

Masons Island Fire District Meeting

April 15 – 5:30 PM

Masons Island Yacht Club

Minutes of Meeting

1. Call to Order

President Scott Parry called the meeting to order at 5:37 pm. Board members Jeff Miceli (Vice President), Ricardo Kleinbaum (Clerk), Audrey Brown, Catherine Deichmann, Kristin Foster, Tom Giola, Fran Hoffman and Bill Taylor (Tax Collector) were present. Also attending were David Ludwig (Tick Committee), Bob Domurat (MIPOA Roads Committee rep), Jean Anderson, Gail Lane, Mary McAuley, and Dexter Murphy. Board member Ethan Tower was not present.

2. Agenda Additions/Deletions/Changes

New Business – Dexter Murphy – Report on potential causeway repairs.

3. Approval of Previous Minutes - A motion was made and seconded to approve the March 18 meeting minutes with no changes.

4. Treasurer’s Report - Ethan Tower – Absent

a. No report.

5. Committee Reports

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

- i. Jeff reported six incidents last month including two false alarms.
- ii. Jeff noted that he followed up with Chris Lewis, and contacted Jack Garbarino of the Quiambaug Fire Chief regarding possible future service. He reported receiving no reply.
- iii. Jeff stated that the next step on the Emergency Planning initiative is to conduct table top drills before issuing a final report in early June. He also indicated the group is looking to source appropriate handheld radios at a minimal cost.

**b. Tick Committee – Fran Hoffman, Dave Ludwig
(Including New Business: – Gail Lane)**

- i. Dave summarized the findings from a guest speaker presentation on tick management organized by Gail Lane and Catherine Deichmann on April 10. The invited speaker was Scott Williams (“Scott W.”), Head of the Department of Environmental Science and Forestry at the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station.
- ii. A discussion followed on tick control application options and the process for making modifications to MIFD’s longstanding program. Several Board members noted the importance of incorporating outside expertise before making changes to the program which has been in place since 2004, and became a taxpayer funded, budget line item in fiscal 2021/2022.

- iii.* Fran noted that Scott Williams recommended a multi-faceted, integrated approach to tick management. She emphasized that a central feature of the program has been not only to identify the appropriate cocktail of tick control products, but also to promote community-wide protection.
- iv.* Fran also reported that in follow up conversations, Scott W recommended increasing applications of the TickKillz (*cedar based organic pesticide*) to three or four per season, and potentially cutting back the Talstar (*bifenthrin-based granular application*) formula to a single fall application. Fran also said that Scott W. offered to provide further free consultations to the MIFD community.
- v.* Scott stressed that modifications to the project should be based on “following the science”, and that historical precedent should not rule out changes. He, along with Fran, cited Scott W’s endorsement of the deer feeder stations (“four poster”) introduced in 2008 as the primary driver of the success of MIFD’s tick control program.
- vi.* Gail participated actively in the discussion and stated her purpose for attending the monthly meeting was to apprise the Board of her intention to present a motion at the May 24 annual meeting to discontinue the yard tick treatment program (while retaining the four posters), and to roll back the related 0.21 mil tax levy applied on all properties. She referred to the motion text and email sent to Board members before the meeting, requesting that the motion be placed on the annual meeting agenda.

- vii. Gail presented a bar chart detailing the results of the annual tick survey, and noted the decline in human disease cases from 2007 to 2023. Gail added that the majority of the land mass on Mason’s Island is not being treated or outside MIFD’s reach. She also observed a drop in bifenthrin-based usage in favor of cedar oil organic products in the MIFD community. Gail stated that the cedar-based products only repel, but do not kill, ticks. For these and other reasons, Gail argued that the taxpayer funded program is no longer compelling.
- viii. A discussion then followed regarding Gail’s findings. Jeff urged Gail to present the bar chart and observations to Scott W. for specific input on the relevance of the data. Scott noted that if Gail makes a motion at the annual meeting to terminate tax supported “spraying” and a majority of taxpayers support the motion, the four poster program could prove sufficient to control the tick population.
- ix. Jean Anderson and Mary McCauley noted their support for the taxpayer funded project. They also remain agreeable to modifications based on scientific studies and empirical findings. Both cautioned that termination of the budget funded program could result in a drop off in participation, and thus higher risks of disease contraction. Jean emphasized that the success of the program was anchored in the community-based approach.
- x. Citing the uncertainties in identifying what factors lead to reduced tick infection rates, Scott concluded that the MIFD Board should take no position on whether the existing tick treatment program (ex-4

posters) should remain in the budget. Instead, he felt taxpayers should be left to decide on how to vote on Gail’s motion at the annual meeting.

- xi. Gail emphasized that while she was not seeking Board endorsement of the motion, she would like MIFD to facilitate communication of her plans. She requested that the Board include a description of the motion in the annual meeting agenda, and either provide her with the email list of voters, or have MIFD disseminate a notice to the community, to promote community awareness on the planned motion.
- xii. A discussion then ensued on how Gail’s request could be accommodated. Ricardo noted that Gail’s remarks at the April meeting would be memorialized in the monthly meeting minutes. Dave suggested that MIFD might consider sending out an email to the community, alerting taxpayers to a new “independent view” of the tick program which MIFD would place temporarily on the website. Gail then asked the Board to provide her with data on the website traffic related to this posting and/or email blast. Scott advised that he would circle back to Gail on the topic.
- xiii. On the basis of Dr. Williams’ presentation, Scott asked Dave to contact Seascope and cancel the June 2025 Talstar granular application in favor of additional spraying of TikKillz this year. Dave agreed to contact the vendor and determine how many additional sprayings could be added under the existing agreement. For the 2025 program, MIFD contracted for three applications each of the Talstar and the TikKillz product under a single vendor.

