

**Minutes of the
Mason's Island Fire District
Annual Meeting
Saturday, May 29, 2021, at 10:00 am
Mason's Island Yacht Club**

The Annual Meeting of the Mason's Island Fire District ("MIFD") was called to order at 10:00 am by President Ethan Tower. In attendance were Board Members Ethan Tower, Tom Cooke, Tom Flaherty, Kristin Foster, Lee Hisle, David Krupp, John Parry, Scott Parry, and Bill Taylor. Roads Manager Rufus Allyn was also present. Alex Ellison was not present.

Mr. Tower thanked Commodore Andy Halsey for the use of the club for the meeting. He proceeded to review Roberts Rules' requirements in connection with participation in the meeting. He noted that voting would be conducted by voice, with voters saying "aye" when in favor of the motion and "nay" when opposed to the motion. In the event the vote is uncertain, the vote would be held again by a show of hands, with Dave Krupp and Lee Hisle acting as tellers and counting the votes. Mr. Tower also reviewed the eligibility requirements for voting on matters raised at the meeting.

MIFD Clerk Tom Cooke determined that a quorum of voters was present.

Opening Remarks

Mr. Tower introduced MIFD's current Officers. He proceeded to describe the agenda of the meeting and asked for any questions concerning the agenda. No questions were raised.

Approval of the Minutes of the 2020 Annual Meeting Minutes

Mr. Tower stated that the Minutes of the 2020 Annual Meeting held on June 27, 2020 (the "2020 Annual Meeting Minutes") had been posted on the Mason's Island Property Owners Association/Mason's Island Fire District website.

A motion was made and seconded to dispense with the reading of the 2020 Annual Meeting Minutes. The motion passed.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the 2020 Annual Meeting Minutes. The motion passed.

Report of the President

Mr. Tower stated that his report had previously been posted on the MIPOA/MIFD website. He highlighted several important issues facing the Fire District, including shoreline erosion along Chippechaug Trail, the prevention of tick-borne diseases on the island, and proposed changes to the speed limits.

Report of the Secretary

MIFD Clerk Tom Cooke reported that the MIFD Board met eleven times and that there was a quorum at all meetings. All required filings were made in a timely fashion, including notice for the Annual Meeting which was published in accordance with the By-Law in The Day on Saturday, May 1, 2021. Mr. Cooke stated that Agendas for the Fire District's Board Meetings are posted in the Stonington Town Clerk's office, and that agendas and a schedule for future meetings will continue to be filed with the Town Clerk. Minutes of meetings are posted on the website at <https://mipoa.info/mifd/>.

Report of the Treasurer

MIFD Treasurer Bill Taylor reported that financial statements for fiscal year 2019-2020 have been reviewed by Garvey Steele, MIFD's independent accountants and that copies of the accountant's report are available upon request. The Reserve Fund for Roads currently stands at \$59,872 and is expected to increase to \$95,508 by the end of this fiscal year. A motion was made and seconded to accept the report of the Treasurer. The motion passed.

Report of the Roads Committee

Tom Flaherty presented the Report of the Roads Committee. He stated that the overall condition of the roads is excellent. He noted that proposed improvement projects for next fiscal year include paving Crossover for \$10,120, expansion of the drainage system along Yacht Club Road for \$8,625, and crack sealing throughout the district for \$11,500, for a total estimated cost of \$30,245.

Some residents expressed concern that paving Crossover would make the roads in the area less safe as it might result in more traffic. Residents also expressed concerns about water run-off and drainage if the road is paved and questioned whether engineering studies had been done. Residents in support of paving Crossover stated that the current gravel road was unsafe for cars and delivery trucks during the winter as it is difficult to plow.

After further discussion, a motion was made and seconded to remove the paving of Crossover from the list of improvement projects for the next fiscal year. The subsequent voice vote was inconclusive, and Mr. Tower called for a vote by hands. A vote by hands ensued and votes were counted by Messrs. Hisle and Krupp. Based on the count, the motion passed.

As a result of the motion the cost of proposed improvement projects dropped from \$30,245 to \$20,125.

A motion was made and seconded to use \$20,125 from the Reserve Fund for Roads for the expansion of the drainage system along Yacht Club Road and crack sealing. The motion passed.

Report of the Shoreline Protection Task Force

Kristin Foster presented the report of the Shoreline Protection Task Force which has been monitoring the erosion of the shoreline on Chippechaug Trail near Allyn's Alley and the dock.

Ms. Foster noted that over the past year there has been significant erosion moving the shoreline much closer to the road. She stated that the increase in the number of powerful storms and the projected rise in water levels present a significant threat to the road. She described the research completed by the Task Force, the experts assisting the Task Force, and some of the options available to address the erosion threat. Task Force Member Bill Pryor added that the focus of the Task Force has been on how to secure the road for the long term.

