

## Little Beach Seaweed Removal

Pursuant to the March 3, 2021 meeting of the Beach Committee, I have been asked to research various aspects of the proposal to remove seaweed at Little Beach. As a starting point, I gathered all information provided to the committee previously. The following summarizes this information:

### BACKGROUND:

**1. Equipment** – The committee has discussed purchasing or leasing equipment to collect the seaweed and having private individuals operate the equipment. The specific equipment discussed to date includes:

- A proposal for the district to purchase a “Surf Rake” from “H. Barber & Sons Inc.”. It is my understanding that 3 prices were provided based on the size of the unit to be purchased including the Model 400, \$24,000, model 400HD, \$42,000, and Model 600HD \$57,000.
- A proposal to purchase a “Cherrington 3000” beach cleaning unit. The original quote provided to purchase this equipment was \$45,000. However, upon providing the dealer with a more detailed aerial view of the property (video and photographs) it was determined that the original proposed “3000 unit” would not work for the size of the area to be cleaned. The “Cherrington 5450” was then recommended at a cost of \$92,000.
- A proposal to purchase/lease a larger backhoe than the one the district currently owns.

It’s important to note that with regard to the purchase/lease of equipment, cost estimates provided above are *only* for the cost to acquire the equipment and do **not** include other related expenses. Other expenses may include maintenance (both routine and as needed) possible storage (i.e. shed etc.), personnel to operate the equipment, a truck to transport material collected, personnel to drive the truck and any costs that may be associated with disposal of materials.

**2. Beach Cleaning Service Companies** – The committee has reached out to various companies in an attempt to find someone to do the work. These companies include:

- “H.S. Environmental” – Members of the committee have spoken numerous times to Harry Plaut (owner) about retaining his company to clean the beach. It is my understanding that Mr. Plaut originally provided a cost of \$24,000 to clean the beach for the entire summer, then reduced the price to \$12,000 based on a 62-day calendar (based on tides) and then increased the price back to the original \$24,000 (although I am uncertain as to what factors caused this as I am unaware of any changes to the “specs” of the project). I am uncertain as to Mr. Plaut’s status or if he is willing/able to do the work and at what cost.
- Landscapers - Several weeks ago I was asked to contact local landscapers to get proposals for cleaning of the beach. I contacted a total of 21 landscapers from throughout RI to request price quotes. I received 0 responses (which I believe shows the scope of work involved). It is my understanding that there may have been a landscaper who previously provided a proposal to clean the area “by hand” but I am unaware as to the specifics or status of this proposal. I would note however that based on the volume of seaweed that accumulates at times, as well as the input that has been gathered from various equipment operators, dealers, etc. that it would not be feasible or reasonable to think the beach could be cleaned by hand (most days) or without the use of equipment.

**3. Access** – The issue of access for equipment to get on/off the beach has been discussed at length. Several proposals have been made to date including:

- the use of a crane to lift equipment on/off the beach
- the purchase of “mats”, “railroad ties” etc. to be laid across existing concrete structures in an attempt to “level” the area to allow for a backhoe or other equipment to drive on/off the beach.
- the construction of “ramps” to allow for access

**4. Transport of Materials** – There has been a great deal of discussion regarding the transport of seaweed collected. It has been suggested that the district could rent/lease a dump truck and have a “retired” person, “off duty DPW staff” or other private individuals hired to drive the truck. I will address this matter in specific detail under “insurance” later in this report.

**5. Disposal** – There has been various discussions and proposals for the disposal of material. It is my understanding that possible options discussed previously include:

- hauling material to the Rose Hill Transfer Station (at a cost of \$100/ton)
- transporting to a local farm (if they would accept it)
- storing material at the Community Center to allow it to “dry” and then possibly burying it or transporting it elsewhere

After having reviewed the history of the project to date, I began to research the various issues related to this project. I provide the following for your review:

#### **Narragansett DPW** –

My first call was to the Narragansett DPW. I spoke to Steve Daignault (Deputy Foreman) to explain the situation and ask for any input he might be able to provide regarding the collection and transport of seaweed including specifics related to various truck sizes, equipment, etc. Steve’s first comments were relative to the “liability” of renting equipment and/or vehicles and having private individuals operate them. He indicated that he thought it would be “very risky” to do so and that you would need to be sure that all involved were properly trained, licensed, certified, etc. Steve also questioned whether the district would be “covered” in the event of an accident or incident. With regard to specific recommendations for the size and type of truck that may be required, he indicated the size of the truck would need to be based on the weight load that was going to be transported. He is familiar with Little Beach but had no idea what the seaweed might weigh or how much there might be on a given day and therefore didn’t have any specific recommendations relative to truck size. He advised that dump trucks average in size based on “cubic yards” and that someone would need to “estimate how much you’re going to haul” in order to determine the size of the truck needed.

