

Minutes of the Meeting of
Quonochontaug Central Beach Fire District
Board of Governors
August 23, 2024
Charlestown Police Department
Meeting Room
4901 Old Post Rd, Charlestown, RI 02813

Members in attendance: Mark Alperin, Renee Cohen, Dede Consoli, Charlie Freedgood, Mike Lewers, Ron Ruel and Debbie Dupre

Members Absent: Bob Frazier, Fred Newton, and Barry Okun

Also in attendance were Paul Mathews and Julia Mathews.

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

Charlie called the meeting to order at 8:14am. He thanked everyone for serving on the BoG and added his appreciation for their help and insight.

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

There were no edits or comments to the August 8, 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 next requested any edits or comments to the draft 2023 Annual Meeting Minutes, which will be presented to the community at the annual meeting. No suggestions were offered.

She then explained the proposed legal resolution that will be presented to the community, which approves and adopts all actions taken and documents executed on behalf of the District by the BoG. A **motion** was made to approve and put forth the below legal resolution as written to a vote at the annual meeting.

Resolved, that all prior actions of the Board of Governors and Officers of the Fire District taken prior hereto in the operation of the Fire District's business or in furtherance thereof are hereby ratified and confirmed and all documents executed on behalf of and in the name of the Fire District are hereby adopted and consented to by a majority vote of the electors voting at the 2024 Annual Meeting.

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

Charlie stated that he did not have anything to report other than to focus on preparation for this year's annual meeting. He raised that this year there is no new business to propose, though the likely increase in cost of the water upgrade project resulting from the rebidding of the construction contract will need to be addressed as part of the Finance and Budget Committee Report at the Annual Meeting. Charlie stated that he and Barry will take the lead on the discussion with Bob from Public Works available to chime in as necessary.

4. Nominating Committee Report **Chair, Paul Mathews**

Paul reported on the proposed 2024-25 QCBFD slate (see attached). Paul thanked the members of his committee, Julie Low, Roberta Peet, and Sue Wilson Perez and reminded the group that the Nominating Committee works throughout the year to find needed volunteers.

5. Treasurer's Report: **Treasurer, Mike Lewers**

Mike reported that the community is officially in tax season and that tax bills have been mailed. Renee raised that her tax bill is still going to her old address. Julia Mathew's pointed out that there are at least three different data bases in existence that contain community member contact details and that these are not fully aligned. Discussion ensued around whether a task force should be formed to consider how best to synchronize the data bases.

6. Committee Chairs' Reports:

Finance and Budget:

Charlie Freedgood for Barry Okun

Charlie suggested we move to Finance and Budget next and led the discussion through several proposed resolutions, all to be approved by the BoG and then presented to the community at the annual meeting. He explained the first resolution (below) approves the adoption of the 2025 budget.

Resolved, that the 2025 budget as presented at the District Meeting on September 14th, 2024, including an approximate \$543,000 in Tax Revenue (4% above 2023), as approved by the Board of Governors, be adopted.

A **motion** was made to approve the resolution as written. Renee suggested that the community be given the context around the proposed 4% increase in tax revenue. After further discussion, 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).

Next Charlie introduced the below resolution ordering the assessment and collection of tax on the rateable property within the District.

Resolved, that the electors of the Quonochontaug Central Beach Fire District qualified to vote at the District Meeting legally assembled on September 14th, 2024, hereby order the assessment and collection of a tax on ratable property of said District in the sum of no less than \$542,000 nor greater than \$544,000. Said tax is for ordinary expenses and charges for the interest and indebtedness in whole or in part of said District and for purposes authorized by law.

The Assessors of Taxes shall assess and apportion said tax on the inhabitants and ratable property of said District as of the 30th day of June 2025 at 12:00 noon based upon December 31st, 2024 assessed values as computed by the town of Charlestown, according to the law, and shall on the completion of the said assessment date, certify and sign the same and deliver the same to the Collector of Taxes on or about the 1st day of August 2025. The Collector of Taxes, on receipt of said assessment, is hereby commanded to proceed and collect said tax on the persons and estates liable therefor. Said tax shall be due and payable on or before the 30th day after the date of certification by the Assessors of Taxes and all remaining unpaid balances after such due date shall carry interest until collected at a penalty rate of 12% per annum upon such unpaid taxes.

A **motion** was made to approve the resolution as written. Following a brief discussion, 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).

Next Charlie introduced a resolution approving increasing the total amount to be spent on the water upgrade project to \$2 million. Debbie pointed the BoG to the proposed language found in the draft agenda for the Annual Meeting (see below):

WHEREAS, the community passed the below resolution at the 92nd Annual Meeting of the Quonochontaug Central Beach Fire District held on September 18, 2021 at the Quonochontaug Grange:

“Resolved, that a 4-log disinfection system RIDOH compliant upgrade to the District water system (“Water Project”), as mandated by the RIDOH, utilizing project modifications as deemed necessary by the DOH and other technical factors no greater than \$1,600,000 be approved by the District with the Board of Governors having authority to modify the plans as necessary. Final financing terms and lender(s) shall be subject to the approval of the majority of the Board of Governors. In addition, as part of the financing for the Water Project, the Board of Governors may decide to refinance and consolidate the existing water loan on the balance sheet of the

District in the amount of no greater than \$65,000. The Board of Governors may delegate authority to negotiate and execute such loans to the person or person(s) approved by the majority of the Board of Governors.”

WHEREAS, the cost of the Water Project is higher than expected and originally approved due to permitting delays, inflation and requirements arising from potential financing options.

Now, therefore, be it **RESOLVED** that the total amount to be spent on the Water Project is hereby increased to an amount no greater than \$2,000,000, with the Board of Governors having the authority and are hereby directed to take any and all actions necessary to undertake and complete the Water Project including the financing of the Project, through the issuance of any bonds or notes or otherwise, in an amount not to exceed \$2,000,000.

A **motion** was made to approve the resolution as written. Following a brief discussion, 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).

Public Works:

Charlie Freedgood for Bob Frazier

No update was available including on the rebidding of the water upgrade project.

Community Property:

Mark next reviewed ongoing maintenance projects, including the post-season timeline for the trimming of a tree on the playground, which is encroaching on the nearby power lines.

He reported that he and Carrie Gilpin received a bid from PS Yardworks for a chemical-free approach to controlling vegetation on certain community property areas (parking lot, playground, tennis court garden and merchandise sales area) as well as the dunes (Beaches and Dunes area). Much of the work would require manual removal and in areas on or near the dunes, the invasive species would need to be replaced with vegetation that is capable of holding the soil and slowing erosion. The bid was approximately \$15k-\$20k annually depending on the exact scope of work. Given the size of the bid, Mark proposed some alternatives, such as removing the gardens and replanting the areas with native vegetation, continuing to spray in certain areas and using Seaside Gardners or other volunteers to do some of the work. Discussion ensued around how to approach vegetation control/removal and whether the community should pay for such work to be done or solicit community volunteers. The group decided to revisit the issue at a future meeting.

Mark reported that the old Quonochontaug Central Beach sign has been refurbished by George Prior and recommended that it be donated to the Grange. The Grange board has agreed to accept and display the sign. A **motion** was made to donate the old sign to the Grange. Following a brief discussion, 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).

Long-Range Planning:

Renee Cohen, Chair

Renee discussed the status of the draft Comprehensive Long-Range Plan and next steps for review.

She reported that work continues on three of the five priorities - Quonnie Neck Cooperation, Governance and Water Quantity/Quality projects. The Governance project team is progressing on pulling together a set of issues reflecting the pros and cons of alternate governance structures in comparison to fire districts as well-paid employees should be considered for some of the work currently being performed by community volunteers. A written report will follow. Work on Environmental project is on-going through QCC and others. The Water Quantity/Quality project team plans to provide an interim report at the October BoG meeting, and will create an abridged version of its final report to be included as a section within the Comprehensive Plan.

Charlie recognized all the work that has gone into these LRP projects as well as the draft Comprehensive Plan. He pointed out what a great accomplishment it is to have brought these projects and the Comprehensive Plan document to this point and thanked the committee.

7. Managers Reports:

Merchandise Sales:

Dede Consoli, Manager

Dede reported that the 2024 Special Events Merchandise Sales Grant proposals will be reviewed August 27th and the selected projects will be presented for approval at the September BoG meeting. Dede was asked whether the grant task force would consider projects throughout the year. Dede indicated that her preference would be to approve a slate of projects after the close of the merchandise sales season and then review additional applications thereafter on a rolling ad hoc basis. Charlie asked that availability of grant funds outside of the annual process be communicated to the community.

Dede announced on behalf of Special Events that the QCBFD 95th anniversary party will be held on July 19, 2025. Details to follow.

A **motion** was made to adjourn at approximately 9:46am. 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