

DRAFT

BONNET SHORES FIRE DISTRICT

Bonnet Shores Fire District Council Monthly Meeting

December 17, 2025

6:30 pm

Meeting Minutes

A recording of the Monthly Council meeting is available on the Fire District website - www.bonnetshores.org

Call to Order

Council Chair Leslie McKnight called the Monthly Council meeting to order at 6:40 pm. Council members present were: John Chereskin, Tony Girardi, Melissa Jenkins, Faith LaSalle, Leslie McKnight and Kevin O'Brien. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Announcements

Leslie announced that the new website was launched on December 9, 2025. The fiscal responsibility and election workshops will resume in January. Kevin reported that pursuant to prior Council approval, a new TV, cart, remote camera and new computer had been purchased and installed, which should improve Zoom capabilities.

Approval of Minutes

The Council next took up consideration of approval of the draft minutes of the November 19, 2025 Monthly Council meeting, copies of which had been distributed to the Council members before the meeting. Upon a motion made by M. Jenkins, seconded by T. Girardi, the minutes were approved as drafted (J. Chereskin not voting). Next, the Council considered approval of the draft minutes of the public portion of the November 19, 2025 Executive Session, copies of which has also been distributed prior to the meeting. Upon a motion made by M. Jenkins, seconded by T. Girardi, the minutes were approved as drafted (J. Chereskin not voting).

Urgent Business – None

Public Comment

L. McKnight encouraged those making public comments to maintain decorum. LaSalle referred to an except she had located and distributed regarding Roberts Rules of Order and discussed the Council's approach towards conducting its meetings.

- Tony Girardi read a statement, appended hereto as ATTACHMENT A, in which he expressed displeasure with discourteous behavior directed towards Leslie McKnight at the recent community Christmas party.
- Michele Dunne reported that since the last meeting, the Town of Narragansett had approved the Never Dunne Foundation 5K walk/run to be held May 31, 2026. She said she no longer was seeking to hold the June 7 rain date she had previously requested and, accordingly, asked the Council to consider waiving the \$400 fee for use of the Community Center on May 31.
- Wendy Peters discussed the benefits to the members of the Card Ladies, Men's Poker, and Mah Jongg groups associated with their use of the Community Center, and asked that those groups be permitted to continue to use the Community Center for those purposes.
- Donna Stephens thanked the Council for their work on the new website. She encouraged the Council to continue to publish the "Do You Know" series. She opposed use of Zoom for public comments by remote meeting attendees. She recommended that the Annual Meeting be held in the Community Center on the June date set forth in the Charter.
- Bill DelGizzo reported that at last night's meeting, the Land Trust unanimously agreed that its status as a 501c3 entity should be preserved. In response to a recent suggestion that the Land Trust might be "privatized", he said doing so would be impossible given its unique status in the State of Rhode Island with elected members. He said that contrary to a prior comment, he felt Zoom comments by remote meeting attendees should be permitted, and that the Council should consider using a Zoom master. He said the meetings of the Strategic Planning Workgroup, headed by Kevin O'Brien, were well-publicized and that all those who participated in the meetings, either in person or by Zoom, were able to speak and share their

views. He said it was important for the Council to have established policies. He objected to the efforts of some in the community to undermine and quash its work.

- Chris Mannix – said the Card Ladies should be able to apply to continue to use the Community Center, and that the Council Chair should be able to vote on matters before the Council.
- Nancy Cordy – said that at the last two Council meetings she discussed use of Zoom at Council meetings by remote participants, which she said had been successfully used at the Strategic Planning Workgroup meetings. She said it had been previously agreed that the topic would be included in this meeting’s agenda, but was not, and that she hoped it would be included in the agenda for the January meeting.
- Faith LaSalle said she too attended the last night’s Land Trust meeting and that further discussion would be held. She then shared comments and legal opinions about the legislative history of, and legal basis for the Land Trust, which she said is a public instrumentality exempt from taxation. She said the Land Trust is defined in Chapter 42 of the RIGL as a public Land Trust attached to a government.

Reports/Updates

Treasurer Update – Neal Prescott reported that the District remains in strong financial health with a combined balance in savings, checking and CD accounts of \$514,000. He recommended that Christina Hilton be hired as the Fire District’s bookkeeper (to be discussed later in the meeting). A CD was rolled over at Harbor Bank; work continued on transfer of QuickBooks from the former bookkeeper to a District account; and he continued efforts to move the Fire District toward cashless operations.

