

111th ANNUAL MEETING
WATCH HILL FIRE DISTRICT
July 14, 2012
9:30 A.M.

MINUTES

The meeting was called to order by the moderator, Charles S. Whitman III at 9:30 a.m.

Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag – Robert Brockmann

REPORT OF BOARD OF CANVASSERS

Ann Brockmann, Collector of Taxes, presented a List of District Voters, as certified by the Board of Canvassers, to the Clerk.

She said:

As required by the District Charter, the Board of Canvassers, consisting of myself as Collector of Taxes and Shelley Weier, Assessor of Taxes, met on the last Monday of June to prepare the list of voters for this meeting. We certify that the copy presented to the Clerk is a true copy of that list.

QUORUM

The Moderator called on the Clerk to report that there was a quorum (10 voters) present, which there was.

The Moderator declared the meeting in order and called on the Clerk to read the Necrology.

Necrology – Clerk, George C. Moore, Jr.

Humphrey J. Amedeo, Jr.
Constance Leeds Bennett
Geraldine W. Brittan
Suzanne D. Christy
J. Joseph Curran
Amy Mazzola Flynn
Reginald H. Fullerton, Jr.
Paul D. Lynch
Bruce McShane
Bernice D. Moore
George C. Moore
Dorset Penick
Judith C. Shinkle
David M. Sisson
Hope J. Braceland Stengel
Hope Lloyd Yates

The Moderator reminded those present of the qualification of voters (i.e., Watch Hill residents who are eligible to vote in a Westerly election and owners of property in Watch Hill - all individual owners, and one representative of any trust, corporation, partnership or other entity owning property), and asked that those present who are not qualified voters refrain from participating.

The Moderator advised that he would be following Roberts Rules and would limit comments from the floor to five minutes. At the end of the meeting, anyone wishing to continue a discussion past the five minute limit could do so.

Nominating Committee – Citizen’s Award - Jane O’Connell

Mrs. O’Connell noted that on occasion, not every year, the Nominating Committee wanted to recognize a special person who has given exceptional service to Watch Hill. This year the award was given to Edwin Russell, who was the previous Moderator for five years.

Moderator’s Report

Mr. Whitman extended his thanks to the Town of Westerly for their work on the Bay Street project which, when completed, will result in a beautiful downtown area. He noted that the Town had been very helpful and that Steven Hartford, Sharon Ahearn, Diana Serra and Senator Dennis Algieri had all worked together to coordinate the effort.

Mr. Whitman reported that in response to Amy Flynn’s tragic death, a committee was formed, headed by Catherine Moore, to raise awareness, including a recent bicycle safety week. Meanwhile, the Fire District has been working with the Department of Transportation for signage on Watch Hill Road. Thanks to Senator Algieri, there will be two signs, one each at the ends of Watch Hill Road and Ocean View Highway, welcoming visitors to Watch Hill. There will also be more signs indicating current speed. Finally, it is hoped that the speed limit on Watch Hill Road will be changed to 25 mph from Avondale Road on. Mr. Whitman noted that speed limits are only as good as the enforcement and expressed hope for extra enforcement by the Police Department.

Mr. Whitman noted the Conservancy’s current project to underground wires on Bay Street and advised that the Conservancy was having a fund raiser this evening and those present should attend to learn more about that project.

Mr. Whitman also noted that the Westerly Hospital is in severe financial trouble and that Mr. Edwin Russell and Dr. Howard Haronian were very involved in the current situation and would answer any questions those present might have after the meeting.

Minutes of Last Annual Meeting, July 9, 2011

A motion to waive a reading of the minutes was made, seconded and approved.

Report of the Treasurer – William White

Mr. White reported that as of June 1, 2011, the Fire District had a cash balance of \$230,255.95. Receipts for the year equaled \$859,810.99, primarily from taxes and rentals. Disbursements were \$888,433.55. After adjustments, the cash balance as of May 31, 2012 was \$192,691.50. Of that, \$80,727.71 was restricted funds and \$111,963.79 was unrestricted.

The budgeted expenses for 2011-2012 were \$921,600. Actual disbursements were \$888,433.55, \$33,166.45 less than budgeted. However, expenditures in some categories were over budget and some were under.

Mr. White called upon Clerk to propose the following resolution:

RESOLUTION VALIDATING OVER-EXPENDITURES OF APPROPRIATIONS AND TRANSFERRING UNEXPENDED BALANCES

RESOLVED:

That all over-expended appropriations as of May 31, 2012, aggregating \$50,969.92 for the fiscal year ending May 31, 2012 before application of unexpended appropriations, aggregating \$84,136.37 for said fiscal year, as reported by the District Treasurer and as noted under Statement of Appropriations, Cash Disbursements, and Encumbrances, be and the same are hereby validated to the same extent as if the District Treasurer had been fully authorized to make such expenditures, and all unexpended balances of appropriations as of May 31, 2012, as reported by the District Treasurer and as noted in said Statement of Appropriations, Cash Disbursements, and Encumbrances, be and the same are hereby applied against said over-expended appropriations.

