

## **Mason's Island Fire District BOD Meeting – April 14, 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, Acting Tax Coordinator Alex Ellison, Chris Ficke and Jeff Walker also participated. President Jim McAuley called the meeting to order at 5:38 pm. A quorum was on the call.

**Clerk's Report:** M/S/P approving the minutes from previous meeting, March 18, 2020.

**Pond Update:** Chris Ficke and Jeff Walker attended the meeting to discuss the pond. Chris said that he has researched other treatment programs. Beyond the continuing algicide treatments, Chris and Jeff believe that something needs to be done about the build up of muck. There may be too many large rocks to hydro-rake the muck, which costs \$10,000 per acre plus (the pond is approximately 3.6 acres) the cost of removing the muck. It might be best to dredge the bottom 2 to 9 feet. This can push the rocks out of the way and costs \$50-60,000/acre or about \$186,000 total. Jeff said that he has walked the pond bottom and that in some spots the muck was up to his waist. As such, there may be much more than one foot or so. He pointed out that the north and south ends of the pond were filling in, and that one more limited approach would be to dig out both ends with a backhoe as a test. This would be a test to see if this is the way to go. If so, the pond could be drained later and the muck could be removed with a bulldozer. Chris asked what could be proposed for MIFD to support improving the pond, adding that it could be possible to build up a fund for the pond over several years. A survey of the pond would cost around \$3,000 and is done sonically, without draining the pond. Jim noted that the pond is still owned by the Masons Island Company. Dredging would cost \$8-10,000 just for the north and south ends via backhoe, so doing that plus a survey plus the algicide treatment would total \$17-19,000. Ethan suggested there was room in the budget to add \$3,000 for the survey to the algicide costs without changing the mil rate. Lee suggested that we do that and consider the dredging in 2021-2022, and that was the group's consensus. Jeff and Chris signed off from the call.

**President's Report:** There were no emergency calls in March so the total for the fiscal year still stands at 20.

**Treasurer's Report:** Prior to the meeting, Ethan Tower distributed updated Profit & Loss Budget vs. Actual and Balance Sheet reports, and annual budget reports for the next fiscal year, 2020-2021. For the current year, the storm last October used up most of the Named Storm Expense line item. Drainage was \$2,140 over budget. Fire Protection – CWC is more than \$9,200 under budget as the water company still has not started billing for the hydrants installed in 2019. \$20,000 to \$25,000 should be available at year end to be moved to the Roads Reserve.

In discussing the budget for next year, the draft budget contemplated that the FD would provide tick control program for homeowners in lieu of their paying a separate tick payment. John Parry stated that with the potential for no live annual meeting, and the potential problem of offering the service to all parts of the district, that the proposal be deferred for further consideration until next year. The board was in agreement with this approach and Ethan will remove tick spraying from the next draft of the budget. The proposed budget includes the full amount that CWC can bill for the hydrants and a customary 3% increase for the Fire Department. New street signs are included in the capital expenditures along with \$10,260 for French & Sons bid to install gravel on Old South Road. After discussion, the budget for the road sign work will be increased \$12,000. The cost of tax collection has been reduced to \$1,500 from the budgeted \$3,000 this year. Rufus Allyn suggested that rather than improving Old South Road it would be more prudent to examine other ways to improve erosion protection of Chippechaug Road. He also said that if the Board decides to install gravel on Old South Road, it could proceed and acquisition of the adjoining parcels and the roadway could be dealt with later. After discussion, the budget will be revised so that the money can be spent for Chippechaug Trail erosion control and/or emergency access via Old South Road.

**Unfinished Business:** (1) Shore Line Erosion – Kristin Foster spoke with Steven Dodd, President of the Lords Point Fire District who suggested that we contact the DEEP as they can provide helpful guidance and whose approval in any event would be needed. Lords Point experience was not exactly on point as it dealt with replacement of a dune. Kristin is also exploring natural shoreline restoration options and will contact DEEP. (2) Stonington Director of Public Works – Jim reported that Town Hall is closed to visitors and there was nothing to report. (3) Succession Planning/Nominating Committee Report – The nominating committee consisted of non-Board members Betsy Lebel, Dexter Murphy and Jeff Walker along with Board members Kristin Foster and Lee Hisle. Tom Flaherty and Scott Parry will join the Board. Ethan will serve as president, Ethan will talk to Scott about becoming vice president and eventually president, Bill Taylor will become treasurer and Tom Cooke will become secretary. (4) Road Signs – The cost of new road signs was covered in the budget discussion. The locations for the initial group of sample signs proposed by Lee were approved.

**New Business:** (1) Annual Meeting – At issue was what to do about the annual meeting under current circumstances. Jim reported that MIPOA plans to hold their meeting outside the Yacht Club on May 23<sup>rd</sup> with people sitting 6 feet apart. The Yacht Club is considering using proxies under corporate enabling statutes that do not apply to the FD. After discussion, it was decided to try to hold the meeting on May 23<sup>rd</sup> as scheduled. If that is not possible, a small group would meet outside the Yacht Club on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, and immediately adjourn the meeting to a future date. Written ballots may be an option. The board will discuss this issue further at the next meeting

when better information about public gatherings will be available. (2) Tax Deferral – Ethan said he was contacted by the Stonington Tax Collector who is announcing that taxpayers can apply for, and automatically receive, a three month deferral of payment of taxes. This will apply to the FD's taxes as well. The FD has a reserve equivalent to six months expenses and most of the FD's expenses are incurred over time, so we should be able to handle the deferral. (3) Tax Coordinator/Collector – Alex Ellison was nominated and unanimously approved as Tax Collector.

**MIFD Meeting Calendar:**

The next meeting is scheduled for May 12, 5:30 pm via Zoom conference call.

Meeting Adjourned – 7:09 pm

Respectfully submitted,  
Bill Taylor