

**North Branch Fire District #1
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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, June 28, 2023

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

Members Present: Steve Montello, Pere Edwards, and Ken Westby.

Also Present: Representing Nbfd#1 were Deana Covieo-Clarke, Bartholomew Howes,
Helen Krzeminski and James Valente. Members of the public were also present.

Steve Montello made the following remarks:

- Montello introduced himself and the other board members. He acknowledged existing and new staff that has brought the Fire District to being fully staffed.
- Montello stated that North Branch has recently been awarded \$140,000 in ERC (employee retention compensation) money from the Federal government.
- Montello noted the fence has been repaired and a project was started to camera sewer lines, to see where there might be excessive infiltration into the plant. He stated that the administration building will be painted this year.
- Montello stated that North Branch still had 40% capacity left for future growth. He also stated that North Branch continues to follow the 30-year capital plan that has been in place.

Moderator, Steve Montello, read the Articles and 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. at the same location. She stated that Articles 2 through 4 would be voted on from the floor.

Article 1. To elect two members to the Prudential Committee and one Officer as follows:

1. One Prudential Committee Member for a three-year term.
2. One Prudential Committee Member for a three-year term.
3. One Clerk for a three-year term.

Note: The results of voting for Article 1 are posted at the end of the minutes of this meeting.

Montello introduced **Article 2**. To see if the Fire District will accept the Annual Budget. He asked Ken Westby to review the financials before a vote was taken.

Westby made the following remarks:

- Westby reviewed the sewer rate history since 2011, that he charted on a graph. He noted that the rates have decreased, and the trend will be to keep the current rate for the near future.
- Westby reviewed the line items on the budget. He noted that excess cash of 2.6 million had been invested in treasury notes and bills, and that they are getting a yielding over 5% interest. He anticipated that it will be well over \$100,000 this next year.
- Westby stated that delinquent sewer bills are at about \$20,000. He noted that this was a drop of over \$100,000 in delinquencies when the current board started a few years ago.
- Westby noted that the budget to be approved had a minor increase of 33,000, which he said was remarkable considering the increase of cost of materials and services.
- Westby summarized that North Branch had assets of 3 million. 1.5 million is held for capital reserves, which leaves 1.5 million in available cash to help maintain rates at these lower current levels.
- Westby reviewed the annual expenditures that he had charted.

Montello asked if there were any remarks or questions before a vote was taken. Tom Ferrazza made a motion to ask the public if they would allow three meeting attendees, Bartholomew Howes, Helen Krzeminski and Deana Covieo-Clarke to speak as non-residents of the Fire District if necessary. Paolo Cugnasca seconded the vote. The vote passed unanimously allowing them to speak.

Ferrazza asked Howes if there are any major repairs that still need to be completed. Howes responded that North Branch had been following the capital plan that was implemented with previous boards. He noted that everything was on track. He stated that there were some unexpected costs of repairing and replacing some pumps. It was noted that replacing the pond liners would be put off for a couple of years.

Montello added that the Prudential Committee focuses on the capital plan at every meeting to make sure North Branch maintains the plant as needed. He noted that a backhoe had been repaired instead of replaced which saved a large expense. He noted that another large expense would be the cell head replacement in approximately 10 years. Montello noted that there was an anticipated revenue of approximately 1.3 million in hook-up fees, in addition to the budgeted income. Montello noted that a tractor (lawn mower) had been purchased which was unanticipated at a time when prices are inflated. Cugnasca made a motion to accept the 2023/24 Annual Budget, as presented. Seconded by Ferrazza. The article passed.

Article 3. Ferrazza moved to see if the Fire District will vote to collect taxes, and any other charges deemed essential by the Prudential Committee, by the Treasurer, pursuant to Title 32, V.S.A., Section 4791. Seconded by Cugnasca. The article passed.

Article 4. Other non-binding business. Montello opened the floor for any questions of discussion. Ferrazza stated that the Prudential Committee needed to check the validity of the public votes and requirements for minimum attendance.

The Prudential Committee noted his comment on the record.

Edwards made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:20 a.m. Seconded by Westby.
Motion passed.

Voting Results Elections: 1004 registered voters; 38 ballots cast.

Prudential Committee for a three-year term; Peter Edwards with 29 votes.
Prudential Committee for a three-year term; Steven Montello with 29 votes.
Clerk, three-year term; Scott Stein with 27 votes.

Respectfully Submitted:



Helen Krzeminski
Assistant Clerk

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