

Bonnet Shores Fire District
Monthly Meeting: Meeting Minutes
February 15, 2023
7:30 PM
130 Bonnet Shores Road, Narragansett, RI 02882
Zoom

Call To Order

Chair Carol O'Donnell called the meeting to order at 7:33pm. Council members in attendance included: Vice Chair Marlene Bellini, Anthony DeAngelis, Carolyn DiLeo, Steve Danuszar, and Bill DelGizzo. Additional present were District Manager Mark Gillooly, Treasurer Laurie McCarthy, Tax Collector Michelle Travis via Zoom and Clerk Stephanie Caldwell.

Pledge of Allegiance/ Moment of silence

The Assembly recited the Pledge.

Urgent Business

None.

Announcements: Procedure of Meeting –

Carol O'Donnell read aloud RI Constitution Article XV Sec. 3 "Continuation of office holders: All officers filling any office by election or appointment shall continue the duties thereof, until the end of the terms to which they were appointed or elected, and until their offices shall have been abolished or their successors elected and qualified in accordance with this Constitution or laws enacted pursuant thereto.

Approval of Minutes:

January 18, 2023 – No discussion. Correction to make – Community Center Rental fee is \$350.00 which includes the \$250.00 rental and \$100 cleaning fees. Motion to approve made by Marlene Bellini, seconded by Steve Danuszar, passed unanimously.

Treasurer: Updated Financial Report

Laurie McCarthy shared her report. Q2 quarter financials are on the website, Q3 on the way. Budget preparations have begun. Last month the question was posed of what the legal costs were, Legal Fees RE voting rights paid: \$4,500 retainer to Tom Dickenson in 2020, \$4,935.00 to Tom Dickenson in 2022; Consent Agreement for Patterson vs BSFD \$40,000.00 in 2023, and \$7,350.00 to William Connenly in 2023 Bill DelGizzo asked if there was a meeting with Land Trust about adjusting Community Center rental fees. Paula Childs 55 Lake Rd; RE legal fees paid to Tom Dickenson

Tax Collector: Update

Michelle Travis shared her report, igov support fee is increasing by \$100 per year and asking if the FD is interested in additional services such as mailings. Bill DelGizzo asked about online payments, she is working with municipay and Linda Kauffman to get a portal for online payments functional on the website. Kristen DeBurgess 25 Stratford Ave. asks if tax information is public information, specifically what the annual cost for a locker at the beach club is yearly, Michelle responds that depends on the property owned and the assessed value by the town. Anthony clarifies what the BSFD mill rate is; there is a discussion that knowing the assed value of a property and the mill rate enables anyone to calculate the tax assessment of all properties; if yearly tax rates should be posted on the website; Kristen clarifies her request is to see what all property owners pay yearly (homes and beach club property); and if the town has a list this accessible. Richard Mercier comments that the tax roll and BSFD tax rate are public information, and that all tax rates can be calculated from this information.

Land Trust: Update

Tabled

Harbor Master Update:

Tabled

Web Master: Update

Steve shared an update that Mailchimp rates are increasing in 2023 for email services, BSFD is using it for roughly 17 email blasts a month. The account needs to be renewed by March 10, 2023 by credit card or paypal, they do not invoice. Laurie speaks in favor and appreciation for Steve managing the account and would like to continue the services. Mark offers to let Steve use his CC and get reimbursed through the district. Anthony makes a motion to accept the new charges of \$26.51 per month for mailchimp services, seconded by Carolyn DiLeo, passed unanimously.

District Manager:

Mark shared his report which is available in full on the BSFD website. Topics included: beaver mitigation, Little Beach and culvert update (including plywood removal), Mega trash services are going well, the large volume of calls and emails weekly (35+), the repaired fire hydrant on Bonnet Shores Road, and an email to a property owner regarding tenant maintenance of trash cans.

Paula Childs questions the presence of the plywood found in the culvert and asks the council what the long term plan for the pond maintenance and emergency planning is. Carol responds that discussions are in the works with Bill DelGizzo and Mary Flynn of the Land Trust. Bill comments on the upcoming budget meetings, and the need to budget for regular maintenance of the breech way and the pond, including estimating the cost of periodic and emergency work on the culvert. Carol comments on the logistics of working with the beach club for beach access and sand storage & cleaning. Loyd Albert of Camden Road comments that the recent cleaning of the culvert was exceptionally well done; and that from his property on the east bank of the pond, the water levels right now appear to be very low, which is in contradiction to Paula Child's assessment on the north end of the pond, which leads him to believe that attention to the pond and these plans are so critical. Bill comments that the culvert is at sea level, which should enable proper draining when it is well maintained. Loyd and Bill comment that the plywood mentioned in Mark's report was stuck in the culvert for a long time, and not an intentional obstruction, it was just unable to dislodge up until now. Discussion about contacting the discussed vendor for culvert maintenance and the history of culvert, pond and breech way maintenance, and the possible expected costs going forward. There is a discussion about the formation of a committee for these purposes.

