

Masons Island Fire District Meeting

January 21, 2025 – 5:30 PM

Masons Island Yacht Club

Minutes of Meeting

1. Call to Order

President Scott Parry called the meeting to order at 5:32 pm. Board members Jeff Miceli (Vice President), Ethan Tower (Treasurer), Ricardo Kleinbaum (Clerk), Audrey Brown, Catherine Deichmann, Kristin Foster, Fran Hoffman, and Bill Taylor (Tax Collector) were present. Also attending were Louis Allyn (MICO Owner), Bob Domurat (MIPOA Roads Committee rep), Dave Ludwig (Tick Committee), and Gail Lane. Board members Tom Giola (Facilities Committee) and Rufus Allyn (Roads Manager) were absent.

2. Agenda Additions/Deletions/Changes

Spring Guest Speakers – Catherine Deichmann

3. Approval of Previous Minutes

A motion was made and seconded to approve the December 17 meeting minutes with the following edit: added reference to meeting with Clifton Iller in paragraph 3 of the Update on Sloped Rock Design section.

4. Treasurer’s Report – Ethan Tower

Ethan referred to the monthly financial statements circulated before the meeting, and also discussed the 2025/26 preliminary budget. He noted that all items in the current budget are in line with expectations, brought

attention to the Roads Reserve balance several years out, and reported on an upcoming payment of \$170K to the Mystic Fire Dept.

- a.** Ethan requested input from other Board members on projected outlays for various MIFD functions in order to refine next year’s budget numbers. Key areas for setting the next budget include road maintenance costs, bid amounts for the Rock Wall project, and potential future expenses for the Shoreline Project, according to Ethan.
- b.** A discussion ensued on the challenge of establishing appropriate Roads Reserve targets, while achieving future mill rate reductions. Bill pointed out that given the need to spend substantial amounts for comprehensive road repaving in the medium term, maintaining current mill rates might prove more prudent. Scott added that without additional detail on road management needs, it would be difficult to set the road reserve and mill rate levels. He asked Bob to work with Tom to generate a multi year “ballpark” projection of road management needs within the District.
- c.** Bob noted that in the meantime he and Tom will continue to analyze vendor contracts and relationships with the goal of identifying cost savings. Bob also noted the urgency of repaving Hickory Ledge as an alternative route for Chippechaug, and that additional road repairs in FY2026 would depend on the mill rate. Ricardo noted potential safety concerns associated with potholes of Mallard Rd which has been scheduled for repaving next year, after postponement the previous year.
- d.** Ethan reported that Mystic Accounting Group (formerly Garvey Steele) had been engaged to perform MIFD’s annual review

and that the required documents have been submitted. He expects that the review will be completed before the upcoming annual meeting.

5. Committee Reports

a. Fire & Safety Committee – Jeff Miceli Jeff reported that during December we had five events: one EMS, one water/steam leak and three smoke detector activations.

i. MI Emergency Plan Update –

1. Jeff stated that all the key elements of the communication structure (list of captains, road safety and medical personnel) are in place. He is now awaiting news from Father Tom on the names of the two captains for Enders Island.
2. Jeff also summarized the upcoming meeting schedule including introduction of Cindy Martin to Captain Schneider, follow up meeting with Captains, Emergency, and Road Security teams to discuss protocol.
3. Jeff cited the need for equipment procurement including a flood gauge, medical devices, and back up radios. Jeff also asked Ethan to add a line item to the budget for the equipment. He noted that Captains will look for resources within their respective zones. Next steps will include running a drill, finalization of protocol documents with MIFD and MIPOA, and presentation of the Emergency protocol plan for the community.

b. Tick Committee – Fran Hoffman, Dave Ludwig

- i. Dave reported that Seascope has presented a draft contract for 2025 with a 2% hike, equating to \$190 for

house lots and \$20 for common areas. All other terms are unchanged.

- ii. Dave also noted that he will coordinate with Fran and send out the annual tick mailing in February with a MIPOA blast email. A draft will be sent to MIFD Board members in the coming weeks.
- iii. Fran reported that she will attend a community meeting on February 13 sponsored by Green Earth Ag & Turf. The Branford-based company will address the use of organic products aimed at containing the spread of tick borne diseases.

c. Shoreline Protection Committee

i. Update on Sloped Rock Design – Bob Domurat & Scott Parry

Scott reported that the Stonington Planning & Zoning Commission (“P&Z”) has acknowledged CLA Engineer’s request on behalf of MIFD for a Coastal Area Management (“CAM”) review to install 130 feet of buried stone revetment on Chippechaug Trail, as described in MIFD’s December 2024 monthly meeting minutes.

