

DISTRICT COUNCIL MEETING

Friday, February 19, 2010

4:00 P.M.

Fire Station

222 Watch Hill Road

Watch Hill, RI

A meeting of the District Council of the Watch Hill Fire District was held at the Watch Hill Fire Station at 4:00 p.m. Friday, February 19, 2010.

The following members were present:

Edwin L. Russell, Moderator
Grant G. Simmons III, Chairman of the Park Commission
William H. White, Treasurer
James T. Beale, Jr., Chairman of the Finance Committee
Scott Harold, Fire Chief

By Phone:

Charles S. Whitman III, Deputy Moderator
Penny Kelly, District Council Member at Large
Andrew Parsons, District Council Member at Large

Voters Present:

Richard J. Ahearn
Michael Beddard
Thomas Capalbo
John Daukas
Jack Felber
Peter Griffin
Innes Hollos
Robert Knisely
Jean Kopp
Susan Kozel
Walter Lentz
Judy Lentz
George C. Moore, Jr.
Kenneth Parilla
Jason Simmons
Shelley Weier
Stuart Weier

Also present:

Chaplin B. Barnes
Lyn Traver, Fire District Administrative Assistant

Proper notice having been given and a quorum being present, the Moderator, Edwin L. Russell, called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

Mr. Russell welcomed Watch Hill Residents and explained that the Annual Meeting would reconvene after the financial update on the agenda whereby a detailed discussion would take place regarding the break in the water main located beneath the cabanas. He further explained that Mr. Ahearn, who has been leading the construction process at the cabanas, would discuss how the water line break occurred and after that Mr. Simmons would talk about the remedy. Mr. Russell would then propose a resolution asking the residents to vote, giving the District Council the authority to proceed with the project to correct the water main break. Mr. Russell thanked everyone for coming and explained that the District Council did not have the financial authority to move forward without a vote from the district residents.

Mr. Russell made a motion to approve the minutes from the previous two District Council meetings. It was seconded and approved.

Financial Update

Mr. Beale presented the financial statement for 8 months ending January 31, 2010 which showed revenue from property taxes being \$405,876.92 which was \$16,623.08 short of budget. However, \$17,474.89 more than last year has been collected at this time.

Mr. Beale explained that the receipt of \$66,457.00 represented past due rent from the cabana group which was held back until an agreement had been reached for the reconstruction and remodeling of the cabanas. Once that agreement was reached, the past due rent was paid. \$66,457 represents unbudgeted funds available to the Fire District, and Mr. Beale added that those funds would not be expended until the water main emergency was resolved for which the residents had been called to this meeting.

Mr. Beale explained that historically at the Annual Meeting voters had approved a resolution allowing the treasurer to spend up to \$30,000 to cover unforeseen emergencies. However, there was never any funding of that resolution, so to insure that the treasurer had sufficient contingency funds, \$20,000 was budgeted. Mr. Beale said that he did not anticipate using the \$20,000 contingency/emergency funds for the water main break.

Other budgeted expenses were at or below projection.

Mr. White reviewed the current and the projected cash position as of the end of fiscal year, May 31, 2010. As of January 31, 2010, the Fire District had \$390,018.63 in cash with anticipated revenue of an additional \$33,000 (one remaining payment from the dock lease and remaining tax revenue that has not yet been paid). Assuming that everything that was budgeted would be spent, with the exception of the \$20,000 contingency funds,

there would still be \$295,000 of budgeted expenses prior to year end, leaving the Fire District with \$128,000 in cash before the water main expenditure.

There being no further discussion, Mr. Russell moved to recess the District Council meeting. It was seconded and approved. The meeting recessed at 4:15 p.m.

Mr. Russell made a motion to reconvene the District Council meeting to the call of the Moderator. Mr. Daukas seconded the motion. The motion was approved, and the meeting reconvened at 4:37 p.m.

Website

Mr. Parsons gave a brief update of the website. He said that Robert Russell and Judy Kelley had interviewed Mr. Simmons and that they had gathered the information needed to write the Park Commission section of the newly created web site. Robert Russell had agreed to complete the work by the end of the following week. In March or April the web site should be complete. The remaining issue is the extent to which the Fire District wishes to include the Charter and the By-Laws.

Fire Department

Chief Harold indicated that the Fire Department had been relatively quiet and that there had been 11 runs since January 1. The Fire Department has embarked on a new incentive program for volunteers. The incentive program was created based on participation in training as well as participation in run responses and that incentives were now tracked quarterly rather than annually. The creation of the new incentive plan has resulted in an increase in responses, and Chief Harold is hopeful that it will continue to increase.

Boat Cruise

Mr. Russell said that a schedule for the experimental cruise boat was in the process of being created for the summer. There would be day trips going back and forth to Stonington, sunset cocktail cruises and evening dinner cruises available. There would also be trips out to Block Island. The 49-foot wooden boat is named the Gansett and will be docked behind the Aphrodite, and in Stonington, it would probably be docked at the Town Dock. There is a need for a marketing group, including people from the Ocean House, Stonington and Watch Hill, to make it known to the public. Mr. Russell felt that the Gansett would have a positive impact on the business community, for both Stonington and Watch Hill. It would provide additional activity for people staying at the Ocean House, and it would provide the residents of Watch Hill and Westerly a way to go to Stonington without driving their cars.

Chief Harold asked if the Fire District had plans to proceed with any dock modifications. Mr. Simmons answered that there wasn't enough money in his budget to upgrade the

floating dock and that since it was an experimental year for the boat that modifications would not be made at this time.

Mr. Beale asked if there was any financial involvement from the Fire District. Mr. Russell answered that the Fire District would be collecting dock rental fees for the Gansett. Mr. Simmons said that the Gansett would pay the exact same dock fees as any other boat. He further added that when the Gansett returned to Newport for other commitments, the dock space would be leased out on a daily basis.

Mr. Felber asked if there was a commencement date for the boat cruises. Mr. Simmons thought the commencement date would be the last week of May (Memorial Day Weekend).

A question was raised about the liability of the boat cruises. Mr. Simmons said there would not be any liability incurred by the Fire District. The captain, who would be licensed, would have to show the Fire District that he was insured. The Fire District only insures the dock space itself in the event that someone gets hurt on the dock.

Chief Harold asked if it would be the same relationship that the Fire District had with the sports fishing charter boat, "Bonita". Mr. Simmons said it would be exactly the same.

Mrs. Kopp asked if there had been a resolution to the electrical box on the dock.

Mr. Simmons responded that the meter had been moved to the center of the box. The 8' x 8' beam would be switched to the other side of the conduits. The overall size should be reduced by 20 percent. The back side of the structure would be shingled and a shed roof would be added so that it would look enclosed.

General Discussion

Mr. Russell brought up his concern about traffic congestion on Airport Road for the upcoming summer season as a result of additional traffic lights. Mr. Russell pointed out that the final layout of the lights was done by the RI Department of Transportation, not the Town of Westerly. He further stated that Chief Mello was opposed to the final layout. Mr. Simmons and Mr. Russell have met with Chief Mello to discuss the situation. Chief Mello explained that they would handle the traffic congestion to the best of their ability.

New Business

Mrs. Lentz brought up the unsightly orange garbage bags that were left on the street. Mr. Simmons agreed to call Sam Picolo to remedy the situation. It was suggested that the bags were left behind due to the holiday.

Mr. Beale made a motion to adjourn the District Council meeting. Mrs. Kelly seconded the motion.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lyn Traver
Fire District Administrative Assistant