

Bonnet Shores Fire District

Monthly Meeting: Meeting Minutes

August 17, 2022

8:17PM

130 Bonnet Shores Road, Narragansett, RI 02882

Zoom

Call To Order

Chair Carol O'Donnell called the meeting to order at 8:17pm. Council members in attendance included: Chair O'Donnell, Carolyn DiLeo, Steve Danuszar, Anthony DeAngelis and Bill DelGizzo. Additional present were District Manager Mark Gillooly, Treasurer Laurie McCarthy, Harbor Master Joe Bleczinski, Tax Collector Michelle Travis via zoom, and Clerk Stephanie Caldwell.

Pledge of Allegiance/ Moment of silence

The Assembly recited the Pledge.

Urgent Business

None.

Motion to go into Executive Session:

Special meeting to discuss litigation matters. This meeting may be closed pursuant to RI Gen .L. sec. 42-46-5(a)(2)(sessions pertaining to litigation.)

Return at 9:02pm

Motion – Vote 5-0 for Tom Dickenson to proceed.

Motion to go into Executive Session: Delayed to end of meeting

Discussion and possible vote on employment status/ termination of Harbor Master. This item may be discussed in closed session pursuant to RI Gen. L. sec. 42-46-5(a)(1). The Harbor Master has been notified in advance of his right to have this discussion and vote conducted in an open meeting.

Motion to close executive session, seal the minutes, go back into open meeting.

Executive session comments.

Announcements: Procedure of Meeting

Approval of Minutes:

May 21, 2022 Special Meeting – Motion to approve by Carolyn DiLeo, 2nd by Anthony Deangelis – 5-0

June 30, 2022 Special Meeting – Motion to approve by Carolyn DiLeo, 2nd by Bill DelGizzo – 5-0

January 19, 2022 Approve Correction

Clarifications

Re-vote from January 19, 2022 – Motion to treat 1099 employees as W-2 Part-time employees – Motion by Bill DelGizzo, 2nd by Carolyn DiLeo, passes 5-0.

Re-vote from December 15, 2021 – Motion to approve subscription to quickbooks – Motion made by Carolyn, 2nd Anthony, passes 5-0.

Re-vote May 18, 2022 – Motion to move forward with tax sale of properties on tax sale list – Motion made by Carolyn, 2nd by Steve Danuzar, passes 5-0

Treasurer: Updated Financial Report

BSFD is in good financial condition, a statement was mailed, and several hundred checks are being received weekly so far.

Tax Collector: Update - Collections

Michelle Travis shared her report. Many tax payments are being received and logged, so far \$32,000 of payments have been received. 10 out of 40 tax sale property owners have paid so far. There has also been some returned mail. Steve asks about progress with igov and municipay, she responds it is a work in progress and payments are still being received via check only.

Land Trust –

Steven Puerini 229 Bonnet Point Road – Reports about 75 letters have gone out regarding properties that are considered unbuildable. They would like to approach the town for tax forgiveness on those properties if donated to the Land Trust. Also, they are looking into if properties owned by the town due to tax sale would possibly be turned over to the Land Trust, and if so what fees may be involved. Asks if the council would be willing to waive delinquent taxes in the event the person is interested in donating the property, Carol responds this request would need to be added to an agenda for discussion and vote when the Land Trust is ready for that. Carolyn asks if the Land Trust is going to announce the opening of the nature trail. Bill DelGizzo comments that they were successful obtaining an \$80,000 grant from Sheldon Whitehouse’s office for a study of the coastline, and how to make that coastline more resilient.

Neal Coleman 31 Fairway Drive – The nature trail grand opening will be on 8/27/22 at 10:00am with the boy and girl scout troops that worked so hard on it.

Harbor Master

Status of position.

Walter Manning Jr.’s letter to the council is displayed and Carol explained the behavior issues reported during his altercation with the launch ramp lock.

Marion’s letter to the council is displayed and Carol explained the behavior issues reported by her experienced by her son in law regarding an inflatable watercraft.

Carol O’Donnell’s letter to the council is displayed and read by Carol.

