

**Joint Meeting of the Water & Sewer Commission
And the Electric Utility Commission
Meeting Minutes, February 6, 2023**

Roll Call: Steve Fitzhugh, Dennis Donahue, John Stevens, Charlie Morse. Others present: Town Manager Jeff Schulz, Interim Utility Superintendent Jim Russo, Sarah Wolfe, and Gerard LaVarney

The meeting started at 6:30 PM.

Meeting of the Electric Commission

Sarah Wolfe, EV Charging Stations

Sarah Wolfe of the Northfield Energy Committee stated that she recently attended a Select Board meeting to present materials on the installation of an electric vehicle charger in the Downtown, and asked the Select Board to fund approximately \$5,600 of the project cost with ARPA funds. The same materials were provided to Utility Commission.

Sarah stated that the EV Charger proposal outlines four charger options with cost estimates and she is recommending a proposal from SemaConnect/Blink Charging based on price and recommendations. One of the options includes a residential type charger whereby the Committee envisions Northfield Electric subsidizing the electric power costs and the Town maintaining the station.

Sarah noted that the Select Board had several questions regarding the project, including: ownership, cost and required changes to the sidewalks, curbing and street. Also, the Select Board appeared in favor of the installation of an EV Charger in the Downtown along Wall Street.

The Utility Commissioners discussed the issues mentioned at the Select Board and generally were supportive of an EV Charger in the Downtown. Charlie Morse raised the topic ownership of the EV charger and suggested the Electric Utility own it. The elected Utility Commissioners stated their opposition to NED owning the EV Charger based on their opinion that the electric ratepayers should not subsidize EV chargers.

Next, Charlie Morse suggested that the Energy Committee consider locating the charger behind the Legion in the municipal parking lot especially since the electrical infrastructure will be upgraded with bridge the project.

Next, John Stevens stated a need to consider the potential impact of the traffic detour as part of the bridge replacement project as it will result in the temporary elimination of

parking on one side of Wall Street. Dennis Donahue noted a concern regarding the winter parking ban.

Sarah, the Commissioners and the Town Manager agreed get answers to the outstanding questions, which include the retail sales of electricity for EV charges, whether EV chargers require a zoning permit, insurance coverage, and ADA issues. Sarah will then revise the Energy Commission's report and resubmit to the Select Board.

Minutes from Previous Meeting

Motion by Charlie Morse, second by Dennis Donahue, to approve the minutes of the December 5, 2022 meeting. Motion passed 4-0.

Upcoming Electric Projects

Steve Fitzhugh noted that NED's electric load in 2022 increased by about one percent, which is about 30 million kilowatts.

Next, Steve noted that the State of VT recently informed VPPSA that they will be receiving \$5,000,000 for its members utilities to upgrade their metering system to smart meter technology. Northfield is expected to receive approximately \$450,000 from the grant, and with the \$500,000 in the electric department's CIP budget, we can deploy smart meters this fall or early next year. We will be working with VPPSA over the next few months to plan for the upgrade.

VPPSA has launched a new web-site that will simplify the information on rebates for the purchase of electrical items as heat pumps, electric vehicles and other items.

VPPSA has asked each of its members if they want VPPSA to do an electric rate analysis. The analysis will not obligate NED to seek a rate change from the Public Utility Commission. However, it has been ten years since NED has had a rate change and it is prudent to review the rates at this time. We have asked VPPSA to perform the rate analysis for NED.

The 35 Kv line that connects to Norwich and is in a floodplain, should be relocated outside the floodplain. Now that a building on the freight yard property, which was in the way of the project, has been removed the project can proceed. The project will require a 248 permit from the PUC.

Also, the battery storage project on King Street is moving forward and Steve and the Town Manager will be working with VPPSA to advance the project. The project will lower NED's costs through peak shaving.

Charlie Morse asked about security measures to protect NED against possible attacks similar to what happened to electric utilities and substations throughout the US. Steve responded that cameras are the best protection and that he is working with GMP and VPPSA on quotes and information on cameras for the NED.

Electric Department Budget Status Reports

Jeff Schulz presented a NED budget status report for period ending January 31, (the 58% point of the year). Jeff noted that NED's financial status remains solid with revenues exceeding estimates and expenditures below budget. In addition, NED has a properly funded CIP and adequate reserve funds.

Total NED revenues exceed budget projections and are at 63% received, and energy sales are at 62% received.

The total electric expenditures are 46% spent with power purchase at 45% spent, administration at 57 % sent and outside service at 46%.

Water Sewer Commission

Project Updates

Main Street Stormwater Abatement and CSO Elimination Project

Jeff noted that just prior to the Main Street Stormwater Abatement and CSO Elimination project winter shut down, the contractor added center line striping on Main Street for safety measures. Unfortunately, due to the winter conditions, the line has disappeared and the engineer and contractor are unable to identify adequate options for redoing the line.

The contractor will return in the spring to finish work on South Main and then fully pave the entire project area. In addition, the contractor will complete the remaining stormwater line work on the side streets.

Main Street Water Line and Tank Replacement Project

Jeff Schulz noted that the final engineering for the Main Street Water line and tank replacement is completed and the engineer has submitted the plans and cost estimate to the Town and the State. The total project cost is approximately \$7,500,000 with the Main Street line estimated at \$3,700,000. The plan is to have the engineer present the plans to the Utility Commission in the near future.

Other Business

Jeff Schulz stated that as discussed previously, the State of Vermont has raised concerns regarding increased copper levels at the sewer plant. In response, and at the insistence of the State, we hired an engineer to assist with addressing the issue. Based upon discussions with the engineer and State, we have made adjustments at the plant and slightly increased chemical usage. Fortunately, the effort has brought the sewer plant into compliance and did not result in a significant cost increase. Thank you to Jim Russo for his work on this effort.

Water and Sewer Department Budget Status Reports

The water budgets also are on a good track with the total revenues exceeding projections at 63% collected. Also, the residential and nonresidential water sales are exceeding projections. Jeff added that he is especially pleased to report that the nonresidential sales (which include Norwich) have recovered after two years and are currently at 63% collected. Water Department expenditures are generally on track at 59% expended.

The sewer budgets also are on a good path with total revenues exceeding budget projection for this point in the year. Similar to water revenues, the nonresidential revenues are recovering and exceeding projections.

The sewer budget expenditures are on target at 58% expended. The line item we are most closely monitoring is chemicals due to price increases and the need for higher chemical use at the sewer plant due to the State's concerns about copper levels. Fortunately, the chemical line item thus far exceeds budget by only 3%.

Motion by Charlie Morse, second by Steve Fitzhugh to adjourn the Joint Meeting of the Electric and the Water/Sewer Commission. **Motion passed 4-0.**

Jeff Schulz, Town Manager