

BONNET SHORES FIRE DISTRICT CHARTER COMMISSION MEETING
130 BONNET SHORES RD NARRAGANSETT, RI 02882
MINUTES JULY 31, 2023

Call to Order: Chair Carolyn Dileo called the meeting to order at 6:37 PM. Members in attendance included: Lloyd Albert, Faith LaSalle, Anita Langer, and Bob Patterson. Secretary, Carole Duffy and Zoom master, Dave Kaufman were also there.

In addition to the Commission members, approximately 30 individuals were present with another 10 on Zoom.

Before the meeting officially began, chair DiLeo reviewed the Commission's timeline so that everyone had an overview of the proceedings from July 22, 2022 to June 2023. This timeline review will be attached to these minutes.

Official start of the meeting:

Chair DiLeo asked each commission member to relate their understanding of the feedback from members of the RI General Assembly during the Charter revision hearings.

Lloyd said that he learned a lobbyist had been hired to navigate the meeting with Rep. Alana DiMauro

Faith said that the Commission's proposals received no support in either the House or Senate as folks in the House felt no one should be disenfranchised.

Bob stated that Rep. Carol McEntee was opposed to the Bill and he referenced BSBC minutes in which Kevin Lynch said a RI Legislator would be entering a new Bill to oppose the Commission's. Bob also heard that the Legislator's were hung up on the 60 day provision of the Bill. Bob learned that Rep. McEntee had sponsored another bill pertaining to voting rights in a So. Kingston Fire District which by the way was approved by the Gen. Assembly

Anita mentioned that during the time the Bill was under consideration, she wrote to both DiMauro and McEntee and received little feedback. She also referenced the BSBC minutes.

Finally, Chair DiLeo added that she had also reached out to our Reps and had heard nothing from them. Faith asked if Carolyn had contacted the Chair of the House Judiciary?

Chair DiLeo made a motion to seek a new independent attorney; 2nd Anita. (discussion about this motion lasted until the end of the meeting). Carolyn explained that she felt alternate voting proposals other than the Commission's proposal should be vetted to determine Constitutionality. Adding that Atty. Bill Conley had scrutinized every aspect of the Consent Order, case studies, and voting laws before advising the Commission to proceed with drafting the Bill which was sent to the Gen. Assembly. Bob agreed by saying we have to know what we are doing going forward and impartial, competent advice is crucial.

Faith voiced concerns that others in the district raised as to the advisability of spending more resident dollars by hiring yet another attorney.

Some background information was offered by Lloyd when in 2019 then Sec. of State Gorbea cautioned that the voting policy in Bonnet might be unconstitutional and should be addressed. He continued by saying that he supported Atty. Conley's recommendations because of his impartiality and professionalism. Lloyd then mentioned that AG Peter Neronha had been contacted in April 2020 about the voting issue and he declined to look at it, but maybe by now the AG might have a different opinion.

At this juncture, Chair DiLeo called for audience comments. These minutes will not be a transcript, but rather a summary of the sentiments expressed by speakers. In order to hear all of the conversations, please listen to the Zoom recording available on the website.

Rep. Carol McEntee spoke about the hearings at the Gen. Assembly, but before delving into that she said that she had also been involved with a similar Bill for South Kingston. It was her opinion that the Commission's Bill did not go forward because there was not a consensus in Bonnet about who should vote. She suggested that Judge Taft should be approached and asked specifically about the BC voters.

Paula Childs, a plaintiff in the court case, explained her involvement and her understanding from the Consent Order that the BC voters diluted the full time residents' votes.

Kristen Deberghes, a part time resident, recommended an informal meeting of all parties to hash out the different opinions about voting.

Joe Thomas didn't favor hiring a new attorney but rather having Atty Dickinson and the BC Attorney rewrite the Charter on voting.

Mary Mercier asked the Chair if she knew how many Bonnet residents and how many non residents were on the deeds at the BC. The information is not available, currently, but could be determined and the Chair continued by saying that the trend over the last few years has been for non Bonnet residents to purchase BC units. Mercier continued by indicating the interested parties should work together.

Louise Healy when asked responded that there is no restriction on the number of people on deeds and one unit has 13 people. She continued by telling about her experience at the Gen. Assembly over hearing Legislators saying "it is all about the "snow birds".

Janice MClanaghan does not want a new attorney hired and feels that this voting issue is destroying the community. Residents should vote and one vote per BC unit.

Pat Mannix felt current voters should decide the voting question.

Bill DelGizzo, a member of the BSFD Council, expressed confidence in Atty. Conley's opinions because his advice had been backed up by law and similar cases.

Diane Botsacos sought clarification whether or not BC owners were considered residents.

Chair DiLeo at this point called for an end to public discussion as the sentiments had basically all been heard previously. She reminded everyone that a motion was still pending to be addressed.

Lloyd offered an interim solution before voting on the motion. He recommended: 1st that Carolyn, Carol O'Donnell, and the BC Chair meet to try to reach a consensus; 2nd to try to re engage Neronha if #1 didn't work. He recommended tabling the motion . Lloyd was proposing #'s 1 & 2 be the basis for an Amendment to the motion , but instead Chair DiLeo moved to table the motion for two weeks from tonight; 2nd Lloyd. Motion passed 3-2 .

Bob called for adjournment at 8:15 2nd by Anita.

Respectfully submitted,
Carole Duffy