

SPECIAL MEETING Minutes (DRAFT)
Randolph Fire District #1
Tuesday, March 5, 2024

Attending: John Lens, John Doss, Bob Dileo, Dave Farnham, Bill DeFlorio, Trudy DeFlorio. Dana Dean participated by phone.

John Lens called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM.

The purpose of this Special Meeting was to brainstorm ideas for operational support for Randolph Fire District#1 (RFD#1) with Vermont State University (VTSU), Randolph Center Campus in preparation for the next meeting with VTSU on 3/28/2024.

The consensus was that the meeting with VTSU on 3/1/2024 was a good first step in getting the college's attention regarding the structure of the Randolph Center Water System (RCWS) and VTSU's connection and mandated obligations/responsibilities as a shared system with Randolph Fire District #1 (RFD#1). With recent staff changes at VTSU, this information needed clarification for the new employees to promote the importance of good communication and cooperation between VTSU and RFD#1.

FACTS:

1. Since 1967 RFD#1 has had an agreement with VT State Colleges for 50,000 gallons of storage in the water tower.
2. VTSU and RFD#1 are jointly responsible for managing the operations of RCWS. The Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation, Drinking Water Division recognizes Randolph Fire District #1 and VTSU as being ONE water system named Randolph Center Water System (RCWS) and has issued it the ONLY permit to operate.
3. FD#1 does not have the community volunteer resources that it used to. It is not fair nor sustainable to rely on the remaining volunteers to continue supporting operations. Population demographics across all aspects of volunteer public service nationwide have been following the same trend of fewer volunteers for many years.

GOALS:

1. The RCWS needs to be operated by a single operator for 24/7/365 coverage of the system physical operations. This includes response to breaks and other emergencies. This is required by the Vermont Drinking Water Division. This is to replace the current part-time operations support that FD#1 provides by long-time volunteers, and what VTSU provides through their on-site staff, which together are supplemented on a limited basis by P2 Environmental, Inc. contracted separately by FD#1 and VTSU Randolph for their portions of the RCWS.
2. The timeframe for instituting a single operator needs to be soon. FD#1 has been working with VTSU Randolph to secure a single operator for over four years. Multiple avenues have been explored with the Town of Randolph and private operations firms which have not developed due to a severe workforce shortage in water system operations across Vermont and beyond.

IDEAS:

The ideas offered at the meeting are summarized as follows:

1. This requires action soon. The importance of keeping the process moving was stressed.
2. The required approach is for VTSU to handle all operations of the Randolph Center Water System. This would be with financial support from RFD#1. VTSU would provide on-call staffing (24/7/365) for problems/emergencies. This would be with contracted or college staff, or a combination, at VTSU's choosing.
3. FD#1 is currently able to handle administrative operations for the FD#1 portion of the system including handling invoicing for their customers.
4. FD#1 will continue to support the Randolph Center Village community via the Prudential Committee by engaging in the management of the RCWS operations but not with the physical operations, once the operations are taken over.
5. FD#1 as a municipality provides synergies to the VTSU/FD#1 collaboration, which is the RCWS, through its status as a municipality, its relationship with the village community, including the Gifford Menig and Strode facilities, with the Town of Randolph.

FOLLOW-UP:

John Lens will contact VTSU (Mike Stevens, Assistant VP of Campus Operations/Eric Brigante, Director of Campus Operations) to provide his notes from the meeting on 3/1/2024 and request an agenda from them for the next meeting on 3/28/2024 to help with the FD's preparation for the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:07

Trudy DeFlorio, Clerk