Ms. Foster explained that the first step to address the erosion problem is to retain an engineering firm to prepare an engineering study, to include several options to address the problem. The Task Force received proposals from three firms and selected GZA which had recently completed a similar project for the Fenwick section of Old Saybrook. She stated that the Task Force was seeking \$30,000 to fund the engineering study. The funds would come from the existing Reserve Fund for Roads and would not cause an increase in the mil rate. She noted that the Task Force had applied for grants which might be used to reduce the cost.

Upon questioning from residents, she confirmed that 6 engineering firms had been invited to provide proposals, that a number of them had conducted site visits, and that the Task Force had received three bids. Discussion ensued concerning the qualifications of the engineering firms, potential solutions to the problem (including the installation of a wall which, based on a quote from Docko, could cost over \$600,000).

A motion was made and seconded to use \$30,000 from the Reserve Fund for Roads, less any grant money received, to commission an engineering study to develop options for addressing the shoreline erosion problem along Chippechaug Trail. The motion was passed.

Report of the Tick Committee

The report of the Tick Committee was presented by Jean Anderson. She presented statistics on the participation of residents in the existing tick program and noted that there were two cases of Lyme Disease and one case of Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever on the island last year. She stated that the Tick Committee is recommending that cost of tick treatments for single-family residents be included in MIFD's property taxes. She estimated the cost of treatment under the tax model at \$35,150 based on participation by 90% of residents. Ms. Anderson explained that the program would continue to use the two existing vendors (Seascape and Biotech), one of which provides an environmentally friendly product. She noted that MIFD would likely receive a volume discount based on an increase in the number of participants.

Discussion ensued with some residents stating that they have chosen to use their own contractors and that they will continue to do so. These residents did not want to be taxed for the tick program as they do not plan to participate in it. Residents also noted that tick boxes, which are very effective but more expensive, were not included in the proposed program. One resident expressed concern about the continued use of pesticides. There were also questions about the notification process required of the contractors. Jean Anderson and John Parry addressed these questions, emphasizing that the success of the tick program depends upon maintaining a high level of participation.

A motion was made and seconded to accept the report of the Tick Committee and to include the costs of tick treatments for single-family residences in MIFD property taxes. The subsequent voice vote was inconclusive, and Mr. Tower called for a vote by hands. A vote by hands ensued and votes were counted by Messrs. Hisle and Krupp. Based on the count, the motion passed.

Report of the Nominating Committee

Scott Parry presented the report of the Nominating Committee. Mr. Parry identified the other members of the Nominating Committee for 2020-2021, which included MIFD Board Member Kristin Foster and three non-Board members: Jennifer Milne, Dexter Murphy, and Fred Lebel.

Mr. Parry explained that three current Board members have terms expiring at the end of June, including Tom Cooke, Kristin Foster, and Lee Hisle. Tom Cooke and Kristin Foster are willing to serve another three-year term. Bart Chamberlain was recommended as a new Director to replace Lee Hisle. Mr. Parry thanked Mr. Hisle for his six years of service on the MIFD Board. In addition, Alex Ellison is willing to serve another term as Tax Collector.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the Nominating Committee’s recommendations as set forth below:

Name	Position	Term Ending
Ethan Tower	President	2023
Scott Parry	Vice-President	2023
William Taylor	Treasurer	2022
Thomas Cooke	Clerk	2024
Kristin Foster	Director	2024
Bart Chamberlain	Director	2024
David Krupp	Director	2022
John Parry	Director	2022
Tom Flaherty	Director	2023

Alex Ellison	Tax Collector Liaison	2022
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The motion passed.

Approval of the Annual Budget

Bill Taylor presented the Annual Budget for the fiscal year starting on July 1, 2021. He stated that MIFD is projecting an excess of \$45,636 at the end of the current fiscal year. Mr. Taylor added that the Board is recommending that \$10,000 of the excess be added to the Reserve Fund for Catastrophe and that the remaining balance be added to the Reserve Fund for Roads. The budget as proposed would require a mil rate set at 2.065 for fiscal year 2021-2022.

A motion was made by a resident to remove \$6,000 from the budget proposed for Pond Maintenance on the grounds that MIFD is not responsible for pond maintenance now that the pond is not to be used as a source of water for firefighting. The motion was seconded, and a discussion of the motion ensued.

Board responded that maintenance for the pond could be classified under MIFD's parks and recreation function, and residents pointed out that there is a community easement which permits residents to walk around the pond at its perimeter. Others added that the pond is seen as a community asset.

