

Minutes of the Meeting of
Quonochontaug Central Beach Fire District
Board of Governors
June 14, 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, Ron Ruel, Bill Wilson and Debbie Dupre

Members Absent: Barry Okun

Also in attendance were Julia Mathews, Paul Mathews, Chris Harris, and Alex Schultheis.

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

Charlie called the meeting to order at 8:20am, thanked everyone for attending and welcomed Paul Mathews, who will be reporting on the LRP Water Quantity/Quality Project and draft QCB Water Plan as part of the Long-Range Planning work and Comprehensive Plan.

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

There was one clarification to the May 31, 2025 minutes around the motion approving the sale of the 2025 community directory at merchandise sales to only QCBFD residents and subsequent directories will require that residents will be notified that their privacy cannot be assured and they have the option to opt-out, vs opt-in, in participating. Debbie reminded everyone that she had not been at the last meeting but would verify the language with Chris Harris, who took the minutes and revise the minutes accordingly. No other edits or comments were made to the May 31, 2025 draft minutes. A **motion** was made to approve the draft minutes with the directory section amended to reflect accurately the discussion around the opt-out option. 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 asked everyone to review the dates for the next two Board of Governors meetings to gauge their availability, particularly given the importance of those meetings in preparing for the Annual Meeting. Charlie proposed that the next two scheduled meetings move from Saturday to Thursday: July 19th and August 9th, respectively. It was suggested that the meetings stay at 8:15am. Once the meeting room has been booked for the new dates, the exact time and location for the July 19 and August 9 meetings will be communicated.

Debbie raised the the topic of the District's current cloud storage system. She reminded the group of the importance of proper record keeping and reminded that contracts executed by QCBFD and any other official documents received be sent to either the Moderator and/or the Clerk for uploading. Charlie added that QCBFD has an obligation under the Access to Public Records Act to provide requested public documents within strict timelines.

Debbie reported that our current cloud storage vendor is small and may not be financially robust. The system is not easy to use and lacks search capability. She recommended that a new more robust and searchable storage vendor be considered and suggested that someone be recruited to evaluate vendors and assist in reorganizing the information and transitioning it to a new system.

Discussion arose around whether the full board should have access to the District cloud storage. Currently four roles have access (Moderator, Clerk, Assistant Clerk and cloud storage manager), and only the cloud storage manager has upload access. Several confidentiality concerns were raised, particularly around work product, executive sessions, and attorney-client privileged documents. As one option, Julia Mathews pointed out that view access could be managed by subject matter. Charlie suggested that the discussion be revisited at a future meeting with an eye to granting view-access to the entire Board.

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

Charlie indicated that he did not have anything to report other than to describe how the annual meeting reports and 2025 budget discussions roll up into the annual meeting agenda, which must be finalized in early August and circulated as part of the packet by the end of that month. He reminded the Board that any items not included in the packet will not be on the agenda for the Annual Meeting scheduled for September 14, 2025.

4. Treasurer's Report:

Treasurer, Ray Martino

Ray reported that the district finances are in good shape. Cash flow remains strong, in part due to the delay in the closing the RIIB financing and resultant shift out in time of loan payments. There are no line of credit outstanding balances, and no borrowing is anticipated for the current fiscal year. He reviewed the current bank balances.

Ray announced that the new insurance policy has been bound with a few adjustments. Julie asked whether the tennis courts were covered. Ray indicated that they were but that the lessee may need to be named on the policy. The existing water system equipment on site is covered but once construction is complete, a new rider will be required to insure the newly installed fixed assets. Separately, Workman's Compensation insurance is due for renewal in two weeks and, if no changes are communicated, it will be renewed as is. The shed has been added to the asset list and is now insured; but the storage POD is not as it is not considered an asset of QCBFD. Inventory for Merchandise Sales is insured up to \$100,000.

5. Committee Chairs' Report

Long-Range Planning:

Renee Cohen, Chair

Renee reminded everyone that a draft of the Comprehensive Long-Range Plan has been distributed to the Board with a request for feedback by June 30. Charlie encouraged a thorough review as the Plan will become part of the District's guiding documents. The LRP committee will revise the draft accordingly and, subject to BoG approval, plans to circulate it to the community for feedback. The committee is considering soliciting input via in-person sessions. The hope of the committee is to have these sessions over the summer and if time allows, ask the community to approve the plan at the Annual Meeting. It was noted that this is an aggressive schedule.

Public Works:

Bob Frazier, Chair

Bob provided updates on the water system upgrade project. The electrical switch-over at the pump house has been completed. There was no material drop in water pressure and thus a boil water alert and related testing was not required. The demolition work is also complete (removal of old tank, excavation of new pump house footprint and construction of a temporary support wall). The shed will be structurally reinforced and moved to its new location. The foundation and block work are expected to begin shortly. The contractor is aiming to have the roof installed on the pump house before inclement weather sets in with full completion expected by winter. Systems maintenance is being addressed where required as the project progresses. It was noted that the contractor and NWSI have been actively supporting our efforts to comply with the EPA grant criteria which has been of significant assistance to the district.

