

Minutes of the Meeting of
Quonochontaug Central Beach Fire District
Board of Governors
May 25, 2024
Charlestown Police Department
Meeting Room
4901 Old Post Rd, Charlestown, RI 02813

Members in attendance: Mark Alperin, Renee Cohen, Dede Consoli, Bob Frazier, Charlie Freedgood, Barry Okun, Ron Ruel and Debbie Dupre

Members Absent: Mike Lewers and Fred Newton

Also in attendance was a member of the public.

1. Call to Order/Moderator's Opening Remarks

Moderator, Charlie Freedgood

Charlie called the meeting to order at 9:00am and thanked everyone for attending.

2. Approval of the Minutes.

Clerk, Debbie Dupre

No edits or comments were made to the March 9, 2024 draft minutes. A **motion** was made to approve the draft minutes as written. 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 reported that the BoG meeting calendar may need to be amended as schedules change and, if required, will be revisited at a future meeting.

In connection with the 2024 activities of the Quonochontaug Conservation Collaborative (QCC) the following resolution was proposed:

RESOLVED, that Charles Freedgood (Moderator) or his designee is authorized to execute on behalf of QCBFD any paperwork required by the Charlestown Grange, as sponsor of an environment-focused poster/art contest to take place at the Grange on August 10, 2024. There are no funds being requested at this time.

A **motion** was made to approve the resolution as written. 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).

3. Treasurer's and Finance and Budget Committee Report

Barry Okun for the Treasurer

Barry reported that the Q1 financials reflected that expenses were within budget, and he has filed them with the state of RI. He also requested that committee chairs and managers begin to pull together their 2025 budget items.

Barry stated that the current cash balances should be sufficient to cover the budgeted expenses through the end of the year; however, he indicated that the district may need to tap the existing line of credit with Washington Trust (LOC) in connection with the water upgrade project later in the year, depending on the timing of regulatory and financing approvals. Barry asked that we table the LOC authorization until later in the meeting, after an update is given on the project and the requisite financing.

Bob Frazier reported that RI Department of Health (RIDoH) issued its approval of the proposed water upgrade project on May 2, 2024. Bob has confirmed with the contractor that they intend to perform under the March 2023 construction contract and the parties will begin to discuss updated terms. He believes the project could possibly begin in a September/October timeframe, provided the financing and whatever requirements come out of it allows.

Barry and Charlie updated the BoG on the current financing opportunities – Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank (RIIB) and the Congressional Directed Spending (CDS) Community Grant – and how they intersect. The Board was reminded that the community has approved spending \$1.6M on the water upgrade project.

RIIB - The RIIB has agreed to loan the district \$1.55M (forgiving \$100k) at a favorable rate. The monies under the loan will be reimbursed in arrears. Part of the monies to be loaned will be sourced from federal funds, although the Federal requirements under Build America, Buy America Act (BABAA) were waived. The RIIB requires approval of the project by the RIDoH. The loan documents have not yet been negotiated.

CDS Community Grant – The US government through the EPA and the CDS Community Grant Program has appropriated as part of its 2024 budget up to \$1M for the water upgrade project. In order to access the grant, the district must qualify following a strict set of rules and requirements, including complying with BABAA among other federal programs. The CDS Community Grant Program provides for a reimbursement of up to 80% of the qualified expenses occurring after October 2023 (for example, the district must spend \$1.25M of qualifying expenditures in order to receive \$1M). Currently, the EPA is still working to clear projects approved within the 2022 and 2023 budgets, so 2024 programs may be delayed. That having been said, QCB has contacted EPA leadership and appears to have positioned this project for immediate consideration. The CDS BABAA requirements may necessitate some reengineering of the current plans, which in turn may compel an updating of our RIDoH and RIIB loan approvals.

The current sequencing plan is to start by borrowing RIIB funds and then qualify the costs under the CDS Community Grant Program and use those monies to repay the RIIB loan. This strategy is subject to change as more information is collected.

A **motion** was made to authorize the district to borrow up to \$500,000 against the QCBFD's LOC from Washington Trust for the payment of 2024 expenses. 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).

A second **motion** was made to approve the following resolution in connection with the district obtaining funding for the water upgrade project:

RESOLVED, that the Moderator or his designees are authorized to review, execute and take any and all actions necessary to facilitate the district's implementation of, and to obtain funding for, the improvements associated with the water system upgrade project, including but not limited to grants, loans, and expenditures in furtherance thereof.

