

DRAFT

Watch Hill Fire District

Watch Hill, R.I. 02891

DISTRICT COUNCIL MEETING

Friday, August 15, 2014

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. on Friday, August 15, 2014.

The following members were present:

Charles S. Whitman III, Moderator

John M. Regan III, Deputy Moderator

Robert Murray, Treasurer

Grant G. Simmons III, Chairman, Park Commission

Paul Verbinnen, Chairman, Finance Committee

Robert Peacock, Fire Chief

Andrew Parsons, Member At Large

Ann Stevenson, Member At Large

Other Committee Members Present:

Elizabeth Bean, Park Commission

Marian Burke, Park Commission

John F. McGill, Jr., Finance Committee

Also present were:

Judy Kelley, Fire District Office Manager

A quorum being present, the meeting was called to order by the Moderator, Charles S. Whitman III, at 4:00 p.m.

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the minutes of the June 13, 2014 meeting, which had been previously circulated, were approved.

Report of the Finance Committee – Paul Verbinnen

Mr. Verbinnen said he had had a meeting with Mr. Robert Murray, Mr. Jim Beale and Mr. John Brough to review the current Fire District financial procedures. He noted that tax bills have been issued so there should soon be a steady inflow of cash. Mr. Verbinnen also noted that expenses were about \$12,500 ahead of budget but it was mostly a matter of the timing of bill payment.

Report of the Treasurer – Robert Murray

Mr. Murray stated that the Fire District currently had \$203,000 in non-restricted cash and another \$100,000 in the Larkin parking lot account, which could be transferred at any time. After discussion, it

was decided to leave some of the parking lot cash for payables and transfer the balance to the Fire District now.

Mr. Murray also noted that the new reporting requirements, instituted by the State of Rhode Island, were annoying but manageable. The Fire District will not need to convert to GAAP with the accompanying audit. Had an audit been required, it would have cost \$20,000 to \$25,000 versus the \$8,000 currently spent. There will be some additional accounting expense the first year due to set up costs related to the new reports. Mr. Murray noted that the people at the state had been very accommodating and that these new requirements were more work for them too.

Mr. Murray spoke to the mismatch between the cabana lease tax rate (23.6%) and the new separately assessed land resulting from the creation of the condo association (35%). He said that Mr. Orsinger had addressed this with the Yacht Club as a routine change so it seems likely that the lease will be changed and the higher amount paid.

Mr. Murray reported that the Fire District accountant, John Brough, felt that Fire District might need to file a Form 990 because of its commercial interests. He is doing some further checking. Mr. Brough is also interested in the details of the relationship between the Fire District and the parking lot LLC. The employees of the LLC get an hourly rate plus a bonus and they get unemployment

coverage. The employees of the Fire District do not.

Report of the Park Commission – Mr. Grant G. Simmons III

Mr. Simmons thanked Mrs. Bean for her help in coordinating material for the Long Term Strategic Plan, identifying issues and how to resolve them without extreme expense and requesting assistance from the Improvement Society.

Report of the Fire Department – Robert Peacock

Chief Peacock mentioned an article in the Westerly Sun about a rescue from the beach and noted that the Fire District response via the ATV saved the victim from potential paralysis. Chief Peacock also reported that the Fire District boat had been called out 3 times and that the most recent was for 3 people in a sinking Boston whaler. In all three cases the Fire District boat was the first on the scene. Finally, Chief Peacock advised that the annual Hartford Surftown Half Marathon on September 14th will require closure of both of the primary roads into Watch Hill. He has expressed Fire Department concerns regarding these closures to the Westerly Police and they have agreed to work diligently to avoid any long term closures.

Chief Peacock explained that Mr. Phil Koretski had sent the Fire Department an email suggesting that some of the incentive money for the volunteers be used to issue bonuses to pay for college expenses. It was suggested that the payments be made directly to the schools in question. Chief Peacock said he had discussed this with Mr. Brough,

who said it was okay from an accounting perspective. Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the District Council approved the use of educational reimbursements as part of the volunteer incentive program, recipients to be selected by the Fire Department.

Chief Peacock reported that several people have asked for burning permits at the cabanas. The cabana group is split on whether such permits should be issued. Normally, burning permits are for one time use. When Mr. Gaccione was chief, the District Council decided that there would be no burning permits on Fire District property. Since the cabana lease resides with the Yacht Club, they would have to ask for the permits. Mr. Murray asked if granting permits was a safety issue. Chief Peacock replied no, not if they followed the rules. Mr. Verbinnen asked who could apply. Chief Peacock said only property owners could receive a permit. It was decided to do nothing until a request was made by the Yacht Club.

Report of the Long Range Planning Group – Andrew Parsons

Mr. Parsons stated that he and Mr. Brad Kopp has designed a planning form that, by department, looked at the 3 biggest risks, their financial impact and the largest revenue opportunities over the next 5 years. The idea is to then come up with options for addressing the risks and projects. They have had meetings with the Park Commission and the Fire Department and more are planned.

With respect to the Fire Department, the largest project is the

replacement of Engine 103, which must occur in the near future due to safety issues. The expected cost of a new truck would be \$550,000. However, right now the Bradford Fire Department, which has closed, has a 1997 pumper for sale that should be good for another 10 years. It has some issues, such as it has been stored for 3 years so it is behind in its maintenance. It will also require some adjustments to fit in the building. The current price is \$25,000 unless there are further defects found as Chief Peacock gets firm estimates from repair contractors. The estimated cost for the maintenance update and size adjustment is \$60,000. It was hoped that the purchase, if approved, would occur at the end of September with the modifications being made in October/November. In response to a question, Chief Peacock said the most he expected to get from the sale of the old pumper was \$4,000. It was also noted that if the Bradford truck were purchased, in 10 years the Fire District would have 2 trucks that were 31 years old, both in the mandatory retirement range of 30 years and in need of replacement at the same time.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the District Council voted to approve an expenditure of up to \$90,000 for the purchase of this truck.

New Business – Mr. Charles S. Whitman III

Parking on Watch Hill Road

Mr. Whitman reported that the majority of the Westerly Town Council was in favor of no parking on Watch Hill Road. Mrs. Bean reported that the Improvement Society had 10 people ready to attend the meeting and it was noted that the Misquamicut Club had sent out an email about the editorial in the Westerly Sun against limiting parking. Mr. Whitman wondered if having too many people there might be detrimental and suggested that a group might go but only speak up if it looked like the vote might be going against a parking ban. Mr. Whitman also noted that the police will check the other roads where parking is currently allowed (Nepun, Ridge) to see if they should be changed to no parking. In the case of Yosemite Drive, which is no parking, the police cannot ticket because cars park totally off the road. It then becomes an issue of trespassing, which the property owner must pursue.

Sale of Book

Mrs. Schneider had requested that the Fire District sell copies of her latest book. The District Council decided this was not something they wanted the Fire District to take on.

Drinking on the Beach

Mrs. Stevenson remarked on the underage drinking on the beach. When calls are made to the police about this, the response is that there is not enough manpower to respond. She asked if the Fire District could hire a private patrol. Mr. Whitman replied that this had been proposed to the Police chief before and such an action was

discouraged. Mr. Simmons noted that the Napatree security is in place in the evening and covers both Napatree and East Beach.

Proposed Meeting Schedule

The proposed schedule was reviewed and revised with the understanding that some meetings might be canceled if unnecessary.

Office Hours after Labor Day

It was agreed that after Labor Day there would be no set office hours. Meetings with residents would be by appointment.

There being no further items for discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 5:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Judy Kelley

Office Manager