

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

Website: www.northbranchfiredistrict.com

Phone: 802-464-7560 x 110

Fax: 802-464-3040

E mail: administration@nbfddwwt.com

**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, April 17, 2024

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

Members Present: Jon Prial and Ken Westby. Steve Montello attended via Zoom.

Also Present: Deana Covio-Clarke, Bartholomew Howes and Helen Krzeminski. James
Valente and Jodi Keeler attended via Zoom.

Public Comments: Jodi Keeler commented on the special meeting that is being held on
April 30, 2024, stating that she had questions as to why the board would want to go from
five members to three members. She stated that a three-member board would only leave a
quorum of two and did not think that two members should be making decisions for
millions of taxpayers' dollars. Westby responded by saying that in the past, there has
been difficulty maintaining a board of five. He stated that the bulk of the work done by
the Prudential Committee has been done by three members. Westby also stated that any
decision making is done in a public format and Fire District voters can attend meetings to
voice opinions or concerns and decisions are made based on feedback from the public.
Keeler asked if there was going to be an informational meeting about this article before
the vote. She stated that she did not see any information about the meeting. Westby
responded that the Prudential Committee would have a public meeting starting at 10 am
and questions from the public can be addressed then, before they choose to vote on the
article. He stated that the polls will be open from 10-7 and vote will be by Australian
Ballot. Keeler stated that a vote from the floor was more appropriate. Prial stated that the
Prudential Committee felt Australian ballot would give voters more flexibility on voting
and stated that even with that, there has been approximately 30 votes out of potential
1700 voters. Keeler stated that she read March's minutes and even though there was a
decision to Warn a special meeting to change the Prudential Committee from five to three
members, there was no discussion noted in the minutes. Prial said there have been many
positive changes made to reduce rates, etc. He stated that most of that work is done
behind the scenes and dialog on those good changes is not posted in the minutes or in the
paper, either.

Minutes: Montello made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 13, 2024,
Regular meeting. Seconded by Prial. Motion passed.

Review of Monthly Updates: Covieo-Clarke and Krzeminski updated the Prudential Committee on customer data, meters, AR/billing, and contracts. Covieo-Clarke reported that there are only 7 customers who are over 180 days delinquent, totaling approximately \$9,000. She also reported that they are working on the May 1 billing and noted that estimated bills are down from the hundreds to 30. Covieo-Clarke stated that this is due to updating meters, installing meters, and correcting errors associated with some meters. Westby said to cite those customers who are not responding to requests to have meters checked or updated, \$100.00 a month until meters are online and working. He asked Covieo-Clarke to compile a list of those customers so that the PC can review. He also asked Covieo-Clarke to provide the PC with comparison lists of two different ways of estimating. One would be the current policy of charging 125% of the average of two “like” billing periods and the other to calculate 125% of the average usage based on bedrooms, that was compiled for the customers who had no meters for several years, with no historical data.

Chief Operator’s Report: Howes submitted the following report:

April Topics

Operations

- I have been working with Claus Bartenstein, P.E. from Engineering Services of Vermont, LLC in regard to a generator for our facility. He has sized the generator & automatic transfer switch and has plans finalized. I have reached out to two local electricians in regard to the facility and admin generators and also reached out to Southworth, and Scherbon. Facility generator if ordered the day after the meeting:
 - Onan 250KW has a lead time of 38 weeks which puts the installation at mid- January. ATS & genset cost \$155k
 - CAT 250KW has a lead time of 31 weeks which puts the installation at late- November. ATS & genset cost = \$120K. (late-January if using the proper ATS)
 - Generac 250KW has a lead time of 20-24 weeks which puts the installation at early Sept to early Oct. ATS & genset cost = \$89.2K
 - Generac 300KW has an estimated delivery of mid-late May. ATS & genset cost = \$100.6K
- The ATV was sent out for a major overhaul as many items were failing. The power steering was half of the bill. The cost of repair was \$5058.69.
- The RT100 generator had the block heater fault. We had a tech come and install a 120V unit while we wait for the proper 240V one to arrive.

Howes recommended the 250KW generator. Montello made a motion to authorize Howes to purchase a generator up to the amount of \$130,000. Seconded by Prial. Motion passed. Howes noted that with the passing of Hobie Terhune, it needed to be established who was maintaining his private lines. Covieo-Clarke said that she would investigate the matter.

Treasurer’s Report: Covieo-Clarke reported that she is finishing up the 2022 audit with the accountants. It was noted by Westby that North Branch is over expected budget for

public accounts as they are working on 2 ½ years of audits instead of one, also with a change in the firm handling the audits.

Ridgeway and Stugger Road properties: Covieo-Clarke reported that there are three properties that are being rented from one owner. She stated that their lease is due to be renewed in May. She noted that the properties were listed under the tenant's name in our billing system. The properties are delinquent in sewer charges and another \$75,000 in hook-up fees that were never collected. Westby said the billing needs to be in the owner's name and to change it. He requested an invoice for the charges to be resent to the owner, not the tenant, and to keep communication with the owner only. Westby said to add a letter, with the invoice, add an 8% delinquency charge and stating that the charges needed to be paid within 30 days or the properties would go to tax sale.

Approval of excess use charges: Prial summarized how the excess use charge (gallons) was arrived at last year. Those customers who used three times their allotted gallonage, during the chosen peak week in December, were charged \$50 for each day over and \$.50 for each gallon over. Data was collected for every customer who went over their allotted gallonage for this billing period. Montello suggested that we add a flat charge of \$100.00 for those customers who exceeded their usage by 200%. Montello made a motion to charge \$50.00/day and \$.50/gallon for those customers 300% over their gallonage allotment and a flat \$100.00 charge for those customers who were 200% over their gallonage. Seconded by Prial. Motion passed.

New Business: Covieo-Clark stated that there were many VHS and cassette tapes of sewer line recordings and meeting audios. The Prudential Committee asked her to research the cost to have them digitized and present information at the next meeting.

Executive Session: Montello made a motion to go into executive session at 11:05 seconded by Prial, to discuss legal matters. Motion passed. The board came out of Executive session at 11:15.

Decisions: None

Westby adjourned the meeting at 11:16.

Respectfully submitted,


Helen Krzeminski

Assistant Clerk

The next, regular meeting of NBF#1's Prudential Committee is May 8, 2024, 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