

Masons Island Fire District Meeting

December 17, 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), Catherine Deichmann, Kristin Foster, Thomas Giola, Fran Hoffman, and Bill Taylor (Tax Collector) were present. Also attending were Louis Allyn (MICO Owner), Bob Domurat (MIPOA Roads Committee rep), and Dave Ludwig (Tick Committee). Board member Audrey Brown and Rufus Allyn (Roads Manager) were absent.

2. Agenda Additions/Deletions/Changes

Update on the Emergency Preparedness Plan – Jeff Miceli

3. Approval of Previous Minutes

A motion was made and seconded to approve the November 19 meeting minutes with the following edit in the Nominating Committee Report, Section f: the name “Gay Reichart” replaces “Lee Reichart”.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the November 26 Special Informational Meeting minutes with the following edit in Section 1: “Forty-five taxpayers” replaces “Several dozen taxpayers”.

4. President’s Report – Scott Parry

Nothing to Report

5. Treasurer’s Report – Ethan Tower (not present)

- a. Ethan referred to the monthly financial statements circulated before the meeting, and indicated that all items are in line with expectations.
- b. Ethan noted that 64% of the facilities maintenance budget has been utilized with \$25K remaining for the fiscal year. The overrun was due to higher than expected paving expenses, as mentioned at the November 2024 meeting.
- c. In response to Bill’s inquiry about the \$16K annual snow removal contract, Scott suggested that next fall MIFD should re-evaluate vendor selection options.
- d. There was also a short discussion about the Roads Manager transition from Rufus to Bob. Scott recommended that Bob continue to discuss the budget for the upcoming fiscal year with Rufus, and also consider the need for vendor alternatives.

6. Committee Reports

a. Fire & Safety Committee – Jeff Miceli

Jeff reported that during November we had four EMS events, compared to one EMS call and two false alarms in November 2023. Scott suggested that Jeff would write to the Quiambaug Fire Co. to keep the relationship open.

i. MI Emergency Plan Update –

Jeff released an updated organizational chart developed by Betsy Lebel and reported that there has been a favorable response from the community to serve as Captains. Jeff also disclosed that Cindy Martin agreed to serve as Contact #1 with assistance from Kit Hartford. Jeff anticipates additional meetings with Captain Schneider (Town of Stonington, Emergency

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Management), in the near future with a final plan document to follow in early 2025.

b. Tick Committee – Fran Hoffman, Dave Ludwig

- i. Dave reported that he expects all four deer feeders will be operational in the Spring, and that a contract for lot treatments is in place. Scott added that since the MIFD tick treatment program is taxpayer funded, next year’s questionnaire should include a disclosure that information supplied to MIFD constitutes public information and thus could be released to third parties. Fran noted that information regarding contraction of tick borne diseases is essentially anonymous.

c. Shoreline Protection Committee

i. Update on Living Shoreline Plan – Kristin Foster

Kristin updated the Board on recent developments constraining implementation of the Shoreline Protection Plan, expenses incurred on the four and a half year initiative and potential consequences of suspending the project.

1. Kristin reported that Lou Allyn advised via email on November 29 that Mason’s Island Company (“MICo”) was not prepared to permit living shoreline protection projects. Permission is needed from MICo for access to the affected property to accompany the Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (“DEEP”) permit application, as discussed and reported in previous MIFD meeting minutes.

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2. Lou clarified at the meeting that MICo decided not to grant permission at this time, and prefers to monitor progress on the sloped rock design project before reconsidering the initial living shoreline protection plan.
3. Kristin also noted that \$49,750 of the \$75,000 National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant monies have been spent for permitting the project which has been in gestation four and a half years. She also described some of the consequences of not proceeding at this time, including the inability to qualify for grant applications, and the impact on the Town's ability to secure coastal grants.
4. Kristin requested that the Board take a clear position on whether to proceed with the living shoreline as time is running out to file grant applications. Scott maintained that the two project pathways (living shoreline and rock trench) are not mutually exclusive and that the living shoreline should be kept on the burner.

ii. Update on Sloped Rock Design - Scott P and Tom G

Scott provided a detailed description of the alternative shoreline protection project, recommendations to move forward on the project as well as the budgetary scope and timeframe. This was followed by a motion approved by the Board to move forward with permits and bid selection.

1. Scott summarized the key features of the sloped rock trench design as discussed at the Nov. 26, 2024 informational session. (See filed meeting minutes for details.)

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2. Scott and Tom believe that the ability to carry out construction on MICO's property greatly reduces execution risks and potential costs. Scott noted that MICO and MIFD are negotiating an irrevocable temporary agreement to grant MIFD permission to perform construction on MICO property. As reported in previous minutes, MIFD would pay MICO \$5K following contractor selection, receipt of any required permit(s) and MIPOA approval of a sloped rock wall on their property.

3. Scott stressed the time sensitivity of the project. Ongoing erosion is contributing to a movement of the coastal jurisdiction line (CJL) from the shore toward MIPOA land, according to Scott and Tom. Their understanding is that as long as the CJL remains off of MIPOA's property line, MIFD would only need to file a Coastal Area Management Permit to carry out the construction. However, if the CJL moves west as a result of erosion onto MIPOA property, construction expenses would likely be far higher and thus delayed, given the need for Department of Energy and Environmental Protection ("DEEP") approvals. Tom and Scott indicated that they have already met with Candy Palmer of the Town Planning Dept and Clifton Iller who have confirmed the streamlined approach to the CLA project design.

4. Scott then discussed the various estimates received from construction companies. He noted that if a bid comes in that is in line with the lowest estimate, the project can be fully financed within the scope of the \$195K approved by taxpayers in May 2024.