Members of the Pond Committee stated that the funding could be used for surveys and/or for alternatives to the algaecides previously used, adding that a species of carp has been effective in eliminating growth in ponds. To date, surveys have projected that removal of silt could cost as much as \$160 to \$180 per yard, and that the funding will help to maintain the pond while alternative approaches are explored.

At the conclusion of the discussion a vote was held on the motion. The motion was defeated.

A motion was made and seconded to move \$10,000 of the Excess Funds from the current fiscal year to the Reserve Fund for Catastrophe and the remaining Excess Funds to the Reserve Fund for Roads. The motion passed.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the budget for the fiscal year beginning with July 1, 2021, as presented and amended to reflect the removal of proposed funding for the paving of Crossover, with a mil rate of 2.065. The motion passed.

Old Business

Report of the Committee on Traffic Volume

John Parry presented the report of the Committee on Traffic Volume, noting that it has been posted and was discussed at the MIFD's information session on May 8, 2021. He stated that, based on the Committee's research, the Committee is proposing changes:

1. The speed limit for Mason's Island will be reduced from 25 miles an hour to 20 miles an hour.
2. The speed limit on Yacht Club Road by the MIYC will be reduced to 10 miles an hour during the active months for the club. Small speed limit signs will be placed on the road during the active season.
3. The guard at the guardhouse will remind drivers of the new speed limits.

A discussion ensued, including a recommendation from a resident that the 10 mph signs for Yacht Club Road be placed on the side of the road and not in the middle of the road. Mr. Parry acknowledged that this issue had been raised at the information meeting and that these signs will be placed on the side of the road.

The Board was questioned on enforcement mechanisms for the speed limits. Mr. Parry acknowledged that enforcement is a challenge and suggested that residents can help by modeling the behavior and advocating for the new speed limits. In response to questions about the reduced speed, Mr. Parry pointed to studies that demonstrate that pedestrians hit by cars going 20 miles per hour were far more likely to survive than pedestrians hit by cars going 25 miles an hour. A resident also questioned whether the 10-mph speed limit would be more likely to succeed if it was a year-round speed limit. Mr. Parry responded that the Board had decided to go with a temporary speed limit and added that the temporary signage might catch more attention.

Residents living on Bayberry asked the Board to consider a 10-mph speed limit for Huckleberry/Bayberry Lane. The lane is very narrow and service vehicles in the road can either prevent other cars from getting through or result in cars driving over the lawns of residents. Cars also use Bayberry Lane as a “cut through” to avoid the speed bumps on Yacht Club Road. Other possible solutions were discussed.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the report of the Committee on Traffic Volume and to accept their recommendations. The motion passed.

New Business

Mr. Tower asked whether residents wanted to raise any new business. He added that the issue of contractors blocking roads had been raised with him, and he recommended that residents hiring landscapers or other contractors work with them to find places to park that will not block the flow of traffic. He recommended that a resident having trouble with a contractor blocking the road should speak to the person who hired the contractor.

Mr. Tower also reminded residents that the new green car stickers are available and must be displayed by July 1. While most residents have already requested them, the form for stickers is available on the MIPOA website and copies of the blank forms are available at the end of the meeting.

The following new business was brought forward by residents:

1. Signage to Slow Traffic and Prevent Blockage of Road on Huckleberry/Bayberry Lane: As discussed during the presentation of the report of the Committee on Traffic Volume, residents of Huckleberry/Bayberry Lane are seeking measures to reduce the speed of traffic and to prevent blockage of the narrow road by stopped vehicles.

The Speed on Andrews Road: The Board was asked to consider methods of slowing traffic on Andrews Road in light of the foot traffic on the road.

2. A One-Way Sign for Osprey Lane: The Board was asked to consider addition of a one way/do not enter sign for Osprey Lane to address frequent turnarounds in the lane by non-residents.

3. Remove the Speed Bumps at the Guardhouse: The Board was asked to consider removal of the new speed bumps located next to the Guardhouse.

4. Posting of the Annual Meeting Minutes: The Board was asked to post the Annual Meeting Minutes on the website shortly after the Annual Meeting, and to send an email announcement alerting residents to the posting.

5. Appointment of Non-Residents to Boards: The Board was asked to encourage the Nominating Committee to consider increasing the number of part-time or summer residents serving on the Board.

6. Repair of the Sea Wall at Secret Beach: The Board was asked to find a way to repair the sea wall at Secret Beach.

On behalf of the Board, Mr. Tower agreed to put these matters before the Board at its regular meetings.

Next Annual Meeting

Mr. Tower announced that the next Annual Meeting of the Mason's Island Fire District will be held on Saturday, May 28, 2022, at 10:00 am.

Adjournment

There being no further business before the Board of the Mason's Island Fire District, a motion was made and seconded to adjourn the Annual Meeting. The motion passed and the meeting adjourned at 12:11 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas F. Cooke II - Clerk