

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

DRAFT

DISTRICT COUNCIL MEETING

Friday, September 21, 2012

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, September 21, 2012.

The following members were present:

James T. Beale, Jr., Chairman of Finance
William H. White, Treasurer
Grant G. Simmons III, Chairman Park Commission
Jason Simmons, Fire Chief
Andrew Parsons, Member at Large

By Phone:

Charles S. Whitman III, Moderator
Paul Verbinnen, Finance Committee

Voters present:

Hank Toolan, Finance Committee
Robert Peacock

Also present were:

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 4:00 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made to waive the reading and approve the minutes of the District Council meeting of August 17, 2012, which were previously circulated. The motion was seconded and approved.

Finance Committee – James T. Beale, Jr.

Mr. Beale said that the HOB Yacht rental income is \$10,000 ahead of last year at this time, but that property tax receipts lagged behind last year. Mr. Beale was surprised at the August, 2011 tax receipts and suggested that the high figure could be due to the tax bills having been mailed out earlier. Mr. Parsons confirmed that the tax bills went out two weeks earlier last year resulting in the higher receipts in August. Mr. Beale pointed out that for legal and professional services, expenses are \$10,000 below last year at this time, due in part, he felt, to no longer paying the Harbor Management Commission legal expenses. Mr. Simmons remarked that all sections of the Harbor Management Commission have been written and passed. There was significant discussion regarding the appointment of two new members of the Harbor Management Commission.

Mr. Beale commented that Fire Department Operations were comparable to 2011 for the first three months, but questioned the budget for annual contracts and repairs and maintenance. Chief Simmons stated that during the budgetary process the line items were reallocated. Chief Simmons identified Contracts as anything that is reoccurring such as annual hose testing, ladder testing and fire alarm testing.

For maintenance of parks and beaches, Mr. Beale observed that \$18,000 was spent in the first three months, as compared to \$7,500 at this time last year, out of a total of \$34,000 budgeted for the year. Mr. Simmons thought that the payments to Charlestown Fence for various materials contributed to the inflated figure. Mr. Simmons questioned the \$3,000 spent on lawn service and for work done on the sprinkler system. He intends to look into those expenditures. Mr. Whitman asked if the Park Commission would run over budget having spent so much this early in the year. Mr. Simmons said that he would spend everything in his budget but that some expenditures might be moved to different line items. Mr. Beale was concerned that \$38,700 had already been spent for personnel, maintenance and parks out of a budget of \$40,000 for the year.

Mr. Beale reported that Ann Brockmann had been told by Capital One, a mortgagee of the Holmgren property, that Watch Hill as a creditor would be paid back taxes as a result of the fire district filing for a tax sale of the property. Jeff Knisley was informed by Jack Payne that Richard Land, of Chase, Rutenberg and Friedman, a law firm in Providence, had been appointed Temporary Special Master of the Holmgren property. A court appointed Land as Temporary Special Master for the property based on a petition by John and Antoinette Holmgren filed on June 26, 2012. Mr. Beale felt that the Temporary Special Master could not preclude a mortgagee from protecting its interest and preserving its lien, by paying the taxes. Mr. White added that the appointment order said no one is allowed to make any payments without the approval of the court. Mr. Beale reported that the property was originally listed with Seaboard Properties out of Stonington, CT, and is now listed with Caldwell Banker. Mr. Whitman questioned whether the appointment of the special master could prevent the tax sale. Mr. Beale felt that the Special Master could in fact prevent the sale. Mr. Beale agreed to follow up with Jeff Knisley.

Report of the Treasurer – William H. White

Mr. White reported that lease payments were made early which helped with revenue through the summer. The cash position at the end of August was not particularly healthy, but by the end of September with the tax receipts arriving the cash position will be very good.

Mr. Beale reported that Tom Lloyd, who is the moderator of the Shelter Harbor Fire District, has expressed an interest in comparing financial information with other fire districts in the area. Mark Pratt, who is Shelter Harbor's financial committee chairman, has been furnished with the Watch Hill Fire District financials along with the DiSanto Priest report.

Report of the Park Commission – Grant G. Simmons III

Mr. Simmons reported that the Park Commission is trying to organize a meeting of its members to go over operational problems that have surfaced over the summer with regards to employees. A list of procedures has been drawn up for the parking lot attendants regarding their behavior, attitude and dress while on duty. Mr. Robert Henderson and Ms. Jane Perkins will be notified of the new expectations for their employees.

