



WITH THE FLOW

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Monthly Message

Greetings and best wishes for a safe and enjoyable summer. As I write I am reflecting on the last several months during which I have continued to evaluate, assess and review the operations and procedures that we engage in and follow. Progress has been made on many fronts but there remain challenges. One area the the board has identified as a priority and provided guidance (and oversight) on is the issue of employee overtime. And, while progress has been made in managing overtime – reduced significantly in each of the last three months - we are by no means at a point where we can become complacent or again tolerate the excessive and imbalanced use of overtime hours. My focus on the problem has been on the utilization of management systems that provide practical tools and frameworks for building consistency across seasonal cycles, account for emergency situations and are fair and impartial in the allocation of approved overtime among the available workforce. I expect training in the use of such systems to continue until every relevant manager and supervisor is competent and comfortable in the use and application of the systems. Computer systems are only as good as the people using the system make them. The old adage “Garbage in garbage out” has been proven time and time again. As I mentioned in this space last month, there will be more to come on this subject; meanwhile, I welcome comments and suggestions on the issue from anyone in the workforce. We are all stakeholders in this enterprise and hopefully we can work together toward sensible solutions.

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Issues and Goals Update

As is explained below, our vehicle fleet is in the process of being modernized and reconfigured. Other recent developments include:

- The new customer service representative is on the job and helping to improve response time to emergencies, inquiries and complaints.
- The dedicated and highly visible hydrant truck will be formally introduced into service on July 7.
- Clark Patterson Lee engineering consultants are continuing a program to address the high percentage loss of treated water.
- A grant application was filed on June 23 with the New York State Environmental Facilities Corp. seeking funding participation in the \$400,000 Bollier Avenue waterline and lead service replacement project. Appreciation is extended to Mayor Dyster, County Legislator Mark Grozio and City Council members Kristen Grandinetti and Andrew Touma for their expressions of support for the project.
- Board action was taken to designate Keller Insurance Group of Niagara Falls as the NFWB broker of record.
- As is described below, On June 26 the board approved funding for leadership training and development.

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Fleet Update

One of my initial objectives upon becoming Executive Director of the NFWB was to review all vehicles needs from the perspective of need, proper utilization, fleet age, and maintenance costs. I asked Bob Drury to assist in this effort and we now have a comprehensive plan that we are moving forward on. I'm confident that the needed "modernization" of the fleet will provide safer vehicles, enhance the public perception of NFWB, lower fuel and maintenance expenditures and insure that the use of the vehicles remains in conformance with established policies.

As of last week we have leased 10 new vehicles off of the current NY State contract, all of which should be in service before the second week of July. The contract with Enterprise Fleet Management includes the acquisition of two Ford Fusion "Energi" efficient sedans, Six Ford F150 Eco Boost pick-up trucks and two Ford F250 Super Duty pick-up trucks. The agreement also includes scheduled maintenance and periodic Ford authorized individual vehicle analysis. This reconstituted table of equipment, and the turn-in of 10 well over the hill vehicles, each with a costly maintenance history, will reduce the total fleet age from over an average per vehicle of 12 years to an average vehicle age closer to 6 years. Planned future acquisitions should

reduce the age to nearer to 5 years. A key feature of the lease is the "remarketing" provision which, when exercised in 5 years via the open market sale of the vehicles with a portion of the proceeds earmarked for NFWB, will, when combined with other built-in expense reduction measures, save NFWB approximately \$300,000 over the lease period.

The tracking feature on each vehicle consists of a Verizon provided GPS system which will afford safer operation, hi-tech mechanical diagnosis, and tracking of the speed, location and other operational characteristics. It is our obligation to maintain the fleet in good order, to understand how each vehicle is being used and to insist that such usage be in conformance with established policies. A GPS system can help NFWB react effectively to field situations we encounter. Knowing where our vehicles are allows NFWB to send the closest vehicle to an emergency event, thereby reacting efficiently to customer concerns.

Finally, I was pleased to see this note from Enterprise: "Enterprise Fleet Management provides expertise in all aspects of fleet management – from vehicle acquisition and registration to maintenance and remarketing – to government agencies throughout the country," said Shane Partiss, Enterprise Fleet Management Account Executive. "Thanks to the efforts and confidence of NFWB Superintendent of Operations Bob Drury, we're thrilled to add the Niagara Falls Water Board to our list of government partners."



Leadership Training and Development Program

Since my arrival at NFWB earlier this year I have been working on a request to the board for approval to undertake a comprehensive system wide Professional Development Program. I am pleased to announce that at its June 26, 2017 meeting the board approved the concept and funding for such a program. The project I envision will be specifically tailored to our needs and designed to improve the skill set and effectiveness of our staff of tactical and strategic leaders.

A detailed program will be unveiled during July and will contain at least the following themes:

- A method of determining which leadership attributes a person already possesses and areas for improvement.
- Task and conflict management and crisis control.
- Improving communication skills and becoming a more trusted and credible leader.
- Creating collaborative work environments with more energy and self-reliance.
- Increasing effectiveness in setting goals, providing clear direction, and listening.
- Enhancing accountability, improving performance, and ensuring execution.

I look forward to finalizing a program and moving forward in the very near future.

Hydrant Van



Hydrant Van put in service as Mayor Dyster joined NFWB staff at the van "launch" on July 7. Left to right, Superintendent of Operations Bob Drury, Executive Director Rolfe Porter, NFWB Chairman Dan O'Callaghan, Mayor Paul Dyster, foremen Bill Wright and Mike Eagler, Administrative Director Jim Perry and outside crew member Max Greco.



Feedback

As always, your comments or suggestions on the subjects in this newsletter or other areas of interest are welcome and encouraged. Please contact me via email, phone or stop in to my office, if I'm not there say hello to Ericka and make an appointment to come back and see me.

Thank you and best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "RP".

RP

