

**Minutes of the  
Mason’s Island Fire District  
Annual Meeting  
Saturday, May 24, 2025 at 10:00 am  
Mason’s Island Yacht Club**

**I. Call to Order**

The Annual Meeting of the Masons Island Fire District (“MIFD”) was called to order at 10:03 am. Mr. Parry stated that the meeting would be conducted in accordance with Robert’s Rules of Order and reviewed portions of the rules applicable to participation in the meeting and the protocol for voting: voice, show of hands, paper ballot options.

**II. Reminder of Eligibility to Vote**

Mr. Parry also explained the rules for determining eligibility to vote.

**III. Establish a Quorum**

Mr. Parry asked eligible voters to raise their hands. Clerk Ricardo Kleinbaum determined that a quorum of voters was present.

**IV. Opening Remarks**

Mr. Parry introduced the other officers of the Fire District, including Jeff Miceli, Vice President (3<sup>rd</sup> year), Ethan Tower, Treasurer, (12<sup>th</sup> year), Ricardo Kleinbaum (2<sup>nd</sup> year). He also introduced MIFD’s Directors: Audrey Brown, (3<sup>rd</sup> year) Catherine Deichmann (4<sup>th</sup> year), Kristin Foster (11<sup>th</sup> year), Tom Giola (2<sup>nd</sup> year), Fran Hoffman (3<sup>rd</sup> year), Tax Collector, Bill Taylor (14<sup>th</sup> year), and David Ludwig (Tick Committee).

Mr. Parry proceeded to describe the agenda of the meeting and asked for any questions concerning the agenda. No questions were asked.

**V. Approval of the Minutes of the 2024 Annual Meeting**

Mr. Parry stated that the Minutes of the 2024 Annual Meeting held on May 27, 2024 had been posted on the Masons Island Property Owners Association/Masons Island Fire District website (the “MIPOA/MIFD Website”).

**A motion was made and seconded to accept the 2024 Annual Meeting Minutes with no corrections. The motion passed with no discussion.**

**VI. Report of the President**

Mr. Parry noted that his report had previously been posted on the MIPOA/MIFD Website.

Mr. Parry highlighted several important issues facing MIFD, including:

**Shoreline Protection –**

The erosion of the marsh that is north of the Allyn's Alley dock continues to pose a serious threat to Chippechaug Trail, which is the primary access route for the majority of residents within the Fire District.

In early 2024, due to growing cost estimates and other permitting obstacles that were threatening to stop the living shoreline project from moving forward, the Board presented to taxpayers and agreed to adopt an alternative concept: a buried rock wall revetment which was installed in early April. The rock wall revetment was completed at a cost below the budgeted amount of \$195K approved by taxpayers at the 2024 annual meeting. The rock wall revetment protects the road if the erosion eventually reaches the road buffer along the east side of the road.

The Board has asked the task force to continue pursuing the living shoreline option (“rocks in the water pilot”) as its purpose is to slow down further erosion by reducing wave action that causes the erosion.

**Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)**

As a public entity, Masons Island Fire District is subject to the Freedom of Information Act. MIFD is thus required to retain records, in paper and online of meeting minutes, emails, etc and correspondence with taxpayers. The Board is required to share this information, with some exceptions upon request to the public. This includes information MIFD taxpayers provide in applications, survey responses, window decal request forms and tick program selection forms.

**VII. Report of the Secretary**

The Report of the Secretary was previously posted on the MIPOA/MIFD Website.

Mr. Kleinbaum reported that the Board of the Masons Island Fire District had held fifteen meetings during the 2024-2025 fiscal year. Four of the meetings were Special Meetings of which three were informational. There was a quorum at all meetings except for one meeting in June 2024. Mr. Kleinbaum also noted that all required filings were

made with the Town of Stonington, including notice for the Annual Meeting, which was published in The Day on April 29, 2025 in accordance with the Bylaws.

