

Council Meeting: Bonnet Shores Fire District Council-Special Meeting

Place: 130 Bonnet Shores Rd-Narragansett -Zoom with no guarantee of accuracy

Date: Wednesday March 12, 2025

Time: 6:00 pm

Call to Order at 6:00PM

Pledge of Allegiance/ Moment of Silence

Urgent Business - None

Announcements - Clarification:

Virtual access is being provided only as a convenience and is not an official "location" where access to the meeting is guaranteed. If there are technical difficulties with the zoom, we will proceed with the meeting. Therefore, being physically present at the meeting is the only way to guarantee complete and uninterrupted access to the meeting.

"In order to preserve order and decorum, and to avoid interfering with the ability of spectators to see and hear, any other person's video recording or photographing of the meeting should do so from a designated area, the bench area in front of the windows."

All BSFD official district information available on bonnetshores.org website

Agenda items are up for consideration

1. Discussion of the Charter Committee reports, attached.
2. Discussion and consideration to vote on a proposal to amend the charter regarding the voting franchise.
3. Discussion and consideration to send to the FD Districts Attorney, Thomas Dickinson

Reports as follows:

RECONSTITUTED CHARTER COMMITTEE REPORT TO COUNCIL

The Reconstituted Charter Committee reports as follows to the Bonnet Shores Fire District Council.

The Committee held six meetings, starting on January 18, 2025. The last meeting was held on March 6, 2025. The Committee consisted of Louise Healey, BSBC representative; Faith LaSalle, Council member, permanent resident and homeowner; Jane Duran, Council member, non-resident homeowner; and Michelle Dunne, permanent resident homeowner. The Council had appointed Bob Patterson to the fifth position on the Committee, which was the designated plaintiff representative seat, and had offered the seat to all plaintiffs to fill. That seat remained empty at all meetings.

The sessions reflected a collaborative, cooperative atmosphere. Several members of the community participated in the public comments and made presentations with ideas for solutions to the voting issue. Data analysis was also provided that shed further light on the different variations of property owners and residents, which make Bonnet a unique place. Legal research and comments on the lawsuit rulings, zoom of meetings, minutes, and other information is available on the BSFD website.

The majority of the Committee agreed that a reduction of voters was appropriate with respect to the beach club and that the community looks forward to this matter being over. A difficulty that the Committee faced was that none of the plaintiffs would accept the plaintiff designated seat on the Committee after multiple attempts and the beach club expressed concern about the lack of participation of the plaintiffs in the process. M. Dunne suggested considering another attempt to get a plaintiff representative to participate.

The Committee considered support for four proposals to move forward to the Council. One of the four was a tie vote. Others were eliminated earlier in the process.

Scenario 1 – Current State – BSFD Narragansett registered voters (permanent residents), plus all property owners who currently vote under the existing Charter.

Support: 1 Do not support: 3

Scenario 3 – BSFD Narragansett registered voters, non-resident property owners, and 1 person designated per unit from the Beach Club as a voter (taxpayers).

Support: 2 Do not support: 2

Scenario 4 – BSFD Narragansett registered voters, BSFD residents and nonresident property owners, no eligibility to vote from Beach Club, and appoint a BSBC seat as one of the seven seats on the BSFD Council.

Support: 1 Do not support: 3

Scenario 5 – BSFD Balanced/Weighted voting proposal -- Narragansett registered voters, people on deed of residential property, 1 BSBC owner per unit who is not part of the other stakeholders. BSBC votes capped at 11%.

Support: 1 Do not support: 3

Submitted by:

Faith LaSalle, Chair of Reconstituted Charter Revision Committee

March 8, 2025

Summary of the Voting Rights Discussion from the March 3, 2025 BSBC Board Meeting

As a result of the March 1, 2025 Bonnet Shores Fire District (BSFD) Reconstituted Charter Revision Committee meeting, it was suggested that a committee representative attend the March 3, 2025 Bonnet Shores Beach Club Board (BSBC) meeting to determine if the BSBC had any appetite to compromise on the solutions being presented to solve the BSFD voting rights issue. Jane Duran, a committee member who owns a bathhouse at the BSBC offered to go and speak at this board meeting. Below are Jane's notes from that meeting that were read at the March 6, 2025 Reconstituted Charter Review Committee Meeting and confirmed to be accurate by Louise Healey who was also in attendance at the board meeting. Subsequently, Jane also read these notes at the March 8, 2025 BSFD Council meeting as part of the Charter Committee Update agenda item. These notes reflect a summary of the dialogue and are not necessarily the opinion of Jane Duran. They are also not the official minutes of the BSBC Board Meeting.

BSBC Board Meeting – March 3, 2025 - Notes

The Goal – The goal of Jane Duran attending the March 3, 2025 BSBC Board Committee Meeting was to determine if there was any appetite for compromise from the BSBC on the voting rights issue.

The Approach - Jane reviewed the following with the BSBC Board and those in attendance:

- The reason why the BSFD had established a Reconstituted Charter Review Committee which was to be in alignment with the Consent Order and the process that was followed, including appointing a committee member from the beach club so their opinion could be heard. She thanked Louise Healey for being the appointed representative from the BSBC on this Committee.
- Jane urged the BSBC to compromise.
- The dialogue was civil and professional and the BSBC respected her opinion.

Summary of BSBC's Commentary:

- The BSBC indicated that they feel that they are the only group being asked to compromise.
- They accepted the appointment to the Reconstituted Charter Review Committee in good faith to discuss options but the plaintiffs did not accept their appointed seat which they interpret as the plaintiff's unwillingness to collaborate and compromise.
- The plaintiffs continually state that there will be litigation with any solution that allows the beach club owners to vote either in current state or with one unit one vote (*The BSBC did not seem interested in any other proposal*). Therefore, BSBC does not trust that any compromise that the BSBC makes will be met with genuine acceptance and will result in

another lawsuit so they just prefer to move right into legally binding mediation or litigation if it is initiated.

- The BSBC indicated that they continue to be the target of malicious statements, the fabrication and spreading of complete falsehoods and harassment by a small yet very vocal group within the community.
- Therefore, they see no reason to compromise and will leave it in the hands of the attorneys and a judge to decide.
- The BSBC indicated that they are very grateful to the members of the community who have put so much effort into this process and appreciate that the majority of the BSFD Community are supportive of the long-standing partnership that has been in place.
- At the end of the dialogue, Louise Healey (Secretary of the BSBC Board) took a poll of the audience and the majority of those in attendance wanted to stay the course with current state and see what happens.

No Public comment

Motion to adjourn.

BSFD is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: BSFD COUNCIL MONTHLY MEETING INVITATION

Time: March 12, 2025 06:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Every month on the Third Wed, until Jun 18, 2025, 8 occurrence(s)

Please download and import the following in Calendar (.ics) files to your calendar system.

Monthly:

https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/tZckcuqsqzMiGNctiUGI9oiRZSWaumuUMfVy/ics?icsToken=98tyKuGrpz4pHtGduBuDRpwqHY_4b-iwmFxFHjY1-iBbQJAKkQrEDNF1M6dyBe39&meetingMasterEventId=g73sCMLZQVeWgSVInobHLQ

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83953458824>

Meeting ID: 839 5345 8824

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