Watch Hill Fire District Watch Hill, R. I. 02891

DISTRICT COUNCIL MEETING

Friday, March 22, 2013 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, March 22, 2013.

The following members were present:

Charles S. Whitman III, Moderator John M. Regan III, Deputy Moderator James T. Beale, Jr., Chairman Finance Committee William H. White, Treasurer Grant G. Simmons III, Chairman Park Commission Jason Simmons, Fire Chief Ann Stevenson, Member at Large

By Phone:

Andrew Parsons, Member at Large

Voters present:

Deborah Lamm, Park Commission Robert Peacock, Assistant Fire Chief

Also present were:

Chaplin B. Barnes Al Daniels Judith Kelley, Office Manager Lyn Traver, Administrative Assistant

Proper notice having been given and a quorum being present, the Moderator, Charles S. Whitman III, called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

Mr. Whitman asked for approval of the minutes of the November 23rd, 2012 meeting which had previously been distributed. The motion was made, seconded and approved.

Finance Committee – James Beale

Mr. Beale reported that all departmental expenses were at about 75% of budget, as they should be; there was nothing unusual except for expenses from Superstorm Sandy. He reported that the Fire District had spent \$80,000 on Sandy related expenses, \$60,000 of which was a draw down of the sinking fund. The balance of \$20,000 was taken from the contingency fund, which only had \$16,000 in it, so there was a \$4,000 deficit. However, he pointed out that past due property taxes have come in which were not part of the budget and these will cover the shortfall.

<u>Treasurer – William White</u>

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Mr. White reported that at the end of February, the Fire District had \$330,000 in cash and that he expected an additional \$30,000 from HOB Yachts, for a total of \$360,000. If all of the remaining budget is spent, that would amount to \$233,000, which would leave a cash balance at the end of May of \$130,000.

Mr. Barnes noted the existence of the new copier, which was donated to the office by the Roberts Foundation. Mr. Whitman expressed his thanks and noted he had also written the Roberts Foundation.

Mr. White asked Mr. Grant Simmons about the \$5,000 which was to be received from the Improvement Society for repair of the horses on the Merry-go-Round and which was not received in the last fiscal year or yet in this fiscal year. Mr. Simmons said he would follow up on the payments and expected to receive both of them.

Park Commission – Grant Simmons

Mr. Simmons distributed some worksheets on FEMA funding, copies of which are attached and a part of these minutes. There is a federal list and a state list. The Rhode Island list has been approved so Mr. Simmons can start work on those projects. The state will need 30 days to reimburse the Fire District for expenses, so Mr. Simmons will need to negotiate a grace period from the vendors. Also, the Fire District will not be reimbursed for the full amount listed on the sheet (\$55,700), but rather at a 75% rate, so Mr. Simmons will try to keep the contractors' fees down to 75% of the quotes on the worksheet. All work must be completed by May 31, 2013.

Mr. Whitman asked if there were funds included to fix the sea wall on the bay side by the Yacht Club Cabanas. Mr. Simmons said no. Mr. Whitman asked if it could at least be painted, which Mr. Simmons said was a possibility.

A second FEMA worksheet requested \$113,900 for sea grass. This request was denied for Rhode Island, New Jersey and New York, but Rhode Island is appealing. Mr. Regan asked what would happen if we did not receive the \$113,000 for the sea grass. Mr. Simmons replied that it was not an urgent issue so the Fire District just would not do anything,

A third worksheet covered work already done by Fields of Dreams to remove debris on Bay Street and Fort Road for a total of \$113,700. \$80,000 of this has already been paid and we owe them the balance. The Watch Hill Yacht Club has agreed to pay a share of this expense, which Mr. Simmons estimated at \$21,000. This issue is under discussion.

Mr. Beale noted that any money that the Fire District receives as reimbursement of these expenses will be received as unrestricted cash. Its final disposition will be reviewed by the Finance Committee and a recommendation will be made to the Council for its decision.

Mr. Simmons said that he is waiting for a check from the insurance company for repair to the bathhouses' underpinnings.

Mr. Simmons reported that a second round of barriers at Ft. Mansfield has been constructed. These are more 6' x 6' pressure treated columns. He also reported that graffiti has appeared on the Fort and that the police are trying to identify who was responsible as the graffiti is signed. Finally, one end of the Fort suffered a great deal of erosion during Sandy but the vegetation surrounding the fort survived.

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Mrs. Lamm suggested that the CRMC needs to achieve more balance in their role as an advisor. She feels they have given Fish and Wildlife too much control and that affected people need to communicate to their elected official the need for a more moderate stance by CRMC. Mr. Whitman stated that he would bring up this issue at a Fire District moderators group meeting.

<u>Fire Department – Jason Simmons</u>

Chief Simmons reported that the budget for 2013-2014 is just about ready to go to the Finance Committee. He is just waiting for a few final numbers to get a better idea of this year's expenses. He expects a slight decrease in expense for utilities and an increase in maintenance. In the current budget, Chief Simmons expects maintenance to be over by \$6,000 due to unusual issues with two trucks. Other line items are below budget.

Chief Simmons noted that several staff members were at the fire house during Nemo. He also reported that a call box at Bluff and Larkin was damaged at an expense of \$1,275, all of which was covered by insurance except for the deductible of \$250.

Chief Simmons reported that the old police car donated to the Fire Department has been very effective in deterring speeding. It is being moved from place to place within the Fire District.

Chief Simmons stated that volunteer retention remains as a major issue and that he has been meeting with the volunteers to discover the best mix of incentives that will keep them motivated and happy.

Chief Simmons advised that he continues to meet with the parties involved with Conservancy's utility project and has been involved in reviewing and overseeing the new box alarm system.

Finally, Chief Simmons noted that the Fire Department had applied to FEMA for a grant to replace Engine 103 and had been denied, which was not a surprise as the grants are becoming more and more difficult to obtain. However, the Fire Department will continue to submit applications.

Other Business

Mr. Barnes noted that each year the Fire District and the Conservancy sign a memorandum of understanding relative to the maintenance of Napatree and asked that such a memorandum for the upcoming season be signed, which he supplied. Mr. Whitman and Mr. Grant Simmons said they would sign the document at the end of the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned to Executive session at 4:45 pm for discussion of personnel and legal issues.

The meeting was returned to regular session at 6:30 p.m., and, their being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Judy Kelley Office Manager