

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

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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, December 8, 2021.

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

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

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

Public Comments: Ferrazza stated concern that at the last meeting Jon (Prial) had introduced a plan to eliminate sleeping space charges and put in place a penalty of some kind. He asked if there was any more on that. He also stated the reserve study that was done confirmed the Operations budget that had been in place. His concern was that it was mentioned another bond may need to be taken out, down the road. He stated that he did not want to see North Branch be in a situation where they had to do that because of putting off repairs or replacement of operations equipment, which had happened in the past. Montello responded that reserve contributions, in the budget, will be reviewed year to year and that currently North Branch is overfunding reserve contributions. He stated that they will continue to do that and adjust the budget, accordingly, based on needs that year. Westby added that even though the committee may decide not to replace or repair something at a certain time, the money for that would still go into the reserve. He stated that after this bond was paid off, there could be a need for a special assessment or another bond, according to the study.

Montello stated that it is the committee's intention to protect the capacity of the plant and that undisclosed sleeping spaces contribute to a potential risk. He stated that the committee is considering eliminating a sleeping space charge and instead substitute a charge for overuse of the system, on an individual basis. Edwards asked how that will affect the complexes that are master metered. Montello said that collectively, Kingswood and Seasons never come close to allotted gallonage. Further explaining that some units are empty while others are at over capacity.

Minutes: Stone moved to approve the minutes of November 10, 2021, as submitted. Seconded by Prial. Passed unanimously.

Letters: Nbfd received a notification from Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation that owners of abutting property, at 79 Dorr Fitch Road, were applying for an individual wetlands permit. It was discussed to notify the agency that is doing the Ellis Brook study.

A letter came from Lincoln Financial Group stating they are denying a Short-Term Disability claim from Kevin Joyce. Montello stated that he had the right to appeal, should he want to do that.

Montello wanted to inform the committee that a former employee had taken a claim to the Supreme Court for a permanent disability. He noted that North Branch was being represented by our insurance company and that it was ongoing.

Montello stated that North Branch had been served with a complaint about a tax sale and that it was being handled and resolved through Fisher & Fisher Law Offices, PC.

Treasurer's Report: Westby moved to approve to pay bills in the amount of \$323,636.24. Seconded by Stone. Passed unanimously.

- Snow stated that the Bond CD was up for renewal on December 18, 2021. Prial made a motion to close out the CD at the Bank of Bennington and put the funds into Operations, at Peoples United Bank, seconded by Stone. Passed unanimously.
- Snow reported that the A/R to be collected has come down to \$166,012.71.
- Montello asked to have A/R reports to include customers and age of account. Westby noted that it is important to do this as 90,180,360 plus days, as NB goes to an accrual basis ledger.
- Snow asked what account to transfer the \$10,525.00 we are holding for the gallonage of 2 lots that were sold in the Tamarack Development. Montello stated to put it in the operations account.
- Snow said that Bart Howes had asked about the \$400,000 that was in the budget from capital raised by users. She asked if that should be transferred, also. Montello said that NB will need to tie out that account at the end of the year to match the budget. He stated that we also need to do that with the bond account, and it should be at zero balance at the end of the year.
- There was a discussion about closing the bond account and opening a payroll account.
- Montello and Westby asked Snow and Krzeminski to get a complete analysis of priority and tax sale accounts. He would like details on gallonage, and funds associated with these accounts. It was suggested to leave \$1,000 in the tax sale account to hold it open.
- Montello asked the committee to get the auditors what they need to complete the representation letters and audit.

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

Operations

- The faulty VFD at Rt 100 pump station has been replaced by Champlin Associates.
- Champlin Associates has begun installation of the backup float system at Rt 100 pump station.
- Stiles has sent me 12 endpoints and registers. That's all I could get. I recommend we reserve these for places that do not have a meter or hand reads with missing/broken readouts. Basically, anyone who we cannot physically get a usage reading from.
- I have created a SOP to help administrations create the needed reports for tracking our hand read meters, radio read meters, accounts missing meters, and non-communicating cellular meters that need replacing. We still cannot get the needed meter parts to fix these, but it should be tracked.

Communications Content:

- Prial stated that he had been working on updating the Ordinance and working on other documents. He explained one of them being a frequently asked questions document and the other is a rates document. He stated that this was an update and would not be completed until January. He outlined work that is being done to update contracts, revise rate structure and implement penalties, all to manage and protect the capacity of flow coming to the plant.
- Prial said that one of the rate systems that are being considered would be monitoring peak periods and have a peak usage fee for those weeks. Weeks that are being considered are December 26- January 2 and President's week. He stated that NB would also do an annual audit of usage and charge for excessive use. This would replace the current form of capacity management and protection, which is the sleeping space charge. The implementation of the annual audit and the conversion of sleeping space dollars into a purchase of gallonage allocation would be put in place and customers would be notified in advance of the peak week charge.
- Stone suggested having different rates for summer verses winter. Prial said that could be a possibility and they needed more discussion about it.
- Prial noted the importance of going paperless and compiling email lists. It was suggested to do a post card mailing, to customers, stating there would be a three-dollar charge if we must send bills by paper.
- Prial explained that the rates document would be the one that the Prudential Committee would change, rather than the Ordinance, which now specifies rates. The Ordinance will refer to the rates document and state statutes.
- Montello noted that there has been some calls and emails, from customers, asking if they will get their money back if the sleeping space charge is eliminated. He read a statement he drafted to respond to those questions. The committee

discussed the need to clarify that eliminating a sleeping space charge will only be a change in structure on how NB charges for gallonage. It was noted that it is all in the discussion stage, at the present, and there has been no definite decision, by the board, yet.

New/Other Business: Fiber was installed but they need to come back and check the system. We are still working with Invoice Cloud to implement that online system which will replace MunicIPAY.

- Montello asked for updates on responses from letters that have been sent out about installing or updating meters. Krzeminski stated that three sets of letters went out in July, September, and November, with follow up emails. No responses have been received, except from the Town of Dover. Montello stated that he has been in contact with Rich Werner about the fire house. He also stated that he and Westby have been in contact with the West Dover Church. Westby suggested going on a one-by-one basis and getting a date of installation, from their plumber. Krzeminski said she is waiting for the response, from the town, since their meeting was the night before and was told a decision would be made about the meters, then.
- Montello wanted on the record that he needs reports every Monday for payroll, cash, and balance sheet for receivables.
- Westby suggested making sure we have at least 100 endpoints ordered for our meters.
- Montello and Westby asked for Snow to send all the committee members the solar fields contract that NB is involved with along with the school.

Executive Session: Stone moved to go into executive session, to discuss legal issues at 10:50. Seconded by Westby. Passed unanimously. The Prudential Committee came out of executive session at 12:00.

No decisions were made.

- The next Regular Prudential Committee meeting will be on January 12, 2021, at 10:00 a.m.

Montello adjourned the meeting at 12:01

Respectfully submitted,

Helen Krzeminski

Helen Krzeminski

Administration

Posted: North Branch Fire District# 1, Wastewater Treatment Facility building and Administration's building. Dover Town Office and www.northbranchfiredistrict.com.