

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

DISTRICT COUNCIL MEETING

Friday, April 22, 2011

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, April 22, 2011.

The following members were present:

Edwin L. Russell, Moderator
Charles S. Whitman III, Vice Moderator
William H. White, Treasurer
Grant G. Simmons III, Chairman Park Commission
Andrew J. Parsons, Member at Large
Jason Simmons, Fire Chief

Voters Present:

John Felber
Jane O'Connell
Kenneth Parilla
Robert Peacock
John M. Regan III
Henry Toolan

Also present:

Chaplin B. Barnes
Sergio Cherenzia
Judy Kelley

By Phone:

Penelope Kelly, District Council Member at Large

A quorum being present, the Moderator, Edwin L. Russell, called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

Mr. Russell asked for approval of the minutes of the March 18, 2011 District Council meeting. A motion was made to approve the minutes as distributed. It was seconded and approved.

Financial Update – Mr. White

Mr. White reported that the Fire District has received the final payment from HOB Yacht and that it was about \$10,000 higher than expected, bringing total revenues from HOB to \$105,600 for the year. Tax revenue is still \$15,000 below budget but overall revenues are \$13,000 ahead of last year at this time.

As of March 31, the Fire District had \$263,000 in unrestricted cash plus the \$35,000 just received from HOB Yacht. The contingency funds remain intact with the exception of the expense for the Training Officer. While there remain \$187,000 of budgeted expenditures, expenses have been running under budget, especially legal and Mr. White expects them to come in \$35,000 to \$45,000 under budget. Therefore, there should be a cash balance of \$150,000 to \$160,000 at year end.

Website – Andrew Parsons

The website has been up for a month under the new vendor and it has been working very well. The only thing still missing is a letter from the Moderator, which will be added in May when it is sent out. The seasonal events will be added starting in May.

Trolley – John Felber

Mr. Felber reported that a federal and state funded initiative called Keep Space has chosen Westerly as a Rhode Island site worth preserving. With input from professional consultants from Keep Safe, a working group of about 40 people was selected to come up with ideas. This group has been meeting once a month. At these meetings the group is broken into small groups which brain storm on positive initiatives and then report out. One suggestion that has come up repeatedly has been a trolley system to connect the Town to the beaches.

On that premise, a small group started investigating the feasibility of a trolley. They got in touch with the company that operates Newport's trolley and got an estimate of \$35,000 for one trolley (35 to 40 seats) to run from July 1 to Labor Day for 8 hours per day, 7 days a week. The trolley will be free. The route would be from downtown to Watch Hill to Misquamicut to a yet to be determined parking area and then back to downtown. Mr. Felber feels there is an 80% probability that this trolley will be funded for this season.

Mr. Felber said he had built two protections into the schedule. The first run of each day will be from the beaches to downtown so that it is not a free ride to the beach. Secondly, no one will be allowed to bring coolers onto the trolley. He emphasized that the trolley is to promote commerce. However, it should also provide some parking relief as employees can park at the designated parking area and ride the trolley to work.

Mr. Russell asked if there would be a written schedule. Mr. Felber said yes, there would be a written schedule with regular stops.

When asked where the trolley would stop in Watch Hill, Mr. Grant Simmons suggested the fire lane by the docks, as long as that is acceptable to the Fire Department.

Mr. Russell asked what remained to be done. Mr. Felber stated that all that is needed is funding, and he hoped the Fire District would make a contribution. The paperwork cannot be signed until there seems to be sufficient financial support. The Town has committed \$10,000. There have also been donations/commitments from various private businesses as well as local business

associations. The Cooked Goose will be buying advertising space. Such space will only be inside the trolley.

Mr. Barnes asked who will be in charge of the trolley. Mr. Felber replied that it will be managed by the Downtown Business Association. The leases will be signed by the Chamber of Commerce.

