

Minutes of South Alburgh Fire District #2 meeting June 18, 2025

Attending: John Fitzgerald, Alton Bruso, Kathy Rochedieu, John Chesarek

Public: Tom Jacobsen

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm by chairman John Fitzgerald. No adjustments were made to the agenda. Tonight's agenda is in a new format which John F. hopes will help the committee get its business done more quickly.

The minutes of the May 21st meeting were reviewed. John C felt the statement concerning "*Alton raised objections to decisions the Prudential Committee made unanimously during a face-to-face meeting in between scheduled meetings*" was quite vague and he requested clarification. It was explained that although May 1st was voted by the committee as the date for the start of \$2500 as the required amount for new Phase 2 hookups, Chairman Fitzgerald continued to accept \$1500 after that date. The "*face to face meeting*" mentioned in the minutes, was held on May 11, attended by all three committee members, and concluded again that \$2500 would be the only amount accepted for new hookups. Alton's objections were to the acceptance of \$1500 after the May 1st deadline and not to the decision to reinstate the \$2500 amount. It was agreed that the minutes should be adjusted to read, "*Rather than reviewing the minutes as presented by the Clerk, which specifically indicated that the application fee would be \$2500 beginning May 1, 2025, Alton raised objections to the Chair's subsequent decisions to continue accepting \$1500 up until the day the Contractor broke ground. The Chair and Kathy Rochedieu both stated Alton had participated in the discussion on May 11th, 2025, outside of a planned a meeting, where the three of us agreed that we would immediately stop accepting \$1500 and require all new applications to be charged \$2500.*" Kathy moved and John F seconded that the minutes be approved as adjusted. All committee members voted to approve.

Kathy presented the Treasurer's Report which showed movement of funds from the Phase 2 deposit account to the checking account where they were then dispersed, as required by the USDA, to pay the first bill for Phase 2 construction. Kathy stated that a second checking account will be opened in the future to handle construction project costs and state and federal loan reimbursements. Alton moved and Kathy seconded that the treasurer's report be approved. All members approved.

No warrants were presented. John F. explained that interim financing is needed to pay the early large invoices from Dirt Tech for the project. Although the state reimburses us for the project costs, it does so only after we have first paid Dirt Tech. A bid letter with Union Bank for such a loan was approved at a special meeting this past Monday. We are currently short of cash to pay the \$708,386.43 Dirt Tech bill but will be able to pay on Friday when the loan is signed. We will be able to begin paying off the loan as reimbursements from the state are received and the high initial costs begin to decrease.

Kathy presented a proposed budget for 2025/26. She provided data including 2024/25 budget to actual comparison, a table of receipts and expenditures, and work sheets regarding debt service and base rate calculations. John F. mentioned that currently there are meter issues with twelve Phase 1 users and suggested that the \$1500 budgeted may not be enough to cover repairs and new wiring needs. The amount was raised to \$3000 for *Repairs and Parts*. Judy suggested an increase in *Administrative Staff* to \$9000 to cover the 10 service hours weekly that Cheryl Dunn is currently providing gratis. This would go through the village agreement and no taxes or insurance costs would be involved. Committee members agreed this would be appropriate. Alton requested that the *Water Sales* value of \$90,000 be broken into a *Debt Service* component and an *Operating and Maintenance* component so that customers could see how the debt service amount per user would go down as the number of users increased. The other members disagreed with this suggested change. John F. moved and Kathy seconded to approve the budget with the changes agreed upon. John F. and Kathy voted to approve. Alton dissented.

For the annual meeting Kathy plans to present the new budget, a comparison of actual vs. budgeted for 2024/25, and the balance sheet. She would also like to include a presentation of Phase 2 details to inform the public about the costs of the projects and thoughts of how payments may change in the future once water is flowing.

Phase 1 updates – There were four new hookups so far this year for a total of 90 users.

Phase 2 updates – Alton reported most of Middle Road pipe laying is complete. Directional drilling has started in the wetland area and some blasting as well.

FAQs – Charlie Shelley is preparing an FAQ paper to guide the new Phase 2 users in the process involved with connecting to the system. Kathy emphasized that the committee members should review the preliminary draft and make suggestions.

Five person board discussion – John F. referenced an email from the League of Cities and Towns indicating we could increase the board if desired, but no specific legal opinion was provided. Kathy felt that more people on the board would only add to the noise. John F. agreed. Alton felt that more board members would provide more ideas. John C. thought that increasing the board size would help decrease the workload on present members and allow for consideration of issues not being cared for now because of the intense focus on Phase 2.

Public comments – Tom Jacobsen asked about how the Wagner Point properties were working to develop their connection to Phase 2. John F. recommend Tom speak with property owners in the Terrapin Lane development as they had created a system to connect multiple properties to one curb stop. John C. commented on remarks made at last month's meeting regarding Alton Bruso's

responsibility for causing time delays and cost increases. John C. pointed out that Alton's vote last spring to bid the project in sections was eventually agreed upon by the other two board members in December but by then it was too late. He asked if the other two board members should be considered responsible for costing the project one million dollars and eight months in delays. He proposed that such conjectures were not in the interest of successfully moving forward with the project, as were the comments made by a resigning board member and repeated by others.

John F. moved and Kathy seconded that the meeting be adjourned at 9:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
John Chesarek, Clerk