

Bonnet Shores Land Trust Meeting Minutes 12/16/25 FINAL

Tuesday, December 16, 2025
Bonnet Shores Community Center

Present:

J. Fandetti (Chair), K. Sheridan, P. Brousseau, T. Beaty, K. Dolan, A. Girardi

1. Call to Order

- The meeting was called to order by Chair Joan Fandetti at 6:31 PM.
- The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

2. Announcements

An excerpt of an email between RI Land Trust Kate Sayles and a Bonnet Shores community member was read into record (and was also included in the meeting agenda):

BSFD Community Member wrote:

I live in the Bonnet Shores Fire District. The Fire District has a Land Trust that was established in 1991 by Legislative Act. From 1994 until 2017 the Land Trust qualified as a 501(c)(3) entity. At that time it lost its exemption due to failure to file the Form 990. Recently, the elected Land Trust council worked to reinstate its 501 (c)(3) status. New members are now questioning the need for exemption but no one on the Fire District Council or the Land Trust knows what exactly our Land Trust is.

In researching the qualities of a Municipal Land Trust I came across your testimony regarding the Burrillville Land Trust. You mentioned “best practices” established by municipal land trusts and I am hoping to get a copy of those. In addition, I am trying to figure out if a municipal land trust is automatically exempt from Federal taxes and if donations to a municipal land trust are deductible without a 501(c)(3) designation.

RI Land Trust Alliance reply:

Thanks for reaching out. I would direct your specific questions about the Bonnet Shores Land Trust to Joan Fandetti, and I've copied her on this email.

In my testimony regarding the Burrillville LT, my reference to best practices was more generalized- sorry if that was unclear. I was referring to the fact that the other 19 municipal land trusts have their own governance structures that outline how they operate, either in their charters or their bylaws. The Burrillville Conservancy that the town established did not have any governing documents or structure.

Municipal land trusts are extensions of cities and towns, and therefore the land belongs to the city/town. The land trusts are extensions of the cities/towns.

3. Guest Speakers

- University of Rhode Island students Shannon McGrath and Mason Bailey presented a high-level overview of their phragmites research project.
 - Educational pamphlets were provided to the Land Trust and were approved for electronic and hard-copy distribution to the community.

- Ms. McGrath and Mr. Bailey discussed pros and cons of phragmites and advised the Land Trust that additional research and education was needed so that an informed decision about keeping or eliminating the plants could be made.
 - They engaged in a discussion/Q&A with the community members who were present.
 - They addressed to forward the final research paper to J. Fandetti.

4. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

- Approval of amended October 14, 2025 Meeting Minutes
 - Motion to accept as amended: T. Beaty
 - Second: P. Brousseau
 - Vote: Passed unanimously (5-0)
- Approval of November 16, 2025 Meeting Minutes
 - Motion to accept: P. Brousseau
 - Second: K. Sheridan
 - Vote: Passed (4 in favor; K. Dolan abstained as he was not present at the November 16, 2025 meeting)

5. Lot N-R873, Narragansett

- This discussion was tabled from the previous Land Trust Meeting pending more information.
 - J. Fandetti researched records at Narragansett Town Hall and reported that the lot has had three owners since 1935.
 - A survey was completed in 2010 but the perimeter of the property has not been walked.
 - The land is noted to be wetlands and landlocked.
 - Required next steps:
 - Request a planner conduct a site review.
 - Conduct a professional title search and evaluation.
 - Purchase title insurance.
 - The item will be added to the January 2026 Land Trust Meeting Agenda for further action.

6. Tax Status Discussion

- J. Fandetti shared excerpts from documents provided by the Town of Narragansett regarding the status of the Land Trust 501(c)(3) designation and related tax exemptions.
 - There are currently not any properties held in the name of the Bonnet Shores Fire District; they are all deeded to the Bonnet Shores Fire District Land Trust.
 - As a quasi-municipal entity, the Bonnet Shores Fire District Land Trust is tax-exempt regardless of 501(c)(3) status.
 - In 2017, the IRS revoked our 501(c)3 for failure to file 990 forms. An excerpt from the Land Trust meeting held on 12/11/2018 was read:
 - "Marlene asked about where we were relative to our tax exemption. We are reporting as part of the District and as a municipality we do not need to be a 501(c)3. Lenny had discussed with Natalie McDonald and also brought this up with Atty. Martha Day and she said that we should not have been a 501(c)3 and it's best that we received that notification that it was withdrawn. This issue is no longer a concern".

