

**Joint Meeting of the Northfield Electric
and Water & Wastewater Commissions
Minutes of January 6, 2025**

Roll Call: Dennis Donahue, Steve Fitzhugh, John Stevens, and Charlie Morse. Also present were Town Manager Jeff Schulz, Utility Superintendent James Russo, and Gerard LaVarnway.

The meeting started at 6:31 p.m.

Approval of Minutes from Previous Meeting.

Motion by Mr. Fitzhugh, seconded by Mr. Donahue, to approve the minutes of the November 4, 2024 meeting. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

Meeting of the Electric Commission

Northfield Electric Department Upcoming Projects

King Street Battery Storage Project. Mr. Fitzhugh said we are still working with the private business Lightshift (formerly Delorean Power) on the details of their interconnection agreement with the Northfield Electric Department (NED). Lightshift did attempt to shift more liability to NED in this agreement but Mr. Fitzhugh said we have been resisting that. He added that we are now in the final stages of reaching an agreement.

Nantanna Mill Hydroelectric Facility. Mr. Fitzhugh said we had a meeting in December with representatives from the Quebec-based company (Charbone Corporation) that purchased this facility a few years ago. An agreement was reached so that Charbone can test the facility output this coming spring in order to determine whether any repairs need to be made to bring the energy production up to full capacity. The facility now has two (2) 100kw generators and Charbone also is interested in having a study performed by Green Mountain Power (GMP) to see if the generators can be upgraded to 300kw. Mr. Fitzhugh said this project now seems to be moving forward after several delays.

Mr. Morse left the meeting at this time.

Smart Meters. Mr. Fitzhugh and Mr. Russo are working on preparing a final spreadsheet regarding all the “make ready” work that needs to be done for this. This will include utility pole replacement and/or reconfiguration. The date collection units should be delivered before the end of February. The water units can be installed for testing this spring but the electric meters need to be sent to a Vermont Public Power Supply Authority (VPPSA) facility in Swanton for testing. We should have all the smart meters installed and operational by this autumn.

Norwich University (NU) Subtransmission Alignment. As previously discussed, a utility pole near the Dog River needs to be relocated for safety concerns. Mr. Fitzhugh said the environmental study for the new location will be conducted this spring. As a result, the pole relocation probably won’t happen until this summer, which is probably better since the students will be gone at that time.

Main Street Bridge Replacement Project. Ms. Fitzhugh said the bridge replacement is now scheduled for the summer of 2026 so in the coming year the utility departments will be working on relocating utility lines underground, etc. Most of this work will be done south of the bridge but a utility pole near the Dollar General will have to be removed. Mr. Fitzhugh said that the number of hours municipal employees spend on this work will be tabulated so that the municipality can be reimbursed later by the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans).

NU Cyber Fusion Center. Mr. Fitzhugh said NU has all the permits in place for this project except for the environmental study, which is taking a little longer because several years ago there was a gas station located on the project site. When this study has been completed, NU will be requesting that some utility lines in the area be relocated. Mr. Fitzhugh suggested that some of the rental equipment for this underground work also could be employed on the bridge project.

Technology Roadmap. Mr. Fitzhugh said that a VPPSA consultant met recently with him, Manager Schulz, Mr. Russo, and Utility Office Manager Doug Reed about utility technology that NED has already implemented and what could be done in the near future once the smart meters are operational. Mr. Fitzhugh returned the roadmap proposal to VPPSA with some comments.

Budget Status Reports. Manager Schulz said we are now halfway through the current fiscal year and NED revenue is now at about 49.4%. NED expenditures are at about 30% for the fiscal year so finances are in good shape with no red flags. Mr. Fitzhugh said much depends on the upcoming state legislative session. However, with the supermajority now gone, he doesn't expect any new renewable energy requirements in the near future.

Other Business. Manager Schulz noted that one of the terms of the elected Electric Commissioners will be expiring on Town Meeting Day (03/04/25). Mr. Donahue said he does plan to run for reelection.

Meeting of the Water & Wastewater Commission

Northfield Water & Sewer Department Upcoming Projects

Main Street Waterline and Reservoir Replacement Project. Manager Schulz said the contractor for the waterline replacement project (J. Hutchins, Inc., Richmond VT) is very anxious to get started on this project and will soon be purchasing the pipe needed. This will be stored on municipal property prior to installation, which should start this spring. Manager Schulz also has been in contact with Preload (Louisville, KY), who will be installing the water tank replacement on Cheney Farm. They will be purchasing their materials soon as well so this project also seems to be right on track. Mr. Donahue asked how much new waterline will be installed. Mr. Russo said about six thousand feet (6,000').

Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF) Twenty-Year Reevaluation. Manager Schulz said the reevaluation has been completed and forwarded to the State of Vermont, which might ask for additional information. Fortunately, it doesn't seem any major upgrades will be required in the next five (5) years. However, we probably should start budgeting for the possibility of costly upgrades after then.

Lead-Lined Pipe Inventory. Manager Schulz said the inventory was provided to the State of Vermont some time ago and we are now receiving \$60,000 to reimburse the time and expense of the utility crew that performed the work. He noted this was unanticipated revenue for the Water and Sewer departments.

WWTF Update. Mr. Russo said the facility is operating well and they are starting to address some of the minor concerns that the recent reevaluation discovered. He added that the facility is meeting all state and federal operating requirements, such as maintaining the proper level of phosphorus removal, etc.

WWTF Sludge Removal. Mr. Donahue asked if the sludge removal process is still working well. Mr. Russo said they are now working on a new contract with the Canadian company that transports the WWTF sludge north of the border. Manager Schulz said the company provided options for a one-, two-, or three-year contract. Due to the lack of alternatives, Manager Schulz and Mr. Russo both felt the three-year contract would be preferable. When the proposed contract has been provided, it would be shared with the Utility Commissioners for their review and comment. Manager Schulz said there probably would be slight cost increase over the current contract. He added that the contractor had said the Northfield utility crew have been very easy to work with when they arrive to collect the sludge. Mr. Russo said it usually takes them about forty-five (45) minutes to collect about thirty (30) tons of sludge.

New Apartment Units. Manager Schulz noted that there are plans to convert the former Masonic temple on South Main Street into fifteen (15) units this year. This will require putting in a new waterline and the property owner will cover this cost. In addition, a new apartment complex with about thirty (30) units will be built on the vacant lot next to the Dollar General this coming summer. In both cases, this additional electric, water, and sewer usage will provide additional revenue for the utility departments.

Budget Status Reports. Manager Schulz said Water Department revenue is about 49% of the projected amount halfway through the current fiscal year. Expenditures are at about 47% so the budget projections were quite accurate. The amounts for Sewer Department revenue and expenditure are about the same. Manager Schulz noted that chemical costs to date are about thirty percent (30%) of the budgeted amount. Mr. Russo said he is trying to use purchased chemicals more efficiently while still meeting state and federal requirements. Manager Schulz thought this was quite commendable as there had been serious concerns about the rising costs of chemicals in recent years.

Other Business. Manager Schulz noted that Mr. Fitzhugh's term as an elected Water & Wastewater Commissioner also will be expiring this coming March.

Adjournment. Motion by Mr. Donahue, seconded by Mr. Fitzhugh, to adjourn. **Motion passed 3-0-0.**

The Board adjourned at 7:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk