

Council Topic:

- Voting Rights Workshop follow up. Discussion and possible vote on voting rights proposal options. At the May 20, 2026 meeting the council assigned Kevin O'Brien to research options for the council to consider given the council could not reach consensus on an agenda item which included discussing and possibly voting on the proposed solution coming out of the council's April 2nd, 2026, strategic planning workshop.

Discussion:

Given this is a new council I will provide background

1. First, I'm not providing a history on the BSFD voting rights topic. This is a history on the most recent proposal brought to the council.
2. Second, this is not my topic or my opinion paper. I was assigned to do the follow up on this. This is simply a summary of that research and represents the consensus as I understood it from the people who brought forward what the May 20th council's agenda called the "All-Inclusive voting rights proposal". I will refer to it as that going forward. Specifically - Kristen Deberghes, Carolyn DiLeo, Janice McClanahan and Mary Patterson

History of this topic:

1. On April 2nd the BSFD Council sponsored a detailed open meeting workshop to discuss the BSFD voting rights topic. The meeting started with a review of a proposed solution brought forward by the 4 people I just named. It also included reviewing proposals from other community members.
2. The proposal comes from people representing all sides of the BSFD community and topic. Specifically, residents, seasonal, BSBC members and plaintiff on the original court case.
3. The Council's April public workshop was attended by 30 to 40 people. It included detailed discussions on various alternatives but in the end the group agreed on a unified proposal.
4. After the meeting, and before the next council meeting, the council received dozens of emails in support of the unified proposal and one dissent. No other topic in that council year received more than a couple of emails.
5. On May 20th the council took up the discussion at its monthly meeting on the proposal.
 - In the end the council didn't take up a vote but instead assigned me to do follow up with the group and report back. That is what I'm doing here.

- Reasoning for not taking up a vote included various thoughts such as the council getting an email from Alana Dimario saying she needed both community and council support and the council was not in possession of that.
- 6. On June 9th I had an in-person meeting with the “All Inclusive Voting Rights” proposal group.

Here are the key points from the meeting

1. There is a court order saying the council must act:
 1. The Council agreed in the consent decree to resolve the dilution of residents’ votes by coming up with a new voting option and they are legally bound to follow through.
2. The Substantial Interests clause in the Judge Taft Carter’s findings make the status quo is not an option
3. The group discussed the following ideas for moving forward.
 1. Have someone speak to Alana Dimario and ask her to clarify what she needs to introduce legislation in the Rhode Island Senate. Her April 15th email said, “a successful proposal for enabling legislation will have the support of the Council in the form of a Resolution as well as support from a rough majority of community stakeholders invested in this issue”. The BSFD Council discussion at the April 15th meeting centered around the question on what is a “rough majority of community stakeholders” and what is considered “support of the council”. Are both a simple majority vote?
 2. Engage a lawyer to understand options going forward as the voting rights proposal team feels the issue meets the “hardship clause”. See below for more detail supporting the “hardship clause” case.
 3. Have a BSFD council attorney reach out to the beach club attorney and ask what they suggest. Reiterate that the proposal team and BSFD community prefer working out a solution without a lawsuit. They discussed the idea of engaging in binding mediation. If this is agreed to, the team suggested getting an estimate on what binding mediation would cost. Kristen Deberghes agreed to provide the attorney with a review packet if necessary.
 4. Ask the judge Sarah Taft Carter to work with the district to renegotiate the May 2022 consent order as the community has hit the hardship clause standard. See hardship case points below.