

Minutes of the Meeting of  
**Quonochontaug Central Beach Fire District**  
**Board of Governors**  
July 19, 2024  
Charlestown Police Department  
Meeting Room  
4901 Old Post Rd, Charlestown, RI 02813

Members in attendance: Mark Alperin, Dede Consoli, Bob Frazier, Charlie Freedgood, Fred Newton, Ron Ruel and Debbie Dupre

Members Absent: Renee Cohen

Also in attendance were Carrie Gilpin, Anthony Flint as well as members of the public.

**1. Call to Order/Moderator's Opening Remarks:** **Moderator, Charlie Freedgood**

Charlie called the meeting to order at 8:16am and thanked everyone for attending.

**2. Approval of the Minutes:** **Clerk, Debbie Dupre**

A couple of minor changes for clarification were proposed to the Long Range-Planning portion of the draft minutes. No other edits or comments were made to the June 15, 2024 draft minutes. A **motion** was made to approve the draft minutes as amended. The **motion** was **seconded and passed** with all in attendance voting in favor (the Moderator, who under the District's By-Laws only votes in the case of a tie).

Debbie reminded all chairs and managers to get their annual meeting reports to her by August 12, 2024.

**3. Moderator's Report:** **Moderator, Charlie Freedgood**

Charlie indicated that he did not have anything to report other than to describe how the annual meeting reports and 2025 budget discussions roll up into the annual meeting agenda, which must be circulated to the community by the last week of August in preparation for the annual meeting scheduled for September 14, 2025.

**4. Treasurer's Report:** **Treasurer, Mike Lewers**

Mike reported that the payroll system for the gate monitors is up and running. He thanked Heather Cotter, Nancy Picard and especially Ron Ruel for his extra effort to get state sign off for the underage monitors.

Mike indicated that the district finances are in good shape. He reviewed the current bank balances. He noted that the interest rate(s) on several of the accounts are below market and will work to improve those. The line of credit (LOC) remains untapped. Mike will follow up at the next meeting on whether the district can cover its upcoming expenses before tax collection or will need to draw down on the LOC in the interim. The 2024 tax bills are scheduled to go out mid-August and are due September 15, 2024.

An "Agreed Upon Procedures" meeting of the Finance and Budget Committee will be held to review the 2023 tax collection process on July 26, 2024.

**5. Committee Chairs' Report**

**Finance and Budget:** **Barry Okun, Chair**

Barry encouraged the BoG and managers to provide Finance with their 2025 budgets items, explaining how those items roll up into the district budget (including adequate reserves) and help determine 2025 tax collection targets. He indicated that the largest expenses for 2025 would be fire protection, garbage collection and water system operations and upgrade project(s).

Bob Frazier reminded the BoG that the water upgrade project will be more costly than under the original construction contract terms due to additional testing, changes in work arising from Buy America, Build America criteria (required under the CDS Grant program), higher wage rates and other rising costs. QCBFD has not yet received these updated cost estimates from the contractor. Charlie reminded the group that the community has approved spending up to \$1.6M for the upgrade project and in the event that the updated contract price exceeds the approved amount, the community will need to approve the increase at the September annual meeting. If the new numbers are not received in time for the annual meeting, we may decide to estimate the incremental costs rather than wait until next year or hold a special meeting in the interim. Discussion ensued and the BoG agreed to revisit the issue at the next meeting.

Barry updated the BoG on the status of the district's application under the CDS Grant program and reported that the district needs to establish an official physical address (a PO Box is insufficient for these purposes). There were no edits or comments to the following resolution:

**RESOLVED, that 107 Airport Road, c/o Hoyt, Filippetti & Malagham LLC, Westerly, Rhode Island 02891 is hereby the physical address of record for Quonochontaug Central Beach Fire District.**

A **motion** was made to approve the resolution as written. The **motion** was **seconded and passed** with all in attendance voting in favor (the Moderator, who under the District's By-Laws only votes in the case of a tie).

#### **Public Works:**

**Bob Frazier, Chair**

Bob reported that the water system has continued to operate normally through the increased seasonal usage. He is continuing to press the contractor for updated cost numbers for the upgrade project.

In connection with the wetlands restoration project, Bob is still waiting for one additional monitoring report verifying whether the plants are stabilizing the soil before requesting that CRMC sign-off on the restoration work. Separately, he plans to confirm with them whether regulatory consent is required to remove the tree adjacent to the pump house as it is a hazard to the water tank. Community Property has requested that other vegetation not on or near the wetlands be trimmed.

