

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

DISTRICT COUNCIL MEETING

Friday, June 17, 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, June 17, 2011.

The following members were present:

Edwin Russell, Moderator

Charles S. Whitman III, Deputy Moderator

Grant G. Simmons III, Chairman of the Park Commission

William H. White, Treasurer

Jason Simmons, Fire Chief

Penelope B. Kelly, Member at Large

Andrew Parsons, Member at Large

Voters present:

Joan Lemp

Kenneth Parilla

Robert Peacock

Henry Toolan, Finance Committee

Also present were:

Chaplin B. Barnes

Judy Kelley, Office Manager

Lyn Traver, Fire District Administrative Assistant

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

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the District Council meeting on May 27, 2011. The motion was seconded and approved.

Report on Town of Westerly Budget – Kenneth Parilla

Mr. Parilla reported that the budget had been prepared with no increase in the tax rate but then the rate was increased by \$0.03 to save between 1 1/2 and 3 million dollars of interest on a bond issued passed by the school committee.

Fire District Budget – William White

Mr. White explained that there had been some minor changes in terminology to coincide with correct accounting language. Income was changed to receipts and expenses became disbursements.

Mr. White went on to say that the largest increase in the budget related to the repair of the sea wall, estimated at \$120,000. That would require using over \$100,000 of the surplus built up over the past few years. Rather than do that, the Finance Committee felt the tax rate should be increased by \$0.02 per 1,000, preserving some of the surplus for future needs.

Mr. Russell asked how the District Council could approve a budget without knowing the actual expense for the sea wall. Mr. White replied that the budget could be approved as submitted and then revised later with the necessary further approvals.

Mr. Russell wondered if the voters would be more concerned about a tax increase or using up the surplus. Mr. White pointed out the recent water line repair and the impending sea wall repair and the need to fund such emergency expenses.

Mr. White said that it was unlikely that a firm number on the cost of the repair could be obtained before the July 9th Annual Meeting. He noted that expenses in the new budget were up 17% but without the sea wall repair, they were only up 2 ½%.

Mrs. Kelly said the proposed increase was only 5% and felt it would not be an issue.

Mr. Russell said they needed to make a case at the Annual Meeting to explain the conservative stance being taken relative to reserves and hence the modest tax increase. Mr. White added that if there were no reserve, taxes would have had to be raised 30%.

Mr. Grant Simmons explained that the delay in getting final expense numbers for the repair was because the engineer has not been able to come up with a repair solution that CRMC would approve. The preferred repair solution would require a full assent, which Mr. Simmons was told would not be approved. However, the repair allowed under a maintenance assent would only allow them to go out one foot. In that case, the digging and filling would have to all be done on the inside of the wall with the hope that the wall would hold up. Such a repair would not be a total fix but it would help. Eventually work will have to be done on the water side of the wall to stabilize it.

Mr. Russell moved that the budget be approved as presented subject to adjustment for the sea wall repair prior to the Annual Meeting. The motion was seconded and passed. Mr. White suggested that if the sea wall repair came in under \$100,000 there would not be a need for a tax increase.

Going over the income side of the budget, Mr. White reported that rents from the beach club, cabanas and parking lot were projected to be flat, while rental income from the bathhouse and merry-go-round were projected to be below last year due to poor weather so far.

On the expense side, the Fire Department operations budget is up 12 ½% from the previous budget, but only 5 % from last year's actual, due to the paid training officer and the increased seasonal staffing. The Park Commission budget is up 2% to 3% over last year's budget and actual.

General Discussion

Mrs. Lemp said she was concerned about the speed at which the Watch Hill fire trucks approached the Ocean House. She noted a dip in the road at the intersection of Westerly Road and Everett Avenue and that excessive speed in that area could cause an accident. She said the trucks were speeding both going to and coming from the Ocean House. Mr. Jason Simmons reported that all drivers go through extensive training and recertification and are aware of speed rules. He will however, reiterate the point.

Mr. Grant Simmons said he had purchased two "stop for pedestrian" signs, one for the crosswalk on Everett Avenue and one to go by Mr. Jenkin's property.

Mr. Russell reported that the proposed trolley run from downtown Westerly to Watch Hill and Misquamicut would not occur. Because both state and local funds were involved, the project had to be run by a non profit and there just wasn't the proper vehicle available. Mr. Barnes noted that it was still possible that the Chamber of Commerce might be able to run the trolley.

Mr. Grant Simmons said he had been asked for approval to film a Honey Dew advertisement on Bay Street. It would take about two hours, would involve live interviews with people on the street in the area of the Merry-Go-Round and would include free samples. Mr. Simmons asked James at St. Clair's if he objected and was told no. However, Mr. Simmons will explore this further with the owner of St. Clair's and then leave it up to the merchants association to decide whether or not to allow the filming.

The meeting was adjourned to executive session at 5:07 p.m.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Kelley
Office Manager