The motion was seconded and approved.

Introduction of Guests – Charles S. Whitman III

Mr. Whitman introduced Police Chief St. Clair and Captain Sean Lacey and invited them to address the voters.

Chief St. Clair reported that the police boat was back in the water and that the officer in charge of that boat would also patrol the streets during the week. Also, the Police Department ATV has been moved to the Misquamicut Club so it is available to respond to issues on East Beach.

In response to a question about use of radar, Chief St. Clair said that a cruiser would be in Watch Hill on Monday, Tuesday and Friday using radar on Watch Hill Road and Ocean View Highway. He noted that the Police Department was also dealing with parking issues on Bay Street resulting from the restriping. Finally, he said there would be more speed signs as well as new signs for motorcycles, asking the riders to keep the noise down and drive slowly.

Mr. Jenkins asked about more temporary stop signs, specifically at Ninigret Avenue. Chief St. Clair responded that when a stop sign is requested, the department performs a traffic study to determine if a new sign is warranted. He said there are cases when additional signs cause more accidents rather than preventing them. He also noted that he has received the report from the Department of Transportation on the study they did and is reviewing the recommendations and the time line for any changes.

Dr. Kelly expressed his concern about the pedestrians at the intersection with Westerly Road and another voter noted that beach parking all along Watch Hill Road to Avondale Road makes that road even more dangerous for pedestrians. Chief St. Clair asked that residents email either him or Captain Lacey with such issues. Once they have it in writing it is easier to act upon.

In response to a question, Chief St. Clair said the police boat can enforce speed limits. The current officer assigned to the boat is new but is being trained and will issue summons as appropriate.

Mr. Whitman thanked the officers for coming.

Report of the Tax Assessor – Ann Brockmann for Shelley S. Weier

Grand List of District properties is \$1,167,618,800 as of December 31, 2011. After the deduction of Westerly and Watch Hill exemptions of \$16,668,800, the assessed value of taxable property is \$1,150,950,000. This reflects an increase since last year of \$1,858,860 in assessed value.

Report of the Tax Collector – Ann L. Brockmann

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| Taxes received | |
| 2011 | \$433,759.07 |
| Prior Years | \$ 5,106.53 |
| Unpaid Taxes (Total) | \$ 13,305.22 on 9 properties |

Comparison Unpaid in Prior Years

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|------|----------------------------|
| 2010 | \$6,407.21 on 8 properties |
| 2009 | \$1,157.78 on 2 properties |

Of the nine properties with taxes outstanding this year, three only owe a total of about \$25, three others owe a total of about \$1,000 for the current year and the last three account for the majority owed. Mr. Whitman noted that the biggest outstanding balance is from one property, which has been in default for three years. The Westerly taxes on this property have been paid. The Fire District has instituted proceedings to have the property sold for back taxes and he assumes that the result will be a payment of the amount owed rather than allowing a tax sale.

Report of Fire Department – Chief Jason Simmons

Chief Simmons reported that the Fire Department has responded to 143 alarms over the past year, an increase of 26%. He asked that residents cut back shrubbery and be certain houses are properly marked to improve response time.

Chief Simmons reminded residents of the need to have tents in excess of 120 square feet inspected by the Fire Department.

Chief Simmons reported that the Fire Department had recently established an education work-study program designed to encourage recruitment and retention of current and future firefighters while assisting their educational goals and objectives. The program is designed to supplement rather than supplant the seasonal staffing program.

Chief Simmons summarized the Fire Department's role in the planning for and aftermath of Hurricane Irene and thanked those volunteers for the extreme effort over that period.

Finally, Chief Simmons reported on the Fire Department's participation in the Fire District's Long Term Study and thanked Assistant Chief Scott Harold and Deputy Chief Robert Peacock for their time in providing information and meeting with the committee.

A full copy of Chief Simmons' report is attached and a part of these minutes.

Report of the Park Commission – Chairman, Grant G. Simmons III

Mr. Simmons reported that all Fire District properties were in good shape and that all the leases were current. He noted that a bearing blew out at the Merry-Go-Round, causing it to be closed for one day, but that it was now repaired and operating.

Mr. Simmons reported that repair of the sea wall next to the Holdredge Garage was an upcoming, major expense. He also noted that the sea wall along Fort Road had been repaired but a further section of it needs repair as well, but probably not for another year and a half when, hopefully, funds will be available.

