

**Joint Meeting of the Northfield Electric
and Water & Wastewater Commissions
Minutes of December 1, 2025**

Roll Call. Utility Commissioners Dennis Donahue, Steve Fitzhugh, Michael Kelley, John Stevens, and Charlie Morse. Also present were Town Manager Jeff Schulz, Utility Superintendent James Russo (6:50 p.m.), and Gerard LaVarnway.

The meeting started at 6:36 p.m.

Approval of Minutes from Previous Meeting.

Motion by Mr. Donahue, seconded by Mr. Morse, to approve the October 13, 2025 meeting minutes.

Motion passed 4-0-1, with Mr. Fitzhugh abstaining.

Meeting of the Electric Commission

Northfield Electric Department (NED) Upcoming Projects

Vermont System Planning Committee (VSPC). Mr. Fitzhugh is asking for the commission members to support the appointment of VPPSA Regulatory Specialist John Abbott to serve as Northfield's alternate representative to the VSPC. Mr. Fitzhugh now serves as Northfield's VSPC primary representative and would like Mr. Abbott to be able to take his place whenever he cannot attend one of their meetings. Motion by Mr. Morse, seconded by Mr. Fitzhugh, to appoint John Abbott as Northfield's VSPC alternate representative.
Motion passed 5-0-0.

Grid Resiliency Grant. Mr. Fitzhugh noted that Northfield received a grant through the State of Vermont that is designed to provide funds so utility companies can upgrade their distribution systems. Mr. Fitzhugh believes these funds should be used for tree trimming and underground maintenance work for the utility lines on Turkey Hill, Water Street, and Dole Hill. Manager Schulz said there is a local match for this grant but it is "in-kind" only so it can be offset through employee workhours, etc. These funds will be well used to improve the reliability of the NED distribution system.

Norwich University (NU) Cyber Fusion Center. Mr. Fitzhugh said that this new building will be provided a new transformer any time now. The underground work needed to connect it to the NED system will need to be completed by next March.

Smart Meters. Mr. Fitzhugh said that MUNIS is still working on upgrading the NED software to accommodate the new smart meters. Once this has been completed, it will be possible to test the system by installing a few smart meters to make sure the data collectors can talk to each other. Once the system has passed this test, a contractor will swap out the old standard utility meters for the new smart meters. Manager Schulz believes the smart meter deployment will take place next March. The public information campaign for Northfield utility customers will start in a few weeks.

NED Rate Case. Mr. Fitzhugh understands that the Public Utility Commission (PUC) granted the full rate increase amount (15.5%) that NED requested. He has not seen the documentation yet for this decision. It is possible that the new rates can be put in place for the NED bills that will go out later this month. Mr. Fitzhugh said the fact that PUC approved the full increase amount indicates to him that NED submitted a well-written request and that NED is considered a well-run public utility that serves its customers well. Mr. Donahue said it didn't hurt that this was the first rate increase NED has requested in fifteen (15) years.

Trans-Video Sale. Mr. Donahue asked if the pending sale of Trans-Video to Comcast will have any impact on NED, which hosts Trans-Video service cables on its utility poles. Mr. Fitzhugh said the only change will be that the pole attachment fee that Trans-Video had been paying the NED will in future be paid by Comcast.

Utility Superintendent James Russo arrived at this time.

NED Right-of-Way on NU Property. Mr. Stevens asked about the existence of a NED ROW on the property that NU would like to transfer to the municipality in return for Center Park. Mr. Fitzhugh said that NED probably would want to retain this ROW in case it is needed in future. As for the utility pole connected to the NU substation that was damaged by a rainstorm a couple years ago, Mr. Fitzhugh said the railroad has refused to allow access through its property in order to install upgrades in order to strengthen its support. Given this, Mr. Fitzhugh has submitted paperwork to PUC that will allow new poles to be installed to create an alternate power distribution route and this bypass the problem utility pole.

King Street Battery Storage Project. Manager Schulz has been in contact with the developers for this project. They plan to inspect the dilapidated structure that is planned for demolition to see if there are any asbestos problems, etc. Manager Schulz does not have a timeframe for the building's razing. He added that there are some stormwater concerns in this area that Mr. Russo will need to look into before the structure is removed.

Meeting of the Water & Wastewater Commission

Northfield Water & Sewer Department Upcoming Projects

Main Street Waterline Installation Project. Manager Schulz said the waterline installation on Main Street has been completed and the area south of the Main Street Bridge has been repaved curb-to-curb. The road north of the bridge was only patch paved but will be repaved in the spring. The work on Byam Hill and Hill Street had to be suspended due to winter weather but it will be completed next spring.

Cheney Field Water Tank Replacement Project. Manager Schulz said the tank has been fully installed but its outside surface will need to be painted next spring. The site restoration also will be done next spring. Mr. Russo said we now have the permits in place to bring the tank online soon. Mr. Donahue asked how long it would take to fill the tank. Mr. Russo said about ten (10) days as the tank will hold 500,000 gallons and that is a lot of water.

Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF) Update. Manager Schulz has seen that the cost of sludge management has increased recently. Mr. Russo said that three (3) loads of sludge were sent out recently and that resulted in a higher than average bill.

Temporary Water Line. Mr. Stevens asked about the painting of the dividing line after the repaving the water line.. Mr. Russo said this should be done within the next couple of weeks depending on the weather. If the weather turns especially bad, the painting might have to wait until next spring..

Other Business.

Adjournment. Motion by Mr. Morse, seconded by Mr. Kelley, to adjourn. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board adjourned at 7:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk