

Minutes of the Meeting of
Quonochontaug Central Beach Fire District
Board of Governors
June 24, 2023
Charlestown Police Station
Meeting Room
4901 Old Post Rd, Charlestown, RI 02813

Members in attendance: Al Bartosic, Dede Consoli, Ellen Frost, Charlie Freedgood,, Ron Ruel, Fred Newton and Maud Bailey

Members Absent: Mark Alperin, Bob Frazier and Mike Lewers.

Also in attendance were Chris Harris as well as members of the public.

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

Charlie called the meeting to order at 8:15am. He thanked everyone for their work as volunteers.

2. Approval of the Minutes. **Clerk, Maud Bailey**

i. No edits or comments were made to the May 27, 2023 BoG meeting 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).

Next Maud passed out the minutes of the May 27, 2023 Executive Session for review and comment. No substantive discussion happened in that executive session so it was decided to review and pass the minutes in open session. No edits or comments were made to the May 27, 2023 BoG Executive Session meeting 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).

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

Charlie began his report by expanding on the Water conservation item that is listed under Public Works. Charlie led a discussion concerning water conservation communication and processes including identifying drought conditions, how to measure the stress level of our wells, and conservation methods and goals. He is working with a sub group and Public Works to create communication around this important issue. It is important to take into consideration actions that have immediate impact like lawn watering and short showers and long-term actions, such as planting native plants that create a more sustainable environment. The District needs to work with our neck communities and with QCC.

Charlie believes we should consider our well field as being a proxy for the overall condition of the district water resources as its status is measurable; thus if our well levels are low we need to communicate this situation to the community. That being said, we also need to be aware of the broader water conditions, such that if Charlestown and the surrounding communities are in drought even if our well levels appear healthy, we nonetheless need to remain conservative with our water use The working subgroup is developing criteria for communicating conservation metrics and actions. In response to an inquiry, Charlie clarified for Ellen that QCC signs have to be approved by the BoG if they are placed on community property, but homeowners may have them on their own land without BoG approval.

Treasurer's Report and Finance and Budget:

Al Bartosic, Finance Chair

Al reported on behalf of Mike Lewers that the District has borrowed \$50,000 from our line of credit, primarily to pay NWSI bills and Garbage. Our insurance is being renewed. Mike is getting ready to send out the tax bills in August.

Charlie stated that our insurance broker asked the District to fill out a questionnaire during the renewal process this year to identify District policies and procedures concerning possible sexual misconduct by District employees.

Al began his Finance report by stating they are about to start the 2022 collections review, an annual audit where they match collection against bank statements—they will report the results to the BoG. The RIIB (Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank) water loan is currently on hold awaiting RIDOH (Rhode Island Department of Health) to issue a certificate of authority.

Finally, Al encouraged the Board to provide Finance with their 2024 budget items because the budget process is about to get underway. He highlighted that next year our biggest expenses will be the repayment of the RIIB loan, the Garbage contract and the cost of fire protection.

Long Range Planning

Ellen Frost, Chair

Ellen reported that she had been planning to present and lead a discussion on the Comprehensive Plan, but because of unforeseen circumstances, she was unable to get a quorum and hold a Long Range Planning meeting this past week so the presentation and discussion is on hold until the next BoG meeting.

Public Works:

Fig Newton for Bob Frazier, Chair

Fig first reported on the status of the water project, stating that now we are waiting on regulatory permits from five agencies in order to move forward. All of the paperwork required to be filed by the District to obtain the various permits has been filed with the appropriate agencies. These include: RIDOH needs to approve the plan and issue the Certificate of Authority; CRMC needs to give the assent permit for construction in a wetland buffer zone; RIDEM needs to issue a permit allowing for the discharge water and; the Town of Charlestown needs to issue a building permit, itself contingent on a Dunn's Corner Fire Department inspection. With respect to the DCFD inspection, a fee is due, and after some discussion with the department concerning their calculation of the fee, the District opted to accept the DCFD calculation in order to move the process forward.

