

**BONNET SHORES FIRE DISTRICT CHARTER COMMISSION**  
**130 BONNET SHORES RD, NARRAGANSETT, RI 02882**  
**AUGUST 15, 2023    MINUTES**

**CALL TO ORDER:** Chair Carolyn DiLeo called the meeting to order at 6:32 with the following members in attendance: Anita Langer, Faith LaSalle, Bob Patterson, and Lloyd Albert. Secretary Carole Duffy was there as well. Carolyn served as Zoom master as well. 20-25 individuals were in the audience.

**RATIFICATION OF JULY 31ST MINUTES:** Anita moved to accept the minutes; 2nd by Lloyd with one amendment, ( BSBC chair, Kevin Lynch, not BSBC attorney). Faith suggested that the minutes should be tabled due to omission of statements by Rep. Carol McEntee and Carol O'Donnell during July's meeting among other statements. Chair DiLeo suggested that the minutes could be tabled and that Faith should forward omissions to Carole and herself before the next meeting. 05:27

**Tabled items from July 31st meeting:** A motion had been made by Carolyn to hire an attorney to speak to Judge Taft about the consent decree; a new motion to reconsider the original motion was made by Lloyd ;2nd by Bob. Faith added that she felt since the Council had already spent \$7,000 for Atty. Conley spending additional money should not happen. Motion passed 5-0. At this point after a brief discussion, Carolyn moved to withdraw her motion 2nd by Anita.

*To hear verbatim commentary during the meeting please refer to the Zoom recording on the website. The ensuing discussion can be found at 0:12:09 - 0:12:27- 0:27:55*

Chair DiLeo was looking for a motion to consider a revised Charter change amendment. None occurred at this point but Bob proceeded to outline a proposal.

- Full time BSFD residents who are registered and qualified to vote in Narragansett should vote. This is referred to as Part A in the Consent Order.
- Commission members also want part time residents, who contribute a lot to Bonnet, to vote but this was not advocated for by the members of the Gen. Assembly
- The District has not had an election in three years; hence, there are members of the Council sitting with expired terms and the Tax Collector just resigned.
- Full time residents who by law have the right to vote are being held hostage by this impasse.
- Specifically, the proposal is to modify the Commission's Charter voting guidelines to include registered voters in Narragansett who are full time Bonnet residents.
- This would follow State Law which Faith has mentioned on several occasions.

Faith entered the discussion with an alternative plan which she had forwarded to Carol O'Donnell and Carolyn DiLeo on Aug. 1st. She wants to keep the community together and not disenfranchise current voters. Her ensuing proposal referenced 3-4 other unnamed Fire Districts that allow full time registered voters and non resident taxpayers to vote.

- Right to vote in Narragansett by registered and qualified voters
- Seasonal homeowners and non resident taxpayers
- Reduced voting at BSBC to solve the dilution issue

Carolyn asked Faith to write up this proposal and send it to her.

Anita joined the discussion at this point with a friendly amendment to Bob's proposal. She read from Judge Taft's Consent Judgement and signed by BSFD Chair Carol O'Donnell and Anita's is advocating that the Commission follow exactly what Judge Taft actually said.

- *The exact wording will be inserted here before these minutes are ratified and made public*

0:27:55

Lloyd joined the discussion at this point by saying voting by members of the BSBC is illegal and with Bob's proposal seasonal resident homeowners would be unable to vote. He is leaning toward residency because dilution is a real factor. Lloyd feels strongly that working together with the BSBC is important and he had high hopes for his proposal at the last meeting for a conversation including Carol, Carolyn, and Kevin Lynch, but Kevin declined without an attorney present.

Bob acknowledged Anita's amendment but stated that he did not want a parallel registration system; although Lloyd thought it could work and Carolyn said the Council would have to be involved in that decision but perhaps the Board of Elections could assist in that endeavor.

0:31:30

Bob continued by adding that his new suggestion would not be the last word, forever, and new voters could be added to the list of current registered voters in Narragansett in the future. Faith asked why the proposal to have long term seasonal homeowners and property taxpayers is an issue.

Lloyd responded by saying Atty. Conley counseled that the taxpayer only voter route was unconstitutional.

:35:59

***Bob made a motion at this point; 2nd by Lloyd. The motion passed 5-0 with the assurance that the franchise base would be addressed in the future.***

***The exact wording of the motion was not forthcoming and will be inserted here.***

:40:44

Chair DiLeo called for public comment by saying the committee was seeking other suggestions or alternatives to the franchise issue, not a rehashing of thoughts previously expressed.

Tony Lupino agreed that it was an arduous task obtaining voter lists and the support of our local Legislators is necessary to get approval in the Gen. Assembly.

Kristen DeBerghes explained that she had written letters to the Council and others in 2020 about our Charter inequities allowing residents to pay 90% of BSFD taxes while BC members paid 10%. She believes the issues will not be resolved until an open discussion is held.

Kevin O'Brien agreed with Bob's suggestion of going forward with Part A of the Consent Order and figuring Part B out later.

Nancy Cordy felt the BC should be carved out of the scenario; then the BC members would not pay taxes to BSFD.

:53:26

Deborah Pennullo is concerned about the proposed wording including: 30,60 or 90 days occupying of a residence because short term renters could vote ( as in summer renters) and she agrees with Faith about the taxpayer language.

Paula Childs restated that in the US voting is based on residency; likes the 30 day commitment ; and the idea of carving out the BC.

A resident of Bayberry Rd. agreed with Narragansett registered voters and residential taxpayers.

Kathy Daly , a part time resident, would agree to giving up allowing part time residents the right to vote. Allowing only full time residents voting rights would probably convince the Gen. Assembly.

Carol Fortin wants a decision now so that registered Bonnet residents can exercise their Constitutional voting rights and to seek solutions for part time residents at a later date.

Anita added a few thoughts at this point. In 1932 all Bonnet residents were part time ( part timers is not a new concept). Furthermore, when the BC became a condominium facility within the boundaries of a residential community eventually created today's voting problem which allows 2,850 members to vote hence diluting the Bonnet residents' votes. Other Fire Districts are dealing with houses within their boundaries not "closets".

Faith agreed that Bonnet began as a seasonal community and therefore seasonal residents should vote. There was an unanswered question about the similarity of other Fire Districts to ours. Then, Faith suggested creating a referendum to address this issue in the community.

Bob moved to adjourn the meeting; 2nd by Lloyd. Meeting adjourned at 7:45 PM

Respectfully submitted,  
Carole Duffy