

Bonnet Shores Fire District

Bonnet Shores Fire District Council Monthly Meeting

Wednesday, July 17, 2019

7:30 pm

Meeting Minutes

Call to Order

Council Chair Michael Vendetti called the meeting to order at 7:36 pm. In attendance were council members Anita Langer, Daniel Johnson, Christopher Mannix, Janice McClanaghan, Carol O'Donnell and Marlene Bellini. Also in attendance were Treasurer Natalie McDonald, Tax Collector Kevin Koehler and Harbormaster Mike Tortolani. District Manager Lisa DiBello was absent.

M. Vendetti informed the attendees that there was a problem with the ladies' bathroom and that everyone should use the men's bathroom tonight.

Before leading the assembly with the Pledge of Allegiance, M. Vendetti made a statement about a new level of disruption and disrespect that has characterized recent Fire District meetings. He indicated that it is a reflection on him and on the community and that people need to respect one another. He stated that the Fire District asked for a police detail to attend tonight's meeting to maintain order. He stated that the disruptive behavior needs to stop.

Pledge of Allegiance

M. Vendetti led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance at 7:40 pm.

Urgent Business

None.

Approval of Minutes

The council approved the December 20, 2019 meeting minutes.

A discussion ensued regarding the approval of the April 17, 2019 meeting minutes. D. Johnson and A. Langer proposed changes to the minutes. M. Vendetti indicated that the minutes would be approved at the following meeting.

Period of Public Comment

Carol DiLeo stated that it was disrespectful to round up non-residents to vote at the Annual Meeting last month. She indicated that she has not seen meeting minutes posted and that they should be posted within 30 days after a meeting. She criticized the council for not holding meetings in January or February.

Louise Healey stated that she is a member of the Board of Directors at the Bonnet Shores Beach Club. She stated that some community members have tried to paint the beach club as the root of all evil. She talked about the following services and favors the beach club provides the Fire District: (1) Fire District lifeguards are allowed to park in the Beach Club lot, (2) the Beach Club cleans Kelly Beach, (3) the Beach Club allows Fire District vehicles to come through its gate and (4) the Beach Club allows Fire District residents to access 200 linear feet of Beach Club property for beach-going. She thanked the Fire District for allowing the Beach Club to use the BSFD Community Center for its Board of Directors' meetings. She also addressed the recent fireworks controversy, stating that 61 cars were parked at the Community Center for the event, which brought in \$1,220.00 to the Beach Club. The Beach Club, in turn, made a \$200.00 donation to the Summer Camp. She stated that the two entities should work as partners.

Carol Fortin stated that she informed the Narragansett Town Council about the serious risk on the causeway. She indicated that the town is cutting back some of the growth in the causeway, but wanted more of an effort to be made because of safety concerns.

Susan Aufiero stated that she recently became a full-time resident and recently became aware that the Beach Club members could vote at Annual Meetings.

Joe Iannucci stated that he had concerns about the Beach Club members voting at Annual Meetings of the Fire District. He asked that the Annual Meeting minutes be made available in draft form prior to the next Annual Meeting.

Richard Mercier asked if someone could explain the bylaws and charter.

Nancy Cordy stated that the meetings should be taped and that she was surprised about a New Business item.

Committee Reports

Social (A. Langer): The 2nd Cocktails on the Beach will be held on July 31, 2019. Thank you to Jane Carter and Marybeth Murphy for organizing that event.

Harbor (M. Tortolani): Five inches, on average, have been filled in around the harbor area since the dredge. There is a new harbor float delineating a NO WAKE ZONE. A. Langer indicated that she was the new chair of the Harbor Committee.

Pond (C. Mannix): \$101,300 reimbursement for the dredge project has been received from the State of Rhode Island. Mary McGinn paid the dredgers \$98,700. The reimbursement requests have been made to the state and we are awaiting reimbursement of the remaining funds. The total cost of the project is \$210,000 and we will be reimbursed approximately \$200,000 of that amount.

Roads (J. McClanaghan): Residents have been notifying Jan, the District Manager and the Town Building Inspector of areas where there is overgrowth that needs to be cut back. The District Manager notifies the Narragansett Building Inspector about complaints.

Recreation (C. Mannix): The Summer Camp has collected \$5,400 in registration fees. Approximately thirty children are enrolled in the camp. It is an approximation because not every participant is a full-time participant. Thank you to Lisa DiBello and Courtney DuBois for their efforts in running this program.