Mr. Simmons reported that a contractor has been brought in to look at the bathhouse cabanas for planning purposes. He is licensed for the removal of asbestos. After removing the asbestos, he would then replace the rotting wood, build the new deck surface and finally build the modular changing rooms. The Parks Commission is planning a trip to Narragansett to look at a job completed by this contractor.

Mr. Simmons further reported that he has a \$69,000 bid from Gwenmoor Marine for sheet piling to repair the retaining wall by the north parking lot. Mr. Simmons said that currently there is \$25,000 budgeted to do a repair and the only way to do the sheet piling is to partner with Mr. Jim Barnes, a neighbor, who would benefit from such a repair. Mr. Simmons intends to start negotiating with Mr. Barnes. Mr. White mentioned that some of the \$25,000 budgeted would be going to the bathhouse cabana repairs. Mr. Simmons stated that Mr. Barnes has a vested interest in the sheet piling repair and that final numbers would depend on what Mr. Barnes would be willing to contribute.

Mr. Beale asked if the contractor thought that the bathhouse cabanas were able to be repaired as opposed to being torn down. Mr. Simmons explained that all of the asbestos had to be removed, which actually makes up the dressing rooms. After the asbestos is removed, all that would be left is the decking and some of that would have to be removed due to rot. The plan would be to get a quote, and plan for the future.

Mr. Parsons asked what position CRMC was taking with regards to the bathhouse cabanas. Mr. Simmons responded that the project would be done under a maintenance assent.

Mr. Simmons thanked the Washington Trust Company for removing 300 lbs. of garbage from Napatree Beach. Mr. Simmons pointed out that nearly a ton of garbage has been removed from Napatree Beach altogether this year. Mr. White remarked that East Beach Association has taken about 7 tons of garbage off of East Beach.

Fire Department – Jason Simmons

Chief Simmons reported that construction on Bay Street was scheduled to resume on October 9th. Mr. Grant Simmons commented that there is only one manhole left to be installed on Larkin Road which is the extent of any digging that will take place. The Town was hoping to extend the storm water drainage system up Larkin Road further than originally planned, but due to budgetary constraints, may not be able to continue. Currently, lines going from the street to the transformer pads are being installed and also the street lighting conduit. Mr. Whitman commented that it was important for the Fire Trucks to be able to get through the construction. The Yacht Club is currently negotiating with the Town of Westerly regarding installing a new force pressure main which carries sewage from the Yacht Club to their leach field. The original pipe line was cut to accommodate space constraints due to the previous construction and it also needed to be brought up to code. Mr. Simmons felt that the Town of Westerly was mostly responsible for this correction and that it may prove to be advantageous to the Yacht Club if Westerly pays for most of the job and the Yacht Club receives a superior system.

Chief Simmons pointed out that the Fire Department has acquired a piece of I- beam steel from the World Trade Center that will be used for a 9/11 memorial. Chief Simmons thanked Mr. Peacock for his donation of two fire hydrants for the memorial. Chief Simmons thanked the Watch Hill Boat Yard for helping to move the steel to the Fire House.

Chief Simmons reported that the majority of budgeted equipment purchases have arrived and are in service. Between 100 and 150 contact forms have been received as a result of the August mailing from Chief Simmons and the Moderator. Chief Simmons reported that the forms have already helped after a call came from the Benson house, the old Harkness House, at 4 a.m. as a result of a broken sprinkler compressor. Mr. Whitman suggested that Chief Simmons hire someone to help input the data from the forms into the computer.

Chief Simmons said that typically the call volume decreases at this time of year, but not so this year.

Chief Simmons reported an incident that took place on August 26th regarding a boat that hit a rock. Due to significant injury to an individual on board the boat then tried to make it to the Yacht Club. Two Watch Hill Fire District rescue boats were used for the initial rescue, the salvage operation - which took many hours, and finally to extinguish a fire on the crippled vessel. The Misquamicut Fire Department also helped with the rescue. Chief Simmons felt that it was crucial to have the use of the rescue boats for an accident of this magnitude. Both the Westerly Sun and the New London Day had a press release about the accident. Mr. Simmons cited another occasion when the rescue boats were used and felt that they are necessary pieces of equipment in Watch Hill. Mr. Beale suggested that Chief Simmons notify Mr. Regan of the incident so that it could be included in the Future Projects Report.

