

**Minutes of the Meeting of  
Quonochontaug Central Beach Fire District  
Board of Governors  
held on Saturday, May 27, 2017  
at the Quonochontaug Grange  
5662 Post Road  
Charlestown RI 02813**

Members in Attendance: Brewster Blackall, Tom Farrell, Tom Frost, Julie Low, Jim Mara, Julia Mathews, Vinny Reppucci, Randy Thornton and Tom Wildman

Members Absent: Charlie Freedgood

Also in attendance were Bill Heep, lead QCBFD representative in discussions with Dunn's Corner Fire District; Peter Rettig, Manager of Beach and Dunes; Katherine Huntington, Manager of Special Events; Kate Thornton, E-Mail Blast Coordinator; Susan Wales, Tennis Manager; Sally Devin, Assistant Clerk, and members of the public.

**I. Call to Order; Moderator's Remarks**

The Moderator, Randy Thornton, called the meeting to order at approximately 9:00 a.m.. He welcomed everyone to the start of another busy season.

**II. Approval of Minutes; Clerk's Comments**

A **motion** was made to approve the draft minutes of the October 9, 2016 meeting of the Board of Governors. The motion was seconded and **passed**, with all members of the Board of Governors in attendance voting in favor of the motion (other than the Moderator, who under the District's By-Laws only votes in the case of a tie).

The Clerk, Tom Wildman, reminded those in attendance of the importance of submitting proposed agenda items (and in the case of Committee chairs, notice/agendas for their committee meetings) as far in advance of the 48-hours filing deadline imposed by RI's Open Meetings Act as possible. He also reminded committee chairs that OMA requires that minutes of our committee meetings be available within 35 days of the meeting. Our counsel has advised us that these minutes do not have to be filed anywhere, but our self-imposed goal is to have them posted on our website within the 35-day period.

**III. Treasurer's Report**

The Treasurer, Julia Matthews, stated that she necessarily relies on someone knowledgeable about the system to tell her when a building permit for a construction project in the District exceeding \$50,000 is issued so that she can send bills for the District's road impact fee and construction bond. The person on whom she has relied is no longer able or willing to supply all necessary information. The Board discussed possible alternatives. Various members noted that the responsibility to pay the impact fee and post the construction bond when required ultimately rests on the property owner.

Julia noted that the owners of a few "sliver lots" (lots too small to build on) were receiving substantial benefits (mainly beach passes and boat stickers) but only paying a very small amount in District taxes because of the low assessed value of their sliver lots by the Town of Charlestown, which is the value used for assessing District taxes. A number of Board members commented that this seems unfair. Randy indicated that he would ask one or more individuals to review the relevant charter and by-law provisions and explore alternatives.

Julia also noted that it appears that at least one house outside the District is receiving water from the District system without cost. Randy indicated that he would ask one or more individuals to look into this situation and explore alternatives.

Julia concluded by reporting that the distributor from which we had ordered two defibrillators had failed to deliver them but that we had obtained a refund and reordered from another vendor.

#### **IV. Manager Reports**

A. Julie Low, Police Liaison and Manager of Beach Gate Monitors, indicated growing concerns about (1) the number of non-residents accessing the beach through the beach parking lot or District rights-of-way and (2) the number of persons violating the District's rule against food and drink (other than water) on the beach. Julie described several steps she plans to take to address these problems. These include employing older students to staff the parking block on weekends and during other busy times and encouraging all residents to speak up when they observe a rule violation or, if not comfortable doing so, to report the violation. Various members of the Board commented favorably on the measures being undertaken. Members also discussed the pros and cons of having a trash can in the beach parking lot. No action was taken.

Julie informed the Board that there have been some complaints about reckless operation of golf carts in the community and operation of carts by underage drivers. She indicated that she may ask the Board at a future meeting to pass a resolution requiring that golf carts used on District roads be registered and display an identifying number issued by the District.

B. Peter Rettig, Manager of Beach and Dunes, stated that the new snow fence installed last fall had worked well and the beach was in good shape; however, the snow fence was vandalized and had to be repaired at a cost of \$1,266. Dead and diseased pines have been removed from the dunes, and periodic beach raking is beginning.

C. Brewster Blackall, Manager of the QCBFD Marina, stated that boat stickers would be available within a week or close to it.

D. Katherine Huntington, Manager of Special Events, reported that the calendar of events for this season has been set and distributed. New events this year will include a pig roast.