Report of the Finance Committee – Chairman, James T. Beale, Jr.

Mr. Beale stated that the proposed 2012-2013 budget had expenses of \$863,795, necessitating a tax rate of \$0.40 per thousand. The total projected expenses are less than those of the current year but the tax rate must go up because no surplus will be used to cover disbursements.

Mr. Beale noted that over the past three years the Fire District has been building up its contingency fund. Currently the balance is \$70,000; the goal is \$100,000 for unforeseen capital improvements or other emergencies.

Mr. Beale advised that copies of the report from the accountant, DiSanto, Priest, were available, and that Mr. John Brough, from the firm, was present today to answer any questions after the meeting.

Mr. Whitman noted that the budgets originally submitted for 2012-2013 were higher and that he asked each department to reduce their numbers to limit the increase in the tax rate to 3.9%, or \$0.40 per thousand.

A full copy of Mr. Beale's report is attached and a part of these minutes.

APPROPRIATIONS – The Moderator introduced the Budget submitted by the Finance Committee, noting that its preparation reflected comments and recommendations received at the May 25, 2012 meeting of the Finance Committee. He reported that the Assessor of Taxes proposes a mill rate of \$.40, a number that will be reviewed again before tax bills go out. He noted further that the budget has been circulated to the Voters in accordance with the Charter.

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

RESOLVED:

That the report of the Finance Committee be accepted and filed and the Appropriations for the fiscal year 2012-2013 be and the same are hereby approved.

The motion was seconded and approved.

TAX RESOLUTION

RESOLVED:

That the electors of the Watch Hill Fire District, hereby order the assessment and collection of a tax on the ratable property of said District in a sum not less than \$450,000 nor more than \$480,000. The Assessor of Taxes shall assess and apportion said tax on the inhabitants and ratable property of said District as of the 31st day of December, 2011 at 12:00 noon, according to law, and shall certify and deliver the same to the Collector of Taxes on or before the first day of August, 2012. The Collector of Taxes shall proceed to collect said tax; said tax to be due and payable on or before the 30th day of September 2012, and all taxes remaining unpaid on the 30th day of September 2012 shall carry interest until collected, a penalty at the rate of 12% per annum upon such unpaid taxes. To the extent that assessments as of the 31st day of December 2011 may be modified by the Assessor of Taxes, the Treasurer and the Collector of Taxes shall make adjustments as appropriate.

The motion was seconded and approved.

TAX ANTICIPATION NOTES

RESOLVED:

That the District Treasurer be, and hereby is, authorized and empowered during the current fiscal year of the District, commencing June 1, 2012 and ending May 31, 2013, to borrow such sum or sums of money as shall be necessary for the payment of the current liabilities and expenses of the District, but not to exceed in the whole the sum of \$100,000.00, and to issue negotiable promissory note or notes of the District therefor, which shall be made payable not later than one (1) year from the respective date or dates thereof. Negotiable notes issued pursuant to the authority hereof shall be signed by the District Treasurer and countersigned by the District Clerk, and such counter signatures shall be conclusive evidence to all holders of such note or notes of the approval and consent of the District and the District Officers to the loan or loans evidenced thereby. The District Treasurer is hereby authorized and empowered to renew any of said notes from time to time, but any such renewal note shall be due not later than one (1) year after the date of the original note so renewed.

The motion was seconded and approved.

RESOLUTION RE: EMERGENCY NEEDS

RESOLVED:

That the Treasurer is authorized to expend sums not to exceed \$30,000.00 in the aggregate, to meet the contingent and emergency needs of the Fire District and to carry out the duties and obligations of the officers and committees in accordance with the provisions of the charter.

The motion was seconded and approved.

RATIFICATION AND APPROVAL OF ACTS OF COUNCIL, OFFICERS, FINANCE COMMITTEE AND PARK COMMISSION

RESOLVED:

That each and all of the resolutions, acts and proceedings of the District Council (as shown by its records in the Minute Book of the District Council) and of its Officers, Finance Committee, and Park Commission in carrying out and promoting the purposes, objects, and interests of the Watch Hill Fire District, during the fiscal year ending May 31, 2012, be and the same are approved, ratified and hereby made the acts and deeds of the Watch Hill Fire District.

The motion was seconded and approved.

AUTHORIZATION OF MODERATOR TO APPEAR AT HEARINGS

RESOLVED:

That the Moderator, or such other person or persons as the District Council or the Moderator shall designate, be and hereby are fully authorized and empowered to enter objections or legal actions on behalf of the Watch Hill Fire District in reference to any zoning matters, liquor licenses, legislative matters, or any other subject affecting the properties at Watch Hill.

The motion was seconded and approved.

