

DRAFT

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

DISTRICT COUNCIL MEETING

Friday, November 28, 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, November 28, 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
Ann Stevenson, Member At Large

The following member was on the phone:

Andrew Parsons, Member at Large

Other Committee Members Present:

Elizabeth Bean, Park Commission
Judy O'Connell, Finance Committee

Other voters present:

Olga Goff
Penelope Kelly
Joan Lemp

Also present were:

Judy Kelley, Fire District Office Manager

A quorum being present, the meeting was called to order by the Deputy Moderator, John M. Regan, at 4:10 p.m.

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the minutes of the August 15, 2014 meeting and the informational minutes of the October 13, 2014 meeting, both of which had been previously circulated, were approved by unanimous vote.

Report of the Finance Committee – Paul Verbinnen

Mr. Verbinnen stated that actual revenues and expenses were closely tracking the budget. He noted that back tax collections were \$2,000 ahead of expectation and that this year's tax receipts were still coming in, with approximately \$35,000 more to be collected. Rental income is on budget.

Report of the Treasurer – Robert Murray

Mr. Murray reported that the Fire District's cash position is strong, with \$715,000 on hand versus \$644,000 last year at this time. He also noted that all insurance renewals have been completed and that new rates are flat or only moderately increased.

Mr. Murray presented a profit and loss statement for the Larkin Square parking lot, indicating a profit of \$150,000 versus the \$115,000 guaranteed by contract. He reminded those present that at the time of the land swap, the Misquamicut Club had loaned the Fire District \$42,000, to be paid from any proceeds exceeding the \$115,000 guarantee. It was Mr. Parsons' and Mr. Simmons' suggestion that the entire loan balance be repaid, even though there could be an argument to carry forward a small balance. Mr. Murray concurred and, as there was no objection, that will occur. Mr. Murray also noted that there was \$36,000 remaining in the Larkin lot account. \$30,000 of it will be transferred to the Fire District, leaving \$6,000 for startup expense in 2015.

Mr. Murray reported that he had worked with Mr. Parsons and Mr. Victor Orsinger relative to amendments to the leases with the Watch Hill Yacht Club for the land underlying the Cabanas and Club parking to reflect the changed properties involved in the base calculation and to correct the percentages used. The necessary adjustments have been agreed to in concept and drafts of revised leases have been sent to the Club.

Mr. Murray advised that he had received the requested Larkin LLC documents from Matthew Thomsen but that he and Andrew Parsons had several questions. One question is why a lease with the LLC was necessary. Mr. Murray will set up a call with accountant Mr. Brough, Mr. Simmons, Mr. Parsons, Mr. Thomsen and himself to discuss these issues.

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

Mr. Simmons reported on the utility pole project, noting that National Grid had removed all the primary lines and that the new transformers were in place. Cox Communications has removed their lines but Verizon still needs to remove theirs, which will be done by the end of December. At that point, removal of the poles will be determined by removal of the town lighting. Mr. Simmons is working with the town engineer to get that accomplished. The streetscape improvements will be done by the town when the poles are down. The TIFF money is in place at the state level

Mr. Simmons is in the process of getting an estimate to put in back flow preventers to mitigate the flooding on Fort Road. There are funds in his budget for a study but he is hoping to bypass the study and use those funds for the actual project.

Mr. Simmons has an estimate for about \$20,000 to reduce the number of changing rooms at the bathing beach by approximately one-third. This project is not included in the current budget but Mr. Simmons would like to do it this year if funds can be found. This would be half of a two part project, with the balance to be completed in the next budget year.

Mr. Simmons noted that URI is involved in a variety of projects on Napatree Point, including tracking migratory birds and digging for Indian artifacts, all of which is covered by \$70,000 in grants.

Finally, Mr. Simmons has received an estimate for \$15,000 to complete an engineering study of the steel plating on the sea wall along the inside of the harbor to determine the degree of deterioration. He will obtain a second estimate.

Report of the Fire Department – Robert Peacock

Chief Peacock reported that work on the new fire truck is behind schedule. He expects completion by the first week in January. The delay resulted from finding a few more minor things to be repaired as well as problems with the compressor and the possible installation of additional shelving in the existing compartments to facilitate storage of the used hydraulic vehicle extraction equipment that was purchased. The final expense will come in under the \$90,000 approved. There have been a few lookers but no offers on the old truck. Chief Peacock feels it will probably go for scrap metal.

Chief Peacock reported that the department has had a few mutual aid calls with the Westerly Fire District, noting improved relations. There have been no calls from the Misquamicut Fire District.

Chief Peacock advised that Santa would arrive via fire truck on Saturday, 11/29, shortly after 5:00 p.m. and that there would follow a small fireworks display.

Chief Peacock also reported that wires for the fire alarm system remain on the utility poles and they can't be removed until the town decides where to put the new alarm boxes. This may slow the removal of the utility poles.

East Beach – Mrs. Joan Lemp

Mrs. Lemp reported that, at a recent East Beach meeting, the issues of safety and sanitation at all access points to East Beach were discussed. It was felt that police were needed at each access point to address parking, unloading, going the wrong way on one way streets, and alcohol. Mr. Daniel Hostettler, present at that meeting, stated he would try to help with getting more police presence.

Mrs. Lemp acknowledged that limitations to police resources, noting a delay of about 25 minutes before they were able to respond to a call. She also reported that at the end of August, when undercover police were on the beach, 47 tickets were issued for alcohol and there was one arrest. She stated that Captain Lacey has said he will start the undercover operation earlier in 2015.

Mr. Whitman pointed out that the Fire District has repeatedly asked for more police presence during the summer season and has suggested several alternatives but has been unable to work out a good solution.

Report of the Long Range Planning Group – Andrew Parsons

Mr. Parsons stated that the committee has been working with the Fire Department and the Park Commission. Within the Fire Department, it was determined that the first priority was a new fire truck, which is in process. Other issues include housing for the volunteers and a new fire boat. For the Park Commission, the first priority was addressing bathhouse repair/reduction. Other issues to address were back flow preventers to protect Fort Road and repair of the sidewalk on the north side of the harbor. Two other potentially major projects to be addressed are steel coating the seawall and enhancing safety at Fort Mansfield. In the latter case, Mr. Simmons had hoped sand from Army Corps of Engineer dredging projects could be used to bury the fort. In the interim, the Conservancy will replace the wire fencing to restrict access.

Open Meetings Act – Judy Kelley

Mrs. Kelley advised that she had just completed training in the rules and regulations related to the state Open Meetings Act. She noted that changes need to be made in how the Fire District agendas are prepared. It was also determined that the third posting location will be the new police booth currently under construction at the village parking lot. Finally, Mrs. Kelley will also post agendas and minutes for the Board of Engineers.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Judy Kelley
Office Manager