

# **BONNET SHORES FIRE DISTRICT**

## **Bonnet Shores Fire District Council Monthly Meeting**

**August 18, 2025**

**7:00 pm**

### **Meeting Minutes**

#### Call to Order

Council Chair Leslie McKnight called the meeting to order at 7:00pm. Council members present were: John Chereskin, Jane Duran, Tony Girardi, Melissa Jenkins, Faith LaSalle, Leslie McKnight and Kevin O'Brien. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited and a moment of silence observed.

#### Announcements

L. McKnight congratulated Melissa Jenkins and Kevin O'Brien on their recent election and welcomed them to the Council. Ms. McKnight read a statement expressing a desire to rebuild trust and establishment of a safe space for expression of different opinions at Council meetings. She then welcomed Bob Patterson and Helen Patience as the new Clerk and Tax Collector, respectively.

#### Approval of Minutes

The Council then took up consideration of approval of the draft minutes of the July 16, 2025 Council meeting, copies of which had been previously distributed to the Council. J. Duran observed that the only Council members eligible to vote on approval were those who attended the July 16, 2025 meeting, viz., L. McKnight, J. Chereskin, F. LaSalle and herself. J. Chereskin moved adoption of the minutes as drafted; J. Duran seconded. F. LaSalle asked that the spelling of a name be corrected. With that modification, the minutes were approved 4-0, with one abstention and 2 not eligible to vote.

Urgent Business None.

#### Public Comment

- **Carolyn DiLeo** referred to a letter she had sent to the Council members. She asked that the members of the Original and Reconstituted Charter Committees meet together in order to discuss ideas, and to do so quickly before summer residents leave.

- **Janice McClanaghan** expressed a desire that the voting issue be resolved, and that, while recognizing the interests of the various constituencies, an effort be made to sit down to find common ground and compromise in order to bring the community back together.

Following Ms. McClanaghan's comments, J. Chereskin thanked her for once again voluntarily stepping in and organizing the recent Annual Meeting, which ran very smoothly. He also criticized certain members of the community for their behavior towards Mrs. McClanaghan, which he viewed as harassment. T. Girardi echoed Mr. Chereskin's comments and extended his apologies to Mrs. McClanaghan for the inappropriate behavior of certain members of the Bonnet Shores community.

- **Bill Del Gizzo** advised the Council of a proposal currently pending before the Narragansett Town Council for approval of development of a property next to Cumberland Farms for an automobile dealership. He asked the Council and Land Trust to monitor the situation and to become involved to protect the Bonnet Shores environment and watershed. He also encouraged putting any past negativity behind us. Officer, Committee, and Team Reports

- **Treasurer Update:** Laurie McCarthy thanked the Council for the opportunity to serve for the past 5 years. She reported that she recently sent financial reports to the Council. She reported the 2025 Summer Camp had income of \$22,558. She proposed a meeting with the Council in order for her to review the pending Workers Compensation and liability cases. She also offered to stay on as interim Treasurer, pending appointment of her replacement, and to continue to perform required tasks, with the exception of: ongoing communications with the Fire District's insurer (the Interlocal Trust); PayPal; Muncipay; iGov; grant applications; and APRA requests (unless financial reports are required). She also offered to help train and transition her replacement. In recognition of those services, she asked if the Council would agree to continue to keep her on the payroll through the end of August, and she would then volunteer her services through the end of September. The Council expressed its appreciation and indicated that she should continue to be paid through September in recognition of the services she intends to provide.

Mr. Patterson asked if he could attach the Treasurer and Manager's Reports to the minutes each month. L. McKnight said she would research the matter and respond later.

- **Tax Collector:** J. Chereskin said that he has recently met with the new Tax Collector, Helen Patience, to help with her transition. He said that as of now 19 properties are scheduled for Tax Sales and the required notifications are in process. L. McKnight referenced the availability of a state program to assist owner-occupied residential properties. Mr. Chereskin added that tax bills have been sent. Mrs. Patience reported that

as of last week, \$148,460 in tax payments had been posted, and that receipt of more payments is anticipated.

