

Joint Meeting of the Northfield Electric and Water & Wastewater Commissions Minutes of September 14, 2026

Roll Call. Utility Commissioners Tim Davis, Dennis Donahue, Steve Fitzhugh, Michael Kelley, and John Stevens. Also present were Town Manager Mary Smith, Director of Public Works James Russo, and Michael Miller.

The meeting started at 6:30 p.m.

Approval of Minutes from Previous Meeting. Motion by Mr. Donahue, seconded by Mr. Kelley, to approve the minutes of August 3, 2026. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

Meeting of the Electric Commission

Northfield Electric Department (NED) Project Status

Utility Pole Realignment Project. Mr. Fitzhugh said a \$2,500 payment still needs to be made to the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) for this project. Manager Smith is still working on getting permission from the railroad to cross their tracks. Mr. Fitzhugh said it would be good to perform a scheduled Norwich University (NU) campus outage during Thanksgiving week when the campus is largely empty. Old transformers could be removed at the same time.

Grid Resiliency Grant. Mr. Fitzhugh said the Department of Energy had several questions about the upgrade work to be done along Water Street with these grant funds. They seemed to be satisfied with the answers provided. We now have to get a conditional use permit from the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation since the project work would be done in a flood plain. Mr. Fitzhugh and Mr. Russo will attend a meeting about this next week (09/24/26).

King Street Battery Storage Project. Mr. Fitzhugh said the energy storage agreement between the project contractor (Lightshift) and Green Mountain Power (GMP) has been completed but a similar agreement with NED also needs to be finalized. Mr. Russo said GMP has installed new utility poles, reclosers, etc. The new transformer is onsite but not yet installed. GMP will schedule this with Lightshift in the near future.

Main Street Bridge Replacement Project. Mr. Fitzhugh said the overhead utility lines near the worksite have been removed in anticipation of the bridge replacement project next year. Mr. Russo said the utility lines that feed East Street still need to be removed.

Norwich University (NU) Cyber Fusion Center. Mr. Fitzhugh said the building is now in full operation. He added that NU has another big project planned that would upgrade the southern entrance to campus from Vermont Route 12. That might require some utility pole relocation but no specific requests have yet been made.

NED System Upgrades. Mr. Russo said there have been several recent requests to have power service upgrades installed. There also has been a request to install a line extension for a new residence on Turkey Hill Road. Mr. Russo doesn't have the details yet but he understands that there will be a request to install three-phase power at 57 Freight Yard Way. This would be for six (6) new two-bedroom apartments. Mr. Fitzhugh doesn't think three-phase service would be required for this usage. Manager Smith suggested that they might be thinking of installing fast electric vehicle (EV) chargers at this location. Another possibility could be the installation of heat pumps. Mr. Russo said he still needs to hear from the project developer, who would be responsible for all the upgrade costs.

Smart Meters. Mr. Fitzhugh is obtaining estimates for outsourcing the smart meter installation process. He then will check with the Vermont Public Power Supply Authority (VPPSA) about how much they would be willing to provide to cover this cost. Mr. Fitzhugh added that Utility Office Manager Doug Reed is now working with MUNIS to get the new smart meter software integrated with the current municipal accounting system.

Meeting of the Water & Wastewater Commission

Northfield Water & Sewer Department Project Status

Main Street Waterline Installation Project. Mr. Russo said the project contractor is supposed to be in town later this week in order to start competing the project completion punch list.

Cross Brothers Dam Removal. Mr. Russo said the dam removal has been completed and all went well with the process.

Main Street Bridge Replacement Project. Mr. Russo said the project contractors are supposed to be in Northfield by the end of this month in order to complete preparations for next year's bridge replacement. They have a little more time to perform some onsite work before late fall/winter sets in.

Cheney Field Water Tank Replacement Project. Mr. Russo said this project has been completed but we still need to put an alarm system on the new water tank. He will obtain some quotes in the next week. If permanent public parking is ever installed near the water tank, then fencing will need to be installed to prevent vandalism, etc. If not, the alarm system should be sufficient.

Water & Sewer Department Vacancies. Mr. Russo said one of the two (2) vacancies in the department was recently filled. The new employee (Tyler Renaud) will start attending water system training sessions next week. He also will be attending smart meter school next spring with Peter J. DeMasi.

Other Business.

NU Campus Alarm System Testing. Mr. Kelley noted that NU will be testing its new emergency alarm system next week. The current alarm system cannot be heard over the entire campus.

Departmental Budget Process. Mr. Kelley asked when the commission members could start getting information for the next fiscal year budget. Mr. Fitzhugh said the process usually begins in the springtime after Town Meeting Day.

NU Campus Water Meters. Mr. Russo said the current water meters on the NU campus will be converted to smart meters in the near future. Also, since the NU employee who did the on-campus meter reads has gone elsewhere, Mr. Russo will perform the meter reads himself in the interim.

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

The Board adjourned at 7:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk