

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

DISTRICT COUNCIL MEETING

Friday, April 23, 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, April 23, 2010.

The following members were present:

Edwin L. Russell, Moderator
Grant G. Simmons III, Chairman of the Park Commission
William H. White, Treasurer
James Beale, Chairman of the Finance Committee
Scott Harold, Fire Chief
Andrew Parsons, Member at Large

Voters present:

Ann Brockmann
John Daukas
Peter Griffin
Judy Lentz
Walter Lentz
Robert Peacock
John M. Regan III
Robert Russell

Also present were:

Judy Kelley, Office Manager
Lyn Traver, Fire District Administrative Assistant

By Phone:

Charles S. Whitman III, Deputy Moderator
Penelope Kelly, District Council Member at Large

Proper notice having been given and a quorum being present, the Moderator, Edwin L. Russell, called the meeting to order at 4:03 P.M.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the regular session of the District Council meeting on March 19, 2010 meeting. The motion was seconded and approved. Another motion was made to approve the minutes of the Executive Session of the District Council meeting on March 19, 2010. It was also seconded and approved.

Financial Update – James Beale

Mr. Beale noted that the Merry-Go-Round revenue was below budget, probably due to a combination of poor weather and the economy. He also noted a balance of \$3,000 in Office Supplies which will be used to fund expenses related to the website and new software for the office. Mr. Beale advised that he is in the process of hiring a new accountant, which may affect expenses on that line. He also pointed out the unanticipated expenses the Park Commission has incurred for repair of the water main by the cabanas. Finally, he reported that the tax revenue was \$10,000 short of budget due to ten unpaid bills. Mr. Knisley has sent out the appropriate warning letters. In general, Mr. Beale stated that the Fire District was on budget except for the unanticipated expense of the website and office software.

Mr. White stated that as of 3/31/10, the Fire District had just under \$400,000 in cash, of which just under \$350,000 was unrestricted.

Water Main Repair - Mr. Simmons

Mr. Simmons reported that the hydrant outside the Misquamicut Club has been relocated to the Fire Department's satisfaction and that the main has been repaired, pressure tested and chlorinated. It is ready to go as soon as the hook up to the Misquamicut Club is completed.

Underground Utility Project – Mr. Simmons

There was concern when East Coast Construction created a pile of sand that obstructed access to the new hydrant. Mr. Harold noted that Cherenzia was very helpful in getting the situation corrected and that the pile has been moved so a fire truck can get out to the hydrant. However, Mr. Harold noted that it is hard to tell where the asphalt road is versus the sand trail. It needs to be staked if possible.

Mr. Russell thanked Mr. Simmons for resolving a potential project ending concern from the Larkin Square Condo Association. Mr. Simmons met with them and resolved the issue.

Overall, Mr. Simmons said the project was about one week behind. The heavy digging should be completed by May 8. When that work is complete, only a thick binder coat will be put on the parking lot. The final asphalt coat will be put on a year later after the binder coat has had time to compact.

Mr. Lentz wondered if there had been consideration of putting in speed retardants on the road by the cabanas. They exist by the Yacht Club and seem to work well. Mr. Griffin suggested a new speed bump half way between the Yacht Club and the Misquamicut Club. Mr. Simmons stated that this issue would be addressed next spring when the final asphalt coat is laid.

Merry-Go-Round - Mr. Simmons

The Larkin Square Condo Association had claimed that the fence around the Merry-Go-Round was not on Fire District property. Mr. Simmons had Cherenzia complete a survey and, in fact, the fence was six feet into the Larkin Square property. The fence is being removed and a new fence will be put up at the correct property line. Mr. Simmons said the cost of the new fence will come from the Merry-Go-Round/Bathroom maintenance line. He also noted that by moving the fence, there will be more parking spaces in Larkin Square which can then be sold, increasing the

income to the Merry-Go-Round and hence to the Fire District. Mr. Harold asked if the Fire District had a license to charge for parking in Larkin Square. All the other lots in town have a license from the town. Mr. Simmons replied that the Fire District did not. They just get a certain number of spaces from the Larkin Square Condo group and then have arranged parking in those spaces. They are not hawking spaces to the general public.

Mr. Simmons met with a computer IT specialist who is setting up a laptop computer with a ribbon printer that will produce a ticket for each ride to better monitor daily sales. The information can be broken down by category, - inside versus outside horse, time of day, day of week, weather, etc. Paper tickets will be punched when the child gets on the horse; the children get to keep the ticket. There was concern about unwanted tickets/trash. The attendants could offer to collect the punched tickets and/or there can be a trash receptacle on the way out.

Cabana Update

Mr. Ahearn was not present as he was in a meeting on the cabana project. In his absence, Mrs. Lentz reported that the construction should be finished in a week to ten days.