Walkway (A. Langer): The committee approved its prior meeting minutes. It has scheduled four information sessions throughout the summer. It has raised 62% of its goal of \$45,000 via pledges. New residents attended and were very supportive.

Treasurer (N. McDonald): The Fire District needs to draw an additional \$5,000 from its Line of Credit to cover costs associated with payroll. C. Mannix moved, seconded by J. McClanaghan, to confirm and ratify the decision from the prior council meeting regarding the Line of Credit increase. The motion was approved unanimously.

Tax Collector (K. Koehler): Working on the transition with the former tax collector. Some checks have been sent in, but not yet deposited.

Land Trust (L. Mercier): L. Mercier was elected chair and George Monaghan was elected Vice Chair.

District Manager: Lisa DiBello is out on medical leave. She had surgery the day after the Annual Meeting. The Interlocal Trust requested the names of the newly elected council members. Bulky Pickup is scheduled for July 24, 2019. We have had to rely on the Narragansett Animal Control Officer to address the issue of dogs on the beach. Individuals are warned for a first offense and fined for a second offense. There is a problem with the east-side door of the Community Center that the council needs to address.

Old Business

Allocation for outside building work

- N. McDonald indicated that the outside siding and sealing work will cost double what the council budgeted. The original budgeted amount was \$6,534.00. C. Mannix moved, seconded by J. McClanaghan, to allocate an additional \$6,534.00 from the Capital Reserve for the siding, sealing and duct work. The motion was approved unanimously.

New Business

Little Beach – seaweed

- J. McClanaghan stated that the CRMC Assent to remove seaweed expired on June 23, 2019. The cost of trucking seaweed away is \$3,000 per truckload. The Fire District is reapplying for the CRMC Assent. The council must determine if it wants to take on the cost of trucking out the seaweed.
- Mary Goodison asked about the differences in the seaweed problem between Little Beach and Kelly Beach. J. McClanaghan responded that seaweed can be buried in the dunes at Kelly Beach, but there is no similar place to bury seaweed at Little Beach.

Kelly Beach discussion on dogs and fires

- J. McClanaghan has told the security company to monitor the fires. An e-blast was sent out regarding the dog problem.

Emergency Contact e-blast discussion

- J. McClanaghan sent a summary regarding the e-blast situation. She stated that many of the emails obtained were obtained for the purpose of communicating with residents regarding EMERGENCIES, such as last summer's water crisis. She stated that other residents want information updates about the Fire District, but that we must be very CAUTIOUS in our use of the system. Steve Ryder is looking to step down as the volunteer webmaster. J. McClanaghan reiterated that the emails were obtained for communications regarding emergencies.
- M. Vendetti indicated that we will try to have an action item on this topic at a future meeting.

*Walkway Committee Review/Direction
Council*

- M. Vendetti stated that this contentious item has gone on for a few years. He inquired whether the Fire District would like to continue having the Walkway Committee as a BSFD Committee. He stated that he did not want to argue about walkway-related items at every council meeting, which is what had occurred at monthly meetings since the 2018 Annual Meeting. He said the project has contributed to the toxicity in the neighborhood and we need to resolve the future of the committee.
- J. McClanaghan stated that we need to look at Bonnet as a whole. She stated that the stress of the last year was the most she had gone through during her time on the council. CRMC may look at the option of elevating the causeway. She stated that the council was told that the funds for the project would be fund-raised, but that is not what happened.
- C. Mannix indicated that the walkway was a "nice-to-have" project, but not a necessity. He echoed M. Vendetti's concern about the toxicity it had caused. He stated that town and CRMC documents analyzing the project revealed serious risks and concerns with the project.
- M. Bellini stated that she agreed with J. McClanaghan. She stated that the safety issue was a problem across Bonnet and not just restricted to the causeway. She said she came to the monthly meetings and the walkway dominated many of those meetings and distracted the council from other issues.
- C. O'Donnell stated that CRMC and town analyses of the walkway project are not favorable. She stated that other parts of Bonnet, such as Onondaga Road, have become safer after being paved. She stated that the walkway project created personal animosities.
- A. Langer stated that the CRMC Preliminary Determination suggested that the sewer and walkway projects be linked. She stated that if the Beach Club had wanted to work with the Fire District, it would have asked the Fire District's opinion. She stated that there were 49 letters sent to CRMC opposed to the sewer project and only two letters in favor. Now that the sewer project is approved, then we should not have a problem supporting the walkway. She stated that the causeway is too narrow and cannot be widened.
- D. Johnson stated that he has owned his house for six years, but has been coming here with his wife for decades. He stated that he is an active runner and cyclist and that he

uses the causeway and it is hazardous. He stated that he got elected to get the walkway project implemented. He stated that the council needs to support the project because it will enhance the community and make it safer. He stated that there was overwhelming public support for the project. He stated that it was endorsed by CRMC, the town and Save the Bay.

