

Mason's Island Fire District Meeting
April 13, 2021 – 5:30 PM
Minutes of Meeting
Zoom Teleconference

This was a virtual meeting conducted on Zoom with public access provided by posting a recording of the meeting on the MIFD 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-108125314222221/?view_public_for=108125314222221

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:37 pm. The following Board members were present: William Taylor, Kristin Foster, Scott Parry, Tom Flaherty, John Parry, David Krupp, Lee Hisle, and Tom Cooke. Rufus Allyn attended the first fifteen minutes of the meeting. Ethan Tower and Alex Ellison were not in attendance.

2. Agenda Additions/Deletions/Changes

There were no changes to the agenda.

3. Approval/Correction of Previous Minutes

- a. **Motion to approve the minutes from March 9, 2021.** There were no changes to the minutes of the March 9, 2021 meeting as presented to the Board. John Parry moved approval of the minutes, Bill Taylor seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

4. President's Report – Ethan Tower

- a. **Emergency Calls – 3 calls in March.** In Ethan's absence, Scott Parry confirmed that there were three calls in March, including 2 HAZMAT and 1 EMS call, bringing the total number of calls for the year to date to 28.

5. Treasurer's Report – Bill Taylor

Bill reported that MIFD received an additional \$412 in tax collections, bringing total tax collections to \$1,500 over budget. Bill added that tick checks are coming in and that Alex had deposited \$9,200 by the end of last week. There were no significant changes to MIFD's financial position. Bill confirmed that payments to SOLitude from the Pond Maintenance account have been discontinued although bills are still coming. He added that the amounts paid to Connecticut Water Company remain below budget.

A discussion ensued about Road Construction Bonds in the amount of \$3,000 as reflected in the liabilities identified in the MIFD Balance Sheet dated April 13, 2021. Bill noted that one of the bonds has been on the books since December 17, 2019. John Parry suggested it might be for the Walker property at end of Money Point as the paving is not yet finished.

a. 2021-2022 Budget.

Bill emailed a draft budget with anticipated budget increases with the exception of funds for the pond. The recommended budget of \$35,000 for the tick program is included. The Board discussion noted that this would represent approximately a 15% increase – net of funds that the Fire District currently receives, it would be a \$12,000 increase or roughly 5%.

Discussion turned to potential costs for engineering services in connection with the erosion problem on Chippechaug Trail. Kristin Foster provided copies of two estimates (one from CLA engineers, Inc. and a second from Fuss & O'Neill, Inc.). Kristin added that a third estimate has since been received. The estimates received suggest that it will cost approximately \$30,000 to obtain an engineering plan for stabilization of the erosion. Bill noted that it appears likely the roads budget should have \$30,000 in extra funds, which might be diverted to the new shoreline costs instead of directing them to the roads reserve. Discussion ensued concerning the possible sources of funds for the necessary engineering work. Kristin noted that a request for a National Coastal Resilience Fund Grant had been submitted for \$20,000, some of which would recover work already done. She added that it will be Mid-May before the shoreline committee finds out whether they will be able to proceed with a full grant request (which would be due in June – grant awards would not be released until November 21st). Kristin explained that the engineering studies are only the first step and that the actual remediation costs will be significantly higher.

The Board discussed the need for communication about the potential increases to the residents prior to the annual meeting. Kristin has provided information to residents, including a notice about the marsh signs approved by MIFD, and a more recent announcement about the research being done by different organizations. The Board recommended a third communication before annual meeting to explain where the shoreline project stands. Kristin agreed to prepare a third communication, noting that she will have additional research from the UConn intern working with the shoreline committee by next week. Further discussion ensued about the timing of receipt of the engineering recommendations, and the likelihood that the reports will reflect the slightly different focuses of the engineering firms. Kristin stated that the shoreline committee will have a recommendation for the next meeting.

Further discussion ensued about the logistics for approval of the funds necessary to cover the engineering costs. Recognizing that a budget including the tick program might not be approved by the residents, Bill agreed to prepare two budgets – one with the tick program and another without it.

The Board discussed the timing of communications to residents about the annual meeting and an informational session to discuss the changes to the budget.

Discussion turned to whether funds were available to cover the cost of paving Crossover Road. Tom Flaherty stated that the contractor (French) has provided an estimate of \$8,800 for the work. Lee Hisle stated during the winter months the current gravel road presents a safety issue, particularly for delivery people and others who use passthrough. Funds for the project

were not included in the draft budget prepared by Bill, who noted that the draft does include the approved Yacht Club road repair. Bill also noted that road costs for the current year may be \$12,000 under budget which could be used to address the two issues. Discussion turned to the paving solution previously approved for Yacht Club Road, including the source and nature of the runoff creating the drainage problem and whether a paving or drainage solution would be more appropriate. Noting that most of these issues would benefit from Rufus Allyn's participation, the issues were tabled until the next meeting.

6. Discuss Agenda for Upcoming Annual Meeting

a. What notices must go out 30 days in advance (by April 29th)

The Board discussed notice issues, including the ten-day notice period for the Annual Meeting.

7. Unfinished Business

a. Pond Committee – Chris Ficke / Martha Ficke

Chris Ficke joined the meeting to discuss the status of the pond, and Martha Ficke joined as well. Chris noted that it would cost \$8,000 to “dewater the pond” so that it would be dry enough for contractors to better assess the scope of work for purposes of preparing quotes. He recommended that this be done during the dry season in August or September. Discussion turned to the cost of excavation, which is being estimated by the pond committee at \$160,000 to \$180,000. Members of the Board noted that a discussion of adding this amount to the budget was premature as the future ownership of the pond was still in question, MIFD currently has no responsibility to pay for maintenance of the pond, and the estimates in question would increase MIFD's budget by 75%. Further discussion addressed the amount MIFD has been paying annually for algicide treatments, potential financing options for a project of the size contemplated by the pond committee, and the worst-case scenario if the pond is not maintained. Martha noting that with the ongoing silt build-up, doing nothing would ultimately lead to the end of the pond. The Board discussed potential financing options, and what the worst-case scenario would be if pond is not maintained. Board members reiterated that prior to budgeting for significant improvements to the pond, its legal status needs to be finalized. The Board also requested a formal proposal from the pond committee for the Board's next meeting. Chris asked that the maintenance contract be reinstated.

b. Shoreline Erosion – Kristin Foster

Kristin noted that much of the Information from the shoreline committee had already been covered. She added that two Save the Sound ecological restoration project managers had visited the site, and that Christie Williams had already reached out to Joe Courtney's office for assistance. Kristin added that some alternative approaches had been suggested (including the use of oyster bags under the Allyn's Alley dock to break up waves). “Ecological Restoration Project Managers” have visited the site as well. Kristin added that she has asked Rufus for a cost estimate for raising the road. She stated that the road may need to be raised as much as 2 feet based on projected water level increases.

c. Tick Tax – Jean Anderson / John Parry

i. Report has been posted for comment. Hearing in April?

Jean Anderson joined the meeting. Jean and John Parry noted that the report was posted. Jean noted that, for this summer's tick program, 58% of residents have responded with 50% participating in the program and 8% treating their properties on their own. Discussion turned to the need for an informational meeting for residents. The Board concluded that May 8th was the best option, and that with permission from the Yacht Club, the meeting would be held outside at the Yacht Club (similar to last year's annual meeting). Jean will be present to discuss the tick program, and John will present on proposed speed limits. Kristin Foster agreed that a representative from the shoreline erosion committee will participate and provide an update on the issue. At this point, Tom Flaherty made a motion to hold an informational issue on these three issues on May 8 at 12:00 noon. Scott Parry seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

d. Committee on Traffic Volume – John Parry

i. Report has been posted for comment. Hearing in April?

This agenda item was covered in the preceding discussion.

e. Traffic Control – Ethan Tower

There was nothing to report.

f. Roads Committee – Tom Flaherty

i. Discussion on new signs. Compliments. Complaints.

The Board discussed both the compliments and complaints received in connection with the new signage. Tom Cooke stated that he found the signs, once installed, to be too numerous and quite negative in their impact. He noted that by the time one gets to the first stop sign after the guard house, one has seen 3 private property and 2 no trespassing signs. Discussion ensued about whether some or most of the signs should be taken down. After some discussion, Scott Parry suggested that specific proposals be submitted prior to the next meeting.

g. Annual Meeting – Ethan Tower

This agenda item was covered in preceding discussions.

h. Appointments – Ethan Tower

i. Website Administrator: Alex Ellison

There was nothing to report.

ii. Traffic Control Representative: TBD

There was nothing to report.

i. Mystic Fire Budget Line Item

John Parry stated that the Mystic Fire Department has not come back with any proposed changes to the contract. The contractual deadline for changing the contract has passed. Bill noted that he has kept the budget for next year at \$48,000 consistent with the prior year.

8. New Business

Kristin Foster reported that a neighbor has asked whether the speed bump at the corner of Nauyaug North and Money Point was going to be reinstalled. Tom Flaherty responded that he would look into it with Rufus.

9. Next Meeting: Tuesday, May 11 at 5:30PM

10. Adjourn

Tom Flaherty made a motion to adjourn. Lee seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 7:49.