Joe says that he has been in contact with CRMC and a representative would like to attend a council meeting regarding mooring inspections and the harbor. Joe says that he feels the 2 complaints presented from the community are not a big deal, and that Carol has interfered with his ability to perform his job, and that the complaints are only a result of his efforts to enforce the rules and regulations. Carol responds that this conversation is not about his performance, it is about his toxic behavior.

Public comment:

Steve Murray, 39 Treasure Road – Boat owner, comments that he feels this process is unfair to Joe, and he feels the issues presented have been blown out of proportion, he thinks the previous harbor master did not actively enforce rules and that Joe is being targeted for enforcing rules now.

Joe Thomas, 39 What Cheer Road – Boat owner, comments that he disagrees with the previous comments about the former Harbor Master’s performance. He explains an issue with Joe over technicalities with a dinghy sticker, and says that the 2 community letters presented are a small representation of boaters in the community that have had negative interactions but feel uncomfortable coming forward.

Anthony DeAngelis asks Joe to comment on the issues, starting with the comments directed at Carol, Joe responds that he has already submitted an apology in an email to the council. He comments that what he said was out of frustration over the vote to suspend mooring inspections. Carol responds that she has also talked to Kevin at CRMC to explain that this issue is not regarding job performance, but behavior with the community. Steve asks why there has not been a Harbor Committee meeting, Joe responds that he was told the committee was dissolved, and he feels that individual conversations have been effective to be in touch with the boaters. Bill comments that CRMC has explained that there are rules in violation of the Harbor Plan, and he feels the reason there is friction between the harbor master and some boaters is because of the issues surrounding the harbor rules and mooring list. Bill suggests a probationary period monitored by the District Manager. Steve comments that he is concerned about the answer of why there have not been any harbor meetings held this year to address issues. Carol explains the council had decided with the support of Bill to disband the official Harbor Committee because of the need to comply with OMA. Anthony suggests establishing a harbor committee

immediately, monthly check ins with the chair, and harbor updates at monthly council meetings to address the issues presented today, and a formal review in October. Joe responds that there is a formal review in December in the charter, why would he need another in October. Steve comments that efforts should be made to address the community issues, Joe responds that his 3 incidences have been handled respectfully.

Bob Patterson comments – That it is typical to create a performance plan and have an unbiased individual monitor, in this case the District Manager.

Carl Napolatiano, 38 Onondaga Road – Boat Owner, Comments that he feels there needs to be a Harbor Committee, and that the Harbor Master needs the support of the council

Sean Baxter, 42 Maywood Road – Boat Owner, comments that he has lived here for 55 years, and feels there have been many issues with Joe’s behavior, and that people feel he screams at them.

Carolyn DiLeo comments that she is concerned with the behavior issues, the liability it presents to the district, and that the council cannot ignore the issue of negative interactions.

Joe responds that the accusations are lies and are because people are upset when he enforces rules.

Anthony asks Joe what he thinks should be addressed with the behavior, Joe responds that of the 2 letters presented he has already resolved one of the issues with an apology email, and that the other letter is a lie and never happened. He says that all interactions with boaters regarding issues have been civil and he has never had a problem with anyone.

Bill suggests violations in writing, not verbally addressed.

Carol Fortin 10 Cross Road – comments that Joe has not addressed how he will correct the issue of poor language and raising his voice. Joe responds that he should have interactions on video. Carol repeats that he has not answered the question, what steps would he take to improve his behavior in a heated situation. He says he would try to keep the situation from escalating.

Steve comments to the boat owners present if they would feel more comfortable with a Harbor Committee.

Steven McCooley 72 Onondaga – Boat Owner, comments that he has been frustrated that attempts to get a harbor committee established were unsuccessful, and that Joe has been difficult to work with so far. Carolyn asks how he would feel about a committee with the boat owners involved.

Bill makes a motion to put Joe on probation monitored by the District Manager, with a zero tolerance policy for behavior issues, and if any are reported/ found to be true, he would be terminated, the District Manager will build the performance plan with Joe, including a scheduled check in for progress. Seconded by Carolyn DiLeo, the motion does not pass. Laurie asks for clarity on the zero tolerance policy, with regard for all district employees.