Chief Simmons pointed out that there is a new Chief of the Westerly Fire Department, John Mackay. Chief Simmons congratulated him and expressed a desire to work with him in the future.

Mr. Beale asked what form of governance existed between the Westerly Fire Department and the Westerly Fire District and how it relates to the Town Council. Chief Simmons said that the Chief of the Westerly Fire Department is independent and only reports to the Moderator. It was further established that there is no fire district council for the Westerly Fire District, only an elected Moderator, and that all district taxes go directly to the fire department.

Chief Simmons reported that one of the Watch Hill fire trucks sustained substantial damage after hitting a low hanging branch on Browning Road while avoiding an on-coming car. When asked about the insurance, Mr. Peacock said that there was a \$1,000 deductible and that the cost to repair the damage would be about \$2,500. The claim has been submitted. The low-hanging branch has been removed.

Future Projects Committee – Charles S. Whitman III for John Regan

Mr. Whitman reported that data is still being collected and that nothing will be done without the recommendations of the committee. He further stated that Mr. Daniels continues to collect facts and will present his findings to the committee. The draft will be drawn up and a report will be issued. The findings will be discussed with the District Council who will decide how to proceed. It was stated that Mr. Regan hopes to have a draft report to discuss in a couple of weeks. Mr. Daniels, Mr. Parsons, Mr. Sayre and Mr. Regan will meet this Monday, September 24th. Mr. Simmons expressed an interest to talk to Mr. Daniels again and feels Mr. Daniels needs to take a look at Napatree, the fort, and the docks. Mr. Parsons agreed to talk to Mr. Daniels about doing further fact finding with regards to the Parks Commission. Chief Simmons expressed concern that so much time has passed since the beginning of the process. Mr. Beale felt that it might be confusing that there are two surveys being circulated – one from Mr. Daniels and the other from Mr. Pratt.

New Business – Charles S. Whitman III

Mr. Whitman asked if Chief Simmons had a formal proposal with regards to the used police cruiser. Chief Simmons stated that, although he did not have anything formally written, the Fire Department would be willing to assume some of the cost to outfit the used police cruiser. Chief Simmons stated that he would want to use the cruiser to replace a less reliable vehicle currently being used by the Fire Department. Mr. White pointed out that once the Fire District takes ownership, it must be insured. Chief Simmons suggested transferring the fire apparatus plates if they could eliminate the other vehicle.

Chief Simmons suggested inviting Mr. Griffin to the Board of Engineers Meeting and to include him in decisions regarding color and decals for the car. When Mr. Peacock asked what Mr. Griffin had in mind for the car, Mr. Whitman answered that Mr. Griffin's main focus is to slow down traffic. Mr. Peacock asked if the general consensus was to use the vehicle as a security car, at which time, Mr. Whitman stated that the Westerly Police Department was opposed to any patrolling function. However, the reason for the gift was for traffic safety and the vehicle's main usage should reflect that. When asked about the Weekapaug security car, both Mr. Peacock and Chief Simmons stated that Weekapaug Fire District taxes pay for their security vehicle.

Mr. Peacock felt that if the car was painted all black, it would still deter speeding and it would also mitigate any confusion with a Westerly Police Cruiser. Mr. Whitman felt that people associated the black and white car with the Westerly Police Department, which would assist in the traffic safety mission. Mr. Parsons agreed that maintaining the colors of a patrol car would accomplish the desired effect of slowing down traffic. After a good deal of discussion, it was agreed that the Fire Department would make a formal proposal for the use of the car, excluding any patrolling functions. Mr. Peter Griffin would be invited to the Board of Engineers Meeting and also be included in the decision of color and ornamentation for the cruiser, and finally Mr. Whitman would bring the final proposal to the Westerly Police Department in the hopes of maintaining a good working relationship with them.

Mr. Grant Simmons said that the Improvement Society wanted to have a tented flower show in the park on June 17, 2013. Mr. Simmons stated that there has been a moratorium on events in the park because of previous damage that resulted from another event. There has been a suggestion to open the park for Watch Hill non profit events, with a guarantee that the tent would be removed after two days. Mr. White suggested eliminating the tent for the flower show. Mr. Simmons has urged the Improvement Society to find other venues to avoid paying for security, fire fighters and the cost of the tent - all of which would take away from their fundraiser. Mr. Whitman pointed out that having an event in downtown Watch Hill would also present parking problems.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lyn Traver
Administrative Assistant