- An APRA request from the Town of Narragansett was read into the meeting minutes further confirming proof that a 501(c) 3 was not needed for tax exemption reasons . A 501(c)3 will be useful in acquiring grants and used for LT property donation transactions.

7. Public Comment

- Bill DelGizzo, 182 Colonel John Gardner Road
 - Mr. DelGizzo questioned each Land Trust member regarding their individual stance on the opposition to the 501(c)(3).
 - Each board member in attendance expressed support for the 501(c)(3) pending corrections of inaccuracies to the original application.
- Nancy Cordy, 240 Bonnet Point Road
 - Ms. Cordy stated that the IRS has no record of the 501(c)(3) before the 1990s and urged the board to correct the filing to allow for grant application submissions.
- Bob Patterson, 8 Parkman Road
 - Mr. Patterson questioned the inconsistency between earlier statements by the chair to dissolve the 501(c)(3) and her current stance.
 - He noted that this has been a topic of discussion for more than a year.
 - Ms. Fandetti responded that the Land Trust would like to complete due diligence before sending a recommendation to the BSFD Council.
- David Kaufmann, 259 Bonnet Point Road
 - Mr.Kaufmann noted that municipal donations are tax-deductible regardless of status.
 - He would like to know if the most recent Form 990 was filed correctly or with any changes.
 - He noted that taxes continued to be paid to the Town of Narragansett only through 1994 and would like to understand if that was because of 501(c)(3) status or land trust status.
 - He noted that The Foundation Group advised that the Land Trust needed their own bylaws when the 501(c)(3) application was prepared.
 - He suggested a motion to rescind any prior statements regarding the dissolution of the 501(c)(3).
- Leslie McKnight, BSFD Council Chair, 8 Clara Lane
 - Ms. McKnight noted that per the BSFD Charter, Section 7, once the land moved to the Land Trust, we were no longer required to pay tax to the Town of Narragansett.
- Melissa Jenkins Mangili, 4 Bayberry Road
 - Ms. Jenkins Mangili provided research about other RI land trusts.
 - She noted that 501(c)(3) status is standard and vital for corporate giving and land donations.
 - She stated that she believes the 501(c)(3) is necessary and does not believe there are material issues that affect the application.
- Faith LaSalle, 98 Colonel John Gardner Road
 - Ms. LaSalle argued that the Land Trust is a public entity defined by RI General Law and funded by taxpayers and was established in 1991 using exact language from the state charter.
 - She noted that the Land Trust is not a non-profit registered with the State of Rhode Island.
 - Privatizing the Land Trust requires approval from the State of Rhode Island General Assembly.
 - The Land Trust remains tax-exempt as a municipality.

- The community members gave the property to the Land Trust and beneficiaries should consult their tax advisor as our responsibility is to the property, not the donors.
- She asked why the Community Center is held in the Land Trust.
- Mary Patterson, 8 Parkman Road
 - Ms. Patterson asked for additional information about the 12/2018 letter noted earlier in the meeting and noted that the land trust should be maintaining proper notes and records.

8. Follow-Up

- Ms. Fandetti noted that \$300 has been dispensed to The Foundation Group for a consultation call regarding the 501(c)(3).

9. Next Meeting

- Proposed date: Tuesday, January 20, 2026 at 5:00PM
 - Motion: T. Beaty
 - Second: P.Brousseau
 - Vote: Passed unanimously (5-0)

10. Adjournment

- Motion to Adjourn
 - Motion: K. Dolan
 - Second: K. Sheridan
 - Vote: Passed unanimously (5-0)

Respectfully submitted,



Kelly R. Sheridan
Bonnet Shores Land Trust Committee Secretary
<https://www.bonnetshoreslandtrust.org/>