Steve makes a motion to terminate Joe.

Steve Murray comments that he feels Carol should recuse herself from this vote. Tom Dickenson comments that if there is a motion for her to recuse, she would need to. Steve asks for Tom’s opinion if she needs to recuse Tom responds as a member of the council she does not need to. Bill DelGizzo makes a motion for Carol to recuse herself, there is no second.

Steve again makes a motion to terminate Joe. Seconded by Carol. The motion fails.

Carolyn makes a motion to suspend Joe for the duration of the season, and put in place a plan to handle the review and discussion of expectations and a code of conduct to be approved by the council.

Mark comments to the council that having served on the town council for 6 years he knows that they do not need to make a motion in order for him as Manager to enforce a code of conduct that the council drafts. Carol asks Joe directly if he admits to the comments he made to her in question, he says yes, and quips that she needs to check her email for his response, to which Mark points out is unacceptable behavior.

Mark comments to Steve McCooley that he would be present at monthly harbor meetings, if they were to take place.

The council agrees on Mark’s suggestion to create a corrective action plan. Carol comments that she disagrees with the decision.

New Business

- A. The new BSFD Manager Mark was introduced and addressed the community – Motion to approve the hiring of Mark G made by Carolyn DiLeo, 2nd by Bill DelGizzo, passes 5-0.

- B. Ocean State Road Race – Motion to approve the road race on 10/23/22 made by Carolyn, 2nd by Carol, passes 5-0
- C. New Website Preview – Dave Kauffman displayed the new BSFD website created by Linda Kauffman, and explained the ease of use by individuals on pc, phone and tablet, streamlined management, and the new system to reorganize BSFD email addresses; there is a onetime \$190 initial startup cost, \$530 estimated yearly maintenance costs.
- D. Carolyn updated on the state of the Charter Commission – Disappointed with low attendance. The next meeting will be on 8/30/22 at 6:00pm. She explains that all of the documents related to the lawsuits will be uploaded and shared with the community to further understanding of why charter commission changes are being made. They are looking for an attorney for outside the community. No questions.
- E. Possibility of Host a Candidate Forum at the Community Center – Bob Patterson, 8 Parkman Road – asks the council to consider hosting a candidate forum at the community center – Carol asks about the attendance capacity and if zoom may be needed, or if a moderator would be used, Bob explains that it would be a meet and greet event, not a debate between candidates. Anthony clarifies if he is looking for a Bonnet endorsement, he is not. Carolyn speaks in support of the idea, as well as Bill DelGizzo, Steve is in favor of the idea as long as the building does not go over capacity. Carol asks for an outline for the council to review.
- F. Seaweed cleanup at Little Beach – Carol discussed how the new person struggled this year, mentions that a person in the community asked if the harbor side of the beach needs to be cleaned, asks if that should be considered in the future, but also comments on the issue of the smell. Bill DelGizzo comments in favor of continuing to clean both sides of the beach and the pros to that, and also suggesting to the new person to talk to Bobby Barber for technique. Anthony asks if they are finding the job more challenging than in the past, Carol answers that he is still operating within financial parameters, and that there were issues with the process. She suggests this person finish out the season, introduce the new manager to him, and see what solutions may be possible going forward. Mark asks Laurie for the contact information.
- G. Camp, bus, lifeguards, security, Little Beach, Kelly Beach – The bus is going well, there has been an issue with finding lifeguards all season, there is an issue with lifeguard chair signs being stolen, and also with street signs being stolen. All stolen signs need to be reported to Narragansett Department of Public Works. Stairs were approved at Kelly Beach when the boardwalk was first built, the topic of a ramp is still under discussion. Camp has been a large success, over 75 kids participated, the program was well received, spearheaded by Carolyn DiLeo and supported by many neighbors – thank you all!

Public Comment

Identify yourself with address, each person will have three minutes to speak, one time.

No comments.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 11:23pm, passes unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Stephanie Caldwell
Bonnet Shores Fire District Clerk