

**Mason’s Island Fire District Monthly Meeting  
January 20, 2026 – 5:30 PM  
Mason’s Island Yacht Club**

**1. Call to Order**

- a. President Scott Parry called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm. Board members Kevin Riley (Vice President), Bill Taylor (Tax Collector), Ricardo Kleinbaum (Clerk), Ethan Tower (Treasurer), Catherine Deichmann, Kristin Foster, Tom Giola, Jeff Miceli, and Nancy Taylor Ross were present. Also attending were Lou Allyn (MICo) and MIPOA Facilities Committee Rep Bob Domurat. Dave Ludwig (Tick Committee rep.) was absent.

**2. Agenda Additions/Deletions/Changes**

- a. Mason’s Island Causeway and Bridge approaches update – Lou Allyn

**3. Approval of Previous Minutes –**

- a. A motion was made and seconded to approve the December 2025 monthly meeting minutes after agreement to make the following changes to the published draft minutes:
  - i. **Approval of Minutes Section** - Corrected date of December approval of meeting minutes to “December 2025” from “June 2025.”
  - ii. **New Business Section** – Added: “She counted the tree growth rings of two trees (over 80 years old) that fell in the October 2019 storm.”
- b. The motion carried.

**4. Treasurer’s Report – Ethan Tower**

- a. Ethan referred to the previously circulated financials, noting the upcoming (Feb 15) \$193K payment to the Mystic Fire Dept (“MFD”), which represents the second 50% installment for the 2026 fiscal year.

- b. Ethan reminded Board members that since approval of the 2026/27 budget will take place in April, he should be apprised of line items in the near future. A preliminary budget will be shared in February.
- c. The Board discussed the terms of the existing five year fire protection contract running from July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2029. It allows either MIFD or MFD to terminate the contract at any time after either party serves notice to the other at least twelve months in advance.
- d. Jeff noted that upon MFD's request, a meeting with MIFD has been scheduled during the last week of January. The subject matter was not identified but Board members expect MFD will discuss financial terms for the 2026/27 fiscal year.

## **5. Committee Reports**

### **a. Fire & Safety Committee (Emergency Preparedness) – Jeff Miceli**

- i. Jeff noted two events in December 2025, one EMS call and one car accident.
- ii. Jeff reported on updates to the MIPOA website covering the emergency preparedness project. He added that Scott approached the Mason's Island Homestead Association to encourage development of an emergency preparedness initiative to work alongside MIFD/MIPOA.

### **b. Tick Committee – Jeff Micelli/Dave Ludwig (absent)**

- i. Jeff summarized the results of last month's tick survey covering activity in 2025. Of the 44 residents who responded, 55% selected the organic cedar-wood oil product, 32% bifenthrin, and the remaining 3 respondents used tick boxes or no treatment. The majority (57%) of residents observed no change in tick behavior, and three (7%) indicated contraction of a tick-borne disease(s) to humans or pets. (See attachment.)
- ii. Given the low (20%) household response level, Scott suggested, and Board members agreed, to release a second survey in the early Spring.

- iii. In the interim, Jeff plans to share the survey results with the State of Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station. He also recommended having volunteers actively monitor tick activity following State training to evaluate tick population changes.

**c. Living Shoreline Road Protection – Kristin Foster**

- i. Kristin referred to documentation forwarded before the meeting and published on the website including the final GZA engineering plan with feedback from the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (“DEEP”): the US Army Corps of Engineer permit for the designs, and the final project report for grants from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation’s 2022 Emergency Coastal Resiliency Fund which funded the design plans and permits. She noted completing a report to close out the grant. The Town’s financial report was also posted, according to Kristin.
- ii. Kristin stressed the need to find volunteers to maintain and replant vegetation between the road and eroding coastline.
- iii. Ethan raised the topic of terminating the Living Shoreline (“Road”) Taskforce, in part, given the completion of the sloped rock revetement project aimed at protecting the road north of Allyn’s Alley. Following Board discussion, Scott exercised his authority as President to dissolve ad hoc committees, and officially terminated the Task Force.
- iv. Board members praised Kristin for her dedication, diligence and efforts in leading the Living Shoreline Road Protection initiative. The task force’s efforts have raised awareness both on the island and with the broader scientific community about coastal erosion.

