

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

**Website: <https://northbranchfiredistrict.com>
Phone: 802-464-7560 x 110
E-mail: administration@nbfddwwt.com**

**THESE MINUTES ARE NOT OFFICIAL UNTIL APPROVED BY THE
PRUDENTIAL COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the North Branch Fire District #1, Prudential Committee, April 30, 2024.

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

Members Present: Ken Westby, Steve Montello and Bob Stone.

Also Present: Deana Covio-Clarke and Helen Krzeminski. Members of the public were Geraldine Golet, Jodi Keeler and Tom Ferrazza.

Article 1. To Vote to change the number of members of the Prudential Committee from the current five members to three members, each with three-year terms and with staggered expirations.

Results of the Australian Ballot are at end of minutes.

Comments from the public:

Geri Golet asked the board to clarify why they wanted to go to a three-member board. Westby responded by saying that it was difficult to find five members of the public to want to run to be on the board and that most of the work has been done by only three members. Golet expressed her concern of only having board of three with a limited view on topics as opposed to a five-member board. Westby also stated that it was easier to have a quorum of two than to try and get a quorum of three. Golet wanted to clarify who would be on board. Westby stated that he and Montello still had open terms and with two resignations, that would leave the third board position open for election if the public voted to go to a three-member board.

Golet asked Montello what he brought to the board. Montello stated that he is a single-family homeowner and manages approximately 1000 of the condominiums that North Branch Fire District serves. Montello also stated that historically, North Branch often had only three members on the board. Montello pointed out that only a few members of the public came to this meeting as with all the meetings, which is why the board chose to go with Australian Ballot. He stated it would give the public an opportunity to attend an informational meeting, but also vote over the course of a day as opposed to a specific time (for floor vote).

Jodi Keeler stated that she was not questioning the work that the current board has done, but that she was the issue of going to a three-member board. She stated that the board should have members with different views, and she acknowledged that it was difficult to find people who would do the work on any board, but that it should not be easy. Even if

those members did not do most of the work, they still would be able to offer different opinions on matters.

Keeler asked how, if the board went to three members, how they expected to run the business of North Branch, since any discussion between two members of the board would be a quorum and would have to be warned as a public meeting. Keeler reminded the board of the legalities of communicating with staff and amongst each other. Montello responded that the board and staff are aware of Vermont's Open Meeting Law and what constitutes a violation of that law.

Montello stated that decisions are made during public meetings by the whole board. Westby stated that the administrator will reach out to any one of the board members if there is a question or about something that needs to go on the agenda. He stated that it is current policy and that will not change with a quorum of two or three.

Tom Ferrazza questioned the legality of using Australian Ballot instead of a floor vote. His understanding was that the public had to vote to use Australian Ballot. Westby responded that he was incorrect. Keeler added that more information should have been available to the public before the meeting. Westby responded that the meeting was accurately warned. Keeler asked where, in the minutes, was the discussion to warn this meeting and that there was only the motion to warn the meeting. Montello stated that not all discussions are in minutes. Westby stated that the informational meeting that was being held is more significant in deciding on how to vote than reading minutes that happened a month ago. Keeler asked why that discussion was not on the agenda and stated that people come to the meetings based on what is on the agenda. Montello stated that in twelve months, only she and Ferrazza had attended any of the meetings. Keeler pointed out that the Annual Meeting would be in June and that gave a limited time for those who were interested to get on the ballot. She suggested advertising for open positions. She stated that it was too soon before the Annual meeting. **Robert Stone** and Montello pointed out that there was an advertisement in the paper, placed by Ferrazza. Westby stated that it was preferred by the board to reduce the board to three members, but it was up for public vote, and they would, ultimately, be making the decision to go to three board members or not.

Montello adjourned the meeting at 10:45.

Respectfully Submitted:

Helen Krzeminski

Helen Krzeminski,
Administration
Assistant Clerk

Results of Australian Ballot:

YES – 18 Votes

NO – 7 Votes

1 spoiled

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