

DRAFT

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

INFORMATIONAL DISTRICT COUNCIL MEETING

Monday, October 13, 2014

4:00 p.m.

Fire Station

222 Watch Hill Road

Watch Hill, RI

An informational 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
Robert Peacock, Fire Chief
Andrew Parsons, Member At Large
Ann Stevenson, Member At Large

By Phone: Robert Murray, Treasurer
Grant G. Simmons III, Chairman, Park Commission
Paul Verbinnen, Chairman, Finance Committee
Elizabeth Bean, Park Commission

Other Committee Members Present:

Marian Burke, Park Commission

Other Voters Present:

Joan Lemp

Also present were:

Judy Kelley, Fire District Office Manager

The meeting was called to order by the Moderator, Charles S. Whitman III, at 4:10 p.m. As a quorum was not present, this meeting was for informational purposes only.

Report of the Finance Committee – Paul Verbinnen

Mr. Verbinnen stated that expenses were on budget with the exception of the new fire truck, which was paid for out of the contingency funds. Income is also on budget except for HOB Yacht. Mr. Simmons advised that he had just received a check from HOB Yacht for \$70,000.

Report of the Treasurer – Robert Murray

Mr. Murray stated that the Fire District currently has \$647,000 in non-restricted cash, which compares to \$611,000 last year at this time. He did note, however, that he was surprised by how many residents pay their taxes late. Tax payments, due 9/30, were \$88,000 short. However, past trends indicate the majority of that will come in during October. Income is also due from the Bathhouse and Carousel.

There is currently \$39,000 in the Larkin Parking Lot LLC account, most of which will be used to pay down closing expenses of about \$41,000. A final P/L for the parking lot will be available in November. Mr. Murray said he was meeting with Mr. Simmons and Mr. Parsons to check the documents related to

the establishment of the LLC as they can't be changed after year end. They are awaiting final drafts from the Fire District lawyer, Matthew Thomsen.

Changes to the Watch Hill Yacht Club lease to reflect the new valuations resulting from the creation of the condominium and the resulting changed taxes are also awaiting finalization by their lawyer, Victor Orsinger.

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

Mr. Simmons reported that the directional sign to the Ocean House has been removed after complaints from residents. The sign had been erected by the Town of Westerly at the request of the Fire District Park Commission in an attempt to keep people from wandering through residential areas as they made their way to the Ocean House.

Mr. Simmons said the police booth in the Fire District parking lot is being rebuilt thanks to a collaboration with the Improvement Society. He is also getting bids to take down the existing changing rooms at the bathhouse and rebuilding, reducing the number from 200 to about 70 to 100. This project has been presented to Scott Randall and he is okay with the size reduction.

Mr. Simmons reported that the Watch Hill Conservancy had obtained project funding that enabled them to purchase a new, better ATV at no expense to the Fire District. The projects involved include the monitoring of migratory birds, vegetation planting and a lagoon study.

Mr. Simmons is still working on a scupper system to prevent flooding the parking lots off Bay Street. He is also still getting bids to evaluate the steel sheet pilings along the sea wall. He has one bid for \$15,000 but would like another that includes drilling into the plating to determine the condition of what is behind it.

Mr. Whitman noted that a certified letter has been sent to the Watch Hill Business Association advising them that the concert series may only be every other week next year, that the concerts need to be on Mondays, that the location of the musicians needs to be moved to the northeast corner and that the Business Association will need to provide the police security at their expense. As a permit is required for the concerts, proper police security will be a condition. Mr. Simmons noted that the Business Association has been responsible for maintenance of the bathroom for this event but that he feels it has not been done properly and suggests that it be taken over by Scott Randall, who will then be reimbursed.

Report of the Fire Department – Robert Peacock

Chief Peacock advised that the purchase of the new truck is under way. He expects it to come in within the budget. The contract allows 75 days for repair. The purchase price was \$1,000 less than expected due to some additional repair items. One payment has been made, with the last two due 11/1 and 12/1 respectively. Chief Peacock has started trying to sell the old truck.

Chief Peacock reported that the Fire Department gets its medical insurance through a co-op of 19 departments and that the Watch Hill share is about \$9,800 over three years. Current coverage limits are death, \$400,000; medical, \$200,000; and reimbursement of weekly pay, \$1,000. The co-op wants to increase the medical coverage to \$400,000 and the weekly reimbursement to \$1,500. This change will cause some increase in the premium. The contract renewal is next month. It was the general consensus of those present that these increases were appropriate.

Chief Peacock noted that the Ambulance Corps has gone out of the rescue business and that the Fire Department was able to buy their jaws of life equipment at a very good price, but that they would need help to operate it. The Fire Department also shared in the purchase of a trench trailer which will be stored at the Dunns Corner Fire Department.

The Fire Department boats will come out of the water on 10/15.

Report of the Long Range Planning Group – Andrew Parsons

Mr. Parsons stated that he has been working with Chief Peacock, Beth Bean and Grant Simmons on priorities. The top two were the purchase of the fire truck, which is underway, and the abatement and reconfiguration of the bathhouses, which will occur next year. Further study is needed before a determination is made on further priorities.

Other Business – Mr. Charles S. Whitman III

Parking on Watch Hill Road

Mr. Whitman reported that the parking issue is being settled at the state level and will be in place by next season. Also, at next year's annual meeting the Fire District will have police present to direct parking away from Watch Hill Road.

It was noted that there has been a sluggish response from the police to illegal parking in the residential neighborhoods. Mr. Whitman stated that he felt this was due to lack of staffing in the police department and noted that the Fire District has supported police department requests for more manpower.

Mr. Murray wondered if the Fire District had ever reached out to the Business Association. Mr. Whitman replied that Mr. Edwin Russell had held a cocktail party for them during his term as Moderator but that there have been no further attempts. It was suggested that before the start of the season next year, there be a get together with a few of the District Council members and representatives of the Business Association to discuss issues that affect both entities in hopes that improved communication can lead to a better working relationship.

There being no further items for discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 5:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Judy Kelley
Office Manager