**d. Traffic Control - Catherine Deichmann**

- i. Catherine reported that the 2026 vehicle decal application is now on the website.
- ii. Catherine and Ethan discussed pricing and broad timing for the Ace guardhouse contract: \$34/hour lock running through October

2027. The Board anticipates initiating coverage in May 2026. Catherine agreed to supply full year figures to Ethan to assemble the budget.

e. **Nominating Committee – Kristin Foster**

- i. Kristin has taken over the Nominating Committee leadership from Catherine D. She reported identified six potential candidates, and has begun extending offers to cover at least one MIFD Board opening.
- ii. The Board discussed the importance of identifying an individual with construction/roads knowledge experience to replace Tom Giola who plans to step down at the end of the current fiscal year (June 30, 2026.)

f. **Facilities Committee – Tom Giola, Bob Domurat** - Referring to the monthly Facilities Committee report, Tom noted the following:

- i. **Possible Tree Hazard** – Tom discussed a complaint about an oak tree at 28 Money Point Road, and awaits input from an Eversource arborist.
- ii. **Center Line Striping** – Tom and Bob D. will address in the early Spring with the painting company
- iii. **Drainage Management** – The issue on Money Point described in the summer minutes has improved but unresolved, according to Tom. The Board agreed to monitor the conditions in the location as well as Yacht Club Road.
- iv. **Pond Tree Removal** – Catherine inquired why MIFD would allocate funds to remove trees on private properties. Nancy explained that it was part of the brush clearing plan and the focus would be to cut branches touching the water, not to take down any trees.

- v. **Home Renovation Monitoring** – Tom reviewed the scope for regulating home remodeling and construction, consistent with previous Board discussions on mitigating adverse consequences to community drainage and road conditions. He stressed the importance of MIFD validating building plans associated with permits filed with the Town of Stonington.

A discussion ensued on the conditions under which the Facilities Committee should be involved in overseeing construction with the aforementioned impact. Tom clarified that the Committee’s work is focused on exterior renovations and the importance of screening plans in advance.

Scott emphasized that MIFD needs to be consistent in reviewing construction and renovation plans filed by homeowners with the Town. He added that MIFD can deny permit to utilize water lines or build a driveway if homeowner plans do not satisfy the Facilities Committee concerns, as described in previous meeting minute notes and recent Ordinance changes. Board members noted that taxpayers have been notified of the requirements in several emails over the past year.

Tom also addressed the challenge of managing unpermitted (plans and/or permits) activity at multiple locations.

- vi. **Road Repaving** – The Board agreed to defer scheduling a special taxpayer meeting to reallocate \$120K from the terminated Shoreline Project Project back to the Roads Reserve.
- vii. **Plover Lane** – Catherine reported that contractors for 3 Schoolhouse Lane have been driving down Plover, parking vehicles at the end of the street and utilizing it to transit to the work site over the wall. According to Catherine, Plover Lane residents have requested placement of a sign at the top of the street to redirect construction-related traffic to Schoolhouse. Tom and Ethan recommended speaking to the contractor and lot owners to address the issue. They also noted that the placement of a sandwich board would be impractical this time of year given the need to leave streets open to snow plows.

## **6. Unfinished Business – Deed Restrictions – Scott Parry**

- a. Scott reported on his recent discussion with the Lord’s Point Association regarding the management of roads and infrastructure in connection with MICO’s late 2025 decision to no longer enforce deed restrictions on most MIFD properties. (Refer to late 2025 meeting minutes.)
- b. Lord’s Point Association has been upgrading the roads (mostly dirt) and turning the roads to the Town, though the Association continues to own the land, according to Scott. He learned that Lord’s Point is organized as a Residential/Moderate (“RM-20”) zoning District with the Town establishing setback standards. Scott also noted the small lot size and absence of a zoning board.
- c. Scott pointed out that on Mason’s Island, Heron Road is established as an RM-20, though the rest of MIFD is designated as a Residential/Agricultural (RA-20) zoning district.
- d. Scott noted that MIFD’s two options are either to: 1) create a special zoning district enabling retention of 15 foot setbacks; this would require Town approval and the Town could reverse its decision in the future; or 2) establish an independent zoning district requiring the establishment of a costly stand-alone planning and zoning board.

