

**Minutes of the
Masons Island Fire District
Annual Meeting
Saturday, May 27, 2023 at 10:00 am
Masons Island Yacht Club**

The Annual Meeting of the Masons Island Fire District (“MIFD”) was called to order at 10:06 am by President Ethan Tower. In attendance were Officers Ethan Tower (President), William Taylor (Treasurer), Thomas Cooke (Clerk), and Board members Audrey Brown, Catherine Deichmann, Kristin Foster, Fran Hoffman, and Scott Parry. Board Member Bart Chamberlain and Tax Collector Liaison Alex Ellison were absent.

Mr. Tower thanked Commodore Tory Christian and the Trustees of Masons Island Yacht Club for the use of the club’s facilities for the meeting. He stated that the meeting would be conducted in accordance with Robert’s Rules of Order and reviewed portions of the rules applicable to participation in the meeting. Mr. Tower also noted that voting on motions would be done by voice, with voters saying “aye” when in favor of a motion and “nay” when opposed to the motion. If the result of voting is uncertain, a vote will be taken by a show of hands with tellers Audrey Brown and Catherine Deichmann counting the votes.

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

Opening Remarks

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

Approval of the Minutes of the 2022 Annual Meeting

Mr. Tower stated that the Minutes of the 2022 Annual Meeting held on May 28, 2022 had been posted on the Masons Island Property Owners Association/Masons Island Fire District website (the “MIPOA/MIFD Website”).

A motion was made and seconded to dispense with the reading of the 2022 Annual Meeting Minutes. The motion passed.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the 2022 Annual Meeting Minutes. The motion passed.

Approval of the Minutes of Special Meeting of the Fire District, September 12, 2022

The proposed September 12, 2022 Minutes of Special Meeting of the Fire District were posted on the MIPOA/MIFD Website.

A motion was made and seconded to dispense with the reading of the Minutes of Special Meeting of the Fire District, September 12, 2022. The motion passed.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the Minutes of Special Meeting held on September 12, 2022. The motion passed.

Report of the President

Mr. Tower stated that his report had previously been posted on the MIPOA/MIFD Website.

Mr. Tower highlighted several important issues facing the Fire District, including:

- A proposal to perform crack sealing of the roads.
- A proposal to hire an engineering firm to seek the permits necessary to address the shoreline erosion problem along Chippechaug Trail near Ally's Alley. The proposal would take recently developed "permit-ready" design to the next step, putting MIFD in a position to being construction of a "living shoreline" to protect Chippechaug Trail.
- A proposal to enter into a new amended and restated Road and Recreational Facilities Maintenance Reimbursement Agreement with Masons Island Property Owners Association (MIPOA). The agreement that had been approved at the Special Meeting in September included two properties that are no longer available to MIPOA. Thus, the agreement needed to be redrafted and reapproved. The revisions give MIPOA as much flexibility as possible in connection with potential purchases of properties. The new agreement was posted to the MIPOA/MIFD website for review.
 - A motion was made and seconded to approve the Amended and Restated Road and Recreational Facilities Maintenance Reimbursement Agreement with Masons Island Property Owners Association. The motion passed.

Report of the Secretary

The Report of the Secretary was previously posted on the MIPOA/MIFD Website.

Mr. Cooke reported that the MIFD board met twelve times and that there was a quorum at all meetings. All required filings were made in a timely fashion, including notice for this Annual Meeting which was published in The Day on May 2, 2023 in accordance with the By-Laws. Mr. Cooke stated that Agendas for MIFD are posted by the Town of Stonington's 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 MIPOA/MIFD Website.

Mr. Tower asked for a motion to accept the report of the Secretary. A motion was made, seconded, and passed.

Report of the Treasurer

Mr. Taylor's report was posted on the MIPOA/MIFD Website. He reported that the financial statements for 2021-2022 have been reviewed by Garvey Steele, MIFD's independent accountants. Copies of the review are available upon request. Mr. Taylor noted that MIFD is

projecting an excess of \$89,573 at the end of the fiscal year. He provided an overview of MIFD's finances, referring to two documents: Masons Island Fire District Property Maintenance Budgets & Actuals (May 27, 2023); and Masons Island Fire District Financial Summary: Budgets & Actuals (May 27, 2023). These documents are attached hereto and incorporated herein.