RESOLUTION RE: ASSISTANT TO THE TREASURER

RESOLVED:

That William D. Horne is appointed and employed as Assistant to the Treasurer for the year 2012 - 2013 and said Assistant is empowered to execute checks and make withdrawals from funds of the District in the same manner as the District Treasurer, subject to limitations requiring dual signatures and that the Assistant to the Treasurer shall be bonded in the same manner and amount as the District Treasurer.

The motion was seconded and approved.

RESOLUTION APPOINTING AUDITOR

RESOLVED:

That DiSanto, Priest & Co. be appointed Auditor of the District for the year 2012 – 2013.

The motion was seconded and approved.

REPORT OF THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE
ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Mr. Whitman called upon Mrs. O'Connell who reported that the Nominating Committee, in accordance with prior vote at the Annual Meeting of July 9, 2011, moves the election of the following slate of Officers:

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| Moderator | Charles S. Whitman III, 1 Yr. |
| Deputy Moderator | John M. Regan III, 1 Yr. |
| Treasurer | William H. White, 1 Yr. |
| District Council, Members at Large | Andrew J. Parsons, 1 Yr. Ann Stevenson, 1 Yr. |
| Clerk | George C. Moore, Jr., 1 Yr. |
| Collector of Taxes | Ann L. Brockmann, 1 Yr. |
| Assessor of Taxes | Shelley S. Weier, 1 Yr. |
| Finance Committee | Paul Verbinnen, 3 Yrs. |
| Park Commission | Deborah Lamm, 3 Yrs. |

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|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Fire Chief | Jason S. Simmons, 1 Yr. |
| First Assistant Chief | Scott Harold, 1 Yr. |
| Second Assistant Chief | Robert Peacock, 1 Yr. |
| Fire Department Members-at-Large | Walter J. Lentz, M.D., 1 Yr. |
| | Stuart W. Weier, 1 Yr. |

Mr. Whitman opened the floor to other nominations. There being no further nominations, the motion to approve the current slate was made, seconded and approved.

Mrs. O'Connell thanked her committee, which included W. Whitney George, Roberta Allardyce, and Peter B. Griffin, Jr.

Mr. Whitman thanked Penny Kelly for her service on the District Council.

APPOINTMENT OF NOMINATING COMMITTEE

RESOLVED:

That Jane B. O'Connell be appointed Chairman of the Nominating Committee, 2012- 2013 and that the Chairman be empowered to appoint at least two additional members to serve thereon and that the Nominating Committee deliver to the District Clerk, at least three weeks before the next annual meeting, its proposed slate of officers. The Clerk shall give notice of the proposed slate in the call of the annual meeting.

The motion was seconded and carried.

NEW BUSINESS

Misquamicut Sewers

Mr. Robert Saglio stated that he was very concerned about the proposed sewers in Misquamicut and wondered if the District Council was keeping an eye on the situation. He noted that historically, the installation of sewers was subject to a town wide vote. In this case, the decision is in the hands of the Town Council. If approved, the property owners in Misquamicut will pay for it. Mr. Saglio feared that if such an expense could be imposed on Misquamicut, it could also be imposed on Watch Hill. There was also the concern that with sewers, there would be a push for greater development.

Mr. Beale explained that the reason the Town Council could make the decision was because the funding would be via a revenue bond rather than a general obligation bond.

Mr. Whitman responded that the District Council was aware of the issue and following it closely.

Westerly Hospital

Mrs. Deborah Lamm advised those present that there would be an informational meeting on the status of the Westerly Hospital on Wednesday evening, July 18, at 6 pm at the hospital. Special

Master Mark Russo, Town Manager Steven Hartford, and hospital Vice President Margaret Austin will be present to answer any questions. All were urged to attend.

Fire Horn

Mr. Lyman Goff stated that he felt with today's technology, there was not a need to sound the fire horn daily, which he finds very disturbing. Chief Simmons replied that the only time the fire horn goes off is the daily test and when the Fire Department is activated. He also noted that the horn is just one part of the system; it is a back up. Also, by fire code, alarm boxes in the commercial area are tied into the horn. Chief Simmons reported that there were cases this year when the alarm sounded and the fire trucks were already on the road before the signal came from Westerly dispatch. The horn gave the fire trucks a two minute head start. Chief Simmons also stated that at this time there is not an effective, affordable alternative.

Mr. Brian Thompson stated that his business involves wireless technology and that he feels the system the fire department has now should be kept.

Dr. Kelly added that Watch Hill is a community, so when the horn sounds, it means someone may need help and it is an opportunity for the community to volunteer.

There being no further business, upon motion made and duly seconded, it was

RESOLVED:

That the meeting be RECESSED to the call of the Moderator.

The motion was seconded and approved.