Tax Collector – the Tax Collector was not present. J. Chereskin said that the District’s mail should be checked in her absence.

Land Trust – Joan Fandetti said the Land Trust meeting met the prior evening. She said a presentation had been made at the meeting by URI graduate students about phragmite mitigation. She reviewed correspondence with Kate Sales at the Land Trust Alliance. J. Fandetti will be the contact person going forward. She discussed research conducted into a proposed

land donation by Emily B. Jenkins. The proposed donation will be discussed at a future Council meeting. She confirmed, as had been previously reported during Public Comment, that at its meeting last night the Land Trust members unanimously supported maintaining the 501c3 status for the Land Trust, though corrections to the original application may be required. She discussed an APRA request she had made to the Town of Narragansett, based on which she believe the Land Trust is tax exempt, though the 501c3 status is required to receive donations and to apply for government grants. To that end, an application for a grant to improve the playground was recently submitted. In response to a question from F. LaSalle, she confirmed that government grant applications do require confirmation of 501c3 status, including the most recent application.

Manager's Report – M. Gillooly said the culverts are operating normally; two requests for CRMC assents have been filed and we are awaiting response; recent trash pickups have gone smoothly. He said K. O'Brien, Dave Kaufman, and he worked on installing the new computer and AV equipment. He reviewed rental days for the Community Center. He submitted the required information to the RI Ethics Commission. M. Jenkins suggested that the Ethics Filing be added to the Clerks requirements. A discussion ensued about the timing for filing Ethics reports by Council members.

Social Activities Group – F. LaSalle thanked Mark Gillooly for the beautiful Christmas tree decorations. The Children's party and social event at the Twin Willows were held. J. Chereskin suggested that consideration should be given as to how to increase attendance at the Children's party, which this year conflicted with an event held by the Town of Narragansett.

New and On-Going Business

6. Bookkeeper – (46:15 – 49:30 on the meting recording) J. Chereskin reported on efforts to engage a new bookkeeper. Neal Prescott identified three candidates, and after initial interactions, identified one as the preferred candidate. After checking her references, J. Chereskin, Neal and Laurie McCarthy met with candidate (Christina Hilton) and were favorably impressed. She is a CPA; she will not prepare the District's taxes. She asked for \$50 more a month than the current bookkeeper. At the conclusion of his remarks. J., Chereskin moved that Christina Hilton be hired as the Fire District bookkeeper. M. Jenkins seconded. Whereupon the motion was unanimously approved.

7. Square Up Device purchase - (51:00-55:00 on the meeting recording)

J. Chereskin said that in furtherance of efforts to move the District away from accepting cash, he recommended that the Fire District purchase a SquareUp device, which will allow the Fire District to accept credit card payments. Neal Prescott supported the proposal. F. LaSalle moved that the Fire District be authorized to purchase a SquareUp device; T. Girardi seconded, whereupon the Council unanimously approved the motion.

8. Paul Masse Automobile Dealership - (55:00 -1:08 on the meeting recording) M. Jenkins said that she had circulated a draft letter for the Council to send to the Narragansett Planning Board in opposition to the potential Paul Masse Automobile dealership on Route 1A. J. Chereskin moved that the Council approve the letter as drafted; K. O'Brien seconded the motion, but, during the subsequent discussion, Kevin suggested that the letter first be distributed to the community and input solicited. The Council also considered that the Narragansett Planning Board might act at any time giving the Council limited time to react. Options for individual letters were also discussed. At the end of the discussion J. Chereskin modified his motion to approve the letter, but to also post it on the District website and to seek public comment by January 1, 2026. Whereupon a vote was held. K. O'Brien, M. Jenkins, F. LaSalle, J. Chereskin and T. Girardi voted in favor; L. McKnight abstained due to a conflict and will not be a signatory to the letter. The motion was approved.