Mr. Kleinbaum added that the Agendas for MIFD’s meetings are posted in the Stonington Town Clerk’s office. Agendas for future meetings and a schedule of future meetings will continue to be filed with the Town Clerk. Minutes of meetings, when approved by the Board, are posted on the website at mipoa.info. He noted the new practice of publishing Board reviewed draft meeting minutes to enhance transparency with final Board approved meeting minutes posted at the subsequent monthly meeting.

**A motion to accept the Report of the Secretary was made and seconded. The motion passed with no discussion.**

**VIII. By Law Change**

Mr. Parry made the following motion to amend Section 14 of the MIFD By-Laws by replacing sentence “A” below with sentence “B” below:

Sentence A

*No~~t~~ice of the holding of the annual meeting and of all special meetings shall be by publication in a newspaper of general circulation at least ten (10) days before the meeting..*

Sentence B:

*Public notifications will comply with the existing state statutes in effect at the time that apply to the District.*

**A motion to accept the Report of the Secretary was made and seconded. The motion carried by voice with a comment from a taxpayer who recommended that MIFD should first secure input from an attorney on the by-laws.**

**IX. Report of the Treasurer**

Mr. Tower presented the Report of the Treasurer. He noted that his report had been posted on the website and that the financial statements for fiscal year 2024 have been reviewed by Mystic Accounting Group, LLP. Mr. Tower presented a document which included a Financial Summary of Budgets & Accounts and Covered Facilities Budgets & Actuals. He stated that Copies of the review are available upon request.

Pursuant to the report, MIFD is currently projecting a surplus of \$166K at the end of the 202/25 fiscal year, reflecting, among other factors, the increase in the Grand List, above

trend returns on money market investments, and the contribution from the Mason's Island Homestead Association.

Mr. Tower noted that expenses of \$565K were very close to projections not taking into account roughly \$10K to cover road repairs associated with a recent fallen tree on Hickory Ledge. MIFD spent \$134K of the \$208K budgeted on road projects. Mr. Towers anticipates the reserve funds for catastrophe and roads will reach \$87K and \$112K, respectively at the end of the current fiscal year.

He added that MIFD is recommending that \$10K of the surplus be added to the Reserve Fund for Catastrophe as part of the Board's goal to reach \$100K; \$87K at the end of the current fiscal year. Mr. Tower recommends that the \$146K balance should be transferred to the Reserve Fund for Roads.

**Mr. Parry asked for a motion to accept the report of the Treasurer. A motion was made and seconded. After no discussion, the motion passed.**

**Mr. Parry next asked for a motion to move \$10K of the Surplus Funds from the current fiscal year to the Reserve Fund for Catastrophe, and to move the remaining Surplus to the Reserve Fund for Roads. A motion was made, seconded, and passed with no discussion.**

**X. Report of the Fire & Safety Committee**

Vice President Jeff Miceli presented the report of the Fire & Safety Committee.

Dr. Miceli summarized the incident report for the past fiscal year: 45 total (of which 3 related to Enders Island) with 74% related to emergency services. He attributed the higher total compared to prior years to multiple EMS calls going to the same location. Dr. Miceli also noted that fire protection service costs will go up in 2025/26 due to increased staffing expenses, the need to replace two fire trucks and other equipment. Dr. Miceli also reported that he continues to seek out a relationship with the Quiambaug Fire Department (QFD) which has expressed an interest in serving the MIFD but has been constrained by limited fire protection resources.

Dr. Miceli then provided an update on the Mason's Island Emergency Plan. A joint MIFD/MIPOA team continues to work on finalizing the communication plan. He urged all residents to sign up to the Stonington Emergency Alert system.

In response to a taxpayer question, Mr. Parry noted that the contract with the Mystic Fire Dept has a twelve month termination clause.

**XI. Report of the Facilities (Roads) Committee**

Mr. Giola described some of the changes in roads management and construction approval in conjunction with Rufus' retirement and assumption of responsibilities by the Facilities Committee.

