

**BONNET SHORES FIRE DISTRICT
RECONSTITUTED CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE**

January 25, 2025, 9:00 a.m.

MEETING MINUTES

Call to Order: Committee Chair Faith LaSalle called the meeting to order at 9:02 at the Bonnet Shore Fire District Community Center.

Announcements: Non-voting-related Charter changes (caps on spending, etc.) will be addressed by the Council. This committee only addresses the voting issue.

Approval of Minutes: Jane Duran requested a correction to the minutes. This committee is advisory only. It will present proposals to the Council for support and then forward, to the General Assembly. Motion was then made to approve January 18, 2025 minutes by Louise Healey. Seconded by Michele Dunne. Motion passed 4-0.

Review and Discussion of New Voting Proposal Scenarios and Presentations: J. Duran, Vice Chair, suggested we moved to Item No. 5 on the agenda and directed the discussion and presentation of new proposals from four members of the community.

Presentations and Discussion on Other Scenarios:

- **BSFD Voter Affiliation and Scenario Analysis** – J. Duran did a deep dive data analysis of all 7 voter affiliation populations, their representation in the community and their attendance at the Aug 2024 election using scenarios 1-4, as well as potential impacts to the BSFD. Some key messages were that the data indicates that while there are 951 Narragansett Registered Voters, 460 net new voters were introduced by the consent order because the remaining 491 were already eligible under a different affiliation. She indicated that the data does not indicate dilution in voter eligibility or the Aug 2024 election turnout. However, that is not a predictor of future ratios as the demographics of the community may change. It also illustrated the participation of the various affiliations, demonstrating that some groups have far less participation in the August 2024 election, citing that only 7% of all eligible voters were from the “BSBC Only” affiliation. Many other data points were discussed and Jane suggested that no matter what scenario is recommended, litigation from any population could be possible. (See PowerPoint presentation that is available on the BSFD Website).
- **BSFD Boundary Proposal** - Kristen Deberghes presented her proposal to change the boundaries of the BSFD. This would carve out the Beach Club from the District and relieve unit owners of their BSFD tax obligations (currently about \$61,000). Kristen explained that the BSBC units are small, uninhabitable units and that the BSBC may not be getting any value for their tax dollars. She also indicated that this would not be easy to do as it would have other considerations outside of voting eligibility but would solve the

removal of BSBC from voting eligibility. (See PowerPoint presentation that is available on the BSFD Website).

- **BSFD Balanced Voting Proposal** - Kevin O'Brien presented a balanced voting approach that allows all current constituents to vote and maintain the benefits and protections of being in the BSFD. This method involves the weighting of certain classifications within the voting population. Parallels were drawn between this proposal and those used in the Electoral College model and within the BSBC. Kevin urged that this would be a viable alternative to consider. The Committee asked Kevin to follow-up on how Narragansett Registered Voters who do not own property would fit into this model as well as how the weighting and process would be operationalized. (See PowerPoint presentation that is available on the BSFD Website).
- **Weighted Voting for BSBC** - Mary Weber presented a weighted voting plan which would put a cap on the BSBC eligible votes to that which would not exceed their tax contribution to the BSFD (currently 12%). The Committee asked Mary to think about how this could be operationalized. (See PowerPoint presentation that is available on the BSFD Website).

Public Comment:

Mary Weber – Talking to community members, she feels that because the voting took place at the Beach Club, this caused people not to come, so the numbers may have been skewed. Voter dilution by the beach club is perceived by residents.

Tony Lupino – We are ignoring parameters set for the sewer easement that has no expiration date. The side deals of cleaning the beach should not go away.

Leslie McKnight – Asked about how could you weight the non-property residents (renters)?

Louise Healey – K. O'Brien's concern about more BC units being built cannot happen. There will never be more than 930 units because the BSBC have already bought the developmental rights from the developer; they have been retired.

Faith LaSalle – commented that a weighted voting franchise has been raised by others over the last couple of years and may not be viable in the context of a quasi-municipality like a fire district. K. O'Brien's proposal may be better suited for an HOA.

Nancy Cordy – mentioned that the weighted proposal doesn't consider the BC not voting in the quasi-municipality.

Kristen Deberghes – Asked whether the renters and the owners weighted all together in K. O'Brien's proposal.

Leslie McKnight – Asked how this would work for the fulltime Narragansett voter, if their property is worth less, do they get less of vote?

Kevin O'Brien – recognized that we would have to work from the concept to how it will be operationalized. He commented that dilution is movable, not black and white, and a voting model should address this dynamic.

Louise Healey – Posed a question to M. Weber about her model...If 5 people or 50 people vote, the beach club gets 12% of the vote? This would be for an operational model.

Laurie McCarthy – Asked will nonresidents be outvoting full time residents?)See zoom for discussion.)

Kristen Deberghes – suggested that you might have to break out the weighting more to protect the permanent residents not being out weighted by seasonal people.

Adrian Deberghes – Asked if the relationship with the beach club owners or with the beach club as an entity? J. Duran answered that the relationship in her analysis is with the beach club owners not the beach club as an entity. L. Healey agreed.

Jane Duran, on behalf of the Committee, thanked everyone for their constructive ideas and participation.

If anyone has any more proposals, email the summary to J. Duran 72 hours in advance of the next meeting.

Michelle Dunne – commented she felt important to meet Wednesday January 29th so we can start narrowing down scenarios.

Louise Healey – indicated that she needs to discuss proposals with the Board of Directors.

Michelle Caraccia – requested the original proposal which includes the snowbirds be considered. She opposes proxy voting and holding meetings or elections at the beach club.

Jane Duran – There will be a working group to address the voting process.

Sue Resnick – Asked how many council members are beach club members? F. LaSalle responded 4 out of 7 Council members are not beach club members; 5 out of 7 are permanent residents.

Nancy Riccitelli –At the last election, it appeared that the beach club had too much control by recommending to its members who to vote for. The residents need more control.

Jane Duran - 243 beach club-only members voted. We want to settle the perception of the beach club having control.

Next meeting: Wednesday, January 29th at the Community Center.

F. LaSalle called for a motion to adjourn. Motion made by L. Healy and seconded by M. Dunne. Meeting adjourned at 11:24 a.m.

Submitted,
/s/ Paulette Brousseau
Clerk, Reconstituted Charter Committee

