

# **Masons Island Fire District Meeting**

**October 15, 2024 – 5:30 PM**

**Masons Island Yacht Club**

## **Minutes of Meeting**

### **1. Call to Order**

President Scott Parry called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm. Board members Jeff Miceli (Vice President), Ethan Tower (Treasurer), Ricardo Kleinbaum (Clerk), Audrey Brown, Catherine Deichmann, Kristin Foster, and Bill Taylor (Tax Collector) were present. Also present were Louis Allyn (MICO Owner), Rod Cook (MIPOA Director) and Kit Hartford. Board members Thomas Giola, Fran Hoffman, and Rufus Allyn (Roads Manager) were absent.

### **2. Agenda Additions/Deletions/Changes**

None.

### **3. Approval of Previous Minutes**

A motion was made and seconded to approve the Minutes from the Meeting for September 17, 2024, as presented by the Clerk. The motion passed.

### **4. President's Report – Scott Parry**

None.

### **5. Treasurer's Report – Ethan Tower**

- a. Ethan reported that tick committee member David Ludwig was negotiating with the supplier of tick treatments for deer feeders to switch from weekly to monthly billing.

- b. Bill observed that interest income trends remained favorable due to still high money market rates. According to Ethan, average annual returns approximate 4.5%.
- c. Scott was advised by Bill Pryor that legal fees for the recent land purchase from MICO were slightly higher than anticipated. Ethan added that the additional expense would fall under the Covered Property Maintenance category on our income statement, and a consolidated Facility Maintenance line item on the annual accounts.

## **6. Committee Reports**

### **a. Fire & Safety Committee – Jeff Miceli**

Jeff reported that during September we had five EMS events, including one false alarm.

#### **i. MI Emergency Plan Update –**

Jeff updated the Board on the roll out of written communications to residents for the joint MIPOA/MIFD initiative. He noted that the letter has been largely finalized and will be reviewed by MIFD and MIPOA Presidents before the planned release to the community later this year. According to Jeff and Kit, the committee has utilized GIS records to identify residents not listed in the Yacht Club directory to ensure a comprehensive mailing list for the upcoming letter.

Jeff noted that all Captains have been identified for the District, other than Enders Island. Once the letter is sent out, the names will be publicly released, according to Jeff.

Jeff added that the next steps include another meeting with Capt. Schneider (Town of Stonington, Emergency Management) to be followed by Emergency Team

consultations by the end of November. The Plan release is anticipated in December or January 2025, with simulations, and an information session to be held at the same time, according to Jeff.

**b. Tick Committee – Fran Hoffman**

Not present.

**c. Shoreline Protection Committee**

**i. Update on Living Shoreline Plan – Kristin Foster**

Kristin updated the Board on recent informational submissions to grant providers, discussions with GZA engineer and the Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (“DEEP”), and ongoing negotiations with MICO regarding shore access.

1. Kristin circulated the fiscal year 2024 annual report submitted to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (“NFWF”) along with a timeline of events related to the NFWF grant for the December 2023 to September 2024 period. Kristin noted that NFWF has reimbursed \$78,216 of the \$116,966 award amount, and an additional \$7,500 will be paid out.
2. Kristin anticipates receiving in the coming days official comments from the Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (“DEEP”) through GZA regarding the viability of a streamlined shoreline projection project with the use of rock sills, known as Element 1.