Looking at studies in other communities that have trolleys, it has been determined that the most effective services run every 8 to 15 minutes. The currently proposed trolley will run once per hour. To run it every half hour would cost \$47,000.

Mr. Parsons asked if there would be more frequent service on weekends. Mr. Felber said that would depend on the dollars contributed as it would cost more.

Mr. Russell said it was important to make the Watch Hill community aware of this proposed trolley and he would do so in his spring letter. He asked for more detailed information before June. In terms of a donation from the Fire District, Mr. Russell said he would like to know which other parties had donated and how much they each had given. Then the District Council can address the issue at their May 27th meeting.

In terms of a donation from the Fire District, Mr. White noted that the Fire District cannot exceed its budget. They could give funds from the contingency budget.

Fire Department – Jason Simmons

Mr. Simmons gave updates as follows:
The annual blood drive will be June 27.

The launching of the new website has been delayed. It will now be on line no later than May 10.

One Fire Department boat is in the water. The second boat will go in as the weather improves.

The department has started budget discussion for 2011-2012.

Mr. Simmons is preparing a letter about procedures relative to the Town project on water line replacement/drainage. He is working with Cherenzia.

Mr. Simmons expressed frustration in his dealings with the Ocean House as he has tried to get information on fire code compliance issues. He stressed that the information being requested is readily available and required by fire code. Mr. Russell, aware of the problem, said they were trying to work through the issues. Mr. Grant Simmons offered his help.

Mr. Barnes reported that, at the request of the Misquamicut Fire District, the Roberts Foundation donated funds to buy an inflatable boat able to go out into the Sound. It will be based in Weekapaug. He noted that Mr. Jason Simmons had indicated that such a boat would be beneficial to Watch Hill.

Mr. Grant Simmons asked about the status of the Westerly rescue boat. Mr. Jason Simmons said he needs to coordinate with Chief Mello. They expect the boat to be in the water by May 1. Mr. Grant Simmons suggested that the ideal spot for the boat would be the Watch Hill boatyard. There is ample parking, there is no traffic to fight to get there and the boat can get up to speed as soon as it leaves the dock. Mr. Peacock noted that he had looked into this and that the boatyard would charge \$3,500 for the year and that the only spot available was near a bulkhead, making it difficult to load and unload. However, it was a cost issue more than anything.

Westerly Water Line Project – Mr. Grant Simmons

Mr. Simmons advised that in the fall (September/October) the Town of Westerly will be working on storm water remediation on Bay Street and Larkin Road and that Fire District property will be involved in the process. Mr. Barnes noted that the Conservancy is working with the Town to put in the duct work for the underground utility wires at the same time. Mr. Simmons introduced Sergio Cherenzia, who will be directing the construction project.

Mr. Cherenzia said his firm had done a drainage study and had come up with a design to address the flooding, both due to precipitation and from tidal changes. He is proposing a rehab of the existing system, removing all the old catch basins and piping and installing new. They propose using the Fire District parking areas for underground water retention. As the water is slowly released to the bay, a series of baffles will remove solids. This is the most cost effective solution available and fits in with what CRMC will allow. The catch basins will be at the edge of the road, the duct for the utility lines will be in the center of the road, encased in concrete with the required separation from the new water line, which will be on the other side of the road. The retention system is expected to last 50 years and includes a series of ports or manholes for pump out locations.

Mr. Simmons said it would be great if the parking lot could be elevated as this work is done. Mr. Cherenzia said that raising the parking lot would not solve flooding problems; it would just be sending the water somewhere else.

Mr. Barnes noted that the Conservancy would be paying for the expenses related to putting in the duct. However, the Conservancy does not have the funds necessary to pull down the related poles. Mr. Youngken is working to raise those funds via grants.

With the work scheduled to begin in October, Mr. Russell asked if anyone had notified Mrs. Nicholas as a courtesy. It was agreed that the Town should make the notification.

