



BONNET SHORES FIRE DISTRICT

Narragansett, Rhode Island 02882

Established 1932

March 2024 Monthly Meeting: Bonnet Shores Fire District Council
130 Bonnet Shores Road, Narragansett, RI 02882 – And Zoom
Tuesday March 26, 2024
7:00pm

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:06pm. Council members in attendance included Chair Carol O'Donnell, Vice Chair Marlene Bellini, Anthony DeAngelis, Carolyn DiLeo Steve Danuszar and Bill DelGizzo. Additional present included District Manager Mark Gillooly, Tax Collector John Chereskin, Treasurer Laurie McCarthy and Clerk Stephanie Caldwell.

Pledge of Allegiance and moment of silence

Urgent Business – None

Announcements, Clarification:

Our grant application to obtain funds for the breachway/ causeway cleanup was submitted to DEM on February 28, 2024.

The Fire District will be applying for Federal Disaster Relief for the storms in December 2023 and January 2024.

We are anticipating our Annual Meeting to be held, with or without charter proposal, adding residents to the voting roles, June 27, 2024. The Council was served a lawsuit from Lloyd Albert, Dale & Nancy Cordy, Raymond & Rosemary Pariseault, Gordon & Katarina Wrin and Robert & Mary Burke Patterson on January 16, 2024 demanding a special meeting be held immediately, an election, disenfranchising taxpayers who are not residents. The complaint was heard before Judge Taft-Carter on February 16, 2024, she did not order the special meeting. The lawsuit will continue April 12, 2024 at 9:00am at the Washington County Court House, which is open to the public.

All BSFD official district information is available at bonnetshores.org.

Approval of minutes:

Treasurer:

There is a discussion about receiving payments to the Fire District for items such a camp registration, mooring registration, etc. Pros and cons raised are ease of use for consumer, ease of reporting for district staff, monthly costs, the hazards of accepting cash and checks on site. Dave Kauffman spoke on the idea of creating an online registration, payment and reporting process through the website.

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- Motion to begin using online payment options for camp registration & payments is made by Carolyn DiLeo, seconded by Bill DelGizzo, passes unanimously.

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Tax Collector:

John shared his report, topics included there are currently 87 delinquent accounts over \$10.00.

There is an ongoing issue with a property sale. To clarify, properties that have not had taxes paid in 2 or 3 years and one of the properties was transferred from the Land Trust to the BSFD.

There are 8 properties with overdue taxes, John discussed the facts he has concerning those properties.

The total sum of back taxes is around \$1,700.00. Carol clarifies with John that currently the next step is for the town to acquire the properties after the time is up. There is a discussion about the lien, foreclosure and overdue payment processes, that would need to happen on the end of the BSFD fiscal year.

John requests for permission to contact the relevant attorney and research the specifics of costs and procedure involved going forward. The council agrees unanimously that this is in the scope of John's roles and responsibilities.

John asks if he is required to get three quotes before proceeding, it is agreed he does not.

John asks about the procedure for submitting agenda items, it's agreed to email.

Land Trust:

Terrence Beatty gave the report from the Land Trust. Topics included the delinquent properties mentioned previous by John, water sampling project, a possible Earth Day project, and communications.

There is a discussion about bylaws. Previously the council suggested that the Land Trust propose to use the BSFD bylaws but were told that was not acceptable.

There is a discussion about the 501C3 submission request.

Anthony suggests consulting with an attorney before proceeding with the 501c3 submission. Terri commented on the bylaws vetting process.

Dave Kauffman comments on the bylaw's discussion process. That the Land Trust is open to editing and updating the preexisting Land Trust Bylaws, and politely expresses frustration with the process to do so thus far, namely that it has been in discussion for roughly five months and there has been little to no constructive dialogue.

Anthony reads from the Land Trust charter about the taxing process, there is a lively discussion about the taxability of land after it has been donated to the Land Trust, the necessity of Land Trust bylaws and the necessity and challenges facing the Land Trust's 501c3 reinstatement.

Dave Kauffman discusses the history of the 501c3 issues and the necessary processes and elements for reinstatement. Active bylaws adopted by the Land Trust are a necessary step in the application for reinstatement with the IRS.

