

115th ANNUAL MEETING  
WATCH HILL FIRE DISTRICT

July 9, 2016

9:30 A.M.

MINUTES

**DRAFT – Not approved**

The meeting was called to order by the Moderator, Charles S. Whitman III at 9:30 a.m. He reminded those present that the meeting would be operated according to Robert's Rules.

The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag was led by Robert Brockmann

**REPORT OF BOARD OF CANVASSERS**

The Moderator called on Shelley S. Weier, Assessor of Taxes, to present 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 Assessor of Taxes and Ann Brockmann, Collector 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, who reported that there was a quorum (10 voters) present.

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

Necrology – Clerk, George C. Moore, Jr.

Kermit D. Adams, Sr.  
Hans H. Angermueller  
Fanny B. Farrand  
Rita Gaccione  
Innes D. Hollos  
William Mahoney  
Marjorie Nugent  
Robert W. Richins  
Mark W. Weber

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.

**Approval of Minutes of Last Annual Meeting, July 11, 2015**

The Moderator asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the last Annual Meeting on July 11, 2015. The motion was made, seconded and approved.

**Report of the Treasurer – Robert C. Murray**

The Moderator called on Paul Verbinnen to read the Report for Robert C. Murray who was not in attendance. Attention was drawn to the Treasurer’s statement of cash received and disbursed noting a cash balance at the end of May of \$414,349.28, an increase of \$165,716.74 over the previous year. It was also noted that expenditures at year end were \$115,535.24 less than budgeted. A full copy of the Treasurer’s report is attached as part of these minutes.

Mr. Verbinnen called upon the 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, 2016, aggregating \$79,320.77 for the fiscal year ending May 31, 2016 before application of unexpended appropriations for said fiscal year, as reported by the District Treasurer and as noted under Statement of Appropriations, Cash Disbursements, Reimbursements, 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, 2016, as reported by the District Treasurer and as noted in said Statement of Appropriations, Cash Disbursements, Reimbursements, and Encumbrances, be and the same are hereby applied against said over-expended appropriations.

The motion was seconded and approved.

**Report of the Tax Assessor – Shelley S. Weier**

Grand List of District properties is **\$ 1,195,225,560** as of December 31, 2015. After the deduction of Westerly and Watch Hill exemptions of **\$18,106,630**, the assessed value of taxable property is **\$1,177,118,930**. This reflects an increase since last year of **\$33,693,180** in assessed value.

## **Report of the Tax Collector – Ann L. Brockmann**

Taxes received	
Current Year	\$ 586,053.48
Prior Years	\$ 6,879.23
Unpaid Taxes (Total)	\$ 6,806.26 on 6 properties

### Comparison Unpaid in Prior Years

2014	\$11,949.36 (8 properties)
2013	\$12,849.45

## **Report of Fire Department – Chief Robert Peacock**

Chief Peacock thanked all of his volunteers for their work throughout the year. There were 153 calls, which was the highest in the past six years. 50% of the calls were during the week/work day and 50% were during the summer months (which is why it is important to have a per diem firefighter here in season). Chief Peacock noted that there are two large capital items in the proposed budget. One being a new rescue boat to replace the 15 year old one. The second is a new fire alarm system to replace the older one which is totally corroded. Finally, Chief Peacock reminded those present of two dates: The Smoky Bear Parade on July 21 and the Fire Department Open House on August 3. A full copy of the Watch Hill Fire Department Annual Report 2016 is attached.

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

Mr. Simmons thanked his committee members for their active involvement over the past year. He reported that the Chief Ninigret statue has been moved and the fountain is now working. Mr. Simmons also noted the first Phase of the renovations to the bathing beach changing rooms has been completed. A second phase will be completed over the next year. Mr. Simmons remarked that all other areas under the Park Commission's responsibility are progressing normally.

## **Report of the Finance Committee – Chairman, Paul Verbinnen**

Mr. Verbinnen reported that overall the Fire District ended the 2015 – 2016 budget year in good shape. Thanks to cost control, expenses were under budget and \$78,000 of reserves were not expended. He said that as of 5/31/2016, there was about \$414,000 in the checking account. Mr. Verbinnen noted that there are two new capital expenditures in the 2016 – 2017 budget: \$130,000 for the new alarm system and \$125,000 for the new boat. The Finance Committee decided to limit the tax increase to 2% (from \$0.515 per thousand to \$0.525 per thousand). To achieve this, they recommend a deficit of \$106,000 and reducing the contingency budget to \$25,000. Finally, Mr. Verbinnen reported that the Conservancy activity on Napatree has been removed from the P&L sheet.

Mr. Walter Lentz asked if the new fire alarm system was wired or a radio system. Chief Peacock replied that it would be wireless but every box would have a repeater to make sure that the signal

goes through. Mr. Lentz wondered if the Fire Department had ever had a meeting with local contractors to reduce the number of false alarms. Chief Peacock replied that he speaks to them each time that the Fire Department is called out. If there are multiple calls to the same location, he contacts the owner of the property.

**APPROPRIATIONS** – The Moderator introduced the Budget submitted by the Finance Committee, noting that its preparation reflects comments and recommendations received at the May 27, 2016 meeting of the Finance Committee. He reported that the Assessor of Taxes proposes a mill rate of \$.525, 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.

The Moderator called on the Clerk

RESOLVED:

That the report of the Finance Committee be accepted and filed and the Appropriations for the fiscal year 2016-2017 be and the same are hereby approved.

The motion was seconded and approved. The Budget was approved.

