

**Minutes of the Meeting of  
Quonochontaug Central Beach Fire District  
Board of Governors  
held on Saturday, June 30 2018  
at the Quonochontaug Grange  
5662 Post Road  
Charlestown RI 02813**

**Members in Attendance:** Brewster Blackall, Charlie Freedgood, Tom Frost, Jim Mara, Roberta Peet, Vinny Reppucci, Randy Thornton and Tom Wildman

**Members Absent:** Tom Farrell and Julie Low

Also in attendance were Julia Mathews, Assistant Treasurer; Sally Devin, Assistant Clerk; Katherine Huntington, Manager of Special Events; DeDe Consoli, Manager of Merchandise Sales; and Roy Jacobsen, on behalf of the Long Range Planning Committee.

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

The Moderator, Randy Thornton, called the meeting to order at approximately 9:00 a.m.. On behalf of the community, he thanked all of the many volunteers who are actively working on District projects and activities. He gave a special "shout out" to DeDe Consoli for her efforts to obtain zoning approval for, and managing the acquisition and installation of, the new shed next to the tennis courts and to Jim Mara for overseeing the new street signs.

Randy reported that this year's Nominating Committee will be Nancy Matthews, chair, Kate Thornton and Mike Divney.

**II. Approval of Minutes**

A **motion** was made to approve the draft minutes of the May 26, 2018 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).

**III. Clerk's Report/ Proposals**

Tom Wildman recalled that at its May 26, 2018 meeting, the Board discussed the requirement of Rhode Island's Open Meetings Act that notices and meeting agendas be posted at our principal office, or in the absence of such an office, at the location of the meeting. Because QCBFD has had no principal office, this requirement has resulted in having to post notice/agendas at the Charlestown Police Station, the Quonochontaug

Grange Hall or on the front doors of people's houses. At the May meeting, there appeared to be agreement that rather than continue making these postings, it would be better to designate a "principal office" on QCBFD property where a bulletin board for official, and only official, postings could be maintained.

A **Motion** was made to (1) designate the new shed adjacent to the QCBFD tennis courts as the principal office of the Quonochontaug Central Beach Fire District, its Board of Governors and its various committees from time to time; (2) place a bulletin board on the Ninigret Avenue side of this shed to be used solely for postings of the Quonochontaug Central Beach Fire District, its Board of Governors and its various committees, including without limitation notices and agendas required by Rhode Island's Open Meetings Act; (3) modify the QCBFD website to provide notice of the fact that the aforementioned shed is the principal office of the Fire District, its Board of Governors, and its various committees and official postings of the Fire District, its Board of Governors and its various committees will be made on the aforementioned bulletin board. 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).

Randy stated that Dave Devin has agreed to make the aforementioned bulletin board and expressed the District's thanks and appreciation to Dave.

Tom next recalled that revisions to the District's by-laws in 2015 had eased the over-all burden of compliance with OMA by reducing the number of our standing committees to four (Finance & Budget, Long Range Planning, Public Works and Community Property) and providing for the appointment of managers to assume the responsibilities previously held by the eliminated committees. This change appears to have worked well but some of the remaining committee chairs have experienced continuing difficulty in working within the mandates and limitations of OMA, such as the requirement for in-person meetings and the general prohibition on group telephone and e-mail communications; and amendments to OMA continue to increase the requirements for compliance.

Those present then discussed whether it would be desirable to amend the District's by-laws in order to give the Board the flexibility to further reduce the number of committees and appoint additional managers in their stead. While not necessarily objecting to this idea as such, some stressed the importance of openness and transparency in our management and governance and emphasized that we should not make changes that would jeopardize transparency. It was noted in turn that whatever our committee/manager structure, overall responsibility for openness and transparency rested with the Moderator and the Board of Governors and can be achieved, as is currently the case, by requiring both committee chairs and managers, as the case may be, to regularly report to the Board and to keep the community informed and solicit community input with respect

to plans and activities via e-blasts and in annual reports. The Board itself must comply with OMA.

After discussion, a **motion** was made to recommend to the QCBFD voters at the 2018 Annual Meeting adoption of an amendment to Article 8 of the District by-laws to eliminate the requirement that we have certain named committees (other than a finance and budget committee). The motion was seconded and **passed**, with all members of the Board of Governors in attendance voting in favor of the motion, other than (i) the Moderator, who under the District's By-Laws only votes in the case of a tie and (ii) Charlie Freedgood, who abstained. Tom said that he would prepare for Board consideration an exact proposed amendment for presentation to the voters.