Mr. Taylor noted that, with the rise of interest rates, the Board elected to move \$260,000 in reserve funds from Citizens Bank to Fidelity Investments. MIFD invested the funds in four certificates of deposit with 3, 6, 9, and 12-month maturities. This should result in earnings of over \$1,100 year-to-date, with a projected increase over time to \$13,680 per year at current interest rates.

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. Taking this action would result in a Reserve Fund for Catastrophe of \$79,573, and a Reserve Fund for Roads balance of \$161,862.

Mr. Tower asked for a motion to accept the report of the Treasurer. A motion was made, seconded, and passed.

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

Upon questioning, the Board reported that its goal for the Reserve Fund for Catastrophe is a balance of \$100,000.

Report of the Roads Committee

Bill Pryor, President of MIPOA, spoke on behalf of the Roads Committee, noting that local roads are mostly in good condition, and that the top priority for roads maintenance in the upcoming fiscal year is crack sealing at a proposed cost of \$11,500.

Mr. Tower asked for a motion to use \$11,500 from the Reserve Fund for Roads for crack sealing the roads. A motion was made, seconded, and approved.

Subsequent to the approval of the motion, a discussion ensued concerning damage done by contractors to the west side of Money Point Road. Rufus Allyn agreed to speak to the contractors in question about reimbursement for the damage to the road.

Report of the Shoreline/Road Protection Task Force

The Report of the Task Force was posted on the MIPOA/MIFD Website.

Speaking on behalf of the Task Force, Kristin Foster highlighted activities for the fiscal year, including:

- Receipt of a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), which obviated the need to spend the \$35,000 approved last year for preparation of permit-ready concept plans to design a living shoreline to mitigate coastal erosion, building resiliency for Chippechaug trail. Engineering firm GZA GeoEnvironmental, Inc. was retained for the job.
- Ms. Foster described a floating biomass mat experiment (called “tutu”) in Chippechaug Cove, noting that the experiment was not successful and that an improved design will be tested in the fall.
- The Task Force is awaiting word on two grant applications – one from CT DEEP (in the amount of \$50,000) and a second from NFWF (by invitation of NFWF, and in the additional amount of \$75,000) – which would help to cover the next step costs of project permitting and the handling of federal documents. Out of caution in the event that these grant applications are not successful, Ms. Foster and the Task Force recommend that \$50,000 be approved to cover the costs of project permitting.

Ms. Foster described a number of activities supported by volunteers, including efforts to reinforce the switchgrass plants with additional plantings. Her report also included a chart addressing the potential use of funds based on different grant application approval scenarios.

A motion was made to allocate \$50,000 from the Reserve Fund for Roads, less any grant money received, to pay the permitting costs of the future construction of a living shoreline to protect the Chippechaug Trail. The motion was seconded and approved.

Report of the Tick Committee

The Report of the Tick Committee was posted on the MIPOA/MIFD Website.

Dave Ludwig described the steps taken to increase the number of participants in the Tick Program and the tick control steps already taken by the current contractors. He stated that only 1 Lyme disease event and one canine tick transmitted bacteria were reported in the survey sent to residents. He noted that on balance, the program is proving to be successful.

Report of the Nominating Committee

The Report of the Nominating Committee was posted on the MIPOA/MIFD Website.

The Report of the Nominating Committee was presented by Scott Parry. Members on the Committee included Mr. Parry, Ms. Deichmann (Directors and Co-chairs of the Committee), and three non-Board members including Fred Lebel, Margot Larkin, and Betsy Trimble. Mr. Parry reported that the terms for Board members Scott Parry, Ethan Tower, and Catherine Deichmann will expire at the end of the fiscal year. Mr. Parry has agreed to serve another three-year term as President. Ethan Tower has agreed to serve another three-year term as a Director. Catherine Deichmann has agreed to serve another two-year term as a Director. Jeff Miceli has agreed to join the Board as the Vice President with a term ending in 2026. Audrey Brown has agreed to

assume the role of Treasurer. Bill Taylor, who will step down as Director, has agreed to take on the role of Tax Collector Liaison for the 2023-2024 fiscal year.