Ethan and Bob specified the estimated timeline for the project: MICO Board approval of agreement (January 26), MIPOA meeting to approve agreement (February 4), MIFD approval of bid documents (February 10), CAM review at P&Z meeting (February 18), request for contractor proposals (end of February), MIFD Board vote to select contractor (March 18), finalize construction

contract (March 31), pre-construction meeting (April 1), Inspection (End May). Anticipated completion of the project before this summer will depend on the bid amounts remaining below a level that will not require further taxpayer approval at the next annual meeting, according to Scott.

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

1. Kristin reported that Lou Allyn, representing Mason’s Island Company (“MICO”), has provided a letter of permission to allow the permitting process to move forward based on the November 18, 2024 GZA revised plan: rocks in the water and plants on shore with no fill.
2. As the project has been simplified, it will take four to six months instead of twelve to eighteen months for the regulators to review and approve, according to Kristin.
3. Kristin noted that next month GZA will send consultation draft letters to MIFD/MIPOA for eight federal and state permitting entities: the Connecticut Department of Agriculture, Stonington Shellfish Commission, Stonington Harbor Master, DEEP Fisheries, US Fish & Wildlife Service, NOAA Fisheries Essential Service, Fish Habitat, Tribal Historic Preservation Office

and the State Historic Preservation Office. Kristin indicated that the feedback from the above entities will be used to produce a permit.

4. Kristin added that draft permit applications will come back to MIFD for submission by June 2025 to the Connecticut DEEP and US Army Corps for pre-construction notification. By January 2026, all permits could be finalized, according to Kristin.
5. Kristin also noted that the permitting process will not cost MIFD anything. Of the \$75K of grant money, MIFD has spent \$54,750.
6. Kristin indicated the need to confer with GZA on when to apply for additional grants.

d. Traffic Control Committee – Catherine Deichmann

- i. Catherine discussed the preliminary traffic control schedule circulated by email before the meeting. She noted that staffing of the guard shack would commence on May 2 on week-ends with full time coverage starting May 23 and running to mid-October. Catherine specified that the guard shack would be staffed 134 days, down from 144 in 2024 and 2023. She is waiting Ace’s new price schedule before making a final recommendation. Ethan commented that if we retain guard coverage for 144 days, there should be enough budget coverage.

e. Facilities Committee – Tom Giola

Tom G. was not present. No report.

f. Nominating Committee – Catherine Deichmann.

- i. Catherine reported that the Committee met the week of January 13, 2025 to discuss potential nominees for the Board spot opening up at the end of the current fiscal year. Another meeting is scheduled over the next two weeks to review the candidates list, according to Catherine.

6. Unfinished Business - FOIA Request for Tick Vendor Selections of MIFD Property Owners – Scott

- a. Scott updated the Board on Gail Lane’s request for MIFD property owners’ selection of tick vendors. Following consultations with Russell Blair of the Connecticut Freedom of Information Commission, Scott proposed, and the Board agreed, to supply Gail with the physical addresses of homes within the District alongside current tick treatment selections.
- b. Scott noted again that upcoming communications to taxpayers on tick treatment choices should include language specifying that information provided to MIFD could, upon request, be made available to the public under FOIA guidelines, as interpreted in the State of Connecticut. Catherine also suggested that a more comprehensive statement should be made at the annual meeting with regard to property owner information shared with MIFD.

7. New Business – Records Retention – Ethan

- i Ethan informed the Board of obligations to retain records as MIFD functions as a municipal agency. He noted that The State

of Connecticut has issued guidelines under its Municipal Records Management Program that require perpetual retention of audit reports, budget documents, and meeting minutes. Financial statements need to be retained for six years and other financial items, e.g. bank statements, bills, checks, and insurance records only need to be retained for three years, according to Ethan.

- ii. Scott agreed to grant to permission Ricardo to access the Google MIFD drive to access archival records.

8. New Business – Guest Speaker Series – Catherine Deichmann

Catherine proposed, and the Board enthusiastically supported, launching a lecture series for MIFD residents on important topics. Catherine recommended holding the events in late March and April with the aim of addressing informational gaps on the green bag program, appropriate tick treatments for properties, and hosting Captain Schneider to discuss our emerging Emergency Preparedness Plan. The Board then discussed the possibility of organizing the meetings under the MIPOA umbrella.

9. Meeting: Tuesday, February 18, 2025 at 5:30PM

10. Adjourn

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting and seconded. The meeting adjourned at 7:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Ricardo J. Kleinbaum – Clerk, Masons Island Fire District