Bill makes a motion to support the Land Trust's forward progress for 501c3 reinstatement, beginning with approving/ establishing the Land Trust bylaws. There is no second for the motion.

Carol invites Faith LaSalle to speak, but she is heckled away from the microphone by Bill and members of the audience.

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There is a discussion and agreement for the council to schedule a working session with Dave and Terri in a timely manner to discuss the bylaws and reinstatement process.

Manager's Report:

Mark shared his report.

Topics include the repair and cleanup activity on Kelly Beach, DPW will be reinforcing Col. John Gardner, the Community Center floor project has been completed as well as several other capital improvement items that were approved last June, there will be work with a building inspector for further needed improvements. There have been updated documents for hiring BSHD employees. Carolyn asks if volunteers need to have a background check, Mark replies that he will follow up on this. Quotes have been obtained for beach security and transportation. Bill asks if there is a plan to install cameras in the Community Center, Mark suggests a discussion and clarification from the Trust on their recommendation, and possibly only using them for summer camp security. There is a discussion about the future of Little Beach cleanup for 2024 and the future of the stairs.

New Business

1. Kelly Beach. Breachway update: The sand has been removed from both sides of the road, the pond is flowing and the mounds on the sides of the breachway taken down. Most of the cleared material is in the Beach Club parking lot and will be screened and replaced on the beach when CRMC gives the OK. Some sand has been spread and the area at the end of the walkway on Kelly Beach has been built back up. Cost to date since October 2023 for cleaning, dredging both sides of the road, mounds, trucking and screening is \$47,487.40. There is a discussion about applying for grant/ disaster relief funds to reimburse these costs.
2. Addressed in the treasurer's section
3. Motion to upgrade the existing software to PRO version is made by Carolyn DiLeo, seconded by Anthony, passes unanimously.
4. Website, forms with logo – there is a discussion about using the official logos and letterhead for official letters.
5. Beach Pass procedure, there is a discussion about conducting a community survey as previously discussed in 2022 to ask if the residents want a beach pass system or not. There is a discussion about if and how to possibly change the beach pass procedure. There is a discussion about using tax bills to issue passes, and the following question of how that could affect the 2024 beach season since the tax bills are issued in August. Mark suggests keeping the current system in place for this year. He feels the beach access was not being abused last year. Marlene makes a motion to keep the existing beach pass procedure in place for the 2024 season, seconded by Carolyn, motion passes unanimously.

Public Comment

Come up to mic, identify yourself with address, 3 minutes to speak, sharing minutes not permitted, and one turn to speak per person. If you are on zoom you must put your video on so you may be identified.

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Faith LaSalle – Comments that she has looked over the 74-page Land Trust 501c3 application. She comments on the status of the BSFD Land Trust, that it is a quasi municipal Land Trust, created by the General Assembly, subject to the language used to describe the tax exemption status without a 501c3 association. She suggests to the council to spend the \$1,000 - \$1,500 for a RI tax attorney to review the situation and give their legal opinion on the matter.

Nancy Cordy 240 Bonnet Point Road – Nancy encourages the community to attend Land Trust meetings. She disagrees with Faith's opinion that the Land Trust is a quasi municipal Land Trust, and that it needs to be a 501c3 organization. She comments on the importance and good nature of the work done by the members and volunteers of the Land Trust, who work hard in a unified way. She comments that she was the one who called the IRS in 2017 after noting the 501c3 status had lapsed and had not been reinstated by the council or land trust. She comments that the cover letter of the grant submitted in February had several unfounded facts stated, including that the BSFD is a 501c3 and that the Audubon Society owns the pond. She comments on the petition submitted by 70 residents for a special meeting to be held for an election.

Robert Patterson – Comments on the impending election at the tentative Annual Meeting, and his fear of having a council body made up of members who are not residents of Bonnet.

Paula Childs – Comments on the Land Trust, that she feels the council is afraid of the Land Trust having a degree of autonomy. She comments that she feels the Annual Election is unfair and against the judges ruling.

Adjournment

The meeting is adjourned at 8:33pm.