## V. Fire Protection Contract

Bill Heep, reporting as our representative in discussions with Dunn's Corner Fire District about its continuing provision of fire protection services to QCBFD, reviewed the history of the protracted discussions and summarized key provisions of a proposed new contract. Dunn's Corner has insisted that all fire districts, including QCBFD, that receive fire protection services under contract with Dunn's Corner pay for these services under a uniform methodology that applies the same mill rate to the assessed value of the properties covered, less a 4% administrative discount. The imposition of this methodology will result in a substantial increase (currently projected to be up to 15%) in the cost of our fire protection services. The proposed contract is for a term of 4 1/2 years, starting as of January 1, 2017 and going through May 31, 2021. Bill noted that we had explored alternatives to Dunn's Corner but there were none, and Dunn's Corner still remains the low cost provider in the State.

Following discussion, Bill made a **motion** to approve the proposed new contract with Dunn's Corner Fire District. The **motion** was seconded and **passed**, with all members of the Board of Governors in attendance voting in favor of the motion (other than the Moderator, who under the District's By-Laws only votes in the case of a tie).

## VI. COMMITTEE CHAIRS' REPORTS

A. Public Works. Vinny Reppucci, committee chair, reviewed with the Board a graph showing by month, starting with May 2014 and continuing through April 2017, the nitrate levels in water taken from the two QCBFD wells and two East Beach wells. Vinny noted that the levels varied considerably by month but overall were stable or showed a slight downward trend during the period and that the nitrate levels tended to be higher in East Beach than in Central Beach.

## APPROVED

Vinny reported that the committee continues to evaluate a proposal by Northeast Water Solutions to further evaluate the potential of two test wells previously dug and makes no recommendation on the proposal at this time.

The Public Works Committee does recommend that we spend up to \$4,000 to upgrade the water system control panel, which will permit more easily switching from one of our two wells to the other and pooling the water from the wells. Vinny **moved** the approval of such upgrade and expenditure. The **motion** was seconded and **passed**, with all members of the Board of Governors in attendance voting in favor of the motion (other than the Moderator, who under the District's By-Laws only votes in the case of a tie).

Vinny stated that it has been suggested that we upgrade our street lights to LED technology. Tom Gentz, past President of the Charlestown Town Council, explained that we have an opportunity to do this in conjunction with switching our street light maintenance from National Grid to a municipal consortium that Charlestown is a member of. He noted that we would save money by doing this and taking ownership of the 17 lights on District roads for which we are responsible. (We have apparently been incorrectly billed and will seek a refund for an additional non-existent light and another one for which the Town should be responsible.) Randy indicated that a proposal to proceed as suggested is not on the agenda for this meeting but could be placed on the agenda for a future meeting for discussion and possible action.

Vinny concluded by reporting that the Town of Charlestown has approved the exact locations of the seven new stop signs approved for installation at our 2016 Annual Meeting and the corresponding street lines. Installation by volunteers will begin soon.

B. Long Range Planning. Tom Farrell, Committee Chair, stated that the Committee would meet on May 29 and matters planned for discussion include potential alternative water sources, a possible sale of our water system to a private company and phragmites remediation in West Pond.

C. Community Property. Bill Heep, past Chair of the Committee, reported that after soliciting competitive bids we entered into a new five-year contract with Ed Palmer Disposal for waste disposal and recycling, commencing upon expiration of our prior contract in November 2016. The contract provides for a slight increase in base charges, with the possibility of further increases if Ed Palmer Disposal is subjected to significantly increased tipping fees.

Jim Mara, Committee Chairman, reported that we had also entered into a two-year contract for pruning and mowing with Peter Whitman.

Jim described an approximately 22-foot stone sitting wall that the Garden Club proposes to install at the playground, at no cost to the District. He moved that the wall be approved, which **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).

In the category of new business, Randy noted the apparent need to repaint and refresh the QCBFD street signs. Jim agreed that the Community Property Committee would look into this and report to the Board.

## **VII. Public Comments without Discussion or Action**

Bob Pompei, on behalf of East Beach Water Association, stated that East Beach is applying or intends to apply for a \$2.8 million grant from the Rhode Island Water Resources Board to purchase land north of Route 1 for possible future well location and protection. He stated that it is in the interest of all communities on Quonochontaug Neck to work cooperatively on water issues and East Beach hopes that QCBFD will support the East Beach application and perhaps join as a co-applicant.

Bob also informed the Board of discussions he is having with Westerly Water Department to bring water from its end location at the Shelter Harbor Golf Club to Quonochontaug.

Roy Jacobsen noted recent improvements to the Grange Hall, including renovated rest rooms, and conveyed the hopes of the Friends of the Grange that QCBFD will continue to use the hall for meetings.

## **VIII. Adjournment**

A **motion** was made to adjourn the meeting at approximately 11.01 a.m.. The motion was seconded and **passed** unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,  
Thomas R. Wildman, Clerk  
Quonochontaug Central Beach Fire District