

Minutes of the Meeting of
Quonochontaug Central Beach Fire District
Board of Governors
July 17, 2025
Charlestown Police Department
Meeting Room
4901 Old Post Rd, Charlestown, RI 02813

Members in attendance: Mark Alperin, Renee Cohen, Bob Frazier, Charlie Freedgood, Julie Low, Ray Martino, Barry Okun, Ron Ruel, Bill Wilson and Debbie Dupre

Also in attendance were Al Bartosic, Chris Licht and Roy Jacobsen.

1. Call to Order/Moderator's Opening Remarks: **Moderator, Charlie Freedgood**

Charlie called the meeting to order at 8:15am and thanked everyone for attending.

2. Approval of the Minutes: **Clerk, Debbie Dupre**

There were no edits or comments to the June 14, 2025 draft minutes. A **motion** was made to approve the draft minutes. The **motion** was **seconded and passed** with all in attendance voting in favor (the Moderator, who under the District's By-Laws only votes in the case of a tie).

Debbie reminded the committee chairs and managers to please submit their Annual Meeting Packet reports by August 11, 2025. She highlighted the compressed timetable and steps necessary to finalize the Annual Meeting agenda and the broader packet between now and August 31, 2025, the date (in accordance with the QCBFD bylaws) when the packet must be submitted to the Community. Charlie reminded the Board that any items not included in the packet will not be on the agenda for the Annual Meeting scheduled for September 13, 2025.

3. Moderator's Report: **Moderator, Charlie Freedgood**

Charlie raised the issue of unwanted solicitation in the District and asked whether the Board wanted to consider enacting rules around who can solicit and how. Julie, who had originally raised the topic, had consulted with Charlestown police, and they stated that permits allowing solicitation are issued by the Town and not the police. Bill asked whether the permit was for the town of Charlestown or specific to the District. The police suggested that homeowners can put up a sign and/or the District can add signs prohibiting solicitation at each of the entrances. Charlie suggested that we check with counsel on the impact of placing a no-solicitation sign at each entrance. After discussion, the Board agreed to revisit the issue asking for more information from the Police and counsel as well as pricing for signage.

Charlie also reported that our website platform provider will discontinue service beginning on December 1, 2025. He asked for candidate suggestions to help QCBFD locate an alternative website host provider. This issue will be put on the next agenda, though the short time limit compelled raising early.

4. Treasurer's Report: **Treasurer, Ray Martino**

Ray walked the Board through the tax assessment procedure for the District. Discussion ensued around how the tax collection billing is done, clarifying that the District tax is collected in arrears. Ray will launch the tax assessment process with the Tax Assessors immediately.

5. Summer Construction:

Renee asked that summer construction agenda item be addressed before the committee reports. She then reported that the task force consulted with counsel who explained that the District has limited power and can regulate and enforce rules principally related to taxation, fire protection, promoting the safety of inhabitants and protection of community property.

The ability to pass and enforce a ban against construction during the summer is likely outside the powers delegated to the District. Instead, it was recommended that the District could either petition the Charlestown town council to enact an ordinance applicable to the district and/or amend the district Charter to grant it powers to enforce these kinds of rules. Though the task force had considered other alternatives, none of those seemed to fit within the existing district powers. Ultimately, the community must choose if it is interested in pursuing the issue and thus direct the BoG accordingly. Part of this discussion must include the determination as to whether the identified alternatives do not create too high an obstacle to enactment. As an alternative, Chris Licht explained that in Connecticut a nearby town council enacted a summer construction ban with associated penalty fees as part of their permitting process and suggested that we explore something similar for Charlestown. Several issues were raised, for instance that the Charlestown process was applicable to all permitting in the town and not isolated to a particular community. It is also unclear how changes to the permitting process are established within Charlestown and whether this issue could be incorporated into its criteria. Chris agreed to contact a member of the Charlestown permitting body in order to get more insight on these issues as well as locate a comparable model of an existing summer construction permitting regulation and report back to the Board at a future meeting.

6. Committee Chairs' Reports:

Finance and Budget:

Barry Okun, Chair

Barry reported, having completed a review of the first six months of financials, that the District's finances are in good shape, with plenty of cash available to carry QCBFD through the tax collection period without drawing on the available line of credit. The 2026 budgeting process has begun, and he hopes to propose a draft 2026 budget at the next meeting. Barry explained that non-standard expenditures are handled on a case-by-case basis and that relatedly, reserves are held in a separate account segregated from the operating accounts.

