

**North Branch Fire District #1
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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, February 9, 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, Jon Prial and Bob Stone attended via Zoom.

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

Public Comments: Ferrazza said that he picked up, from January's meeting, that North Branch is moving funds from one bank account to another without an approved motion by the whole board. Montello said he has not seen that is a requirement, anywhere. Ferrazza stated that he would present that documentation to the board.

Minutes: Prial moved to approve the minutes of January 12, 2022, meeting. Seconded by Westby. Passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report: Snow reported that accounts receivable was down to \$36,390. Edwards moved to approve payment of bills in the amount of \$77,016.86. Seconded by Westby. Passed unanimously.

- Montello asked why we must make a motion every month, to approve the bills, when they review and sign the checks, anyway.
- Snow reported that she is getting together an updated version of a commitments liability's spreadsheet.
- Montello wanted to thank Snow, on behalf of the Prudential Committee, for her years of service to North Branch Fire District. He asked Snow to state, for the record, her resignation. She stated it will take effect on February 16, 2022.
- Montello asked Valente if they could appoint a treasurer to fill Snow's position as treasurer. He replied that NB could. It was decided to discuss it under executive session, as to who would be appointed.

- Montello stated that NB needs to render a representation letter, for the Steve Love, the auditor, for our 2020 audit. Montello said he would generate the letter for Love, and have Edwards and Westby, review it before he sends it to him.
- Montello asked for update on the HRA refunds. He stated he thought we were owed around \$70,000. Krzeminski replied that nothing had changed since January's meeting, \$40,000 dollars had been refunded, and the rest would be refunded at the end of Health Equity's fiscal year, which is in March.
- Krzeminski reported that our new policy with Health Equity is still pending approval, even though the renewal documents were sent in on time. She stated it was problematic as employees are not able to use there HRA cards. Krzeminski stated that there has been attempts to get the issue resolved, and that she was copying Howes in the most recent emails. Health Equity's only explanation was that they were backlogged. Montello said he would help get it resolved.

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

- The new mixer has been installed and the old has been sent out for repair. The cost to repair is \$12,573.14. A new replacement unit is \$18,989. We have already rebuilt this mixer once, so I recommend we replace it with a new one. Prial moved to approve the replacement at \$18,989. Seconded by Stone. Passed unanimously.
- I would like to have Arcomm change our phone setting so that we no longer have the call screening function. It has caused numerous people to try and leave a message in the wrong spot and result in no message being left. This way, our phones will ring when our extension is dialed without the caller stating their name first and if no one answers, they can leave a message.
- Eric Taylor has obtained his Grade 2 license.
- We have received 72 of our endpoints that were ordered. We can resume replacing the non-communicate endpoints now.
- Due to the increased cost of shipping, Endyne will now be charging a \$20 fee for any sample cooler they mail back. Rich Werner has worked out an arrangement where the courier can drop off ours, Coldbrook's, and W&B's coolers for free at the W&B office. This will save us over \$4,000.

Montello asked Howes if he knew of any Capital expenditures, he may have this summer. Howes replied he is gathering information for the July-June fiscal year, budget and he wanted to know when that need to be ready. Montello replied that the board would need to approve the budget, at the May meeting, before the June 8th, annual meeting.

- Montello updated the board on the meeting he and Westby attended at the River Valley Unified School District, concerning the meter at the Dover School.
- Montello stated that Laura Sibilila also attended the meeting. He said that there was discussion on funding, and he thought Sibilila may be able to help streamline the process that North Branch currently must go through, to have access to certain funds.

- The board suggested to invite Sibia to our next meeting.
- Montello stated that, at the meeting, Wardsboro School asked if they could hook up to North Branch, which brought up the discussion of North Branch being able to expand the customer base, which would bring down rates to all users, since NB currently has the capacity to serve Wardsboro, as well as additional users.
- Howes noted that Wardsboro is out of the Fire District, and we would need to confirm that we could include them or anyone else outside the Fire District.
- Montello also stated that Sibia proposed that North Branch look into developing a public water system and having North Branch operate that water system.
- Prial suggested that we investigate that proposal if an infrastructure study was presented to us. The rest of the board agreed.

Technology Update: Prial noted that there will need to be some adjustments to our current billing system when North Branch's new rate structure goes into place. Noting that excess charges will have to be calculated and hand entered to QuickBooks as a charge, separate from the bill generated by Muni Smart.

- Prial stated he is still working with vendors and staff to update systems, which includes going to paperless billing.
- Prial noted that North Branch needed to set the excessive use charge and when it will be implemented. Montello noted that we cannot put the excessive use charge in place for the spring bill, as it would cover usage while the previous ordinance was in effect. He stated the new ordinance will not go into effect until March 15, 2022. Prial said he would continue to work on the process.
- Prial read a letter he generated to the editor of the Deerfield Valley News.

Annual Meeting Date: is set for June 8, 2022.

Old Business: Montello will continue to review, with staff, to clean up outdated contracts and old liabilities. He stated that contracts currently with North Branch will be handled as per the previous ordinance, not moving funds into operations, until the sites are connected. This procedure will change with new contracts once the new ordinance takes effect.

- Stone agreed to reach out to association management members and board members of those associations to see if they would be willing to and can share email addresses of North Branch's customers. Montello stated that this would help North Branch move towards a paperless billing system.

New Business: Westby shared his findings of the investigation of the Solar Project that he and Montello started, concerning North Branch's participation. Westby summarized that although, North Branch seems to get approximately a 10% savings on energy costs, there are some discrepancies in credits. Initial investigation show that we are not getting as much savings as we could, as we generate more credits than we can offset with usage due to monthly credits expiring after 12 months. More research is required to understand our allocation of generated power vs. the entire Town system.

Executive Session: Prial moved to go into executive session, to discuss personnel and legal issues at 11:30. Seconded by Westby. All in favor. The Prudential Committee came out of executive session at 12:10.

Decisions:

- Prial moved to appoint Ken Westby as interim Treasurer for North Branch Fire District#1. Seconded by Stone. Westby abstained. Edwards, Prial and Stone in favor. Motion passed.
- Montello stated that CVG attorneys will send Tom Ferrazza a letter about his request for back pay and that they gave NB an update on two tax sale properties, 342 Dover Hill Road and 2B Waldwinkle Road.

Montello adjourned the meeting at 12:12.

Respectfully submitted,

Helen Krzeminski
Helen Krzeminski

Administration

The next, regular meeting of NBFD#1's Prudential Committee is on March 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.