Ocean House – Mr. Simmons

Mr. Simmons reported that the Ocean House had just today received its certification for occupancy. They are doing punch lists of the rooms now that they are all furnished and they are beginning staff training. There will be a soft opening during the month of May which will include many activities, some directed at the people of Westerly such as the open house at the end of May, and the Show House, to raise money for local charities. Other activities will be by invitation only. The Ocean House will accept paying guests as of May 17. The true opening will be June 1, 2010.

RI Natural History Survey – Mr. Russell

Mr. Whitman noted that the Fire District has \$7,000 in funds left over from a Roberts Foundation grant for air conditioning. Mr. Russell said there was a question of whose money that is. Mr. Beale replied that procedurally, how the money is to be spent should be based upon a recommendation from the Fire District to the Roberts Foundation. If the District Council believes another Natural History Survey of Napatree is a good idea, then they need to ask the Roberts Foundation for approval to use the funds for that purpose.

Mr. Russell said the negative of doing another survey was that it was just done five years ago; why does it need to be done again? The positive side is that the survey provides excellent information that could justify what the Fire District is doing on Napatree.

Mr. Griffin said he felt the new study should be done, asking how many of us would make a decision based on data five years old.

Mr. Beale said that in response to the first survey, many meaningful changes have been made. A new survey would help to measure the impact of those changes.

Mr. Simmons noted that the first survey was a benchmark. A second survey would be a way to see the effect of the current programs and to set a second benchmark. Mrs. Kelly agreed that the second survey would be a good report card.

Mr. Parsons noted that the first survey did not consider water quality and hoped that could be included this time. Mr. Simmons replied that they would like to include water quality on the bay side as well as an assessment of invasive species.

Mr. Regan wondered if doing the second survey would establish a practice of new surveys every five years. Mr. Russell said he felt that would not be the case.

Mr. Harold asked if the Fire District would be bound by the recommendations that might come from a new survey. Mr. Simmons replied that the survey was for internal use only and provided guidance.

There was some discussion of whether the results of the survey would be public knowledge if it was paid for by the Fire District. Mr. Simmons replied that he saw no reason to be concerned and would be happy to provide the document if requested.

Mr. Simmons moved that the \$7,000 of Roberts Foundation funds be transferred to the Park Commission to pay for a RI Natural History Survey on behalf of the Watch Hill Fire District, the cost of which was not to exceed \$7,100. The motion was seconded and passed.

Website – Andrew Parsons and Robert Russell

Most of the recent changes have been format changes. Mr. Parsons said the site should be ready to launch in a week to ten days. Mr. Russell wondered if there should be a presentation on the site at the annual meeting. It was decided to launch the site as soon as possible, mention it in the Moderator's letter and make a presentation at the annual meeting.

In the events section, it was decided to include items such as the Memorial Library hours, a Merry-Go-Round rate card, a listing of the concerts in the park, the date of the Smokey the Bear parade, dates of hydrant flushing, etc.

Mr. Simmons asked if it would be possible to track hits on the site. Mr. Robert Russell replied that hits could be tracked as a total or by pages.

The various pages of the site were reviewed. It was decided that any policy questions related to existing or new items for the site be directed to Mr. Parsons. Any corrections of mistakes, such as typos should be directed to Mr. Robert Russell.

General Discussion

Mr. Beale reported that bill S2109, removing the cap on property tax increases for non-residents, was still in the General Assembly. There have not been any hearings but it has not gone away. Mr. Parsons said he felt passage of the bill would result in lower property values and perhaps less rather than more tax income from non-residents for the state.

Asked about the recent flooding, Mr. Harold reported that as the storm approached the Fire Department evaluated the District and was able to keep access open. There were 8 to 12 service calls to private residences, the most significant of which was next door where 2 ½ feet of water came into the house. Many people had water but did not find out until after the fact when they come up to check their property. Mr. Harold said the Fire District was able to loan some pumps to Westerly for their use, which was much appreciated. He is looking into getting reimbursement for expenses related to the flooding but if the potential reimbursement is less than \$1,500, it may not be worth pursuing. Mr. Harold also noted that the retention pond behind the fire station worked well. Mr. Simmons noted that the first breakwater near the Misquamicut Club Beach Club lost quite a bit of sand and exposed bare rock rubble. He is trying to get permission from CRMC to put sand back in the area. Mr. White noted that East Beach gained quite a bit of sand.

Mr. Simmons noted that there is still a wrecked boat on Napatree. He is working with the police to determine how to proceed. A warrant has been issued to the owner, who has pleaded financial hardship. Any expense for removal of the boat will be part of the next year's budget and hopefully there will be some sort of reimbursement from the owner.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Kelley
Office Manager