3. Kristin also discussed the placement of rod sticks measuring erosion activity along the affected shoreline. From Chippechaug Rd to the edge of the lawn, there has been little change in lawn area lost the last ten months, although six feet has been lost since July 2021. There has also been rapid marsh loss observed east of the area.
4. A discussion then ensued on the terms of the draft “Limited Littoral Rights and Access Agreement” presented by MICO to MIPOA/MIFD that would give MIPOA the right to access the shoreline through MICO-owned property (Lot 1, Block 8, Map 177) in order to position rock sills offshore.
  - a. Board members expressed concerns about the Agreement’s provision requiring MIPOA to pay \$10,000 as consideration for installing, maintaining, and repairing stone sills.
  - b. Ethan argued, and other Board members concurred, that any agreement should include a provision that no payment(s) should be extended to MICO until all local, state and federal permits as well as funding are secured.
  - c. Kristin pointed out that there will likely be little community support for using taxpayer funds to compensate MICO for a project that improves and protects MICO-owned land. She recommended that an informal agreement with the two parties would be more appropriate, given the importance of the project to the welfare of the entire island

community. Catherine and Bill also expressed dissent regarding the appropriateness of financial consideration from MIPOA to MICO.

- d. Jeff noted that the Agreement was narrow in scope and did not incorporate a potential second stage of work.
- e. Ricardo recommended that any written agreement should incorporate a survival clause in the event MICO sells the affected property during the agreed term. Ricardo agreed with Bill's recommendation to have an attorney review the document.
- f. Scott asked for Audrey's advice to identify a lawyer, potentially someone in the community, to provide the Board with guidance on the above issues.

**ii. Update on Underground Barrier ("Riprap") Plan -**

- 1. In Tom's absence, Scott updated the Board on the CLA Design Plan for an underground barrier as a component of the Road Protection Project. Scott reported that due to the position recently communicated by MICO that the project cannot disturb their adjacent land, the buffer area owned by MIPOA will likely not be wide enough to fit the width of the trench that will be needed to be dug to support a sloped design. Scott suggested that the project may have to pivot to the proposed use of concrete blocks. According to Scott, this application could be completed within the buffer without disturbing the adjacent MICO land. Scott

said he would reach out to Tom to discuss with CLA.

2. Scott also discussed the application of ground cover for cosmetic purposes and the need to move and later replace the existing switch grasses under potential construction.

**d. Traffic Control Committee – Catherine Deichmann**

- i. Catherine circulated the October Traffic report (half month) which revealed a consistent daily average of 408 vehicles. Bill noted that the 130 turnarounds in October at the gate in October were sharply down from monthly levels of 600 to 700 during the summer. He, therefore, recommended that the Board consider suspending the October gate guard. Ethan added that retaining the current schedule has other merits, given increased tourist activity in Mystic.
- ii. Separately, Catherine noted that our hourly contract rate for the guardhouse will increase on July 1, 2025, regardless of minimum wage levels.

**e. Facilities Committee – Tom Giola**

- i. In Tom's absence, Scott summarized recent driveway permit recordings, shrub maintenance activity, and plans to further transfer road management MIPOA from MICO.

**f. Nominating Committee – Catherine Deichmann/Ethan Tower.**

- i. Catherine reported that three Board members' terms with expire in June 2025. Audrey Brown has indicated she will not be a candidate next year. Catherine and Fran

would like to continue on the Board. Catherine asked the Board to pass along the names of those who might be interested in joining the Board next year.

## **6. Unfinished Business**

None

## **7. New Business – Tightening up Minutes and Agendas**

- a. Ricardo reported on a recent discussion with the Stonington Town Clerk regarding MIFD meeting agenda and minutes handling. Ricardo was advised that while MIFD Meeting agendas are posted on the Stonington website, meeting minutes sent to the Town are retained in a file and disposed at the end of each year.
- b. Ricardo believes that compliance with Freedom of Information Act (“FOIA”) standards under Connecticut Statute Section 1-225 is achieved by posting and retaining meeting agendas and minutes on the MIFD website. Ricardo added that any votes at MIFD meetings require written public notification within 48 hours.
- c. Scott asked Ricardo to further investigate FOIA best practices, including the timeframe for retaining historical records on public sites.

## **8. Next Meeting: Tuesday, November 19, 2024 at 5:30PM**

## **9. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 7:43 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Ricardo J. Kleinbaum – Clerk, Masons Island Fire District