Mr. Cherenzia said the construction sequence would be to put in the large structures first, such as the manholes which have to be eight feet deep, then the trenches, which are six feet deep, etc. They need to work with the Fire Department to insure access to village buildings during construction.

Sea Wall – Grant Simmons

Mr. Simmons said he had received 4 quotes.

1. Gwenmore Marine, who put in the Fire District docks, was at the high end, quoting \$1,000 per foot.
2. Field of Dreams, who did the retaining wall going to the Lighthouse, quoted \$48,900 for the first 200 feet and \$57,458 for the next 200 feet. They proposed encasing the existing wall. As the road is cut on the inside of the wall, the eroded areas will be filled. Mr. White said they did a good job at the light house and that they were easy to work with. They also worked on sea walls for Mr. Toolan and Mr. Orthwein.
3. Atlantic Marine made a proposal that had a nicer face/look but it was much more expensive.

Mr. Russell said there was no sense to encase just 200 feet; the entire wall should be repaired. Mr. White agreed, pointing out that when you get CRMC approval, you have 3 years to do the work, so the entire job would have to be finished in three years either way.

Mr. Regan asked why there was such a difference in price. Mr. Simmons did not know. Mr. White said the proposal from Field of Dreams was in line with what they had charged for the Lighthouse.

Mr. Cherenzia said he was wary of the Field of Dreams proposal. It does not say specifically how deep they are going to dig, which will affect how well the encasing works. Also they need to put some sort of stone at the base of the wall to ameliorate tidal action.

If the Fire District wants to go forward, there has to be approval by the voters and CRMC permits will be needed. Mr. White suggested that the Fire District start the CRMC permitting process and bring the project to the annual meeting as part of the 2011-2012 budget. Mr. Simmons replied that the CRMC application is all ready except for the how.

Mr. Russell made a motion that Mr. Simmons be authorized to apply for the CRMC permit and build the cost of the project into the new budget. The motion was seconded and approved.

Mr. White pointed out that if the Fire District were to receive quick approval from CRMC, the annual meeting could be reconvened for a vote so that the work could be done this spring.

Mr. Whitman expressed concern about going through the summer without the repair of Fort Road. It was suggested that cones could be placed on the road to block off the worst areas of erosion.

Napatree Report – Mr. Barnes

Mr. Barnes reported that the study, passed out to the District Council, had been completed last summer by the Rhode Island Natural History Survey. It was funded by a Roberts Foundation grant to the Fire District. The report noted that the Fire District and the Conservancy had done a great job of stewardship. Mr. Barnes also provided a letter from U.S. Fish and Wildlife, a copy of

which is attached and a part of these minutes, which also praised the Fire District and Conservancy for their good work with the plovers.

Mr. White reported that an old fashioned turbo, sightseeing helicopter, which is very loud, cruises about 50 feet above the beach, which must really scare the birds. Mr. Simmons advised the helicopters don't have to file flight plans and don't have to comply with regular FAA regulations. He suggested that U.S. Fish and Wildlife be told of the helicopter and they should write a letter.

Mr. Russell said he was concerned about the fencing to protect the birds. It is taking over more and more land. He will speak with U.S. Fish and Wildlife to see if it is all necessary. He will mention the helicopter at the same time.

Harbor Commission – Mr. Whitman

Mr. Whitman advised that the Fire District has paid for a special legal consultant to protect our interests as the Harbor Commission comes up with a plan. It is his perception that CRMC supports what the Fire District is doing.

One suggestion in the proposed plan is that the Harbor Master be different than the Police Chief. Right now Chief Mello designates someone to act as Harbor Master.

Mr. Barnes noted that the Conservancy is working with their naturalists and Save the Bay to protect certain areas of little Narragansett Bay.

Other

Mr. Russell noted that through the winter the Ocean House has been parking cars on Bay Street. Now it is time for them to be parked elsewhere and that process is under way.

There being no further business, upon a motion duly made and seconded, the meeting was adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Kelley
Office Manager