

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE BUTTONWOODS FIRE DISTRICT
June 26, 2012
Buttonwoods Casino

The 87th Annual Meeting of the Buttonwoods Fire District was called to order at 7:00 p.m. Moderator, Mr. Mark McKenney presided.

Mr. Mark McKenney reminded the group of the ground rules of the Annual Meeting, and that we hold the meeting primarily to establish the budget, but that the discussion of other issues is welcome.

He offered a warm welcome to the new members and property owners of the community – Francis Faeth and Despina Kartson and Allen and Sherry Syslo. He then asked for a moment of silence to remember the neighbors who had passed away in the past year.

Reading of the Minutes of the 2011 Annual Meeting:

Mr. Mark McKenney called for a motion to accept the minutes of the previous meeting (2011) that had been available to all taxpayers of the Fire District in advance, and that the reading of the minutes be waived. The reading of the minutes was waived.

Motion to accept amended minutes passed.

Reports of Buttonwood Fire District Officers

Mr. Mark McKenney called for the reports of the Officers and Supervisors.

Treasurer's Report:

Dave Curry reported that the opening balance was \$129,907. The ending balance is \$109,318. In addition to the tax receipts \$7,845 was received from FEMA for storm damage and \$8,000 was transferred from Casino Committee funds. No additional reserves were added in the prior year. Sewer assessments of \$45,920 were paid out of unallocated reserves. The Casino Reserve is at \$16,937. The Roads Reserve is at \$19,500. The Landscaping Reserve is at \$4,844 and the Seawall Reserve is at \$54,500. The total unallocated reserve as of May 31, 2012 is \$13,537. Motion passed to accept report as is.

Tax Assessor's Report:

Mrs. Karen O'Sullivan noted the Tax Rate determined by the Board of Tax Assessors for 2011/2012 was \$1.11 per \$1,000.00 of real estate.

The Chapel, the Buttonwoods Fire District (BFD), and the Buttonwoods Beach Association (BBA) are exempt from taxation by the BFD. The BFD and the BBA are subject to Warwick City taxes whereas the Chapel is not. With no questions the report was accepted as submitted.

Tax Collector's Report:

Mrs. Karen O'Sullivan reported that the total taxes collected through May 31, 2012 were \$94,602. With no questions the report was accepted as submitted.

Auditor's Report:

Mr. David Weisberg reported that he had reviewed the Fire District transaction details and procedures for the Fire District and the P&L statements for the Casino Committee for the past year. He noted that everything appeared to be in order and that the procedures are sound. He is satisfied that the procedures and practices of the Treasurer, Tax Collector and Casino Committee Treasurer have produced an accurate assessment of the Buttonwoods' financial condition. After no questions there was a motion to adopt the report. The motion was accepted.

Supervisors' Report:

Dave Tremblay presented his report and highlighted the following:

He began by remembering the residents who passed away during his three year term: Richard Robinson, John (Jay) Farrell, Joseph Suffredini, Harry Pass, Cliff Carlson, Mary E. Merlino, and Mrs. Anna Hagen.

During the 2011 / 2012 fiscal year the following was accomplished:

- Sewer assessments were negotiated - BFD and BBA Tax Assessments have been paid. We received an \$825,941 abatement leaving a bill of \$45,920, which was paid in full. A sewer bill of \$7,754 remains for the Casino.
- Hurricane Irene caused tree damage. Fortunately two companies were put on alert before the storm as the city of Warwick decided that we would not be part of their debris clearing process, Dave efforts successfully resulted in recapturing 75% of our expenses (\$7,845) from FEMA.
- Casino bathroom upgrades were completed. Repairs of the window frames are next in order to preventing the existing windows from falling out of their frames.
- The Casino Committee replaced 50 folding chairs. More will be purchased when funding is available.
- Several ballasts for the porch lights have been replaced
- Cleaned catch basins
- New mowing contract has been assigned
- Tree replacement on Buttonwoods Ave.
- Maintained the common areas for all to enjoy.

There remains a to do list:

- Replace lower windows, window locks, and door locks
- Porch deck - replace rotted boards, painting required
- Porch railing should be replaced & painted
- Recommend louver fans above stage
- Cage floor fixed in 2005, needs to be secured underneath. Some deterioration under cage area, rotted post near bleacher area

Long term needs:

- Casino catch basin size should be increased
- Poor ventilation of crawl space
- Vapor barrier under Casino
- Railing sagging next to bowling alley
- Floor refinishing was looked at in 2005; recommendation wait a few more years before sanding and coating, including the blowing alleys
- Replace benches at flag pole
- Replace fencing on tennis clay courts

Maps of Old Buttonwoods were displayed showing BFD and BBA properties. The maps were helpful in the tax reduction effort and they have also been used for the sewer taxes, and to show resident where properties are located.

