

Town of Northfield, Vermont
Joint Meeting of the Water & Sewer Commission
And the Electric Utility Commission
Meeting Minutes, June 5, 2023

Roll Call: Steve Fitzhugh, Dennis Donahue, John Stevens, Charlie Morse. Others present: Town Manager Jeff Schulz, Utility Superintendent Jim Russo.

The meeting started at 6:30 PM.

Minutes from Previous Meeting

Motion by Charlie Morse, second by Dennis Donahue, to approve the minutes of the April 3, 2023, meeting. Steve Fitzhugh noted a point of clarification regarding Charlie Morse's question asking if the most recent outages this past winter involved both transmission lines. Steve clarified that the issues were not related to the transmission lines. In addition, Steve added that if there was an issue with one of the transmission lines, the other line would back feed the system. **The motion was approved 4-0 as amended.**

FY 23/24 Electric Budget

Jeff Schulz stated that he provided the Commission with the same copy of the FY 23/24 electric budget as from the last meeting with no changes. Jeff noted that the Electric Department is facing a shortfall of nearly \$630,000 due to an increase in purchase power costs, wages, benefits, and VPPSA costs. In addition, last year's budget included the use of \$150,000 in surplus funds. Also, this year, purchase power costs are increasing by \$315,590 (9.4%). The proposed FY 23/24 Electric Budget includes the use of \$155,000 in surplus funds and the transfer of CIP funds from two projects (land purchase and the Cabot project) that are not moving forward.

Next Steve Fitzhugh presented to the Commission a revised CIP. Steve discussed the changes that include: moving the \$150,000 from Land Purchase to Capacitor Bank Update and moving the \$150,000 Cabot Expansion funds to the battery storage project. In addition, Steve noted that funds should be added for the make ready work associated with the Main Street Bridge. That work is estimated to cost \$140,000 – the State will fund a portion of that work as it is being done because of the bridge. In addition, Steve stated that \$150,000 is needed for the capacitor bank work.

Jeff summarized the changes stating that \$150,000 from the Land purchase and \$150,000 from the Cabot Expansion is to be transferred to cover the O&M shortfall. Next, transfer \$70,000 from the Terry Hill to the make Route 12 Bridge make ready work, transfer \$150,000 from Terry Hill transferred to capacitor bank, and transfer \$55,000 from Terry Hill to solar make ready work.

Motion by Charlie Morse, second by Dennis Donahue to approve the FY 23/24 Electric Budget as presented and amended. Motion passed 4-0.

Other Projects

Steve noted that work is continuing on the relocation of the electric utility poles from the Dog River Park to the Freight Yard Way property. The project will require approval by the PUC, and as part of the process, an environmental assessment will be required. Steve is working with a consulting firm (VHB) to do the work. They are preparing a proposal for the study.

Water Sewer Commission

Project Updates

Jeff Schulz noted that the contractor for the Main Street Stormwater and Combined Sewer Overflow Project is currently installing the stormwater crossing lines and catch basins on Main Street. Next week, the contractor plans to begin removing the existing concrete under the pavement on Main Street with the goal of paving Main Street by July 4. The contractor will then complete the stormwater lines and basins on Elm, Prospect and Highland with a goal of completing that work by August.

Next, Jeff noted that the VT Department Environmental Conservation will be conducting a sanitary survey of the water system this week. This is annual survey of the system.

Next, Jim Russo noted that they are purchasing a new skid stir to replace the tractor and it should arrive within 90 days.

Jeff Schulz stated that Martha Mahan has submitted a letter to the Select Board seeking funds for the replacement of the six-inch water line on Freight Yard Way. The Board has discussed the request and is seeking more information regarding ownership of line and has asked the Utility Commission to comment on the request.

Charlie Morse and John Stevens noted support for the Town or Utility Commission funding the project. Charlie added that the recent VCRD and other planning efforts advocate for economic development of Downtown and specifically the Freight Yard Way. Steve Fitzhugh and Dennis Donahue stated that the Utility or the Town should consider funding the request if there are current or solid future development plans on the property that would generate additional revenue for the Water Utility. Steve added that the Utility Commission does not currently have the funds in a CIP to fund the project. However, if future development plans on the property where to generate a reasonable amount of revenue, the Utility Commission stated that it may want to bond for the project.

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

Jeff Schulz, Town Manager