**A motion was made and seconded to allow the Facilities Committee to use up to \$11,400 from the Roads Reserve to replace pavement markings with epoxy paint for \$9K and replace road signage.**

**(The motion passed on a voice vote with no discussion. )**

**A motion to allow the MIFD Board, at its discretion, to amend the Road Recreational Facilities Maintenance Reimbursement Agreement so it would allow MIPOA to appoint the Facilities Committee to act in the capacity of general contract role that is required in the Agreement and to amend the protocol described in the Agreement as maybe required when the Facilities Committee is acting in such role.**

**(The motion passed on a voice vote with no discussion. )**

**A motion was made to amend the existing ordinance re permits to work or excavate under MIFD-managed roads (as posted on the MIFD website. See attachment.)**

**(The motion passed on a voice vote with no discussion.)**

## **XII. Report of the Shoreline Road Protection Task Force**

Board member Kristin Foster presented the report of the Shoreline Road Protection Task Force.

Ms. Foster reviewed the project's progress and updated goals, as described in the Report of the Task Force posted on the MIPOA/MIFD Website and monthly MIFD meeting minutes. She stressed that the sloped rock revetement wall along Chippechaug Trail completed in April 2025, while helping protect the integrity of the road, does not mitigate soil erosion on land between the road and the seashore.

Ms. Foster then provided further details of the modified shoreline project which consists of placing rocks in the water and vegetation along the waterfront to address the erosion issue. Revival of the tidal wetlands offshore and the trapping of sand behind the rocks would work to restrain wave action from eventually reaching the road, according to Ms. Foster. The pilot project incorporated input from the Mason's Island Company ("MICO"), though MICO recently notified MIFD and MIPOA that it has withdrawn permission for a living shoreline project on their land.

Ms. Foster then urged taxpayers to renew their support for the plan, noting progress (86% completion) in permit applications, with the goal of securing a grant award from the National Coastal Resiliency Fund (“NCRF”), and re-engaging MCo. To this end, she asked taxpayers to vote to approve a reallocation of \$120K from next year’s roads reserve, as part of a 25% matching of funds for the \$491K project. Of this amount, \$75K represents the unused portion of the \$195K approved in 2024/25 for shoreline projects. The remaining \$45K would be set aside from the upcoming roads reserve.

**A motion was made and seconded to use up to \$120K from the Reserve fund for Roads on the next phase of the Living Shoreline Protection Project near Allyn’s Alley. Following several questions regarding the sources of funds and MCo’s role in the project, the motion passed on a voice vote.**

**XIII. Report of the Tick Committee**

The Report of the Tick Committee was posted on the MIPOA/MIFD Website. David Ludwig presented the report on behalf of the Committee.

Mr. Ludwig discussed changes in the tick treatment schedule, notably the suspension of the second Talstar bifenthrin application, along with rescheduling of the TickKillz cedar oil treatments to late May and early June,. A fall Talstar application is still planned. He also noted that Mason Homestead Owners’ Association continues to provide permission to run one of the four poster treatment stations, and is now contributing funds.

**A motion was made to allow for the application of tick treatments on vacant residential building lots, at the owner’s request.**

**The motion carried with a voice vote, after several taxpayers asked how many lots were vacant in the District (approximately 3, according to Mr. Parry), what products are being used under the program, and the efficacy of those products. Mr. Ludwig noted that there have been questions about the efficacy of the natural products as they only work as repellents, though the goal of the program is to offer taxpayers multiple treatments that also address environmental concerns.**

**XIV. Report of the Traffic Committee**

The Report of the Traffic Committee was posted on the MIPOA/MIFD website.

Ms. Deichmann noted 144 days of security coverage with the guard house manned 1,152 hours during the 2024 season (April 26 to Columbus Day.) The guards recorded a 14% increase in vehicular traffic over 2023. She also noted that there were two police requests to review the guardhouse video tape in response to a reported missing bicycle and a car entering the property and leaving, according to Ms. Deichmann.

A taxpayer asked what instructions, if any, the guards were given to communicate with individuals intending to visit Enders Island. Referring to the recent settlement between the Mystic Preservation Neighborhood Association and St. Edmund of Connecticut, Inc./Society of St. Edmund, Mr. Parry indicated that a sign would be placed by Enders Island at the guard house.