**RIIRMT Insurance** - Pursuant to speaking to Narragansett DPW (and before going any further to obtain specifics relative to truck sizes, prices, etc.) I contacted the District’s Insurer (Rhode Island Interlocal Risk Management Trust “RIIRMT”) to get their input relative to the District’s rental/lease of equipment. I spoke to Colleen Bodziony (Senior Risk Associate) and she advised that there are several **IMPORTANT** factors to consider if the district is looking at renting or leasing equipment to be operated by “non-employees”. She indicated the biggest concern would be that of liability and that the district needs to be “very careful” in this regard. If individuals were paid to operate equipment they would be considered “independent contractors” and there would be **NO** liability coverage for any claims that may be filed in relation to work done. She also advised that there would be **NO** workers comp coverage either if the operator were to sustain any sort of injury. She further went on to state that our policy “**specifically excludes**” coverage for Independent Contractors which means if there were to be *any* sort of a claim arising out of the work being done, the district “would be 100% liable for the cost of litigation and settlement of any claims.” She repeatedly cautioned against such actions and indicated that there was “nothing to prohibit the district from doing so” but she wanted to be sure we were aware of the “tremendous risk” in doing so. She also indicated that *if* the

district were to rent equipment at any time that we should be sure to contact the RIIRMT to get a certificate of insurance to cover the equipment while it's in our possession.

Pursuant to speaking to the RIIRMT, I contacted Janice (Beach Committee Chair) to share this information and seek her input/direction. We discussed the risk of the district renting/leasing/purchasing equipment, trucks, etc. and having "non-employees" operate the equipment and both agreed that there was far too much risk and potential liability to the district. As such, we discussed "other" options at which time I advised her that I would try to contact some local excavating companies to see if any might be interested in the job. I contacted 4 local companies (Sherman & Son, We Dig, Flynn & Son, and Timpson) and was unable to find any willing/able to do the job. More than one indicated that the job was "too rough" for their equipment and/or they "didn't have the proper equipment for the job" and that we would need to find someone with equipment designed for the rocky terrain at Little Beach.

Having been unable to find an excavating company, I contacted Bob Barber (who has done excavating work for the district for many years) to discuss the possibility of him doing the work. He agreed to meet me at Little Beach to get a better idea of the work. After looking at the area, Bob indicated it would be "really tough" to get a backhoe on/off the beach because you would need a ramp that was sloped enough to drive on/off and there wasn't enough "clearance" to have a ramp long enough to safely do so. He also indicated the wires along the road would pose a potential problem for his big equipment. I told him I had been unable to find anyone to do the work which he indicated "wasn't a surprise because of the rough terrain and because of the extensive wear and tear on equipment in or around salt water". We then talked about the type of equipment the Beach Club uses to clean seaweed and if something similar could be used at Little Beach. Bob advised that he thought the club used a "skid steer" with a special "fork" bucket and that this type of equipment "would do the job if we could get it on/off the beach". Subsequent to meeting with Bob, I contacted "Bobcat of RI" and spoke to a salesman ("Josh") to explain the situation and get his input. Josh indicated they have "several municipalities and private clubs who are using Skid Steers with skeleton buckets (see photos 1&2) to remove seaweed successfully and thought it would be a good solution for Little Beach. We discussed the issue of access on/off and Josh indicated they make a skid steer model that comes on "tracks" which are specifically designed to drive over rough or unlevel terrain. The "skeleton buckets" have "teeth" on them which allows for water, rocks, etc. to fall through while seaweed is picked up.

Upon getting this information, I again met with Bob to talk about the possibility of him purchasing/leasing the equipment and doing the work as the district would not be able to do so based on concerns re: insurance coverage for private operators. Bob indicated he *would* be willing to purchase the skid steer machine and skeleton bucket (est. \$45-50k) to allow him to do the work but that he would need some sort of "guarantee" to be assured it would be "profitable" for him to do so. He also indicated that he would want some sort of guarantee because the equipment will be subject to a lot of wear and tear because of the salt water. We explored the issue of access and determined that there would be sufficient access on both sides with minimal work needed. On the beach side, the beach could be accessed by driving down the existing "ramp" that is constructed of 4 large cement slabs. We might just need to remove or "re-set" one of the slabs as it sticks up a little higher than the rest (see photo #3). On the "harbor side", we identified an existing opening that is approx. 8 ft wide that could be used as an access point (see photo #4). The only work that would be necessary would be to do some slight grading of the hillside (from the road down) to make access easier. We would not need to build any ramps or purchase mats, railroad ties etc. (as previously discussed). We would also need to remove/re-locate a bucket that someone has placed in the ground to apparently serve as a "mooring" for a boat (see photo #5). If using these areas as "access points" we would also want to mark them off to be sure they are kept clear (by sign, chain, etc.) so they are not blocked at any time. I would also suggest that you may want to advise all residents that they need to be sure dinghy's, kayaks, canoes, etc. are stored all the way up along the boulders (on both sides) so there is clear access to the lower "beach" portions for daily cleaning. This could be done via e-mail blast and perhaps signage as well. Bob would park his truck on the boat ramp to load and would then transport the material.