## **7. New Business – Update on Mason’s Island Bridge and Approaches Projects**

### **a. Mason’s Island Bridge – Lou Allyn**

Lou updated the Board on the Mason’s Island Bridge reconstruction project based on discussions with the Town Engineer, Chris Greenlaw and documentation from the Connecticut Local Bridge Program.

#### **KEY POINTS**

- i. In 2020, WMC Engineering on behalf of the Town of Stonington inspected the bridge, and noted concerns about the deck geometry, width and substructure. This set in motion a plan to develop a design plan to elevate the Mason’s Island causeway and address a portion of the approaches to the bridge. (The

project is being executed under the State and Local Bridge Program which provides half the cost of a bridge replacement.)

- ii.** In 2023, The Town hired WMC Engineering to develop plans for the reconstruction of the Mason’s Island Bridge and filing of a funding application with the State. The need for bicycle lanes and a fishing path was cited.
- iii.** The goal is to replace the existing 20 foot bridge with an additional 50 feet of roadway, and to raise the bridge roadbed from three feet to roughly six feet above the Mean Sea Level, or one foot above the predicted annual highest tide. The Town has recognized that the Mason’s Island causeway – as the only mode of egress for several hundred residents - can be overtopped by an even moderate coastal event. However, no provision is made for storm surges, rising sea levels or high waves, according to Lou.
- iv.** The Town is now awaiting a preliminary design which could be presented by WMC as early as March 2025. Once approved, it will set into motion a multi-month permitting process. The construction completion date has been pushed back from end November 2025 to November 2027.
- v.** The Town is funding the design plans from the \$2.67 MM earmarked last Spring, (as part of the voter approved \$15.5 MM referendum for infrastructure projects.)
- vi.** Under the 2025/26 budget, the Town anticipates a \$1.16 MM contribution from the State from the Local Bridge Program - which provides up to 50% of funding for bridge safety and reliability projects. This asset program was started two years ago and includes funding for plans to replace and repair bridge infrastructure.
- vii.** The Town has also identified the prospect of sponsoring a second project to raise the approaches to the bridge. Molly Evak, Stonington Grants Administrator advised Lou that the PROTECT grant prospect was “pulled from circulation” after Trump’s re-election, though she will continue to seek to tap other funding sources.

**b. Emergency Warning –**

- i. Lou recommended enhancing the communication protocol from the Town Emergency Operations Center (“EOC”) to allow for more proactive contact in the event the bridge is at threat of not being passable. He believes an early warning forecasting system should be put in place whereby the Stonington Police Dept would contact the Captain(s) of MIFD’s Emergency Planning Committee.
- ii. Jeff acknowledged this issue and clarified that in earlier discussions with Stonington Police Dept. head, Capt. Schneider, it was determined that the EOC would not be able to directly contact the Mason’s Island Emergency Preparedness Contact 1. Nonetheless, Jeff advised that the Emergency Preparedness protocol was developed with input from Capt. Schneider (tactical EOC operations director). This collaborative effort helps ensure that the EOC will work diligently to notify MIFD and Mason’s Island residents through Stonington Alerts when the causeway is inaccessible and/or emergency vehicles cannot access the island, according to Jeff.
- iii. Jeff also reported on a recent meeting between the Emergency Planning Committed and the Mystic Fire Dept. to discuss MIFD’s preparedness plan and activation triggers, as well as the Fire Department’s coordination with the EOC on emergency vehicle access, and activity alongside the police, according to Jeff.

**8. Next Meeting: Tuesday, February 17, 2026 at 5:30PM**

**Adjourn**

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 6:52 pm. It was seconded and approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Ricardo J. Kleinbaum – Clerk, Masons Island Fire District