New Business

- A. Charter Commission – Update – Discussion – Motion – Vote
 - a. Cost to date for Attorney Conley – End Engagement – Discussion – Motion – Vote
 - i. Carolyn shared her report. When the bills are written, the council will receive a copy, then the legislature will vote, timeline is unclear at this point, but she hopes to get updates.
 - ii. The cost to date is \$7,350.00. Carolyn commented on this cost; the Committee did not realize the extent of the implications of the lawsuit until September, due to the unclear initial summary by Tom Dickenson (1 page summary of a 45 page Consent Order). Earlier this month Rep. McEntee reached out to William Connley for a necessary explanation, and his response was an unexpected expense.
 - iii. Bill DelGizzo comments that William Connley's work has been exceptional despite the overage in budget of \$2,350.00 so far. He feels that ending the engagement at this point would send a message of obstruction to the court. He stated that in Executive Session the council was told they lost the litigation.
 - iv. Steve comments that he feels the council should end engagement at this time because the stated purposes have been met at this point.

- v. Marlene comments that she agrees with Steve. Attorney Connley was picked for the Charter Commission purposes, and those tasks have been completed.
 - vi. Anthony asks if he is needed for anything right now. Carolyn replies that they do not know at this time, and that would depend on if there are any questions poised for the BSFD in the legislation process. He suggests ending engagement at this time, and beginning again if and when needed after a scope of work is identified and costs are agreed on. There is a discussion about predicting needs and cost control. There are interruptive comments from the audience. Carolyn read aloud the full engagement letter. There is a discussion about the pros and cons of ending engagement at this time.
 - vii. Carol suggests waiting to discuss ending engagement until after the bills have been submitted to the legislature (expected tomorrow 2/16/23), and communicating with him to see if there are any expected upcoming needs.
 - viii. Marlene agrees that waiting to discuss this until March's meeting is a considerable idea, Carolyn asks if he would still be representing the Charter Commission in the meantime, and the answer is yes.
 - ix. Motion to leave Attorney William Connley in place at this time and revisit the topic at next month's meeting is made by Carol O'Donnell, seconded by Marlene, motion passed unanimously.
- b. Motion on position of Council regarding Charter Commissions Proposed
- i. Marlene comments that she does not agree with the Charter Commissions changes and feels that the end result is divisive.
 - ii. Carolyn read a prepared statement on behalf of the Charter Commission, about the goal to make changes to satisfy the conditions of the Consent Order, which are ultimately approved or rejected by the voters of the district. She also elaborates on the importance to clarify that any dissenting opinions by council members are not representative of the Council, council members agree they are only stating personal opinions and not attempting to represent the council body with their personal opinions. There is a discussion about the interpretation of the consent ruling by various members.
 - iii. Carol comments that the council will have a vote on the bill from the General Assembly.
 - iv. Anthony comments that his impression that votes were not going to be taken and is spoken over by Paula Childs yelling at him from the audience.
 - v. Steve comments that the only clear black and white resolution was giving voting rights to all residents.
 - vi. Carolyn comments that William Connley was hired by the council with good faith, and that his opinion should be regarded as accurate. Carol comments that the Charter Commission's work was independent of the council, and that council members have the right to disagree with his opinion.
 - vii. Anthony comments that until the General Assembly accepts all proposed changes, there is no discussion to be had at this time.
 - viii. Carolyn makes a motion to table this topic until the council gets a formal opinion from another attorney, seconded by Bill.
 - ix. Bob Patterson shared his comments regarding the consent ruling, accusing Carol of undermining the Charter Commission and acting in contempt, and threatening to sue her for these accusations. Carol disagrees with his claims. Anthony asks why council member's personal opinion's matter at this point. Carolyn comments that agreeing or not is irrelevant, only if opinions are made on behalf of the council. Anthony clarifies that the decision is ultimately up to the voters, and Carolyn agrees. Marlene asks who would be the voting body on these changes, and there is a discussion without agreement.
 - x. Faith LaSalle shared her comments that she was a dissenting member of the Charter Commission because she felt it disenfranchised too many members of the community. Her proposal was modeled after other fire districts, and that the current proposal will deny certain homeowners of voting rights based on the 60 day residency proposal. She

further commented (over loud interruptions from the crowd) on the roles and work of the Commission and William Connley.