**XV. Report of the Nominating Committee**

The Report of the Nominating Committee was posted on the MIPOA/MIFD Website.

Ms. Deichmann presented the Report of the MIFD Nominating Committee for 2024. The Committee included Catherine Deichmann and Ethan Tower from the MIFD Board, and as required by the Bylaws, three non-Board members: Gail Lane, Gay Reichart, and Tommy Thomason.

Ms. Deichmann noted the following changes:

- Three Board members terms expire at the end of June 2025.
- Audrey Brown will be retiring after three years of service.
- Fran Hoffman will be retiring after three years of service and has agreed to continue working on the Tick Committee as an off-board position.
- Kevin Riley has agreed to join the Board as Vice President for a three year term, ending in 2028.
- Nancy Taylor-Ross has agreed to join the Board as a Director for a three-year term, ending in 2028.
- Scott Parry has agreed to continue to serve as President, term ending in 2026.
- Jeff Miceli has agreed to continue serving as Director, term ending in 2026.
- Ethan Tower has agreed to continue to serve as Treasurer, term ending in 2026.
- Ricardo Kleinbaum has agreed to continue as Secretary/Clerk, term ending in 2027.
- Kristin Foster has agreed to continue serving as Director, term ending in 2027.
- Tom Giola has agreed to continue serving as Director, term ending in 2027.
- Catherine Deichmann has agreed to serve as Director for a renewed three year term, ending in 2028.
- Bill Taylor has agreed to continue to serve as Tax Collector, for a renewed one year term ending in 2026.

**A motion was made and seconded to accept the report of the Nominating Committee and to elect the persons so nominated to those positions. The motion passed with no discussion.**

**XVI. Approval of the Annual Budget**

**Gail Lane made a motion to postpone consideration of the budget until after the New Business portion of the meeting when she planned to present another motion calling for the suspension of the residential tick treatment program. The motion was seconded. The motion was defeated after a voice vote and show of hands.**

Mr. Tower then provided a review of the upcoming 2025/26 budget which was circulated to the meeting attendees. He noted that tax revenues would increase slightly as a result of the enlarged Grand List and a small contribution from the Mason Homestead Homeowners' Association with total revenues reaching \$725K.

Key expense items include a slight decline in roads maintenance to roughly \$88K as MIFD will no longer pay management fees to MICO, according to Mr. Tower. However, fire protection costs will rise about 10% in fiscal 2025 to \$385K for reasons outlined earlier in the presentation by Mr. Miceli. Connecticut Water costs will rise slightly due to an overdue billing error.

Mr. Tower anticipates a \$112K surplus in 2025/26 of which \$10K would again be allocated to the Reserve Fund for Catastrophe and \$102K would go to the Reserve Fund for Reserves. After segregating \$120K funds for the shoreline project, Mr. Tower projects year-end Roads Reserve and Catastrophe Reserve balances of \$93K and \$97K, respectively at June 30, 2026. The mill rate will remain unchanged at 3.4, as planned last year.

**A motion was made and seconded to approve the budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2025 as presented and to set the mill rate at 3.4. After discussion of plans to add more carp to the pond and whether the recent St. Edmunds agreement would impact the MIFD budget, the motion passed.**

#### **XVII. New Business**

**Gail Lane made the following motion and then explained her justification for recommending termination of the residential tick application program:**

*Motion to Remove Tax Funding for the Masons Island Fire District (MIFD) Tick Yard Treatment Program*

*Whereas, since the well-intentioned introduction of the yard tick treatment tax in 2021, MIFD's tick control initiative has not resulted in a significant reduction in tick-borne disease cases, which have remained at approximately two per year since 2012;*

*Whereas, approximately 60% of the acreage within the Fire District is not part of the program, and an additional ~90 acres on Mason's Island are outside the program's reach;*

*Whereas, the yard treatment program consumes 6.7% of MIFD's annual budget (\$38,500), funded by a .27 mil ad valorem tax, levied on all property owners regardless of participation or eligibility;*