9. BSFD Policy/Process/Guidelines Manual - (1:08 – 1:16:20)

L. McKnight reported that a binder had been located with a collection of Fire District policies. The materials will be distributed to the Council members for review. K. O'Brien said that creation of a Policy Manual is one of the three workstreams identified by the Strategic Planning Workgroup. J. Duran will be the workstream leader. Kevin said that he was not given an opportunity to submit items for this meeting's agenda, and would have submitted items had he been given the opportunity. He said the binder will be input for the workstream as it does it work. M. Gillooly will handle distribution of the manual to the Council members. K. O'Brien said that currently there are no policies available and M. Jenkins agreed that having a policy manual would be helpful. No vote was held on this matter.

10. Community Center Use Policy - (1:16:24-1:45:30 on the meeting recording) Next, L. McKnight said that prior to the meeting the Council members had been supplied with two draft policies for use of the Community Center, both of

which had been attached to the agenda. M. Jenkins discussed her proposal, and spoke to the need for consistency in treatment of the various groups that seek to use the Center. She responded to questions from F. LaSalle about a recent meeting held in the Center. K. O'Brien commented that this discussion is a good example of why a policy manual is needed. L. McKnight reviewed her proposal which was based on that used by the Town of Narragansett for its community center. A discussion ensued, including how to handle use by political groups. After discussion, K. O'Brien suggested that this item be tabled, and that the current users be permitted to continue to use the Center in the interim. T. Girardi felt the proposed policy drafted by M. Jenkins was overly detailed. F. LaSalle offered views as to what a policy should include. J. Chereskin said that he felt a legal opinion was required, and moved that the three current users, viz., Ladies Card, Men's Poker, and Mah Jongg, be permitted to continue to use the Community Center free of charge until the Council adopts a policy, and that approval be required from the Council for any other requested free use. T. Girardi seconded the motion. M. Jenkins said that any efforts by the Council to discriminate among requests based on viewpoints would be illegal. A vote on the motion was then held, with K. O'Brien, L. McKnight, F. LaSalle, J. Chereskin and T. Girardi in favor; M. Jenkins opposed. The motion was approved.

11. Community Center Access Policy – (1:45:30 – 1:55:55 on the meeting recording) Next, L. McKnight raised the topic of access to the Community Center by the various users, some of whom have keys. She suggested that an electronic access system be considered to afford more secure access. T. Girardi moved that the three page draft Access Policy Protocols and Process, included with the meeting materials, be adopted. K. O'Brien seconded the motion, whereupon a discussion was held regarding the potential costs and features of an electronic system, and the possible availability of grant money to assist in offsetting the cost. At the conclusion of the discussion a vote was held, with K. O'Brien, L. McKnight, F. LaSalle, J. Chereskin and T. Girardi in favor; M. Jenkins opposed. The motion was carried.

12. Community Center Keys - (1:55:56 - 2:08 on the meeting recording) Next, a discussion was held regarding collecting all keys currently in distribution. After discussion, T. Girardi moved, and F. LaSalle seconded, that all Community Center keys currently in distribution be collected, with the exception of one key to the Ladies Card Group, Men's Poker, Mah Jongg, the Land Trust Chair, the Treasurer, Tax Collector, and District Manager. At the conclusion of the discussion a vote was held, with K. O'Brien, L. McKnight, F. LaSalle, J. Chereskin and T. Girardi in favor; M. Jenkins opposed. The motion was carried.

13. Lockbox - (2:08 – 2:11:30 on the meeting recording) The Council then turned to a discussion of the key lock box affixed to the Community Center. L. McKnight suggested that pending adoption of applicable policies and procedures, the code to the lock box be changed and the new code reissued to only those requiring physical access to the building to discuss District Business. After discussion, T. Girardi moved that the key lock box access code be changed, and the new code issued upon request to all Council Members, Land Trust members, and the Clerk. Whereupon, a vote was held, with K. O'Brien, L. McKnight, F. LaSalle, J. Chereskin and T. Girardi in favor; M; Jenkins opposed. The motion was carried.

