

Minutes of the Meeting of
Quonochontaug Central Beach Fire District
Board of Governors
January 20, 2024
Quonochontaug Grange
Lower Level Meeting Room
5662 Post Rd, Charlestown, RI 02813

Members in attendance: Renee Cohen, Dede Consoli, Charlie Freedgood, Barry Okun, Fred Newton and Debbie Dupre

Members Absent: Mark Alperin, Bob Frazier, Mike Lewers, Ron Ruel

1. Call to Order/Moderator's Opening Remarks

Moderator, Charlie Freedgood

Charlie called the meeting to order at 9:02am and thanked everyone for attending. He then updated the BoG that the water upgrade project remains on the list of RI projects recommended by US Senator Whitehouse to receive a Community-Directed Spending Projects (CDSP) grant from the federal government. The CDSP grant program is waiting for the 2024 federal budget to be approved by Congress before specific requests can be approved. Our request is for \$1.3 million (representing 85% of the total cost of the water upgrade project as allowed under the CDSP program).

2. Approval of the Minutes.

Clerk, Debbie Dupre

There was one clarification to the October 21, 2023 draft minutes by Renee Cohen that LRP has collapsed the governmental structure and professional management initiatives into one resulting in 5 LRP initiatives. No additional edits or comments were made. A **motion** was made to approve the draft minutes as amended. 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 led a discussion overviewing the RI Open Meetings Act and Public Records Act and their impact on the roles and responsibilities of committee chairs and managers, particularly avoiding rolling quorums. She highlighted that if a chair was unclear how to proceed, please reach out to Chris Harris, Charlie or her. Also noted was the preference for meetings to be held in venues that are free such as the Charlestown police station or the Cross Mills library over locations that charge a rental fee such as the Grange.

Debbie then introduced a discussion around document retention on behalf of QCB, particularly the need to forward an electronic copy of original documents to Charlie and her to help ensure appropriate record keeping, uploading onto the cloud and when applicable copying our bookkeeper.

3. Treasurer's Report

Barry Okun for the Treasurer

Barry reported that our current cash and general financial position is strong. A discussion arose around construction escrows, the process around their collection and return and how the bookkeeper reflects the current position.

4. Moderator's Report:

Moderator, Charlie Freedgood

Charlie led a discussion around whether QCB might want to name a possible representative to serve on the Charlestown 250th Committee, which was established to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the United States by honoring the history of Charlestown. He requested that whether we would like to participate and how a representative might be named be revisited at the next meeting.

Next Charlie reported on the availability of an ethics training course for municipal officials offered through the RI Learning Center. Charlie agreed to circulate to the BoG the email regarding the course so that interested Governors could take the training.

5. Committee Chairs' Report

Finance and Budget:

Barry Okun, Chair

Barry took the group through the financials and reported that the actuals, though not yet fully reconciled, appear slightly more positive than the 2023 budget, mostly due to accrued interest not yet paid under the RIIB loan. The reserves look

healthy and are continuing to be added to, as is the contingency account and all generally align with cash. A discussion arose around how fixed assets are handled in the financials. There was also a question regarding contingency spending reallocation and what is the appropriate level of approvals required as well as the handling of the Special Event reserves.

Long-Range Planning

Renee Cohen, Chair

Renee updated the BoG on the status of each of the 5 LRP initiatives in terms of setting up a task force with an identified leader, members and an action plan. In addition, Renee reported that the Comprehensive Plan Document was being reworked with the help of Maud Bailey and Ellen Frost. A draft of the plan should be ready to share with the LRP committee by the end of the winter season and the BoG later in the year.

Public Works:

Charlie Freedgood for the Chair

Charlie reported that the Certificate of Approval from the RI Department of Health ("RIDOH") for the water upgrade project remains outstanding. He raised the potential impact of this delay on the construction contract with R.P. Iannuccillo & Sons Construction Co, which will need to be amended to extend the completion date. The contractor appears willing to work with us on timing. The loan with the Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank ("RIIB") including the negotiation of the loan documents also remains on hold until the Certificate of Approval is issued. Discussion arose on whether any action could be taken to move the approval process forward without resolution.

Charlie then updated the BoG on the wetlands restoration project. The work has essentially been completed - fill and boulders removed or shifted and most of the required planting installed with a few exceptions due to flooding. The remaining plants should be bedded, conditions permitting in March. Bob will follow up with CRMC on the next steps necessary to get their sign-off. Once received, the FD will request that the fine levied by CRMC be forgiven.

A question was raised around the RI Accessory Dwelling Unit legislation and how it might affect QCB. The BoG agreed to pick up the issue at the next BoG meeting.

Managers Reports

Merchandise Sales:

Dede Consoli

Dede reported on the status of the planning and purchasing for the 2024 Merchandise Sales. She indicated that the use of a storage POD for the 2023 sales had been helpful and cost effective. Based on the projected volume of merchandise for the 2024 season, Dede would like to rent a POD for this summer and locate it in the same spot as in 2023. A question was raised about whether Dede received any feedback about the POD in general or its placement in 2023 and she indicated no concerns had been raised. Further discussion ensued about how long the POD would be required. Dede believed 8 weeks of additional storage should be sufficient.

A **motion** was made to approve the rental and placement of a POD on the community property adjacent to the shed for a period of 8 weeks over the 2024 summer. 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).

Beach and Dunes:

Charlie Freedgood/Debbie Dupre for the Manager

Charlie and Debbie updated the BoG on the effects to the beach and dunes of the recent winter storms, which brought high tides that washed over the sandbags and into the dunes leaving beach erosion and damage to the snow fence. It was noted that Jon Pruitt has been asked to restock the sandbags.

Charlie reported that Carrie Gilpen, working in tandem with Art Ganz from East Beach has received an estimate of \$7600 from Carl Larlham Landscapers to repair the QCB portion of the fencing. The bid also includes removing the damaged fencing and debris, reusing fence posts when appropriate and obtaining the required permit from CRMC. The landscaper suggested that the work should wait until April after the winter storms are over. He also raised the possibility of importing sand. Carrie plans to do additional diligence around how we have handled fence repair and beach erosion in the past and will seek approval for the work at the next BoG meeting.

Barry indicated that the approval should include moving the necessary funds from the Contingency into the Beach and Dunes account. Dede stated that there were still funds available in the Merchandise Sales community grant program and suggested Carrie should apply to cover the cost of the repair work.

Discussion arose around the necessity of obtaining a second bid for the repair work. Charlie clarified that a second bid is not required for estimates below \$10,000. It was also noted that the vendor has worked with East Beach in the past and knows how and where to build the fence.

Further discussion arose around saltwater incursion into Fresh Pond, the surrounding wetlands and subsequently into the QCB water system. Charlie suggested that the issue could possibly be looked into as part of the LRP initiatives.

Adjournment

A **motion** was made to adjourn at approximately 9:51 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