**TAX RESOLUTION**

The Moderator called on the Clerk

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 \$610,000.00 nor more than \$640,000.00. The Assessor of Taxes shall assess and apportion said tax on the inhabitants and ratable property of said District as of the 31<sup>st</sup> day of December, 2015 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, 2016. 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 2016, and all taxes remaining unpaid on the 30<sup>th</sup> day of September 2016 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 2015 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**

The Moderator called on the Clerk.

RESOLVED:

That the District Treasurer be, and hereby is, authorized and empowered during the current fiscal year of the District, commencing June 1, 2016 and ending May 31, 2017, 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**

The Moderator called on the Clerk.

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**

The Moderator called on Nicholas Moore.

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, 2016, 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**

The Moderator called on the Clerk.

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**

The Moderator called on the Clerk.

RESOLVED:

That William D. Horne is appointed and employed as Assistant to the Treasurer for the year 2016 - 2017 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**

The Moderator called on the Clerk.

RESOLVED:

That DiSanto, Priest & Co. be appointed Auditor of the District for the year 2016 – 2017.

The motion was seconded and approved.

**REPORT OF THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE  
ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

The Moderator noted that Jane O’Connell could not be present and called on Nominating Committee member, Deborah Lamm, to give the report.

The Nominating Committee, in accordance with the prior vote at the Annual Meeting of July 11, 2015, moves the election of the following slate of Officers:

Moderator

**Charles S. Whitman III, 1 Yr.**

Deputy Moderator	<b>John M. Regan III, 1 Yr.</b>
Treasurer	<b>Robert C. Murray, 1 Yr.</b>
District Council, Members at Large	<b>Andrew J. Parsons, 1 Yr.</b>
	<b>William J. Miller, Jr., 1 Yr.</b>
Clerk	<b>George C. Moore, Jr., 1 Yr.</b>
Collector of Taxes	<b>Ann L. Brockmann, 1 Yr.</b>
Assessor of Taxes	<b>Shelley S. Weier, 1 Yr.</b>
Finance Committee	<b>Steven Tighe, 3 Yrs.</b>
Park Commission	<b>Jeanne Blasberg, 3 Yrs.</b>
	<b>John Felber, 3 Yrs.</b>
Fire Chief	<b>Robert Peacock, 1 Yr.</b>
First Assistant Chief	<b>Scott Harold, 1 Yr.</b>
Second Assistant Chief	<b>Jason Simmons, 1 Yr.</b>
Fire Department Members-at-Large	<b>Andrew G. Barber, 1 Yr.</b>
	<b>John M. Regan III, 1 Yr.</b>

Mr. Whitman asked if there were any nominations from the floor. There being none, Mr. Whitman asked for a second to the motion to approve the slate as presented. It was seconded and the motion was approved.

**APPOINTMENT OF NOMINATING COMMITTEE**

The Moderator called on the Clerk.

RESOLVED:

That Jane B. O’Connell be appointed Chairman of the Nominating Committee, 2016- 2017 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 approved.

**New Business**

The Moderator announced that Office Manager, Judy Kelley, would be leaving her position after 15 years. He thanked her for her service. Mr. Regan introduced Alicia Perrone, who will be taking over the position.

The Moderator said that he had been contacted by Mr. Andrew Gagarin, regarding hedge trimming. Mr. Gargarin suggested that electric trimmers be used wherever possible instead of gas to cut down on the noise.

**Introduction of Guests**

The Moderator introduced Police Chief Edward St. Clair and Captain Shawn Lacey.

Chief St. Clair announced that he will be retiring at the end of July and that Captain Lacey will be the acting Chief.

Mr. Whitman pointed out that drug issues are a big problem in Westerly. Chief St. Clair confirmed this and noted that this issue takes priority in his use of resources. Chief St. Clair also reported that he has undercover officers on the beaches and has made over 200 arrests so far this season, mostly for alcohol abuse. He plans to put uniformed officers on the beach as well.

Captain Lacey noted that staffing was down to 42 officers out of an authorized 50. However, there are 15 CSO's (more than last year), two of whom just walk the beach every day. Also, there are CSO's at the rights of way at Niantic, Bluff and Everett Avenues.

Mr. Nicholas Moore asked about the feeling of the Town of Westerly relative to the issue of rights of way. Chief St. Clair responded that the Town is just taking input and that there are two concerns: rights of way onto the beach and the lateral access to the beach (mean high tide line). Chief St. Clair continued that it is difficult to determine the mean high tide line and therefore difficult to enforce trespassing on private property. Relative to drop offs at rights of way, the priority for the police department would be obstruction of traffic. Drop offs at Bluff and Everett Avenues are of primary concern because a drop off would occur in a travel lane.

Mr. Kelly asked if there was some technology that could be used to reduce speeding. Chief St. Clair replied that it really comes down to enforcement. He said that flashing signs help, such as the one at the intersection of Avondale and Watch Hill Roads. Chief St. Clair also noted that police cruisers have moving radars so that they can see how fast traffic around them is traveling. Mr. Kelly asked if there was a system that could take a picture of a speeder and send them a warning. Chief St. Clair said that such technology exists but that it is very expensive. In response to a suggestion that more stop signs might slow traffic, Captain Lacey replied that placing extra stop signs somewhat arbitrarily, tends to increase the number of accidents rather than decrease speeding. Also, the police department can only place stop signs on town roads.

Mrs. Kline noted that the signs on Watch Hill Road are confusing with a 35 MPH sign and a 25 MPH sign within about 20 feet of each other. Chief St. Clair noted that this is a state road so he cannot do anything about it but that he will notify the state.

A concern was raised by a member of the audience that the pressure to increase available parking might come at a cost of usable bike lanes. Chief St. Clair replied that as a biker himself, he would make sure that this balance was considered.

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

RESOLVED:

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

The motion was approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Alicia Perrone  
Office Manager