Renee asked whether there was a communication plan around water demand over July 4th usage and offered to draft an e-blast encouraging residents to limit water usage during this peak demand period. Separately, discussion arose around communication about construction continuing during the summer season in light of the community-wide rule prohibiting certain actions during July and August. It was agreed that a community notice should be drafted to explain the project's necessity, timeline, as well as the community benefits, including fulfilling regulatory mandates such as chlorination. To minimize impact on the community, the contractors have been advised to park within the gated area and to avoid parking on Sea Breeze.

In connection with the wetlands restoration project, Ray noted that \$5000 remains budgeted for engineering costs related to CRMC compliance. Bob recommended the allocation remain until final sign-off from CRMC is received.

Community Property:

Mark Alperin, Chair

Mark provided updates on the current maintenance projects including beach parking lot resurfacing, playground safety compliance (swing chain and connectors replaced and removal of tree root identified as a trip hazard), ballfield's bulletin board repair, and vegetation management/removal at the ballfield and basketball court. The Community Property committee is planning to discuss the removal and replacement of oversized arborvitae along the tennis court and ballfield with lower maintenance species. He reported that Seaside Gardeners have replanted some of the unsightly shrubbery and he is looking for an artist to repaint some of the QCB signage. Julie asked about providing some weed control in the parking lots. Mark reminded everyone that herbicides are no longer used on community property but that the lots are

treated weekly with a vinegar-based solution. Weed whacking will be evaluated, although it poses some risk of flying debris. It was suggested that the volunteer weed-pulling effort, that was suspended during COVID, be revived. Julie also inquired about ongoing road damage on Surfside. Bob indicated that the owner is open to corrective work and the PW committee will develop a plan by fall to address the cause of the damage.

The current condition of the tennis courts was discussed. Mark indicated that Mark McEnroe is aware of the issue and is balancing repair versus a total replacement including drainage work. Reserve funding levels are being reviewed.

Mark reiterated that there will only be a single weekly garbage pickup this season.

Managers Reports

Merchandise Sales:

Julie Low

Julie reported that most of the inventory for the 2025 merchandise sales has arrived and looks great. A question was raised about the impact of tariffs on pricing the year. Julie thought the impact would be minimal as the ordering was done quite early to avoid paying any associated higher costs.

Police Liaison & Manager of Beach Gate Monitors:

Ron Ruel, Manager

Ron updated the board on this year's process for obtaining RI work permits for the underaged gate monitors.

Long-Range Planning Comprehensive Plan – QCB Water Plan

Paul Mathews

Paul Mathews reported on the findings from the LRP Water Quantity and Quality Project and corresponding QCB Water Plan, which was developed based on a comprehensive body of research and collaborative input.

Water Quantity:

The foundational document is the 2001 Urish report, and Paul's updates certain of the assumptions and adds issues not evaluated in 2001. The updated findings were vetted by a range of experts and stakeholders with detailed calculations, data and citations contained within the report.

Key Findings:

Aquifer is currently in good health with ample buffer to prevent over-pumping and protect from saltwater intrusion. Currently the total available water from Central and East Beach well fields is approximately 15M gallons annually, with average annual current household usage at ~7.5M gallons annually (down from 2001, in part due to federal appliance efficiency standards), leaving a buffer of 7.5 gallons in an average year of household usage. However, in a drought year, the well fields could fall to as low as 7.7M gallons, and thus the buffer might not be sufficient especially if demand rises due to additional home build-outs, irrigation system competition and rising vegetative demand from landscaping. Therefore, the community could be at risk of supply shortages in the future.

Recommendations and Action Items:

A coordinated education and communication strategy is necessary to prepare the community. Policy development is recommended to define acceptable actions during water stress events. Messaging will be separate and tailored specifically for QCBFD (managed/governed by the Board of Governors), QEBWA (independent governance and messaging system) and private well owners (separate communication and decision makers).

Water Quality:

As with the water quantity discussion, the foundational document for the water quality management plan is based on the 2001 Urish study, which informed much of the hydrologic modeling and assumptions in the current plan. Subject matter experts and stakeholders vetted the findings.

Key Findings:

Nitrates: Groundwater quality has improved over the last 20 years, partially through the regulation of septic systems, including mandatory installation of denitrification systems for new builds/remodels.

Saltwater Intrusion: The wells are far enough away from the saltwater source under current pumping conditions. The salt concentration level is closely monitored and could be controlled by regulating well field drawdown limits. The current concentration level of salt in local wells has held steady over the last 20 years and is well below the maximum prescribed by RI. Common causes of incidents of intrusion include excessive or "thirsty" non-native vegetation and deep bedrock wells tapping into fissures with connectivity to ocean water migration.

Recommendations and Action Items:

It is recommended that the community develop a unified response strategy and communication plan. In a drought year the community must decide whether to curtail irrigation and/or reduce household water delivery. Questions were raised about the challenge of drought forecasting. To counter this uncertainty, Paul suggested a tiered communication approach depending on level of drought and prioritizing early summer messaging based on real-time well data.

The long-term success of this QCB Water Plan depends on coordinated messaging, infrastructure management and wide community participation. Paul asked the Board to review and approve the QCB Water Plan as presented. Volunteers are welcome to assist in further vetting and refining the plan.

The group thanked Paul and his other team members for their hard work.

Adjournment:

A **motion** was made to adjourn at approximately 10:19am. 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