- xiv. A discussion followed on how to enhance the annual survey to include responses from homeowners utilizing an alternative treatment method and the incidence of infection from any tick-borne disease.

c. Shoreline Protection Committee

i. Update on Sloped Rock Design – Tom Giola

1. Tom reported that installation of the 130 foot covered stone revetement is complete at a cost of \$89,275 to the contractor, below previous estimates. He clarified that he is awaiting final project costs related to engineering, construction, inspections, and survey work.
2. Tom added that both Rufus and Lou Allyn have approved the restored conditions of the adjacent MICO property. Kristin noted that the switch grasses have been replanted in their previous locations.
3. Tom indicated that he would assemble a package with the submittals, costs, as built drawings for archival reference.

ii. Update on Living Shoreline Plan – Kristin Foster

1. Kristin provided an update on the permitting process related to the streamlined (rock sills-only) project, as described in previous monthly meeting minutes.
2. She reported that MIPOA President Bill Pryor signed the consultation letters for submission to the eight regulatory agencies for feedback. Of

the eight consultation letters sent out by GZA, seven came back with no disagreement. Kristin noted that the Shellfish Commission was satisfied and recommended seeding the area with oysters once the rocks are in place. Kristin believes this will enhance the grant worthiness of the project.

3. Kristin then discussed the approach she is taking to secure additional grant funds and her joint work with Christie Williams, notably with the National Coastal Resiliency Fund

d. Traffic Control Committee – Catherine Deichmann

- i. Catherine reported that vendors Ace is scheduled to begin guard duty on May 2. Finkeldeys portable toilet will likely be placed in the same location as last year.
- ii. Catherine discussed the process for creating and placing new signs at the gatehouse and causeway per the recent MIPOA/Enders Island agreement. She also emphasized the need to clarify communications for guards and visitors to Enders Island.

e. Facilities Committee – Tom Giola

- i. Referring to the slide presentation circulated before the meeting, Tom noted that the Yacht Club Road project drainage repair cost is included in the upcoming budget, and that a request was made to add a sidewalk from East Forest Rd down Yacht Club Rd to the MIYC structure. This would entail spending an additional \$15K for design costs as part of the overall

drainage repair project. There was little support among Board members for inclusion of the sidewalk.

- ii. Tom reported that MIPOA will hold a meeting will be held with residents of East Forest Rd regarding the landmark tree, following the Town Tree Warden’s assessment that the tree is safe.

f. Nominating Committee – Catherine Deichmann, Ethan Tower (absent)

- i. **No report.**

6. New Business –

a. Motion re: Tick Program – Gail Lane (See Section 5(b))

b. Report on potential causeway repairs – Dexter Murphy

- i. Dexter reported on his attendance at a local meeting and discussion with the Police Commissioner regarding the dangers of the intersection of Route 1 and Mason’s Island Rd.

- ii. Bill and Bob noted that the Town of Stonington has scheduled a referendum on April 29, seeking approval to issue a \$15.5 million bond to finance the evaluation, planning and design of local infrastructure. This would include the Masons’s Island causeway.

c. Review tasks for upcoming meetings – Scott Parry

- i. Scott reported on plans to present several motions at the annual meeting in coordination with MIPOA, including:
 - 1. Amend the MIFD - MIPOA Facilities Agreement to eliminate the requirement for MIPOA to hire a contractor to act as roads manager, and allow the Facilities Committee to replace the General Contractor role that will no longer exist as a result of Rufus' retirement as Roads Manager.
 - 2. Require builders to secure approval of site plans by the Facilities Committee, and submit changes before site plans are approved. This would amend the existing May 2022 ordinance pertaining to permits to work or excavate in or under MIFD-managed roads. It is aimed at ensuring that home site development and repairs do not adversely affect MIPOA-owned property, notably roads and drainage systems.
- ii. Tom reiterated the importance of rectifying the limitations of the existing ordinance governing work and excavation under MIFD-managed roads. He believes MIFD should have the right to address issues in the entire right of way, and thus align the scope to MIFD's liability - which extends to the property limit.
- iii. A discussion followed on how to achieve these goals: either through a motion (taxpayer vote) expanding authority under the existing ordinance or issuance of a new ordinance. Tom noted that the existing MIPOA ordinance does not give the Board explicit

authority to make site plan changes, unless a driveway apron or excavation permit is requested.

- iv. Tom also discussed his recommendations regarding requirements, standards and fees related to the permit process.
- v. Ricardo referred to the 2024 annual meeting minutes circulated before the meeting, and requested suggested changes prior to presentation for voter approval at the annual meeting. He added that approval of informational meeting minutes would not be necessary at the annual meeting as the Board had already approved these minutes during the year.

7. Next Meeting: Tuesday, May 20, 2025 at 5:30PM

8. Adjourn

Catherine made a motion to adjourn the meeting. It was seconded. The meeting adjourned at 7:37 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Ricardo J. Kleinbaum – Clerk, Masons Island Fire District