

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, September 13, 2023.

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

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

Also Present: Deana Covieo-Clarke, Bart Howes and Helen Krzeminski. James Valente. attended via Zoom.

Minutes: Montello made a motion to approve the minutes of the August 9, 2023, Regular and Reorganization meeting. Seconded by Prial. Motion passed.

Public Comments: None

Review of Monthly Updates: Covieo-Clarke and Krzeminski updated the Prudential Committee on customer data, meters, AR/billing, and contracts. North Branch has 93 non-communicating meters. Approximately 40 of those must have the endpoint replaced. The remaining have different issues, either needing to be activated or an error that needs to be addressed. Summonses have gone out to most customers who have failed to have old meters replaced.

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

Sept Topics

- We have nearly completed inspecting and raising the manholes from Negus pumpstation to the school. Out of the 38 manholes, 13 needed to be raised. The two at the school are buried. One is under the tar in the driveway and the second is right next to the building. I recommend we do not disturb these two. Now that they are raised, we can camera the system on a dry day from the school down and do it again when flows are up due to I/I.
- The equipment to swap to liquid hypochlorite disinfection has arrived and is in operation.
- AR controls came and inspected our broken actuator and has ordered parts. The original design has the actuator pivoting back and forth which caused the drive nut to wear out quickly. He is working on a proposal to retrofit it to a more stable design that he normally sees.

- The east clarifier has been drained and one sheet of skirting that was broken over the winter has been repaired. We will patch a smaller piece in for the remaining cracks out of the old skirting. Replacing that sheet is not feasible as it has pipes that run through it, but the sheet isn't cut in half for replacement.
- The crew must shift gears from the collection system to leveling and preparing the spray field for winter.
- I have called Lane Plumbing, MT Plumbing, Carroll Mechanical, and ARC Mechanical to get quotes on installing AC in the Admin building. MT Plumbing stated they do not do AC, ARC mechanical said an estimator could come out Oct 11th, Lane Plumbing came to inspect and is worked up a quote, and Carroll Mechanical will call me back when an estimator can come out. Lane quote \$16,600 for replacing the furnace due to its age and installing AC. If they installed A/C on the old one it would not be interchangeable with a new furnace. They can start in early Oct. An electrician will need to be hired to wire in the AC.
- Montello made a motion to approve funding up to \$17,000 to replace the heating and install the cooling system in the administration building. Seconded by Stone. Motion passed.
- The sensor in the headworks gas meter is malfunctioning. I have purchased a new one and have Neposet Controls scheduled to come replace it and calibrate it at a cost of \$2488.
- I have reached out to our dam engineers Fuss & O'Neill, Inc regarding replacing our polishing pond liner and its related work. They are working up a proposal.
- I have spoken to Daniels Construction in regard to our Rt 100 pumpstation project they were awarded earlier this year. They plan to prepare the jobsite on Thur 9/14 and install the bypass valves on 9/15. Then come back on Monday and Tuesday to install the valves in the pump station.

Montello had the following comments:

- To get a completion date for the work being done on the administration building.
- Check on changing propane suppliers from AmeriGas to Superior.
- Work on housekeeping in the headworks building, basement of pumphouse and weeds around the irrigation ditches.

Treasurer's Report: Westby reported that North Branch was two months into the new fiscal year with nothing out of line with the budget. There are 2.982 million in current assets. 2.8 million in investments. 115,000 in available cash.

Montello asked Krzeminski for an update on the refunds from Health Equity and why there is such a delay. Krzeminski said she has opened another case with them, as of Friday, since there are conflicting explanations coming from Health Equity. Westby asked Krzeminski to draw up a summary, for the board, in writing. Westby also asked Krzeminski to investigate different options for funding the employee health

reimbursement accounts, to possibly include a bill from Health Equity instead of them having access to withdrawing money from North Branch's bank account. Montello asked for an update on the life insurance. Covieo-Clarke reported that North Branch will see an increase in the premiums as she found the records had not been updated to reflect employee's current salaries since 2011. She has since updated Lincoln Financial on the accurate salaries of all employees.