Name	Position	Term Ending
Officers		
Scott Parry	President	2026
Jeff Miceli	Vice-President	2026
Audrey Brown	Treasurer	2025
Thomas Cooke	Clerk	2024
Board Members		
Ethan Tower	Director	2026
Catherine Deichmann	Director	2025
Fran Hoffman	Director	2025
Bart Chamberlain	Director	2024
Kristin Foster	Director	2024
Other Appointment		
Bill Taylor	Tax Collector	2024

A motion to accept the report of the Nominating Committee and to elect the persons so nominated to these positions was made, seconded, and approved.

Approval of the Annual Budget

Mr. Taylor presented the proposed budget for fiscal year 2023-2024 noting that overall budget expenditures are expected to be little changed from fiscal year 2022-2023. He pointed out that the Grand List total property values within the Fire District rose from \$133 million to \$202 million. Keeping tax revenues almost unchanged, the mill rate has been reduced from 2.4 to 1.6.

Mr. Taylor noted that the proposed budget includes increases in total expenditures on property maintenance of \$12,000 (covering pond expenditures and transitional costs incurred by MIPOA in connection with acquiring title to recreational properties). He noted that expenses for crack sealing and MIFD Shoreline Road Protection had already been approved. He also addressed the variability of Improvement Project costs based on potential grant acquisitions, the status of the Roads Reserve, and the Reserve Fund for Catastrophe. The information reviewed by Mr. Taylor is attached to these minutes.

A motion was made to approve the budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2023, as presented, and to set the mill rate at 1.6. The motion was seconded and approved.

New Business

Mr. Tower stated that MIFD is now using green car stickers and explained how residents can obtain them. Scott Parry also had forms for stickers available at the end of the meeting.

Several new issues were raised by residents:

- Catherine Deichmann provided information about two new programs, including the collection of food waste using green bins – a program promoted by the Town of Stonington. She provided details about how to participate in the program and resources available from the Town of Stonington. She also provided information about plastic film recycling and recommended that residents participate and obtain any additional information from the Town of Stonington.
- Resident Lee Reichart expressed concerns about two potholes on Black Duck.
- Sarah Lathrop noted that there was a hole in the road in the vicinity of Allyn's Alley and the Gleysteen residence.
- Bruce Burdge reiterated his concern expressed at the 2022 meeting that the water access off Sea Gull needed attention. Rufus Allyn stated that abutters will address the situation in three weeks' time.
- A resident identified a spot on Mallard Road – something between crack sealing and a pothole – requiring attention.
- A resident described a situation between Old South and Allyn's Alley where a "water cover" has sunk into the road. This is a spot where a draining catch basin should work. It was noted that this may be a Water Company issue.
- Residents asked for the percentage of resident participation in the Tick Program and were advised that participation was in the range of 75 to 80% of residents.
- A resident asked for information about the number of speed bumps. Residents were informed that the number and location has been consistent over time. There was concern about speeding on School House Road.
- Catherine Deichmann expressed concern about the intersection of School House and Chippechaug, noting that outbound traffic does not stop. A warning sign was suggested.
- A resident noted that the U.S. Postal Service vehicle often exceeds the posted speed limits. A discussion ensued concerning what steps might be taken to enforce posted speed limits on the island. Discussion included the possibility of purchasing an electronic speed sign or borrowing one from the Town of Stonington to monitor the actual speed of motorists.

Mr. Tower stated that there was insufficient time to address the issues raised, noted that none of the issues required immediate action by the voters, and further stated that he will refer the issues raised to the Board for discussion during their regular business meetings.

Next Annual Meeting

Mr. Tower offered his thanks to Bill Taylor for his eleven-year service on the Board, and to Alex Ellison for his four-year service as Tax Collector. He noted that, consistent with tradition, the Board will make \$100 donations to their respective charities of choice.

Mr. Tower concluded by announcing that the next Annual Meeting of the Masons Island Fire District will be held on Saturday, May 25, 2024 at 10:00 am.

Adjourn

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded and approved, and the meeting accordingly adjourned at 11:14 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas F. Cooke - Clerk