- xi. Paula Childs shared her comments, recapping the voting issue, accusing the council of roadblocking progress on the matter, and threatening a lawsuit if the council makes a statement disagreeing with the work of the Charter Commission.
- xii. Kristen DeBurgess comments on the ratios of taxes paid and voting power between the residents and beach club owners.
- xiii. Carol comments on how many homeowners are going to lose their votes based on the 60 day residency rule.
- xiv. Loyd comments that the Charter Commission is still operational with work to do, and that the voters will have the final say on any changes.
- xv. Anthony comments that the General Assembly still has to approve the proposed changes.
- xvi. Joe Iannucci shared his comments, that the people who are possibly losing votes are unable to vote in the town, and that he believes the proposed changes by the Commission are overall fair to the community.
- xvii. Christiana Quinn 1 Mohawk Trail via Zoom, asks why Carol and Marlene are still council members and accuses them of not being members. Carol responded by re-reading Sec. 3 of RI Constitution Article XV which verifies their continued positions.
- xviii. Melissa Jenkins comments via zoom without video, she accused Marlene and Carol of embezzlement, of not being members of the council any more, and of obstruction of the Charter Commission.
- xix. Paul Luba of Col. John Gardner, shared his comments that he thinks it is appropriate for the council to disagree with the Charter Commission if that is how they feel; that the taxes paid by the beach club owners are sufficient; and that the threats of litigation throughout this meeting are extreme and atypical.
- xx. A motion is made by Carol to table this item until next month's meeting, seconded by Marlene, passed unanimously.

B. Presentation by Narragansett Fire Chief Scott M. Partington & Assistant Dory Boardman – Moved to first in order of New Business for time purposes.

- a. Chief Partington introduced his assistant Dory and explained her roles with the EMA and as the recycling coordinator for the town. His history working with the town is over 32 years old. He discussed the Code Red emergency alert system used by the town and **encourages residents to sign up for this Code Red service via the town website to receive emergency alerts**, and anyone with special needs or medical needs can put this information in for first responders. He comments if the BSFD was willing to share their email contact list, the town could upload that information into the Code Red system. Additional alert notification system through the town, "Alert", to receive any/ all updates from the town regarding meetings. He discussed social media used by the town, as the EMA director Chief Partington uses Twitter and other social media for sharing alerts. Evacuation Management – there is an evacuation map for the town with 2 zones, A & B, Bonnet Shores is in the red zone A, which requires evacuation for category 1 & 2 hurricanes, and he discussed the need for BSFD residents to have an evacuation plan. Where should residents go? The town has a shelter plan with the Red Cross with 3 tiers of shelters for various needs. Tier 1 warming/ cooling, the Narragansett Town Library is the designated warming center; Tier 2, overnight shelter- Locally Initiated Community Shelter – the Middle School on Broad Rock Road in South Kingstown, reason being that it is important for the town to pool resources with neighboring towns ; Tier 3, Regional Shelters, run in conjunction with the state, would be the Ryan Center at URI. **The town EMA is looking for volunteers.** Training is free, no experience necessary, please consider volunteering! Grant funding is key for the EMA program, and he mentions that there may be Grant funding available for the district from Hazard Mitigation Preparedness grant for mitigating recurring property losses from storm damage, and may apply to pond management. Carolyn comments on the importance of all topics addressed by Chief Partington. Bill comments on the benefits for residents for the council to share the email

list with the town EMA for emergency purposes. Paula Childs asks if there are any concerns for the evacuation routes, he replies that the causeway is an identified problem evacuation route that they have been looking into grant funding for possibilities of fixing the road by various means. He comments the most important steps residents can take are to sign up for the early alert systems, to be aware in the instances of incoming storms, to have an emergency evacuation plan and to evacuate as early as possible when alerted by the EMA.

- C. Harbor management report – motion – discussion – vote
 - a. Tabled until March.
 - b. There is a brief moment of commenting from the council.
- D. Enforcement of trash ordinance –
 - a. There is a discussion that the town has been enforcing a trash ordinance when residents throughout the town call with complaints. Mark comments about a few homes in the neighborhood that the housing authority have visited and given warnings to, and that they are willing to be an authority to address issues. Marleen asks if the person with the complaint should call the town or the District Manager, the answer is either or. Carolyn makes a motion to strike the \$50 off of the existing trash ordinance and accept as corrected, Marlene seconds, motion passes unanimously.
- E. Camp 2023 – motion – discussion – vote
 - a. Bonnet camp will happen this year and will run for 6 weeks. There has been interest in participation from campers and camp counselors.

Public Comment

Please come up to the microphone, identify yourself with address, 3 minutes to speak. If you are on zoom you must turn your video on to be identified.

Anita Langer, Col. John Gardner, shared her comments about Attorney Dickenson, that she does not feel he is impartial any longer or appropriate to represent the district. She comments that she feels the council is in contempt, violating RI ethics laws, and that Carol and Marlene are no longer members of the council and should step down.

Bob Patterson shared his comments about the council terms of Carol and Marlene, that their terms have expired, and accuses them of a conflict of interest. He suggests that they recuse themselves and get an opinion from the Secretary of State or an attorney.

Steve Danuszar comments that he will continue to research the issue.

Faith LaSalle commented on the procedure of public comment.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 10:33pm by Carol O'Donnell, seconded by Bill DelGizzo, passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,
Stephanie Caldwell
Bonnet Shores Fire District Clerk