14. Strategic Planning Workshop – (2:12:00 - 2:43 on the meeting recording) The final order of business related to the Strategic Planning Workshop. F. LaSalle said that questions had arisen about what the Strategic Planning Workgroup is doing and how the workgroups are staffed, and that the OMA must be complied with. She discussed how Councils are run throughout Rhode Island. M. Jenkins agreed that the OMA applies and said that the Workgroup is advisory. In response, K. O'Brien reviewed an email Ms. LaSalle sent to L. McKnight and J. Duran, with a copy to him, recommending that this item be added to this agenda (see Attachment B). He said that he felt this item should not have been on the agenda and that this process serves as an example of how the addenda creation process should be improved. He said that because Ms. LaSalle sent her email to four Council members, she advised its recipients they should not respond, citing the OMA. Accordingly, until now, Mr. O'Brien was foreclosed from responding. He added that since his input was not solicited into creation of the meeting agenda, the instant item was added rather than one in which he had planned to update the Council on the current state of the strategic plan. Turning to the email itself, Mr. O'Brien noted that in it he was referred to a Workgroup "coordinator", when in fact at the August Council meeting when he was assigned to the Workgroup, he was unanimously elected by the Council as its "Lead". He added that at the September meeting, in his capacity as Workgroup Lead, he set forth the process and timeline that the Workgroup intended to follow during the period September 2025 through the 2026 Annual Meeting, which was then approved unanimously by the Council. He added that there is a Strategic Planning Workgroup page on the District's website that includes every meeting agenda, all Workgroup presentations and findings, as well as a Zoom recording of each meeting. He said the process followed by the Workgroup has been well received by the community and has received favorable comments both at Council meetings as well as in emails to the Council, some of which urged the Council to adopt the Workgroup's processes for

itself. F. LaSalle said that what occurred at the Workgroup meetings has not come to the Council and she raised concerns about the financial impact of the Plan which, she said, will affect the community for 10 to 15 years. K. O'Brien disagreed with her comments. He also disagreed with Ms. LaSalle's comments in her email that the Workgroup was simply intended to "... gather facts for the Council to consider as a referendum item to be placed before the voting community at an Annual Meeting". Rather, he said that, as set forth in the materials previously supplied to, and approved by the Council, the approved plan was to "request alignment on proposed priorities, actions and funding" at its January meeting, and that he continues to anticipate that occurring. He said that at that January meeting, the Workgroup intends to recommend certain items for action prior to the Annual Meeting, and that at the Annual Meeting, the entire plan will be reviewed with the community and its input solicited. He shared that at the January Council meeting, he anticipates recommending the creation of three sub-workgroups focussing on: Policies and Procedures; Asset Maintenance and Utilization; and Social and Collaboration. At the conclusion of his comments, Mr. O'Brien said it would be preferable for Council members to call him directly before the January Council meeting to discuss any questions they might have. No vote was taken on this item.

There being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting was adjourned at 9:20 pm.

Respectfully submitted:

/S/

Robert E. Patterson, Clerk

ATTACHMENT A

I would like to take a moment to address an incident that occurred two Sundays ago during our community's Children's Christmas Party.

If permissible, I respectfully request that this entire statement be entered into the official meeting minutes.

I would like to offer a sincere apology to our Council Chair, Leslie, who was placed in an unfair, unwelcomed, and unacceptable position—particularly in the presence of her grandchildren. Leslie and her family have been members of this community for decades, not merely a handful of years. Leslie, both as a member of the Bonnet Shores Fire District Council and as a longtime member of our community, has consistently demonstrated professionalism, integrity, and a steadfast commitment to putting the needs of Bonnet Shores first throughout her service. She did not deserve to be treated in that manner under any circumstance. As the saying goes, *"I would not wish this on my worst enemy."*

This event is intended to be a joyful, family- and community-centered gathering—especially for our children—and it is critically important that it remains a safe space defined by kindness, respect, and community spirit.

Unfortunately, during that event, a confrontation occurred that should never have taken place, particularly in front of children and family members. I want to state clearly, for the record, that this behavior was wholly inappropriate and does not reflect the values of this council or the community we serve. Conduct of this nature has no place in Bonnet Shores.

This is not the Bonnet Shores I know, nor is it the standard of conduct I believe our residents expect from those entrusted with leadership roles. Our community is built on mutual respect, accountability, and a shared responsibility to act with care—especially at events meant to bring people together.

I believe it is important to say this publicly and plainly: behavior that undermines those values—particularly in settings involving children and families—cannot and should not be normalized.

Thank you for allowing this statement to be entered into the official record.

