

## **Mason's Island Fire District BOD Special Meeting – April 28, 2020**

**Attending via Zoom Conference Call:** Jim McAuley, David Krupp, Bill Taylor, Ethan Tower, Kristin Foster, John Parry, Bob Banas, Tom Cooke and Lee Hisle. Rufus Allyn and MIPOA President Bob Martin also participated. Not on the call: Tax Collector Alex Ellison. President Jim McAuley called the Special Meeting to order at 5:30 pm. A quorum was on the call.

**Annual Meeting/Budget Approval:** The first item under discussion was passing the 2020-2021 Budget and setting the mil rate under Governor Lamont's Executive Orders that currently prohibit meetings of 50 or more people and have granted Fire District Boards the power to pass budgets and set mil rates by a vote of the Board if certain conditions are met. Bob Martin said that the extended e-mail list that MIPOA/Tommy Thomason maintains has over 260 addresses, although in some cases more than one email goes to the same home. Coverage is certainly over 75% and may be as high as 90% of taxpayers. Ethan said we will have to post a meeting notice at Town Hall. We can use the MIPOA Facebook page to live stream the Zoom meeting proceedings, audio and video, although residents will need a Facebook account to see it. As for the Annual Meeting, we will publish in the Day, but likely suspend the meeting to a later date. The Board will approve the Budget and set the mil rate at the May 12<sup>th</sup> Board Meeting. The meeting will be live Streamed on Facebook and the other requirements of the Executive Orders will be observed to the extent possible.

**Security Issues:** The special meeting was triggered by a number of incidents, and e-mails with regard to an influx of non-resident cars, bikers and walkers on the FD's roads. Prior to the meeting Bob Banas had circulated a memo outlining options. Rufus Allyn, prior to exiting the meeting, noted his opposition to using volunteers to man the traffic control booth. Bob noted that most complaints were about bikers and walkers whereas historically the concerns have been about cars and safety. Extending the time traffic control officers are on duty would raise a budget issue for both the current and the next fiscal year. The current weekend schedule will use the remainder of the Traffic Control and Safety line item in the current year's budget. Changing to an eight hour a day, full week schedule for two months would cost an additional \$6-7,000. Ethan said we could change next year's budget to continue seven-day coverage through September and overspend the current fiscal year budget for May and June. Ethan said he would look into adjusting the budget, particularly by reducing road maintenance in consultation with Rufus, and see if the next fiscal year could provide July-Sept. coverage without increasing the mil rate. The discussion turned to placing sandwich board signs to further discourage visitors. Lee Hisle suggest using a sign company that Conn College uses. After some discussion, it was decided that we would look into placing three sandwich signs to be located at the traffic control shack, at the Chippechaug-Money Point-Nauyaug Point-Yacht Club four-way intersection, and near the causeway to Enders Island. After further discussion,

the Board concluded the signs should say “Roads Closed for Public Recreation” on both sides, except the sign posted near Enders would say “Enders Island Causeway” on one side. More discussion followed about budgeting for the costs of expanded hours. Bob Martin recommended we carefully consider our communication plans regarding our decisions and that they be shared as soon as possible. M/S/P that we have traffic control officers on duty from 10-6, seven days a week for the months of May through September. We will monitor the reports from the officers and see if it is necessary to continue after June. Bob Banas suggested that we speak to Fr. Hoar before announcing this plan and Bob and Jim responded that they planned to.

**Eligibility to Vote based on Car Tax Assessment:** Bill Taylor reported that when he requested a list of cars in the FD from the Town Assessor, she questioned the ability of car owners to vote now that the FD no longer levies a car tax. The FD’s by-laws state “Any citizen ...who...is liable to the District for taxes, assessed against him on an assessment of not less than \$1,000...” can vote. The Assessor position is that if no tax is assessed, you are not qualified to vote. Bill raised the issue so the Board could think about this prior to the annual meeting which will likely be continued to late June at least. Some Mason’s Island residents rely on their car assessment to be eligible to vote as their homes are in one spouse’s name or a LLC. Bill said he would look at Lydia’s last voting list and report on the number of people using car ownership as the basis for voting eligibility by the next meeting.

**MIFD Meeting Calendar:**

The next meeting is scheduled for May 12, 5:30 pm via Zoom conference call and will include approval of the 2020-2021 Budget and Mil Rate.

Meeting Adjourned – 7:00 pm

Respectfully submitted,  
Bill Taylor