The report was accepted as submitted.

Following the report there were several questions related to the Casino and additional bathroom renovations. Dave noted that the window frame repairs are important so the bathroom expenses are limited. There was a desire to resurrect the Casino Restoration Committee, which was addressed later in the meeting.

Carl Baer inquired about the \$2,200 survey expense incurred by the Fire District. It was noted that the BBA, which is responsible for enforcing the rights of BBA owned property, reimbursed the Fire District. Several attendees questioned the BBA's ability to fund ongoing efforts. Dave Tremblay told the group that the BBA took ownership of the matter thus far but that additional efforts may require the resources of the Fire District. Others questioned why the onus was on the BBA and not the property owners. At this point the issue was deferred to the part of the meeting where the BBA provides an update.

Reports of BFD Committees

Casino Committee:

Karen O'Sullivan reported on behalf of Kathy Falaguerra. She reported that Mr. Conti will be back as Steward.

Opening Day was June 25th and the first week included the Theatre Camp with Angie Collins.

2011 adult activities include the Cocktail Classic, the traditional 4th of July parade and field games, Cocktails on the Sea Wall, Bowling and Beers, and the Steak Fry. Two exercise groups have continued to meet on the Casino grounds. Children's activities will include bowling, tennis, and arts and crafts. Thank you to Doug Rademacher and Dave and Nancy Dickerman for co-chairing the bowling.

The Casino has been booked for many summer parties - the contact is Jeanne Pass. Casino rental fees have enabled the purchase of new chairs and high tables and enabled an \$8,000 contribution toward the renovation of the Casino bathrooms this past year.

New volunteers and members of the Casino Committee are welcome.

The report of the Casino Committee was accepted.

Tennis Committee:

Ken Steinkamp reported that the courts are open and active with an organized group on Saturday morning and open play on Sunday mornings. \$1,200 in funds will be used to replace nets. The hard courts continue to be plagued with cracks, which will be addressed as needed. The committee endorsed the planned tennis camp.

Reports of Other Community Committees (non BFD)

Buttonwood Beach Association – Susan Martins Phipps:

Susan read a letter from the BBA Board that was to be delivered to all residents. She reminded the group that the BBA is a corporation created by the founders of Buttonwoods in 1872. The purpose was to sell land, develop streets, and to maintain and preserve the community held land for the enjoyment of all residents. The BBA also owns all the streets as well as the undeveloped land throughout Buttonwoods.

In lights of this responsibility the BBA has made known to the community its intent to see that such land is protected. In order to do so, the Association has been advised that it must preserve its rights as the owners of the property. Failing to do so could result in the loss of BBA land, now often used by many people, to individuals. Failure to act could jeopardize the private nature of Buttonwoods.

While anyone can understand a property owner taking steps to protect rights to their land, the BBA faces a more sensitive task. First, many people don't understand the BBA or its role. Second, Association property has often been used by abutting land owners without any thought for the BBA's rights. Without a survey many don't know what land they own. Often, the lands is used and frequently landscaped and improved. There is no ill intent; however, it is not that person's land. Third, generally the adjoining landowners are not only neighbors but also friends. No one wants to confront a friend on such issues, even when it's the right thing to do.

The letter reminds residents that property owners are required to contact the Association and request permission to make improvements or otherwise alter BBA land. These instances include construction or removal of structures or barriers, re-grading and water dispersion, landscape improvements, lawn maintenance, tree removal, or other usage. In these instances, the abutting landowner must acknowledge that:

- The use of the property does not constitute a change in ownership; the BBA continues to own the property
- The BBA retains its right to use the property in the future
- The abutting landowner may be required to remove any improvement and/or restore the property to its original condition
- The abutting land-owner may have to comply with municipal requirements such as requirements for sewer installation

- The abutting landowner will hold the BBA harmless from any liability, damages and legal fees related thereto, arising from any conditions involving the subject the property
- The abutting landowner will maintain insurance coverage on the property, naming the BBA as an additional insured.

The Association is taking the same steps as would any other land owner. It is perhaps even more important that the BBA do so, as it seeks to protect the private nature of the area, and to ensure the property that could be used by so many does not become the property of any one individual.

Susan also referred to the maps on display at the back of the room.

Referring back to the earlier discussion, Barbara McCarty asked why the homeowner did not pay for the survey. Susan explained that legal counsel advised the BBA to have the survey done. She also noted that the BBA has no source of income other than the \$1 per year it receives from the BFD for renting the land. The BFD, however, maintains the land at its own cost. Ron Marcella noted that the BFD also incurs the cost of defending the rights of the property as well as the cost to maintain the land.