*Whereas, the tax forces property owners to subsidize treatment on private properties not their own, even when their land is ineligible, already managed, or treated outside the program; Whereas, increased property taxes reduce the value of our property, Therefore, I move that MIFD discontinue its tick yard treatment program and that the associated .27 mil tax levy be rolled back accordingly. Fire District (MIFD) Tick Yard Treatment Program*

*Whereas, since the well-intentioned introduction of the yard tick treatment tax in 2021, MIFD's tick control initiative has not resulted in a significant reduction in tick-borne disease cases, which have remained at approximately two per year since 2012;*

*Whereas, approximately 60% of the acreage within the Fire District is not part of the program, and an additional ~90 acres on Mason's Island are outside the program's reach; Whereas, the yard treatment program consumes 6.7% of MIFD's annual budget (\$38,500), funded by a .27 mil ad valorem tax, levied on all property owners regardless of participation or eligibility;*

*Whereas, the tax forces property owners to subsidize treatment on private properties not their own, even when their land is ineligible, already managed, or treated outside the program;*

*Whereas, increased property taxes reduce the value of our property,*

*Therefore, I move that MIFD discontinue its tick yard treatment program and that the associated .27 mil tax levy be rolled back accordingly.*

**Discussion followed with Mary McAuley (Chair of the Tick Committee from 2004 – 2014) and Fran Hoffman (Tick Committee head) challenging Ms. Lane's rationale. Ms. McAuley read the following text which was sent to the community on May 17, 2025.**

*To MIFD Residents,*

*As former Chairs and Current Member of the MIFD Lyme Disease Prevention Program, we urge you to VOTE NO on a potential motion at the annual meeting to eliminate the MIFD-funded tick treatment program and its associated tax levy of .185 mil (approximately \$180 per residence on average).*

*This motion would remove treatment of single-family lot perimeters, MIFD common areas, and walking trails—leaving only the 4-Poster Deer Feeder component. This would*

*dismantle the comprehensive approach that has dramatically reduced Lyme disease cases on Mason's Island. Background & Results Since coordinated treatment began in 2005, Lyme disease cases dropped from widespread prevalence to just 1–2 cases annually by 2013 and each year since. There were no reported cases in 2024.*

*The success is due to our integrated program, not just one portion of the program, such as the 4-Poster Deer Feeders: Property perimeter treatments • 4-Poster Deer Feeders • Treatment of common areas and walkways • Community education •*

*Tick experts consistently affirm that such integrated efforts are the gold standard. As Dr. Scott Williams of the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station recently noted (April 10, 2025), that Mason's Island's program is a very effective tick control program.*

*Why Maintain the Program?*

*Higher Participation & Lower Cost: Integrating property perimeter treatments into the MIFD budget in 2021 led to a 60% increase in participation and reduced costs through vendor discounts and economies of scale. Individual treatment would be ~30% more expensive and less effective.*

*Simplified Administration: Including the program in the MIFD budget eliminated the burdensome sign-up and payment process.*

*Tax Deductibility: Costs included in MIFD taxes may be deductible on state and federal returns for some homeowners. Increased Property Value: Realtors recognize the program's value in protecting families and pets, contributing to property appeal.*

*Fair Cost Sharing: Since all residents benefit from reduced disease risk, it's fair that all contribute.*

*Conclusion: Eliminating this program would reverse hard-won public health gains and return us to an ineffective patchwork system. For the health, safety, and well-being of all MIFD residents, please vote NO on the proposed motion.*

Signed, Jean M. Anderson Mary McAuley Dave Ludwig

**A vote by show of hands vote revealed 10 votes in favor and the remainder of the attendees eligible to vote, voted against. The motion was defeated.**

#### **XVIII. Next Annual Meeting**

Mr. Parry reported that the next Annual Meeting will take place on Saturday May 23, 2026 at 10:00 am.

**Adjourn**

**A motion was made to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded and approved, and the meeting accordingly adjourned at 11:59 am.**

Respectfully submitted,

Ricardo Kleinbaum – Clerk, Mason’s Island Fire District

DRAFT