

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, May 10, 2023.

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

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

**Also Present:** Bartholomew Howes, Helen Krzeminski, Scott Stein, and James Valente via Zoom. Members of the public attending were Tom Ferrazza, in person. Victor Alemany, Tom McNally, Dennis Manzer and Dandan Zhu attended via Zoom.

**Minutes:** Prial made a motion to accept the minutes of April 12, 2023. Seconded by Westby. Motion passed.

**Letters:** Emails from Dan Fox and Todd Bauer were presented to the Prudential Committee. Both were addressing the fees associated with our new online billing system. Prial commented that he understood the concern, as suggested to remain signed up for paperless billing but pay with your bank check, who also pays the postage to send the check to North Branch.

**Public Comments:**

**Victor Alemany, DM010 1 vs. 2 bedrooms:** Alemany asked if there was anything to prevent the Prudential Committee from changing the ordinance from a two-bedroom minimum for hookup fees. He noted that North Branch's fees and minimum charges are one of the highest in Vermont. He asked that North Branch look at how they can lower the minimum charge. He suggested North Branch review rates and hookup fees possibly by number of bathrooms, hot tubs, washers, etc. instead of by bedrooms.

Howes and Montello clarified the reasoning behind the ordinance of charging for two bedrooms minimum (based on the State wastewater permit). Montello stated that the Prudential Committee was cognizant of the historically high rates. He noted that the board has been able to reduce the rates over the last two years and continues to work on reducing them further. Prial commented on Alemany's minimum charge question. He noted that the committee is reviewing charging an access fee vs. a minimum charge that would be more equitable for all the customers.

**BX144 McNally:** McNally stated that the excessive use charge on his recent bill was an unfair charge of \$614.40 for a one-day overage. He would like the board to consider eliminating that additional charge. Montello stated that the board would take his

comments into consideration and discuss it under executive session. Prial and Westby added a further explanation on how the excess use charge was arrived at.

**HU024 Zhu:** Zhu requested a review of her account and asked that the recent bill be lowered to reflect no usage since the property has been under renovation since September 2022. She stated that her current bill has been estimated since North Branch was unaware of the demolition. Montello stated that they would consider her request and North Branch needed to get a certification that the lines to the sewer had been capped.

**TC203 Manzer:** Manzer stated he received an excess use charge due to a running toilet. He asked if the PC could review the charge and consider that it was accidental and not what the excessive use charge was intended to do. Montello stated that the Prudential Committee will consider his request under executive session.

**Ferrazza:** Ferrazza had sent an email to be forwarded to the Prudential Committee concerning term limits of elected board members. He commented that he had contacted an attorney to stop the election. Westby responded that anything further would be discussed in executive session as now it was a legal matter.

**Review Board Appointments:** Valente advised that the Prudential Committee start the process to select or appoint a six-member Review Board with staggering terms of two members for one year, two members for two years and two members for three years initially. The selection of 6 review board appointments will be addressed at the next regular Prudential Committee meeting.

**Budget:** Westby reviewed the proposed budget for the Fiscal Year 24. Prial made a motion to accept the budget. Seconded by Edwards. Motion passed.

**Review of monthly updates:** Krzeminski updated the board tracking of customer data, meters, accounts receivable and contracts.

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

- On 4/26 Trinity Engineering was onsite and performed our annual engineer's inspection. I will pass the report along when it is finalized.
- I have reached out to Stiles numerous times regarding the 240 CDMA endpoints. Badger is having supply shortages on the style connector we use. Stiles has sent 96 that they had in inventory.
- We have received all the risers to raise the manholes along Dover Hill Rd. The crew will be working on them and doing manhole inspections for the next few months.
- I have received the quote on replacing the spray pump. It is estimated to cost \$11,300 with a 12–14-week lead time.
- I would like to purchase a 55-gallon drum of chlorine to do a cost /benefit analysis on switching to liquid from pellets. A drum delivered costs \$250. We currently spend approximately \$8600 a year on pellets, and we need two pumps/injection systems that last about 15 years and cost about \$20,000 each

**Treasurer's Report:** There were no comments or questions on the financial statements Deana Covio-Clarke presented to the Prudential Committee.

**Ordinance Update:** Krzeminski stated the amended ordinance has been in effect since April 9, 2023.

**Old Business:** Abatement hearing will be scheduled after the Annual Meeting. The 2021 draft of the audit of Financial Statements and Schedule from Love/Cody is complete. Westby made a motion to approve the draft with changes as the final draft. Seconded by Stone. Motion passed.

**New Business:** A letter from Joseph Messina concerning a bill will be discussed in the executive session.

**Executive Session:** Edwards made a motion to go into executive session at 11:05 to discuss legal matters. Seconded by Prial. Motion passed. The Prudential Committee came out of executive session at 12:04.

**Decisions:** The Prudential Committee authorized James Valente to write letters to four letters for collection of debt owed to North Branch.

The PC asked Krzeminski to inform all those customers who attended the meeting, concerning bill adjustments, to start the procedures to come before the Board of Abatement.

Montello adjourned the meeting at 12:10.

Respectfully submitted,  
*Helen Krzeminski*  
Helen Krzeminski  
Assistant Clerk

The next, regular meeting of NBFD#1's Prudential Committee is on June 14, 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](http://www.northbranchfiredistrict.com).