

Minutes of the Meeting of
Quonochontaug Central Beach Fire District
Board of Governors
 January 11, 2025
Quonochontaug Grange
Meeting Room
5662 Post Rd, Charlestown, RI 02813

Members in attendance: Charlie Freedgood, Bob Frazier, Julie Low, Barry Okun, Bill Wilson, and Debbie Dupre.

Members Absent: Mark Alperin, Renee Cohen, Ray Martino and Ron Ruel.

1. Call to Order/Moderator's Opening Remarks

Moderator, Charlie Freedgood

Charlie called the meeting to order at 9:01am. He hoped everyone had a nice holiday season.

2. Approval of the Minutes

Clerk, Debbie Dupre

Edits to the Merchandise Sales grant procedure section were proposed by Julie, discussed, and agreed to amend the draft language by substituting "appropriate governance" in place of "efficiency, effectiveness and appropriate governance." No additional edits or comments were made. A **motion** was made to approve the minutes as amended. The **motion** was **seconded and passed** with Bob Frazier, Julie Low, Barry Okun and Debbie Dupre voting in favor. Bill Wilson abstained. (The Moderator, under the District's By-Laws, only votes in the case of a tie).

3. Treasurer's Report

Treasurer, Barry Okun for Ray Martino

Barry reported that at the end of 2024 the District had over \$730,000 cash on hand. The various District accounts at Washington Trust have now been converted into sweep accounts, each earning interest at 4%. Nothing currently has been drawn against the District's existing 1-year line of credit at Washington Trust, due to expire August 2025 at which time it should be re-extended. A single 2024 property tax bill remains outstanding, which Ray is actively working to collect.

4. Moderator's Report

Moderator, Charlie Freedgood

Charlie updated the board on initial feedback on the summer construction ban and enforcement. The penalties applicable for enforcement of rules and regulations is set out under the QCBFD Charter. In order to change these penalties an amendment of the Charter would be required. This in turn would require the consent of the state legislature. In addition, there may be other issues to consider in order to modify the respective penalties. Discussion ensued about various approaches with some agreement around timely notification of the rules to residents, especially to new owners. It was further agreed that an ad hoc task force would be set up (including Julie Lowe, Renee Cohen, Chris Licht and possibly other community members) to propose options at the March BoG meeting. Debbie suggested we invite counsel as well to answer any questions and advise on the draft proposal.

Charlie reported that the RIIB financing for the water upgrade project was now in place and that from time-to-time certain actions have and will need to be taken to effectuate the loan, grant, and other requirements. After discussion, a **motion** was made to authorize the District's Moderator or its designee to execute, deliver and/or act regarding applications for funding, permitting and/or construction in connection with the water upgrade and pump house improvement project and to ratify any such actions that have or may be taken. The **motion** was **seconded and passed** with all in attendance voting in favor (except the Moderator, who under the District's By-Laws only votes in the case of a tie).

5. Committee Chairs' Reports

Long-Range Planning

Debbie Dupre for Renee Cohen

Debbie reported that the work on the LRP priorities is continuing and Renee plans to circulate a draft of the Comprehensive Plan to the BoG for their feedback. Paul Mathews will give an update on the water quantity/quality project at the May BoG meeting. Charlie reminded the BoG that the Comprehensive Plan was meant to be in support of the work for the five priorities identified by LRP earlier along with recommendations for the community. The section covering water quantity/quality is ongoing and should be incorporated into the Plan shortly; however, the Communications priority does not yet have a leader. Charlie has reviewed and commented on the current draft and hopes the water quantity/quality summary will be included by the March BoG meeting. Once the water summary is completed and the existing draft

revised, Charlie suggested that it be circulated to a subset of the BoG for comment, followed by distribution to the full BoG for feedback and then to the community.

Finance and Budget

Chair, Barry Okun

Barry updated the BoG on the financing for the water upgrade project. As mentioned earlier, the RIIB loan for \$1,555,000 closed in December 2024, is at a below-market interest rate and included forgiveness of \$100,000 of debt. The proceeds will be drawn down as receipts are submitted by our contractor and/or consultant. Interest payments will begin in March, with principal repayment starting in September; all are built into the QCBFD 2025 budget.

Work is continuing on the \$1M federal grant offered under the EPA. The next step is to apply formally for the grant, which Barry hopes to do within the coming weeks. If the application is successful (in whole or part), those monies will be used to pay down the RIIB loan. Barry added that an independent audit of the project may be required in 2025, if the grant is awarded and paid out within the year. Bill asked whether the cost of applying/compliance as required under the federal grant was on balance worth the possibility of receiving the grant. Both Barry and Charlie believe, that although the costs are not insubstantial (+/- \$10k), the potential of a partial repayment of the RIIB loan justifies the exercise.

The BoG thanked Barry for spearheading the financing and Bob for his help in documenting and complying with all the state and federal requirements.

The finance committee is finishing the year-end financials and will make all filings with the State of RI as required. The District's financial position is strong and is ahead of the budget projections. Barry pointed out that as our budget and indebtedness grow so do our reporting and compliance requirements. QCBFD will include details of revenue/expenses for both the water upgrade project/RIIB loan debt and Special Events in our 2025 RI filings.

Public Works

Chair, Bob Frazier

Bob updated the group on the water upgrade project and reported that work may begin next month and requisition 1 issued within the next 30 days. Charlestown has approved the plans and is waiting for review and sign-off by the fire department to issue the building permit. If everything progresses as expected, he hopes to have the construction schedule, including sequencing of trades/subcontractors, ready to present to the BoG in March. The goal is to have the exterior work complete by the beginning of the summer. Charlie asked whether construction would interfere with the club tennis courts and if so, who at the club should we notify of the construction schedule? Julie agreed to provide Charlie with contact details.

Next Bob reported that he is coordinating with the environmental engineer to get the assent on the wetlands restoration project from CRMC. Once the sign-off is received Bob and/or the engineer will seek to have the fine reconsidered by CRMC. Charlie suggested he contact our counsel, Beth Noonan, to help move the assent and penalty-waiving process along.

6. Managers' Report

Merchandise Sales

Julie Low

Julie reported that the Merchandise Sales has requested permission to install around June 1st a temporary storage POD on community property near the tennis courts in a location similar to that used in 2024. Charlie asked that all neighbors within sightline of the POD be notified prior to the March BoG meeting. Julie agreed to ensure notification is given and asked that the issue be placed on the March BoG agenda for discussion and possible action.

Adjournment

A **motion** was made to adjourn at approximately 10:42am. The **motion** was **seconded and passed** with all members of the Board of Governors in attendance voting in favor (other than the Moderator, who under the District's By-Laws only votes in the case of a tie).

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Dupre, Clerk
Quonochontaug Central Beach Fire District