- **Land Trust:** Joan Fandetti gave a report on the work of the Land Trust during the past year, including uniform signage, assuring deeds are appropriately titled, adoption of a new program for memorial benches, maintenance of the walking trail and watershed watch. She asked that the Council issue direction regarding the 501c3 filing.
- **Manager and Harbor Update:** Mark Gillooly reported that \$12,200 in mooring fees had been collected during the season, and that 6 moorings are available for reassignment. He reported on preparations for the passage of Hurricane Erin. Seaweed at Little Beach had recently been cleaned up and he has been in touch with the Beach Club about maintenance of Kelly Beach. Lifeguards will remain at Kelly Beach until Labor Day and the Port-O-John will stay until mid-September. The quote for Mega trash removal has gone out, and he discussed the dumpster schedule. He will monitor maintenance of the culvert. He added that the summer camp was a success. In response to a question, he confirmed the Fire District is in compliance with the recent outdoor watering ban.
- **Social Team:** Deb Pannullo reported that the season's last Cocktails on the Beach would be held on August 27. She said the Social Team would be meeting on September 11 to plan future events and invited any interested persons to come to the meeting and/or join the team.

## New and Ongoing Business

### **A. DEM Grant**

Next, the Council turned to a discussion and consideration of whether to enter into the \$75,000 Grant Agreement (of which the Fire District would contribute \$25,000) between the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management ("DEM") and the Fire District, a copy of which had been appended to the meeting Agenda. J. Duran moved that the agreement be executed, which was seconded by T. Girardi. There then followed a lengthy discussion including whether the Fire District's financial obligations can be covered by like-kind services. M. Jenkins raised several objections and concerns about the agreement, including jurisdictional overreach, lack of adequate scientific certainty and study regarding the underlying issues causing flooding, the effect of impervious surfaces, certain issues relating to the role of the prior Council Chair in securing the grant, and prioritization of resident concerns. In response to a question, J. Chereskin confirmed the \$25,000 had not been included in the current budget. L. McKnight confirmed that if executed, she would sign the Grant Agreement. The Council then

discussed the scope and purposes of the proposed Grant and its timing for execution. T. Girardi opined about the need to take action. Carolyn DiLeo, Carol O'Donnell and Bill Del Gizzo offered their observations about the history of efforts to address flooding and the Grant application process.

At the end of the discussion, the motion previously made was amended to include, in addition to executing the Grant Agreement, extending an invitation to a representative of DEM to attend the next Council meeting to discuss the scope of the Grant and matters affecting flooding of Wesquage Pond. Whereupon, the Council voted 6-1 in favor of the motion, as amended. M. Jenkins voted No.

#### **B. Little Beach Access**

L. McKnight then asked the Council to take up consideration of whether to seek bids for construction of an access/walkover to Little Beach, and to submit an associated assent application with CRMC. J. Chereskin moved that the Council be authorized to seek bids for construction of an access/walkover for Little Beach. It was seconded by J. Duran. A discussion followed, and it was confirmed that at this point the Council was only seeking bids. Whereupon, the Council voted unanimously (7-0) in favor of the motion.

#### **C. Painting of the Community Center**

The Council next took up consideration of approval of the bid previously received for painting of the Community Center. Mark Gillooly confirmed that at this point the bid did not include painting of the kitchen or bathrooms. J. Chereskin confirmed the current budget included an allocation for this project. J. Chereskin moved that the bid be accepted, which J. Duran seconded, whereupon the Council voted unanimously (7-0) in favor of the motion. Replacement of community bulletin boards will be considered at a future meeting.

#### **D. Working Groups**

The Council then briefly reviewed the existing Council assignments for various previously approved working groups. F. LaSalle reviewed her engagement with Fire District Legal Counsel, and reminded those present that she is a lawyer. She also offered to take on interaction with the Interlocal Trust; J. Chereskin discussed his assignment focusing on financial matters and his coordination with the Tax Collector and Treasurer. J. Duran reviewed her role as relates to Council data and communications. Following Ms. Duran's comments, M. Jenkins asked that going forward all official Fire District communications (agendas, minutes etc.) be sent out by the Clerk. F. LaSalle opposed that as beyond the role of the Clerk as defined in Article 3, Section 4 of the Bonnet Shores Fire District By Laws. T. Girardi spoke to his role as liaison with the Land Trust. L. McKnight said that she had taken on issues relating to Governance items. Two new working groups were proposed: Beaches and Public Safety and Strategic Planning. K. O'Brien volunteered to take on the Strategic Planning assignment. K. O'Brien moved that

he be assigned to the Strategic Planning working group. J. Duran seconded the motion, whereupon the Council voted unanimously (7-0) in favor of the motion. M. Jenkins will consider whether to take on an assignment in the future.

Adjourn

There being no further business, and upon a motion duly made and seconded, the meeting was adjourned at 8:42 pm.

Respectfully submitted:

/s/

Robert E. Patterson, Clerk