Barry provided an update on the water project financing and confirmed that the federal grant from the EPA had been awarded for the project. Barry indicated that there are ongoing discussions with the EPA and RIIB to understand how to best optimize the available funding sources within the constraints applicable to the respective commitments. Barry continued that the grant award would be audited upon project completion and that there is a risk that the project could be found to be non-compliant within the detailed terms and conditions, in which case QCBFD could be required to return some portion of the proceeds. Barry added that he is continuing to work with the stakeholders, including RIIB and the EPA, to minimize this risk and will report back to the Board.

Public Works:

Bob Frazier, Chair

Bob provided updates on the water system upgrade project indicated the project is progressing. The mason will begin building the block wall on Monday and Bob is hopeful that the roof on the pump house will be in place by the next meeting.

Community Property:

Mark Alperin, Chair

Mark provided updates on the current maintenance projects including brush cutting, garden maintenance in front of the tennis courts, and the addition of mulch around the playground. Mark received a quotation from Surv for weeding and garden maintenance of \$9000 annually. Mark plans to try their services out before making a recommendation to the Board. The alternative would be to remove and replace some of the vegetation with lower-maintenance options.

The contract with John Pruitt is expiring at the end of this year and will need to go for public bid. Mark is continuing to look at the arborvitae issue along the tennis court/ball field boundary and will report back. Ray asked whether the roots were causing some of the damage to the tennis courts. Mark was unsure if it was that or drainage but agreed that it should be taken into account in any decision about replacing the tennis court surface.

Long-Range Planning:

Renee Cohen, Chair

Renee reported that the Governance and Water priority projects had been completed and an overview and recommendations for each will be presented to the Board for review and approval at a future meeting.

Renee thanked the Board for their review of the draft Comprehensive Long-Range Plan and presented a process to take the draft plan to the community for review including sending an e-blast with a link to the Plan, together with holding two in-person community feedback sessions (July 26 and August 2) with the hope of bringing the Plan to the Community for approval at the Annual Meeting. Discussion ensued about the best way to present the draft plan given its length (including

an executive summary with findings and recommendations) and build community buy-in. Charlie reminded the group that the draft plan will need to be finalized by the August 23rd Board meeting in order to get Board approval and place it on the Annual Meeting agenda. In order for this to occur, the Board will have to be comfortable with the depth of community feedback and engagement as the open comment period is very short.

7. Managers Reports:

Police Liaison & Manager of Beach Gate Monitors:

Ron Ruel, Manager

Ron reported that fewer people are working the beach gate this year, which might lead to scheduling difficulties later in the season. Due to staffing, the gate to the beach parking lot will be locked at 6pm instead of 8pm each day and the new time will be communicated by eblast. New AED equipment has been acquired, and training on this will be provided to the gate monitors. The University of Rhode Island has provided three new NARCAN kits to be included in the first aid kit at the block. Separately, Ron is hoping to organize a water rescue lifesaving technique class to be held at the beach later in the summer.

Ron asked whether the boulders at the tennis court parking lots could be removed as he is having to move them each time for special events. Discussion ensued and it was decided that the issue should be addressed at the next Board meeting.

Tennis Court:

Mark Alperin for Mark McEnroe

Mark shared a presentation by Mark McEnroe which updated the Board on the condition of the tennis courts and offered three options to address the current cracks spreading across the court surfaces:

- Do nothing;
- Repair the existing cracks, noting that there is no guarantee that additional cracks will appear. This option will extend the life of the courts for approximately 5 years. Mark McEnroe received a bid of \$17,000 from Hinding Tennis for the crack repair; the work could be scheduled for the fall. Currently, there is \$7800 reserved for tennis, with enough in the contingency to pay the balance; or
- Redo the courts, including addressing any associated drainage issues. The bid for this came in at \$200,000.

Ray asked about the length of the useful life following the complete redo option. Discussion ensued. The board asked for more information before making a decision on whether to move forward with the repairs in the short term, including when is the best time to do the work (fall 2025 or spring 2026) and the impact of the surrounding vegetation and their possible removal on the courts and drainage. They also asked for a more detailed plan on how to build up reserves necessary to cover the cost of a complete redo as a long-term solution.

8. Adjournment:

A **motion** was made to adjourn at approximately 10:53 am. The **motion** was **seconded and passed** with all members of the Board of Governors in attendance voting in favor (other than the Moderator, who under the District's By-Laws only votes in the case of a tie).

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Dupré, Clerk
Quonochontaug Central Beach Fire District