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If the funds are not sufficient, a special taxpayers' meeting would be needed to appropriate additional funds, according to Scott.

5. Tom elaborated that the contractor estimates received include a 25% allowance for cost overruns which could include potential findings of large boulders or groundwater. He added that the estimated project completion time is one month or less, and that the road would likely remain passable during construction. All dirt removed would need to be kept off site to avoid a wash out in a storm, according to Scott.
6. Scott then discussed the next steps: a) completion of final design; b) filing building permit; c) execution of land use agreement with MICO; d) completion of bid documents; e) request and receipt of bid proposals; e) convening Board meeting to approve project and vendor selection.
7. Kristin inquired about MIPOA's consent to the project. Scott and Bob D. responded that MIPOA needs to approve the project, and most likely the vote could not take place until a vendor and bid amount is known. Scott added that MIPOA President Bill Pryor is backing the sloped rock initiative.
8. In response to Ethan's question, Lou indicated that MICO has no plans to carry out erosion mitigation work on their lot. Lou, nonetheless, recommended that MIFD expedite execution of the sloped rock design project with the aim of summer 2025 construction. He noted the logjam at the Planning

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and Zoning Commission. Tom added that CLA has scheduled to submit the permit application by January 10, with action possible in February 2025.

9. Tom clarified that the \$18,840 paid to the design engineer firm CLA covers all work up to receipt of bids for contract and permits (approximately \$100 to \$200.)

10. Scott then made a motion (copied below and filed with the Town of Stonington on December 19, 2024.) The motion was seconded by Jeff Miceli followed by a discussion and vote. The motion was carried with seven Board members voting for the motion, one abstention, and one Board member absent.

Move forward on the sloped rock design as presented at the November 26, 2024 Special Informational Meeting with the following steps: Complete a final design, apply for Planning and Zoning Commission permit(s), complete bid documents, and request and receive bid proposals. The motion also authorizes spending up to \$500 for permitting application(s).

d. Traffic Control Committee – Catherine Deichmann

Catherine detailed her recent meeting with a Stonington police officer in relation to the reported theft of a child’s bicycle belonging to a MIFD resident. In reviewing the camera footage at the guardhouse with the policeperson, Catherine and the

police officer found no images of any bicycle being removed outside of the community. A discussion then ensued on potentially replacing the cameras at the guardhouse with more current equipment.

e. Facilities Committee – Tom Giola/Bob Domurat

Referring to the monthly Facilities Committee Report circulated before the meeting, Tom reported on the status of three driveway permit applications, scheduled and completed road maintenance work, and the swale issue reported at the November meeting. Tom also addressed the need for potential ordinance modifications related to interventions in private owner construction projects as they impact MIPOA/MIFD drainage systems.

i. Driveway Permit Oversight

1. Tom discussed the challenges the Roads Committee faces in managing Driveway Permit Applications. He solicited the Board's input on the appropriate extent of MIFD involvement in driveway projects. He noted the need to strike a balance between not being overly punitive and managing the consequences of changes in drainage patterns associated with driveway repair and construction projects. Tom noted that some projects have not only affected MIFD-managed roads but also neighboring properties. He also reported on the unexpected removal of trees on MIPOA right of way property as part of a recent driveway expansion project.
2. A discussion followed on MIFD's limitations with regard to screening projects and related permits,

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ordinance language and limited human resources to review the impacts of construction on drainage.

3. Scott noted that current guidelines do not give MIFD any right to review house plans and mandate changes to site plans, only to have the lot owner post a bond if a road is opened. He pointed out that since these projects may become a drain on MIFD resources, there may be a need for a budget provision to cover future expense.
4. The Board discussed the possibility of amending the MIPOA Ordinance covering work and excavation on MIFD-Managed roads, adapted from the 2021 Stonington Ordinance. Ethan noted that MIFD cannot override zoning rules and Fire Districts can only adopt zoning rules that the Town has not created. Any change in the ordinance would need to focus on drainage impacts, as MIFD has no jurisdiction over home site heights and set backs, according to Ethan. He added that changes in driveway ordinances are possible because they are not covered by Town zoning.
5. Scott concurred with the view above and suggested approaching the Planning & Zoning Commission and securing legal input before considering any potential Ordinance changes. The limited authority of MIPOA's architectural review committee was also a consideration for the Board.

ii. Swale Upgrade –

1. Tom followed up on Kristin's New Business request in November 2024 related to swale

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changes at the corner of Allyn's Alley and Chippechaug Trail.

2. At issue is the increased water runoff associated with the construction of a new home near the main road, according to Kristin. Tom received a cost estimate to remedy the situation, but recommended no action at this time. He believes the Board should consider the repair in the future once the Living Shoreline Project is implemented.

f. Nominating Committee – Catherine Deichmann.

- i. Catherine reported that one Board position needs to be filled for the next fiscal year (2025-2026).

7. New Business – Freezing Road – Yacht Club Road – Kristin

Kristin reported that several taxpayers have brought to her attention the accumulation of water and ice on a portion of Yacht Club Road. Ethan observed that as part of the recent road repair, French's excessively flattened the road and failed to pitch it properly and also to crown the sides. It was agreed that the road maintenance team would add this road repair to their 2025 project list.

8. Next Meeting: Tuesday, January 21, 2025 at 5:30PM

9. Adjourn

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting and seconded. The meeting adjourned at 7:33 pm.

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Respectfully submitted,

Ricardo J. Kleinbaum – Clerk, Masons Island Fire District