

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

DISTRICT COUNCIL MEETING

Friday, May 27, 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, May 27, 2011.

The following members were present:

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

Voters present:

Walter Lentz  
Robert Peacock  
Henry Toolan, Finance Committee

Also present were:

Chaplin B. Barnes  
Judy Kelley, Office Manager  
Lyn Traver, Fire District Administrative Assistant

By Phone:

Edwin L. Russell, Moderator

Proper notice having been given and a quorum being present, the Deputy Moderator, Charles S. Whitman III, called the meeting to order at 4:10 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the District Council meeting on April 22, 2011. The motion was seconded and approved.

Sea Wall Repair

Mr. Grant Simmons reported that there was an ongoing discussion between the contractor, Field of Dreams, and the engineers, Docko, on the exact work to be done as they prepared a CRMC application. If the work can be done under a maintenance assent, the permit can be obtained in a

matter of weeks and is less expensive. If a full blown assent is required, it will take several months to get the document. It is hoped that construction can begin in September.

Mr. Whitman asked if there were friction between the contractor and engineer. Mr. Simmons said no and that he expects agreement soon, with final budget numbers by June 17, 2011.

Mr. Lentz asked for a description of the repair. Mr. Simmons replied that the contractor would dredge out a form, put in steel supports and then fill it in to create a wall. The ocean side of the wall would be concrete and the road side would be a concrete mixture. The resulting wall will be bigger, which may be a problem in terms of the CRMC assent. They normally only allow an increase of one foot and the drawings for the proposed repair call for an 18 inch increase.

#### Utility Work on Bay Street

Mr. Chaplin Barnes reported the that Town of Westerly will be repairing the water line on Bay Street and improving the storm drainage. At the same time the Conservancy will put in the duct bank to underground utility lines. This is all part of the Bay Street Infrastructure Improvement Project. Doing the work at the same time means that Bay Street will only be torn up once. The Town will be in charge of the project. The Fire District is not involved except to grant an easement for the work. The Town had wanted to start work right after Labor Day but at Mr. Barnes suggestion, will hopefully defer starting until after Columbus Day. It was noted that working together on this project has greatly improved the relationship between the Town and the Conservancy.

There will be a need for space to stage equipment. It was suggested that the Holdredge Garage or the District parking lot might be used. Mr. Grant Simmons suggested that equipment could be stored at the Holdredge Garage and that materials could be trucked in as needed. It is understood that the parking lot will be torn up as part of the repair process and that the merchants who stay open until Christmas will be affected. There may be some expense to the Fire District for new lighting in the parking lot, which should be more energy efficient.

Mr. Barnes reported that the Town will finance the entire project and then bill the Conservancy for their share.

#### Fire Department Staffing

Mr. Jason Simmons said that the Moderator had asked him for an update on staffing. Mr. Simmons explained that the Watch Hill Fire Department has been operating on a volunteer basis for the last 100 years. However, the world of firefighting has changed dramatically. Firemen no longer just pour water on fires; they search buildings, deal with various chemicals, etc. Mr. Simmons said he is currently developing a small group of highly trained firefighters but there are not enough of them to sustain the Fire Department for the long term. He feels the Fire Department needs to be proactive to keep residents safe in the future. The Fire Department does provide incentives and training but the reality is not a lot of people come from within the Fire District are committed to the Department. Right now they are doing more with less. Other Fire Districts have full time personnel (Westerly has three, Dunn's Corner has one). It was also noted

that to be certified as Firefighter One, a volunteer must complete 145 hours of work at the Fire Academy, which is a lot to ask. It is more an issue of time away from home rather than cost.

Mr. Beale asked if, projecting forward, this meant there would be an end of Fire Districts. Mr. Simmons said not in the next five years. What was more likely would be a Fire Department that is a combination of paid and volunteer firemen.

Mr. White asked if merging Fire Districts might be the answer. Mr. Lentz said he felt that there would be fewer and more professional firemen and that there would be more cooperation rather than consolidation.

Mr. Simmons said that within the next calendar year he would like to establish a subcommittee to start studying the situation. The Board of Engineers is a starting point but he would like to bring in other people.

Mr. White suggested that the subcommittee check with other seasonal communities such as Cape Cod, the Jersey Shore and Maine to see how they have proceeded.

Looking at current staffing, daytime is the most difficult as many of the firemen have jobs and can't just get away to fight a fire. It was noted that the salary of a full time firefighter in Providence is about \$40,000 to \$43,000 to start.

Mr. Peacock suggested that rather than hire a fireman, the Fire District could hire a chief, or a driver or a maintenance man that could drive a fire truck.

Mr. Simmons reported that Mr. Peacock and five other officers had recently received awards for heroism related to pulling a woman out of her car after it plunged into a pond.

#### Parking Stickers

Mr. Grant Simmons noted that the packets are ready for pick up. He also advised that there are very few stickers left. Also, the parking stickers will be withheld from tax delinquent property owners.

Mr. White asked why the Fire District did not publish a list of tax delinquents. All such delinquents have received two notices from Ann Brockmann and a letter from the District attorney, Jeff Knisley. Ms. Brockmann has checked with the Town of Westerly and some of the tax delinquents here are also delinquent on Town taxes, while some have paid the Town but not the Fire District. It was suggested that after the end of the fiscal year, those who haven't paid have their names posted. The District Council agreed that one more letter would be sent after May 31 and then those who have not paid within a week will have their names posted.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

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Judith Kelley  
Office Manager