

Mason's Island Fire District BOD Meeting
Masons Island Yacht Club
December 8, 2020
Minutes of Meeting

The meeting was held virtually on Zoom. The Agenda filed with the Town of Stonington included instructions for the public to access live streaming of the meeting on MIFD's Facebook page. This is a public page that can be accessed with or without a Facebook account using the following link: https://www.facebook.com/Masons-Island-Fire-District-10812531422221/?view_public_for=10812531422221

Attending: Ethan Tower, David Krupp, Bill Taylor, John Parry, Kristin Foster, Tom Flaherty, Lee Hisle, Scott Parry and Tom Cooke. Rufus Allyn and Alex Ellison were not in attendance. Jean Anderson, Mary McAuley, and Chris Ficke also participated in the meeting. President Ethan Tower called the meeting to order at 5:31 pm. A quorum was present.

Clerk's Report: Tom Cooke presented draft minutes of the November 10, 2020 with corrections made by Ethan Tower. M/S/P approving the minutes as corrected. A copy of the corrected minutes is attached.

President's Report – Ethan Tower: Emergency Calls – Ethan reported that there was 1 call in November bringing the yearly total to 18.

Treasurer's Report – Bill Taylor: Bill reported that the receipt of additional tax income put MIFD \$1,136 over budget. \$2,600 was spent on clearing trees and brush since the last meeting bringing the total to \$6,175. He added that the Fickes representing the Pond Committee have approved payment to SOLitude for its survey of the pond. \$13,800 currently in the Roads Reserve Fund will be moved to Capital Improvements, 51401 From Roads Reserve of the Profit & Loss Statement to cover the budgeted costs of road signs. MIFD currently has \$90,000 in operating reserves.

Unfinished Business

- **Tick Tax:** Mary McAuley and Jean Anderson were present to discuss the possibility of a tick tax and to provide additional information about the program. Jean noted that the transition to a tick tax could not occur for 2021 and that the program therefore would continue to be managed in the same manner as past years.

The Board discussed whether a MIFD tick tax would be applied only to residential properties, and whether the tax could be limited to a subset of taxpayers. It was noted that some non-residential properties currently participate in the program. It also discussed the possibility of obtaining competitive bids from service providers in the future.

Mary McAuley provided information on the “4-Poster Program” which is designed to kill ticks on deer’s ears, heads, necks, and shoulders. She noted that Masons Island was issued the first and only permit from CT DEP in 2008 ever issued for a 4-Poster Program. Studies have shown the program to be highly effective in certain environments such as islands and was an important part of the overall approach to tick management. A discussion ensued concerning the effectiveness of organic insecticide products. Mary also discussed the importance of herd management as part of the program, noting that there has been an increase in the deer population over the past two years.

Mary also discussed the importance of resident education as part of the overall program, advising residents of the importance of pet treatment, yard waste management and checking for ticks. She stated that human lyme disease was a major issue prior to the implementation of the program in 2008, adding that there was only once instance of human lyme disease in 2012 after the program had been running for some time. There have been 3 to 4 cases per year in the past couple of years (last year there were 4 cases with 3 occurring in one family).

In further discussion of the 4-Poster Program, Mary explained that scientists have told her that Masons Island could expect an increase in lyme cases if the program were discontinued. She added that if the program is discontinued Masons Island will not be able to get another permit.

Discussion ensued about how to develop a budget for the tick tax which included a suggestion that an estimate based on \$250 per property might be reasonable. The Board discussed possible communications with and to residents and Jean recommended in-person meetings.

- **Shoreline Erosion – Kristin Foster:** Kristin reported that the number of people participating on the Shoreline Committee is growing and currently includes Kristin, Jim McAuley, Bill Pryor, Rufus Allyn, Rob Christian, Christie Williams, Cate Moffett, Julia Parry, Lou Allyn, and Kit Hartford. Kristin discussed the possibility of establishing the

Committee as a 501(c)(3) organization which would potentially increase the likelihood of obtaining gifts and grants to cover remediation costs.

Kristin reported that by her own measurement, 3 feet of ground was lost on Chippechaug Trail as a result of the November 30 storm. She noted that DEEP would be supportive of “upland” solutions such as plants to protect against erosion and raised berms. More complicated and expensive options include steps to redevelop the marshland. Existing complications include multiple ownership of the land involved and the reality that the land in question is mostly sand and not glacier material.

Next steps include engaging an engineering firm. The goal is to have recommendations for the annual meeting in May. Discussion ensued about the role of the Town of Stonington, which has a Climate Change Task Force. A Declaration of Emergency by the Town would open up possible access to FEMA funding. The Town also has a hazard mitigation plan which was created in 2016 and updated in 2017. While the causeway to Masons Island may be included it is a low priority. Costs for mitigation could exceed \$100,000.

- **Pond Committee:** Chris Ficke stated that the north end of the pond has considerable amounts of silt and vegetation and that one solution would be to dredge that area, going 30 to 40 feet into the pond. He estimates that to dredge this section of the pond would cost \$100,000. This appears to be the best option and the approach would be to dredge first and then to install a “bubbler” system. A discussion ensued concerning the effectiveness of installing the “bubbler” system without dredging, and Chris stated that the information available suggests that the system would not make a meaningful difference. Further discussion ensued concerning the options for funding the dredging project. Chris recommends discontinuing the algicide program to cover the costs of the bubbler. The Board discussed the advantages of MIPOA taking ownership of the pond for project funding purposes. Chris noted that the cost of liability insurance bourn by the owner is likely a significant expense. Other ownership and potential funding options, such as the creation of a special tax district for the pond, were considered by the Board. No action was taken on this item at the meeting.
- **Committee on Traffic Volume:** John Parry reported that no further comments have been received on the report posted on the website, and that no action was required of the committee at this point. Ethan Tower raised the possibility of having a Public Hearing on the plan in April, and John suggested that it might be combined with a hearing on the proposed tick tax.

- **Traffic Control Plan**: Ethan reviewed with most recent version in the plan which addressed recommendations made by members of the Board. Final comments and recommendations included standardizing the appearance of the signs as much as possible, putting traffic signs on the right side of the road. Changes would be funded through the roads budget. Bill Taylor moved approval of the Plan and David Krupp seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. Ethan stated that he would work with Rufus on implementation, including some of the sign placement issues.
- **Vehicle Stickers**: Ethan noted that the policy has been updated by MIPOA. Ethan recommended moving to green stickers to replace the red stickers currently in use. Discussion ensued concerning the color, the need for an effective background color, and whether to number the stickers. No official Board action was taken.
- **Nominating Committee**: Three non-board positions on the Nominating Committee need to be filled. A goal was set to finalize the members of the committee by the next meeting in January.

New Business

There was no new business for the Board.

MIFD Meeting Calendar: The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 12 (correcting the agenda which stated the meeting would take place on January 9).

Meeting Adjourned – 7:33 pm

Respectfully submitted,
Tom Cooke