#### **IV. Treasurer's Report**

The Treasurer, Roberta Peet, reported that our expenses remain within budget and that our cash management continues to run smoothly.

#### **V. Managers' Reports**

Katherine Huntington, Manager of Special Events, reported that we will once again have a full season of activities, commencing with the opening picnic on June 30.

Randy, on behalf of Julie Low, Manager of Beach Gate Monitors, noted that the hours during which monitors will be on duty at both the beach gate block and in the boat yard have been extended. Monitors will be on the block until 7:00 p.m..

DeDe Consoli, Manager of Merchandise Sales, reported that sales from the new shed would commence today and that purchases could now be made using credit cards.

Brewster Blackall, Manager of the Boating/Marina, stated that approximately 120 craft were stored at the marina. He described the difficulties he and the volunteers assisting him have dealing with boats lacking a current QCBFD sticker and the need on occasion to remove and dispose of an apparently abandoned boat. In the ensuing discussion, it was noted that, before removing and/or disposing of a boat, reasonable efforts should be made to contact the owner. Randy asked Brewster to develop a specific protocol for consideration.

#### **VI. Committee Chairs' Reports**

Finance and Budget. The Committee chair, Charlie Freedgood, reviewed the 2017 financial performance of the District, comparing actual results against budget, and noted

certain variations of interest. Charlie also noted various comparisons to the 2018 budget and anticipated 2018 results. Overall our financial position is good.

Charlie stated that QCBFD is in compliance with the financial reporting requirements for fire districts. Six filings are required annually: our budget, 4 quarterly reports and an annual report.

Work on the proposed 2019 budget will begin soon and must be completed for submission to the voters in advance of our annual meeting in September.

Public Works. The committee chair, Vinny Reppucci, indicated that the committee has discussed whether it should recommend a change to our most recent practice of not charging homeowners a hookup fee for new (as opposed to relocated) hookups. The committee is also considering whether a fee should be charged for seasonal shutoffs and turn ons. The committee has not decided on any recommendations at this time. Vinny does expect to request the Board to approve further testing of the exploratory deep wells drilled in 2015. The nitrate levels in our water system continue to be good.

Some trimming to maintain sight lines at road intersections will be necessary. An effort will be made to contact the owners of affected properties in order to give them the opportunity to undertake the trimming themselves.

Long Range Planning. Roy Jacobsen, on behalf of Tom Farrell, the committee chair, discussed the format of a survey of property owners the committee is considering in order to help determine the matters or topics on which the committee should focus. He indicated that it might be possible to conduct such a survey electronically, using SurveyMonkey or a similar online tool. Roy also reported that the committee has made a preliminary investigation into the economics of burying utility lines in the District and notes that this would be very expensive.

Community Property. The committee chair, Jim Mara, reported that 23 new street signs have been installed at a cost of approximately \$175 each. Several Board Members commented favorably on the appearance of the new signs. Jim stated that he is now focusing on a new gate for the beach parking lot, additional stone for the tennis parking area and trimming the bushes surrounding the courts.

## **VII. Defibrillators**

Randy informed the Board that he had asked Julia Mathews to supervise the use and maintenance of the two defibrillators that the District has acquired. Julie then addressed location and availability of the defibrillators and training in their use. She stated her intent to have one defibrillator on the beach parking lot block during periods when monitors are on duty and one defibrillator located in a protective case inside the tennis

courts, which are locked overnight. She switched on one of the defibrillators and demonstrated how the device leads a person through its use, step by step.

#### **VIII. Benefits to which Owners of Sliver Lots Entitled**

Tom Frost reported that he, Randy and the Clerk had consulted our legal counsel about possible ways of addressing the perceived unfairness that results from the owners of lots in QCBFD on which a house cannot be built (often referred to as “sliver lots”) receiving beach passes and boat stickers while paying very low District property taxes (which in accordance with our Charter are based on Town of Charlestown assessments). He stated that we had learned that both the Weekapaug and Shelter Harbor fire districts are studying the same issue and at least one of the two is likely to take some action soon. We will watch to see what they do and what reaction there is.

#### **IX. Adjournment**

A **motion** was made to adjourn the meeting at approximately 11:15 a.m.. The motion was seconded and **passed** unanimously.

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