A **motion** was made to approve the resolution as written. 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).

4. Moderator's Report:

Moderator, Charlie Freedgood

Charlie reported that the dumpster paid for with Special Event merchandise sales grant funds has arrived and is installed in the beach parking lot. He mentioned that the use of funds had been approved by the BoG but not the location on community property. A **motion** was made to approve the use of community property over Memorial Day weekend for a dumpster to be located in the beach parking lot for community members to dispose of, with some restrictions, unwanted items. 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).

Charlie updated the BoG that the snow fencing repair and replacement along the QCB beachfront had been completed. As part of that repair and replacement process, actions were taken including obtaining approval from CRMC in connection with the work. A **motion** was made to ratify all such actions. 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).

5. Committee Chairs' Report

Long-Range Planning

Renee Cohen, Chair

Renee reported that the teams responsible for the Quonnie Neck Cooperation and the Water Quantity Assessment projects gave in-depth descriptions of the work their teams have done over the winter. Renee hoped that a presentation to the BOG for one of the projects may occur at the June 15th meeting.

Renee indicated that the first draft of the written LRP document has been completed and is currently under review by the LRP committee. Renee hopes to forward a draft in June to Charlie for comment before circulated it more broadly for further review and comment.

Public Works:**Bob Frazier, Chair**

In connection with the wetlands restoration project, Bob reported that a few plants have still not been installed due to overly saturated conditions. Our environmental engineer is coordinating with CRMC to get their sign-off and upon receipt, QCBFD will seek to have the levied fine reconsidered by CRMC.

Bob raised the issue of the tree near the water tank and believes it should be removed in coordination with Community Property. Bob agreed to confirm with Ed Avizinis, our environmental consultant, whether regulatory consent is required before any action to remove the tree is taken. Bob also identified a hole in the most western Surfside right-of-way that needs repair.

Charlie reminded the board that DCFD had invited members for a drive-through of the community in order to identify obstacles for the fire trucks. Several members were identified as key participants, all of whom agreed to join. Charlie will coordinate dates among the volunteers and DCFD.

With regard to whether and how to enforce the encroachment rules on district property, it was suggested that an inventory of infringements on the district roads and rights-of-way be created. Discussion ensued and it was agreed to table the issue for now.

Community Property:

Mark reported that new wood chips have been installed at the playground. He suggested that the district consider the useful life of the playground and begin to accrue for a replacement of the current playground and equipment. Dede asked how much a full replacement might cost and Mark believed upwards of \$25,000 but indicated that a playground consultant would need to be engaged to scope fully the size and cost of the work. Mark agreed to get proposals for a playground consultant.

Mark updated the group on repairs being carried out to the district bulletin boards and signage. He indicated that the old QCB welcome sign had been rehabilitated and asked whether it should be donated, auctioned or re-installed in a different location. Discussion ensued and the BoG agreed to revisit the issue at the next meeting.

Mark reminded the BoG that our garbage collection contract will expire in early September. He has begun the process of bidding a new contract with updates to follow at subsequent meetings.

Mark indicated that the Community Property Committee will take up the issue of placing memorials on community property and make a recommendation to the BoG over the coming months. Roy Jacobson agreed to provide a list of existing memorials.

Barry asked whether there was a QCBFD "dark skies" policy? Renee indicated that QCC had done some work around dark skies focusing on the Northeastern corridor and agreed to draft a note to be sent out by eblast, crafted to educate the community on the issue.

Managers Reports**Merchandise Sales:****Dede Consoli**

Dede reported that the merchandise sale will open on June 30th. The storage POD arrives at the shed on Wednesday, May 29th.

Police Liaison & Manager of Beach Gate Monitors:**Ron Ruel**

Ron reported that he has been working with our payroll contractor to shorten the process and reduce paperwork for the hiring of beach gate monitors who are 16 and 17. For the younger employees, Ron has offered to assist them personally through the process. He is also working with the families and the requisite schools to get charitable service credit for the monitors.

Ron reminded everyone that the new RI law governing golf carts will take effect on July 1st and that many older carts will not comply with the new state requirements. Ron has agreed to put together an eblast for the community detailing the new regulations. He emphasized that the Charlestown Police can enforce the law on our private roads. The police are particularly interested in underage/non-licensed drivers, drivers under the influence and reckless driving and can pursue criminal penalties in addition to motor vehicle fines.

Adjournment

A **motion** was made to adjourn at approximately 11:01am. 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