ATTACHMENT B



BONNET SHORES
FIRE DISTRICT
Narragansett, Rhode Island 02882
Established 1932

Kevin O'Brien – Meeting Facilitator
Date: December 17, 2025

BSFD Mission, Vision and Core Values



The BSFD is dedicated to enhancing the community's quality of life by providing dependable services, programs, coastal environment protection, and improving shared resources that make the community welcoming, vibrant, and sustainable.



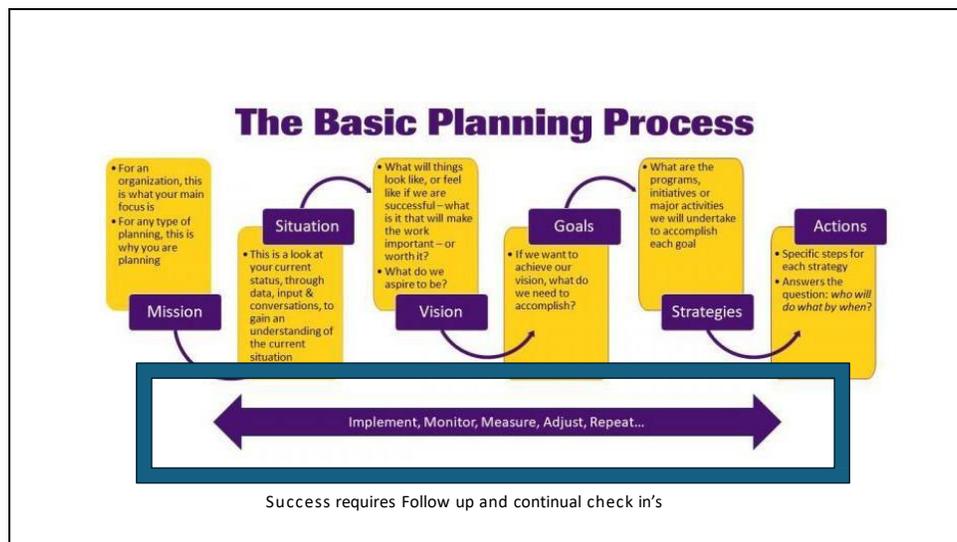
BSFD is a role model community with open and responsive government and actively engaged citizens dedicated to enhancing the quality of life and managing the long-term sustainability of its entrusted assets.



Integrity
Respect
Responsible Stewardship
Social engagement

Strategic Plan Definition

A document outlining an organization's long-term vision, mission, goals, and the specific actions required to achieve them. Serves as a comprehensive roadmap to guide future decisions and resource allocation. The plan provides a clear direction, fosters alignment among teams, and enables effective prioritization of efforts to achieve measurable objectives over a defined period, typically three to five years.



BSFD Strategic Proposed action steps & timeline

- September 2025 Council Meeting -- Agree on Proposed Approach
- Host Workgroup sessions – finish by early November
- November 2025 Council meeting – Provide first draft and get input
- Post November meeting -- Post for wider community input
- Host 2nd workgroup session(s) to refine based on input
- January 2026 Council meeting – Review Second draft and request alignment on proposed priorities, actions and funding
- Late January - Start Execution
- May/June 2026 Council meeting – Review proposed annual report
- 2026 Annual meeting – Review plan and report. Ask for 2026 plan input
- After Annual meeting – 2026 Update, back to top - continuous improvement

Listening Tour Update – Informal findings



Initial BSFD Strategic Planning SWOT

The hard parts are our strengths!!

People Process Product(PPP)

- An organizations effectiveness is determined by how well it manages its people process and products

People Process Technology(PPT)

- An organizations effectiveness is determined ensuring these 3 elements work in harmony

Starting BSFD SWOT

<u>Strengths</u>	<u>Weakness</u>
People, Product	
<u>Opportunity</u>	<u>Threats</u>
Process, Technology	



Faith LaSalle
 To: Leslie McKnight; Jane Duran
 Cc: Kevin O'Brien

Wed 12/10/2025 10:26 AM

Jane and Leslie:

Please consider adding the following to the December agenda:

Review and discuss procedures, process and scope for the Strategic Planning Workshop to ensure inclusiveness and transparency.

I'm including Kevin on this email as the coordinator for this workshop that was set up to gather facts for the Council to consider as a referendum item to be placed before the voting community at an Annual Meeting.

Please do not respond substantively. This is a scheduling request for an agenda item for a public meeting.

Regards,

Faith