After meeting with Bob, I called "Earthcare Farms" (Charlestown) and spoke to the manager "Nikki". She indicated they would accept seaweed at no charge, as long as it was "clean" and free of rocks and liter. I also called "Casey Farm" but no one was available to speak with me. Lastly, I called the Town of Narragansett (Dory Boardman, Recycling Coordinator) as well as the Rose Hill Transfer station ("Anthony") and confirmed previous information that seaweed could be disposed of at the transfer station at a cost of \$100/ton.

Based upon the aforementioned, I asked Bob to provide me with a written proposal for the committee to review. I have attached his proposal. I would note that you will see that Bob has provided 2 options. He did so based upon my asking him to quote the work for 62 days (based upon tidal schedule) and also to include what he would be looking for relative to the "guarantee" he mentioned.

Lastly, I would like to note that several months ago I applied for a "Safety Enhancement Grant" from the RIIRMT with the goal of being able to "improve access at Little Beach". Specifically, I was seeking funds to build and install stairs so people could safely access the "beachside" where currently the only access is via large boulders that serve as "makeshift" stairs. The boulders are not level and make access difficult for some. The boulders are at the end of a "ramp" (see photo #6) that is missing the lower section (due to past storms). I spoke to Phil Smith to get a price for constructing stairs that could be attached to the existing "ramp" and requested funds in the grant application for this purpose. I also thought it might be good to have a few dollars available that could potentially be used to provide safer access for equipment and machinery to clean Little Beach (knowing that the committee has been looking into this) so I included \$500 for this purpose. I am happy to report that Ken Fogarty, RIIRMT Property Loss Prevention Specialist, came by the office TODAY (3.18.21) to personally notify me the district had been selected to receive the grant for which I applied (NOTE: usually the grant recipients are announced at the RIIRMT annual awards ceremony but it's not being held due to the pandemic). This is a small grant but will provide for the construction of stairs as well as provide immediately available funds for any minor access work related to the removal of seaweed and as deemed appropriate.

I hope you find the information provided helpful. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Lisa DiBello, District Manager  
Bonnet Shores Fire District



**PHOTO #1**  
Bobcat Skid Steer on trac

**PHOTO #2**  
Skeleton Bucket



**PHOTO #3**  
Existing concrete slabs (access ramp)



**PHOTO #4**  
8 ft wide possible access area "harbor side"



**PHOTO #5**  
Existing bucket/mooring on harbor side



**PHOTO #6**

Existing "ramp" (harbor side)





## *R. Barber Jr. Trucking*

*2271 Tower Hill Rd  
Saunderstown, RI 02874  
Phone (401) 294-9124  
Cell (401) 413-8221  
Robert H BarberJr@msn.com*

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*March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2021*

*Attn: Bonnet Shores Fire District  
130 Bonnet Shores Rd  
Narragansett, RI 02882*

### *Estimate for Bonnet Shores Fire District Little Beach*

#### *Option #1.*

*Clean the little beach 62 times from May to September with dates chosen by the Fire District. Seaweed would be removed from left and right side of the boat ramp, disposed of at compost facility set up by the Fire District. ----- \$62,000.000*

#### *Option #2.*

*Clean the little beach a minimum of 35 times from May to September with dates chosen by the Fire District. If there is more than one (15 yard) load of seaweed that needs to be transported, (i.e., after a storm) these additional loads will incur a charge of \$225.00 per load. Seaweed would be removed from left and right side of the boat ramp, disposed of at compost facility set up by the Fire District.  
----- \$35,000.00*

*There must be a minimum on this bid to be profitable to purchase the necessary equipment to clean the beach, maintain the equipment due to salt and water damage that can occur, and dedicate time during the days selected to solely cleaning the beach and removing seaweed.*

*\*If the compost facility declines to take the seaweed, the Fire District will incur the associated charges for dumping the seaweed.*