#### **Community Property:**

Mark provided updates on the current maintenance projects including vegetation removal and district bulletin boards rehabilitation. He reported that he will contact J.P. LaRue of Little Compton in the fall to evaluate the playground, including providing a safety check of current equipment and recommendations and costs for an overall refresh.

He reported that the public bidding process for the garbage collection service is continuing with a response deadline of July 25<sup>th</sup>. Our current vendor is the only party to respond so far with the following proposal: Year 1 - \$67,340 for a weekly Monday pick up of both garbage and recyclables, with possibility of a second Thursday pickup of garbage during July and August for an additional \$11,655 (\$78,995 total); Year 2 same but with a 5% bump in cost; and Year 3 – at an additional 5% increase over the Year 2 pricing. Discussion ensued about the level of community satisfaction with our current service and the relative value of the second pick up. Mark agreed to circulate a copy of the proposal at the next BoG meeting in preparation for a vote on whether to accept this bid (or another if any additional proposals are offered in the meantime).

Mark led a discussion concerning memorials placed on community property within the district. After review, Community Property formally recommends to the BoG that no memorials be allowed to be placed on community property. In lieu of a memorial a donation can be made to a specific area within the community and that such donation will be published in a community-wide announcement in honor of the deceased. All existing memorials currently located on community property should be grandfathered in and allowed to remain in place. Nothing in the policy should prohibit a community member to place a memorial on their own (non-community) property within the district. After discussion a **motion** was made to accept and approve the QCBFD Memorial Policy recommended by Community Property. The **motion** was **seconded and passed** with all in attendance voting in favor (the Moderator, who under the District's By-Laws only votes in the case of a tie). Mark agreed to provide a detailed description of the policy for publication.

#### **Long-Range Planning:**

**Debbie Dupre for Renee Cohen**

Debbie gave a brief update on the progress of each of the priority projects as well as the comprehensive plan. Charlie recommended that the review process for the draft LRP comprehensive plan be adjusted to allow the BoG a chance to review before it circulates more broadly within the various committees and to the community at large.

Anthony Flint reported on the current progress and findings of the Quonnie Neck Cooperation project. The overarching goals of the project are to be prepared for future hazards, be good stewards and strive toward a more resilient community. The team focused their efforts to foster cooperation among interested groups on the Quonnie Neck primarily around environmental themes - gardens and greenery (native plants, use of organic materials, composting), beaches and dunes (snow-fencing and grass planting), Dark Skies (reduction of artificial light), Green building (preference for clean energy/renewables), water conservation (aquifer, wetlands) and appreciation of native ecosystem. Much of the work on the Quonnie Neck Cooperation team will be through education (public programming) and coordinated guidance (proposing standards for individual and community-wide action). The group thanked Anthony and his other team members for their hard work.

## **Managers Reports**

### **Merchandise Sales:**

Dede reported that sales are consistent to last year, with lower volume but larger average purchases. QEBA has expanded its merchandise offering significantly, which may be cutting into logo sales.

### **Beach and Dunes:**

**Carrie Gilpin**

Carrie reported that the additional work to the fencing and handrails required by damage from winter storms is complete. There will be a beach cleanup event tomorrow and a beach safety demonstration and lecture on July 28<sup>th</sup>. Carrie asked whether the district should consider publishing the current CRMC rules and regulations concerning chemicals that are permissible around the beaches, dunes and waterways and consider whether the district should adopt a consistent standard (possibly based upon CRMC policy) on what can be used within the district.

### **Police Liaison & Manager of Beach Gate Monitors:**

**Ron Ruel**

Ron led a discussion on the use of fireworks within the district. He clarified that state law requires a licensed pyrotechnic to set off anything with a firing tube within Rhode Island. Discussion ensued around the use of large fireworks at the beach over the July 4<sup>th</sup> holidays, which led to complaints from community members as well as significant cleanup efforts. Ron suggested that complaints be raised directly with the police but emphasized that the police will prioritize injury to persons and property damage. It was suggested that an e-blast should be sent stating the cost of this year's cleanup and clarifying that fireworks must be used in compliance with state law, using a licensed pyrotechnic and appropriate permitting. It was agreed that a similar communication should be circulated each year in the lead up to the July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday.

Ron updated the board on this year's process for obtaining RI work permits for the underaged gate monitors, who reside in other states off season.

Bill Wilson, on behalf of Quonochontaug Conservation Collaborative (QCC), thanked QCBCFD for lending financial support to the organization through the Special Events grant program.

### **Adjournment:**

A **motion** was made to adjourn at approximately 10:19am. 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 Dupré, Clerk  
Quonochontaug Central Beach Fire District