

**Mason’s Island Fire District Monthly Meeting
February 17, 2026 – 5:30 PM
Mason’s Island Yacht Club**

1. Call to Order

- a. President Scott Parry called the meeting to order at 5:35 pm. Board members Kevin Riley (Vice President), Bill Taylor (Tax Collector), Ricardo Kleinbaum (Clerk), Ethan Tower (Treasurer), Kristin Foster, Tom Giola, and Nancy Taylor Ross were present. Lou Allyn (MICO) was also present. Catherine Deichmann, Jeff Miceli and Dave Ludwig (Tick Committee rep.) were absent.

2. Agenda Additions/Deletions/Changes – None.

3. Approval of Previous Minutes –

- a. A motion was made and seconded to approve the January 2026 monthly meeting minutes after agreement to make the following changes to the published draft minutes:
 - i. Rewording of sections 5 C (iii)
 - ii. Rewording of section 5 F (vi)
 - iii. Additional language to section 7 (B), Emergency Warning
- b. The motion carried.

4. Treasurer’s Report – Ethan Tower

- a. Referring to the previously circulated monthly financials and preliminary 2026/27 budget, Ethan noted making the second planned installment of the \$383K annual payment to the Mystic Fire Dept (“MFD”). Overall budget line items and cash position are in good shape, according to Ethan.
- b. Ethan solicited input from the Facilities Committee to generate next year’s budget, particularly the availability of residual funds from the 2025/26 budget for pond and woods maintenance. Tom reported that Pacheco has not yet come to clean out debris and sediment from the swale drains (off of Old South, Hickory Ledge) and perform trail clearing work in the conservation land. He plans to follow up with the landscaping/mowing vendor. Kristin suggested this clearing

work could be carried out by volunteers in the community. Board members discussed the extent of trimming needed around the pond and in adjacent wooded areas.

- c. Ethan said he also needs additional information on the 2026 tick treatment program plans and estimated vendor application costs to assemble the upcoming budget. A short discussion followed on scheduling and product selection. Scott noted that he is compiling the results of the second tick survey which he believes should shape the treatment program. Kristin emphasized the importance of implementing a multi-year plan.
- d. Ethan reported that previously discussed drainage issues on Yacht Club Road were not apparent this winter season (and thus may not require expense outlays for repairs).
- e. Ethan recommended that for operational and aesthetic reasons road cracks throughout the District need to be addressed. Road cracks result from issues below the surface: poor foundation as well as moisture accumulation and freeze/thaw activity which were quite evident this winter season, according to Board members. Tom agreed to confer with Bob D. and provide a budget expense figure for road crack repairs.
- f. Ethan described the criteria for setting future mill rates levels (3.4 in 2025/26). A key consideration is the expense trajectory for capital improvement projects (largely roads.) Ethan believes that at least \$40K to \$50K should be allocated annually to cover ongoing capital improvement (road) projects. Tom noted the figure could approach \$100K. The Board agreed on the importance of building up reserves for this purpose.

5. Committee Reports

- a. **Fire & Safety Committee (Emergency Preparedness) – Jeff Miceli (absent), Ethan Tower**
 - i. Jeff distributed information to the Board members ahead of the meeting. He noted 3 incidents in January: two non emergency calls and one medical.
 - ii. Ethan reported on the January 27 meeting (Kevin, Jeff and Ethan) with the Mystic Fire Dept (“MFD”) to review proposed budget

increases for 2026/27. Ethan disclosed that MFD anticipates a \$53K increase (\$250 per household) in 2026/27 and an additional hike of \$40K in 2027/28 to cover increased professional staffing requirements and equipment procurement costs. MIFD represents 15% of MFD’s budget, according to Ethan. The Board discussed several options and agreed to continue negotiations with MFD to secure reasonable and stable pricing on future contracts.

b. Tick Committee – Jeff Miceli (absent)/Dave Ludwig (absent)

- i. In written correspondence presented before the meeting, Jeff provided an update on the launch of an active tick monitoring program within MIFD. He noted coordinating the volunteer led effort with the Connecticut Agricultural Experimental Station (CAES).

c. Traffic Control - Catherine Deichmann (absent)

- i. **No report.**

d. Nominating Committee – Kristin Foster

- i. Kristin provided an update on the recruitment of candidates to fill Board slots: Tom Giola’s last year of a three year term and one to two candidates to serve new 3 year terms beginning on July 1, 2026.
- ii. Kristin agreed to submit the final Nominating Committee report and recommendations to the Board no later than the April monthly meeting.
- iii. A discussion followed on the feasibility of enabling Board members to participate remotely (“dial in”) to monthly meetings. Ethan and Ricardo agreed to research whether any by-law change is needed, or other statutory and best practices requirements need to be satisfied.

e. Facilities Committee – Tom Giola, Bob Domurat (absent) - Referring to the monthly Facilities Committee report, Tom noted the following:

- i. **Plowing Contract** – Minor complaints for speeding, curb damage, and frequency were noted. Tom has used the feedback to draft next year’s contract to include snow depth criteria, plowing route, cleaning standards, and post-storm review. Current contract runs through fall 2026.
- ii. **3 Schoolhouse Construction** – Tom described issues related to the project: truck damage to right of away (reported by Ricardo), use of the private road to access the site, lack of information on wetlands impact. Tom noted that the builder is performing site work and excavation on the lot, which is permissible pending Coastal Area Management review approval.
- iii. **Capital Projects** – Tom recommended the Board establish a framework to accommodate residential input and property line validation on new projects that go beyond the repair and/or replacement of existing materials. The Board discussed the notification process and reiterated the annual meeting venue as the best conduit of information unless there are planned road modifications in which case MIPOA, as the land owner, would exercise authority.
- iv. **New Water Main** – Later this year, Connecticut Water will install new mains on Allyn’s Alley and Old South to address leaks and material quality. As the work will be entirely on the shoulder, there will be no road work, according to Tom.

6. New Business – Update on Mason’s Island Bridge and Approaches Projects

a. Mason’s Island Bridge – Lou Allyn

- i. Lou updated the Board on the planned reconstruction of the Mason’s Island Bridge, noting a low deck geometry rating of 3/10 due to narrow 10 ft. lanes, absence of shoulders, and lack of pedestrian protection.
- ii. The Board discussed possible scenarios for the bridge rebuild and the extent to which approaches might be addressed.

- iii.** Lou reported the following upcoming meetings on the topic:
Monday, March 30 BOF Public Hearing with opportunity to comment on the budget at Stonington High School 7:00 PM;
Monday, April 20 Town Meeting Stonington High School 7:00 PM Tuesday; April 28 Referendum.

A complete list of upcoming meetings related to the 2026/27 budget is available at:

https://www.stonington-ct.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlf3851/f/news/0_-_26-27_board_of_finance_budget_hearing_schedule_v.4_02-09-26_002.pdf

7. Next Meeting: Tuesday, March 17, 2026 at 5:30

Adjourn

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 6:46 pm. It was seconded and approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Ricardo J. Kleinbaum – Clerk, Masons Island Fire District