- Westby stated that he will work with Harris Computer to implement a system, in our Muni Smart program, to break down aged receivables and possibly to be able to list accounts with emails associated. He noted that cost would be around 600 to 1,000 dollars.

**Ordinance Review:** Montello wanted to state that North Branch Fire District is bound by state statutes, its bylaws, and the ordinance, since it's organization in 1972. He said that a complete set of the bylaws cannot be located, and NB's attorney has reached out to its previous attorney to try and locate updated bylaws. He said that over the last few months, he, Prial and Valente had been working on the ordinance to clean up the language and define the board's authority. He further noted the procedures for changing the ordinance, following the state statutes. He noted that the board members have had the opportunity to review the revised ordinance, individually, and his hope was to get approval, by the board, to move forward with the new ordinance.

Prial moved to approve the new ordinance with a correction concerning garbage disposals. Seconded by Stone. Passed unanimously.

- Edwards suggested purging old records when looking for complete set of bylaws. Montello agreed.

Bob Stone left the meeting.

**Annual Meeting Date:** Montello suggested making it the second Wednesday in May or even June. It was decided to wait until the February board meeting to set the date for the annual meeting.

**Renius Application Approval:** Prial moved to approve the application, from Renius, to purchase 360 gallons @ 40.00/gallon, for his property at 45 Sawmill Village Way. Charges are \$14,400 plus a \$300 application fee. Seconded by Westby, three of four approved. Stone was absent.

**Old Business:** Montello will continue to review, with staff, to clean up outdated contracts and old liabilities.

**New/Other Business:** Montello asked if there was a potential problem with a tax sale concerning Joe Mahon. Krzeminski stated that he had asked for a copy of a signed check, generated by North Branch, to the previous owner. It was decided to discuss under executive session.

- Montello asked for an update on previously exempted meters. Krzeminski stated that the Town of Dover had scheduled installation of their meters at the Town office, the Fire Department, and the Police Department. Snow reported that the Dover church had already purchased their meter and waiting installation. Krzeminski stated that Dover school had been in contact with North Branch. She also stated that she had no response from the Historical society to gain access to assess what they needed. Howes stated that he could do physical reads at the School and Twice blessed since they had meters, and only had to be updated.
- Westby made a motion to start charging entities, that previously had not been charged, as of January 1, 2022, and to estimate usage for the period that there is no meter. Seconded by Prial. Passed three out of four. Stone was absent.

**Executive Session:** Westby moved to go into executive session, to discuss personnel and legal issues at 11:15. Seconded by Prial. All in favor. The Prudential Committee came out of executive session at 12:00.

**Decisions:**

- Edwards made a motion for James Valente to write a letter to Tom Ferrazza requesting additional information. Seconded by Westby. All in favor.
- Westby made a motion to approve an increase of 3% for Howes, Krzeminski and Snow's pay, effective January 1, 2022. Seconded by Edwards. All in favor.
- Westby made a motion for James Valente to have a discussion with Fisher & Fisher regarding tax sales that took place in October 2020. Seconded by Edwards. All in favor.

Montello adjourned the meeting at 12:05.

Respectfully submitted,

*Helen Krzeminski*  
Helen Krzeminski  
Administration

The next, regular meeting of NBFD#1's Prudential Committee is on February 9, 2022, at 10:00 a.m.

**Posted:** North Branch Fire District# 1, Wastewater Treatment Facility building and Administration's building. Dover Town Office and [www.northbranchfiredistrict.com](http://www.northbranchfiredistrict.com).