Invoice Cloud, Muni Smart, MuniPay and paperless: Prial reported that he was working on a letter to go out to customers to encourage them to register for paperless billing. He also updated the board on the proposal to InvoiceCloud, for North Branch to absorb the electronic check fee of \$2.95 they charge the customer. Invoice Cloud is willing to do that but will increase the credit card fee to 3.95% with a \$3.15 minimum charge. Prial made a motion to approve up to \$4,000 a year cost to InvoiceCloud to absorb EFT fees for customers. Seconded by Stone. Motion passed.

Prial explained the work being done with Muni Smart to implement a program that will give a credit to those customers who use paperless billing. They are working on a proposal for that work. Prial made a motion to authorize up to \$5,000 to have the program implemented into our billing system. Stone and Montello denied the motion. Edwards and Prial approved the motion. Chairman, Westby voted to approve the motion. Motion passed.

Fall billing estimate: Most endpoints have been replaced which will give North Branch accurate readings and no need to estimate those bills. Covieo-Clarke asked how the board would like her to handle the few bills that were estimated much higher than the actual reads. It was decided to take the charges on a case-by-case basis.

Dover School Visit: A teacher at Dover School asked if she could bring 7 of her middle school students to the plant for a tour. It was discovered that it would increase North Branch's insurance premiums annually by \$1,500.00. It was decided that Operations would go to the school, instead, and do a presentation.

Master Meter/letter approval: Deferred to discuss in executive session.

Ordinance revision/approval: Deferred to discuss in executive session as it is related to master meters.

GS127 Colty-Heyward: The account is in probate and will continue to accrue penalties and interest until the estate is settled.

Back charging accounts who had no meter for years: Legal counsel, Valente said it was not necessary to have a policy in place other than what was allowable by law. It was decided to discuss further in executive session.

Old Business: Prial reported that he had drafted a letter to send to customers to encourage them to sign up for EYE ON WATER. Montello asked to include information on the excessive use charges that will be on the spring bill. Montello and Prial will review the draft before it will be sent for distribution.

Covieo-Clarke asked if there was any new information on the solar project since some of the solar credit was to expire if not used by the next electric bill. Prial said he will work on donating portions of our shares that North Branch does not utilize. Prial stated that he would like to see a percentage of North Branch's allocation go to the school, who may need the credits.

New Business: None

Executive Session: Montello made a motion to go into executive session, to discuss legal issues at 11:22. Seconded by Stone. Motion passed. The Prudential Committee came out of executive session at 12:00.

Decisions: Montello made a motion to adopt the collection policy that was drafted by Valente. Prial seconded the motion. Motion passed. Policy will be attached to the minutes of this meeting.

Prial made a motion to approve the amendments made by CV&G, PC to the current North Branch Fire District #1's ordinance, in reference to Sections 8.02 and 8.03 on master meters and paperless billing. Also, to correct a typographical error on section 8.09. Seconded by Montello. Motion passed.

Montello made a motion to send a reimbursement check to William Peruso, once confirmation has been made that all water from the buildings and apartments at 135 Route 100, is going through the meter. Seconded by Stone. Motion passed.

Westby adjourned the meeting at 12:05.

Respectfully submitted,

Helen Krzeminski
Assistant Clerk

The next, regular meeting of NBFD#1's Prudential Committee is on October 11, 2023, 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.

COLLECTION POLICY

It is the policy of Nbfd #1 that the Treasurer is authorized to correspond, prepare and send citations, and take any actions authorized by law related to the collection of unpaid fees except the initiation of a tax sale. Actions by the Treasurer in furtherance of collection do not require notification to the Prudential Committee or authorization thereby.

The Treasurer is required to notify the Prudential Committee of any outstanding balance more than \$1,000.00. Each notification shall be made at the first regularly scheduled Prudential Committee meeting after the outstanding balance exceeds the \$1,000.00 threshold.

After notification, the Treasurer may continue their collection efforts at their discretion. If authorized by the Prudential Committee, the Treasurer shall work with legal counsel to initiate tax sale proceedings against the user.

This policy is not intended to (nor shall it) bar the initiation at the direction of the Prudential committee of any collection action, including tax sale, for users with an outstanding balance of less than \$1,000.00.