Public Comment

- M. Vendetti stated that members of the public would be restricted to 2-3 minutes to address the council on this topic.
- C. Mannix was asked for clarification regarding the documents from the town and CRMC to which he referred. C. Mannix read from a letter written by the Narragansett Planning Staff describing the project as “deficient.” He then referred to the CRMC Preliminary Determination, which required that the project have a “compelling public” purpose. C. Mannix indicated that satisfying that public purpose would jeopardize the privacy of the Fire District.
- D. Johnson said he disagreed with C. Mannix’s characterization of the CRMC Preliminary Determination.
- Brian Holland stated that Colonel John Gardner Road is a more dangerous road than the causeway. He stated that the walkway project was voted down at the 2018 Annual Meeting and the council’s job is to end the project.
- Dave Stenmark stated that the “seed” money had been voted down at the 2018 Annual Meeting. He stated that CRMC had made many recommendations in its report.
- M. Bellini stated that she did not support the walkway.
- Donna Monaghan inquired whether the sewer and walkway projects could be linked.
- Victor Samaha stated that he is a summertime resident and that the projects cannot be linked because of the costs. He stated that it took years and money to get the sewer project off the ground and finally approved.
- M. Vendetti stated that the sewer line has been approved and that we should now discuss the future of the walkway project. Do we want to mislead the people working on this project? Is the community going to support this project with Fire District money? He stated that he supported the project based on the concept that it would be privately funded. It was dealt with at the 2018 Annual Meeting. It has caused too much division and we should not mislead the public or the volunteers by keeping this committee.
- Carol Fortin indicated that she was at the July 15, 2019 presentation regarding the walkway. She stated that it has 300 supporters. She stated that the council members need to see the presentation and inform themselves.
- Dana Carter stated he was concerned about the cost to the Fire District when a person gets killed on the causeway.
- Carol DiLeo stated that the council has done nothing. She stated that there needs to be a cop at each end of the causeway on Sundays.
- M. Vendetti stated that the people voted down the project.
- J. McClanaghan talked about the establishment of the Roads Committee and the priorities it identified. She stated the walkway supporters were not supportive of that committee.

- Nancy Cordy stated that the Roads Committee labeled the walkway a low priority. She stated that the council members did not come to Walkway Committee meetings and then went out and bad-mouthed the project. We need this to be a Fire District project.
- M. Vendetti stated that the Fire District voters did not approve the \$60,000 last year. They are not going to approve a larger amount.
- Tony Lupino stated that there are so many near-misses on the causeway and that people are not calling the cops. He stated that there is a large volume of traffic on the causeway.
- M. Vendetti stated that there has been an increased police presence on the causeway during the past two weeks. He reiterated that the public voted down the walkway.
- A. Langer made a point of order, stating that members of the council who had voted against the creation of the walkway committee could not vote on a motion to dismantle the committee.
- M. Vendetti stated that he disagreed with A. Langer's point and, further, that a new council had been elected and can vote to change policies adopted by the prior council.
- C. Mannix moved, seconded by J. McClanaghan, to withdraw the walkway application from CRMC and withdraw the walkway application from Narragansett's Zoning/Planning Department. The motion was approved, 5-2, with D. Johnson and A. Langer dissenting.

D. Johnson and A. Langer departed the meeting at 10:10 pm. The Narragansett policeman on detail forcibly removed D. Johnson after a verbal exchange between D. Johnson and Angelo Bellini.

Council vote to support land trust acceptance of Audobon Properties

- C. Mannix moved, seconded by J. McClanaghan, to accept the recommendation of the Land Trust to accept the Audobon properties. The motion was approved, 5-0.

Appointment to Land Trust

- L. Mercier indicated that there are interested parties and that the Land Trust would like to talk with them and make a recommendation. C. Mannix moved, seconded by J. McClanaghan, to continue this item to the next meeting. The motion was approved, 5-0.

Adjournment

C. Mannix moved, seconded by J. McClanaghan, to adjourn the meeting. The motion was approved, 5-0, and the meeting adjourned at 10:20 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/Matthew M. Mannix
Bonnet Shores Fire District Clerk