The next item of discussion was the impact of the construction at 75 Surfside on the District's roadway and right of way. . There are road wear and drainage issues at 75 Surfside in addition to construction on the District's property. These issues will be reviewed and the owner contacted.

Relatedly, the adequacy of the \$5,000 escrow required to protect District property during major construction was raised. The amount will be reviewed by PW to assess if it needs to be adjusted and/or if another structure is appropriate (i.e. a bond in lieu of cash). Also, Fig agreed to have PW revisit the discussion of parameters around construction on district ROW's as well as better communication with potential property owners in advance of the commencement of construction.

Community Property

Maud Bailey for Mark Alperin

Maud read Mark's report that covered landscaping, the garbage collection performance and future budgeting. The CP committee requested increasing reserves to cover tree removal and creating a longtime reserve to replace and/or upgrade the playground equipment. Ellen asked if the report covered memorials, which it did not.

Managers Reports

Merchandise Sales

Dede Consoli, Manager

Dede reported that she is excited and ready to start merchandise sales this Sunday.

The Police Liaison & Manager of Beach Gate Monitors:

Ron Ruel

Ron reported that we have received over 20 applicants, with enough completing the process so that the first week is staffed. Ron suggested that next year the link to the work documents and an explanation on how to apply should be in the Spring Packet.

The next item for discussion and possible action was the purchase of a new safe box for the AED at the beach.s Currently, a backpack containing the AED and first aid items is kept at the block and removed each evening. The proposed safe box would allow the items to stay at the beach all day during the summer. Ron said this is the same box that Charlestown uses at their facilities. The box is locked, with a call to 911 required to receive an unlock code. The 911 call also triggers an ambulance dispatch to the scene. Although the responding person needs a cell phone, Ron felt these are now commonplace. Ron noted that the box is large and secure enough to include a variety of emergency gear,

including the AED, NARCAN, and other vital response equipment.. Ron estimated the cost at \$900 and will continue to diligence the applicability for our situation.

Ron then reported that Charlestown Rescue will provide CPR and First Aid training on the beach in July.

Next Ron reported on topics covered during a meeting with the Charlestown Police Chief. The Chief first covered the restricted use of fireworks. The Chief said the police will be enhancing their enforcement efforts this year. The issue is one of safety and community disturbance. Ron indicated he has an eblast prepared outlining the State and local laws regarding the use of fireworks.

The Chief reported new laws affecting water recreation. Everyone will be required to wear life preservers (now including kayakers and paddleboarders) starting July 1st. Also all boaters with vessels equipped with an auto shut-off key fob will be required to use them.

The last issue was new State laws affecting low-speed vehicles, including golf carts. Currently, low speed vehicles are illegal to drive on public roads. The new law, to take effect on July 1, 2024, will allow low speed vehicles if the vehicle meets the law's requirements, which include: Inspection, registration and insurance. The low speed vehicles will need to be equipped with certain safety equipment, including seat belts, headlights and turn signals. The discussion will be included in an upcoming BoG agenda to determine whether to synchronize the District's existing rules with the new State provisions.

Special Events

Dede Consoli for Elaine Heilemann

Elaine asked Dede to remind everyone the Beach picnic is tonight so please come.

Beach and Dunes

Caroline Gilpin

Carrie thanked Heidi Nichols Carpenter for all the work she has put into organizing, publicizing, and running the beach cleanup on Saturday, July 8, after the softball game is over. Rain date is Sunday, July 9. She also reported on the new beach boardwalk.

Community Comment

Roy Jacobson raised a recent state law development concerning accessory apartments that could have implications to the District and the Neck. The law passed by the State allows for auxiliary buildings to be converted to housing, ostensibly to help alleviate the housing shortage. This law allows towns to opt-in or opt-out, but if they opt-in the law may override current zoning restrictions.

Adjournment

A **motion** was made to adjourn at approximately 10:50am. 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
Maud Bailey, Clerk
Quonochontaug Central Beach Fire District