Ginny Goldstein asked what the consequences are if someone doesn't notify the BBA when they want to make changes or improvements. Susan noted that the BBA has approved almost all improvements in the past.

Bob Remick asked about the results of the survey. Sue Phipps noted that the survey was complete but that the next steps were still in debate.

Richard Taylor questioned how the neighborhood could educate new property owners on property ownership and rights. Mark McKenney recommended that a motion could be made later in the meeting to form a new committee.

Ginny Goldstein asked if the Point falls under the BBA jurisdiction. It was suggested that this question be deferred to New Business.

The report was accepted.

Buttonwood Chapel Committee – Claire Flaherty read the report for Kathy Gilman.

The Chapel will celebrate its 127th Anniversary this year. Events in the past year included an Egg Hunt, a Children's Service, a 9/11 Service with a supper on the Chapel lawn, and the Annual Christmas / Hanukah Service with the Giving Tree to benefit residents of the House of Hope. Four weddings are planned thus far for the 2012 season.

A new lamppost was installed on Buttonwoods Avenue and new lights are planned for the Memorial Garden. Many thanks to Dave Lussier, Bill Ross, and Ken Mason for their assistance.

Lastly, Claire reminded the attendees that the activities and improvements are possible due to the generosity of the residents who help to make the Annual Chapel Fundraiser a success.

Reading of Communications: - There were no communications in 2011 / 2012.

Unfinished Business: None

New Business:

Budget Presentation and Acceptance Resolution 2012 - 2013

Mr. Joe Jolls began by thanking Dave Tremblay for his great service as a supervisor over the last 3 years.

Joe then presented the 2012 budget and resolution, which called for a total budget of \$94,455, which was up 3% versus the prior year. Most of the proposed budgets were consistent with the 2011-2012 spending with a couple of exceptions. Casino operating expenses have been reduced thanks to the efforts of Dave Curry who identified several areas for savings. BFD Sewer expenses were increased to reflect a quicker payoff of the Sewer Assessment, which will ultimately result in greater interest expense savings. Joe noted that the budget

reflects a level of expenses necessary to keep the neighborhood in good shape. The budget, without changes, was voted on, and accepted.

Budget Acceptance and Resolution:

Three resolutions were read by Mrs. Karen O'Sullivan - Budget Appropriation Resolution for \$97,455, Tax Resolution and the Tax Anticipation Borrowing Resolution - not to exceed \$20,000 (authorization for Treasurer to borrow funds).

All three resolutions were approved.

Report of the Nominating Committee – Mark McKenney read Bill Foley's report:

The following names are hereby placed in nomination for the offices and terms stated:

For Supervisor, for a three year term, from this date to the BFD annual meeting in June, 2015 – Mr. Jonathon Pratt.

For one year terms, from this date to the BFD annual meeting in 2013:

For Moderator – Mr. Mark McKenney

For Clerk – Mrs. Patricia Wegrzyn McGreen

For Treasurer – Mr. David Curry

For Tax Assessors – Mrs. Karen O'Sullivan, Mrs. Deb Taylor, Mr. Steven Marcks

For Tax Collector – Mrs. Karen O'Sullivan

For Auditor – Mr. David Weisberg

Motion to accept the proposed slate was made and accepted.

Mr. Bill Foley will chair the Nominating Committee for 2013.

Election of Officers and Supervisors: Mark McKenney

A motion to elect the slate, as presented, was made and seconded. The motion passed and the Clerk cast a single ballot for the slate.

Board of Supervisors for the coming year:

Mr. Joe Jolls – Sr. Supervisor

Mrs. Kathy Baer – Supervisor

Mr. Jonathon Pratt - New Supervisor

Ratification of Acts of Officers and Supervisors:

The ratification of the acts of the officers was passed.

Mr. Mark McKenney thanked Dave Tremblay for his three years as Supervisor and the group applauded.

Miscellaneous New Business:

Claire Flaherty made a motion to resurrect the Casino Restoration Committee and that the Supervisors appoint the members of the committee and report back in 3 months. The motion passed and Joe Jolls will chair the committee.

Richard Taylor made a motion to appoint a committee that would resurrect the Buttonwoods Handbook and develop a process to ensure that new homeowners are informed about the neighborhood rules and requirements.

Ian Phipps informed the group that he has built a site called Oldebottonwoods.com. It is a private site and a place where items like the handbook can be posted.

Norma Jean Bassett recommended that speed limit signs be posted near the entrance to the neighborhood.

Ginny Goldstein made a motion for a committee to be established to address the point erosion and cleanup.

Call for Adjournment

Motion to adjourn accepted. The meeting adjourned at 8:40pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Patricia Wegrzyn McGreen