

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

DISTRICT COUNCIL MEETING

Friday, May 25, 2012

4:30 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 4:30 p.m. Friday, May 25, 2012.

The following members were present:

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

Voters present:

Walter J. Lentz
Robert Peacock
Henry Toolan, Finance Committee

Also present were:

Chaplin B. Barnes
Judy 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 4:30 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the District Council meetings of October 7, 2011 and April 27, 2012 and the informational minutes of the meeting on December 16, 2011, all of which were previously circulated. The motion was seconded and approved.

It was agreed that in the future, minutes will be kept of all informational meetings. Also, immediately after the Annual Meeting, draft minutes will be put on the web site, clearly marked as draft, until they are approved at the next Annual Meeting.

Finance Committee – James T. Beale, Jr.

Mr. Beale summarized the results of the earlier meetings, stating that the Fire Department had requested an increase of 5% for operations and that the Park Commission Capital expenditures would be decreased by \$40,000 while their operations expenses would be approximately the same.

Addressing general expenses, Mr. Beale said the special studies consultant would be paid an additional \$10,000 this year and would be budgeted for \$25,000 next year from the legal and professional fees budget.

Mr. Beale said he did not expect any significant salary changes but that this would be discussed in executive session.

The budget will be approved at the District Council meeting on June 15. Mr. Beale will have a draft to the District Council by June 4 so they have time to review it. The proposed tax rate is based on the assessed values and any changes in the grand list. Mr. Beale expects a decrease in disbursements but because of the intent not to use any contingency/surplus funds, there may be a slight increase in the tax rate.

Mr. Beale reported that as of April 30 past due taxes and interest were \$16,500. Of that, \$13,500 was for multiple years and that 3 people owe for 3 years, with \$10,775 for one taxpayer. Mr. White noted that the next budget will not anticipate a payment of past due taxes.

Report of the Treasurer – William White

Mr. White had little to add to Mr. Beale's report but noted that the current cash balance of unrestricted funds equals \$150,000 and that while there will be a few more expenses, the Fire District was in a good financial position. He did note that revenue would be \$10,000 below budget this year.

Report of the Park Commission – Grant G. Simmons III

On the issue of parking stickers, Mr. Simmons reported that any extra stickers handed out would have to have a name attached to them so as to inhibit a secondary market. Renters are to get their stickers from the property owner. Mr. Whitman asked about a procedure for meritorious cases such as people who had lived in Watch Hill for years but have moved out and still want a sticker. Mrs. Kelly noted that there are only about 25 resident spaces and suggested that only people who pay taxes should receive stickers. Mr. Parsons agreed. It was decided that if one owned multiple properties with separate houses, each house should have two stickers. The District Council agreed that stickers should only go to taxpayers.

Fire Department – Jason Simmons

Mr. Simmons stated that he had received a call from Mr. Matthew Thomsen relative to the Holdredge Garage. The building will not be open to the public this year. However, in order for the parking lot to be open, it must offer bathrooms. Therefore, port-a-potties will be placed outside for the public. They will be emptied three times per week.

Mr. Simmons attended a workshop on FEMA grants. He reported that there is more competition for less money but that the Fire Department would apply for some grants.

Mr. Simmons reported that the Fire Department boats are in the water and ready for use. He also noted that business inspections are going on with the usual problems, such as fire extinguishers not fully charged and non-working exit lights. He suggested that the building owners were partially responsible and that he will ask the Fire Marshall to come at the end of the season to review two buildings in particular. Any violations reported as a result are to be fixed in 30 days but there is an appeal process.

Mr. Simmons thanked Mr. Peacock for his help in starting to gather information for the special study project.

Mr. Simmons stated that the Fire Department had received advice from both an accountant and a lawyer on the proposed education work/study program and that the concept is still being discussed.

Future Projects Committee – John M. Regan III

Mr. Regan noted that there had been no significant progress since the last meeting. Mr. Daniels is setting up a meeting next week (Thursday, May 31) and will meet with the Fire Chiefs, Mr. Grant Simmons, Mr. Whitman and Mr. Beale. He may also meet with Mr. Lentz, Mr. Weier, Mr. Barnes, Mr. Toolan and Mrs. Kelly.

New Business – Charles S. Whitman III

Mr. Whitman reported that he and Mr. G. Simmons had met with the Town Manager, Mr. Hartford, and Senator Algieri on road safety. The report from the DOT is just about finished. One of the draft recommendations is a reduction in the speed limit, but nothing will happen with this until the report is finalized. However the three gentlemen did agree in principal to put up “Welcome to Historic Watch Hill” signs. That would require a petition from Mr. Hartford to the DOT. The signs will be placed at Avondale Road and the end of Ocean View Highway. The signs should be up by the 4th of July and hopefully, people will slow down when they see them. It was noted that the speed sign at the Watch Hill Garage has been successful

Mr. Whitman reported that the Westerly police department will dedicate a minimum of one-half a police officer every day for the entire summer. The department has asked for an additional officer in next year’s budget. If that is approved, Watch Hill will get a full time police officer every day. The police will begin on Ocean View highway and ticket all offenders.

The meeting was adjourned to executive session at 5:20 pm.

The meeting returned to regular session at 5:35 pm and there being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Kelley
Office Manager