

## **Mason's Island Fire District Annual Meeting May 28, 2016**

President Jim McAuley called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m. Jim noted that the meeting would follow Roberts Rules of Order and requested no sidebars while someone recognized by the chair was speaking. He asked that those wishing to speak raise their hand, stand when recognized by the chair, state their name and then speak. Jim read the section of the MIFD Bylaws that set forth eligibility for voting and asked for a show of hands of those attending that were qualified to vote. The Clerk confirmed that a quorum was present. Jim introduced the current slate of officers and Board members: David Krupp, Vice President; Ethan Tower, Treasurer; Bill Taylor, Clerk; and Directors Thomas Gram, Greta Jones (absent), Kristin Foster, Gordon Kemp (absent) and Lee Hisle (absent). He thanked the Board for their service. Minutes of last year's Annual Meeting were distributed with the package of materials for this year's meeting ("Advanced Meeting Distribution" or "AMD"). M/S/P to waive the reading of the minutes and M/S/P to approve the minutes as written.

**President's Report:** Jim noted that a President's Report had been included in AMD, and then reported on some additional items: (1) The Mystic Fire Department (MFD) increased its annual fire protection fee by \$1,305 (approximately 3%) to a total annual charge of \$44,805 for the fiscal year 2016-17. This charge covers up to 25 emergency calls. Additional calls cost \$1,250 each, with a cap of \$48,000. In past years, when calls exceeded 25 there has not been any additional charge. Through the end of April, there have been 21 calls this year. (2) Enders Island – Jim and MIPOA President Bob Martin have been meeting periodically with Fr. Tom Hoar. The novitiate has not made its annual voluntary contribution, previously \$3,000 per year, for the last two years. (3) Excavation Permit Process – The Town of Stonington does not extend its excavation permit process to MIFD's private roads. The Town requires application for a permit and bonding to assure the proper restoration of roadways that are dug up. The Board will research this issue in the next year and produce a position paper on how to best handle excavation of MIFD's roads in the future. (4) The Connecticut Water Company (CWC) was obligated to perform final permanent paving work where the new water mains were installed. Most of this work was made unnecessary by our planned road repaving. CWC offered the MIFD \$90,000 to release it from its repaving obligation. MIFD has agreed to this and we expect payment by the end of June.

**Report of the Clerk:** For the Fiscal Year 2015-2016, the MIFD Board of Directors met seven times. Minutes were prepared recording discussion, motions and voting. The minutes for the last fiscal year will be available soon on MIPOA web site which is being updated with new software. All future meeting minutes will be posted on MIPOA web site within 7 days of each meeting. Agendas for future meetings and a schedule of future meetings will be filed with the Town Clerk's office in advance. The meeting notice for this meeting was published per the

bylaws in The Day on May 16th. The Agenda for this meeting was posted in the Town Clerk's office on May 23rd.

**Treasurer's Report:** Ethan Tower reported that the District's accountant completed his audit of the last four fiscal years and complimented the prior treasurer, Jeff Brown, on his work. All annual filings for this year were completed. Ethan reviewed the Financial Summary: Budgets & Actuals that was handed out at the meeting, comparing the first three columns: Actual 2014-2015, Projected Actual 2015-2016, and Budget 2015-2016. Tax Revenue exceeded budget by about \$1,000. Interest exceeded budget because the Road Reserves were not spent and Jeff had secured a higher interest rate. Revenues totaled \$334,467 and include the \$90,000 which CWC has agreed to pay.

Road Maintenance was detailed on the reverse side of the Budgets and Actuals sheet and totaled \$63,063. All road expenses are projected to come in on or below budget with overall expenditures around \$15,000 under budget. Due to the mild winter, there was no Crack and Seal Service or Sweeping. There was no Unplanned Storm expense so that \$11,500 will be added to the Road Reserve.

The \$150,000 that was planned for road repaving in 2015-6 will be moved to the next fiscal year. Combined with \$168,000 moved into the Roads Reserve for this year and reduced by the \$6,000 spent on Black Duck paving, the year-end Roads Reserve is projected to be \$312,000. Total reserves are \$440,000 including \$90,000 Unreserved Cash.

Jeff Brown asked whether the \$12,500 Reserve Fund for Fire could be reduced since the Fire Protection Agreement cost is capped at \$48,000, only \$3,200 more than the base contract. Ethan asked that the discussion be tabled to let him check the terms of the contract. Fran Hoffman asked about the apparent increase in mowing cost compared to 2014-5. Ethan responded that mowing varies with the amount of rain and that the prior year had been unusually dry.

M/S/P to add the excess of Revenues over Expenses for 2015-2016 to the Roads Reserve Fund.

**Committee Reports:**

1. **Security & Traffic Report:** David Krupp reported that the guard service at the Gatehouse will be the same as last year with the exception of adding two weekends after Labor Day at the end of this season and starting two weeks earlier than Memorial Day next spring. We will also have extended hours on two weekends this summer. The objective of the extra weekends and extended hours is to evaluate their effectiveness in reducing traffic

on the island. Data will be collected to determine whether we should consider extra weekends and additional hours. Patty Copp has red stickers for those that need more than the two sent out with the AMD. You may need to use tape as some people are having trouble keeping the new stickers attached to their windshield.

2. **Tick Report:** Mary McAuley reported that the MIPOA web site has all the data and information on the tick program. This year in response to two e-mails and a mailing, there were 152 responses, or 82%, slightly better than the average 79% for recent years. Of those responding, 110 properties signed up for the tick control program compared to 105 last year, and another 19 owners indicated they will use some other form of tick control. This brings the total number of properties up to 129, an increase of 9 from last year. Mary asked those who had not signed up to reconsider as more universal participation provides better coverage for everyone. There were four cases of Lyme disease in the MIFD last year versus the one or two cases in the recent past. Prior to the program there were 15-20 cases a year. The four poster program is continuing.
3. **Pond Report:** Jeff Walker reported on the pond for Lou Allyn. The contract with Solitude Lake Management for treatment of the pond for the next three years has been signed. The pond is in good shape except for algae blooms such as the one we are experiencing now. These are treated with Captan which destroys chlorophyll but is harmless to humans and pets. There were three treatments last year and there is a treatment scheduled for June 1. Jeff and Lou pull out the water lilies which can overwhelm a pond quickly otherwise and have been joined in this endeavor by Martha Ficke.
4. **Road Report:** Rufus Allyn reported that there will be no increase in the snow plowing contract cost for the coming winter. Tree trimming will occur shortly. Rufus stressed that in the fall paving program, it will be important for people to follow the instructions of the flagmen to avoid driving over and damaging asphalt that has just been put down. The paving will involve grinding down the existing pavement, leveling, and repaving. There will be no application of crushed stone (chip seal). There was some discussion of whether it would be better to wait until next spring to repave to avoid damage from heaving in the winter. Rufus answered that it could not be done this spring due to the water line installation and need to wait for the soil to settle. Taking all things into consideration, it was thought best to do the paving this fall. In addition, the paving company has agreed to hold their price for this fall, but we do not know what the price would be next spring.
5. **Nominating Committee Report:** Kristin Foster, chairwoman of the Nominating Committee, reported that the members of the Committee from the MIFD Board were herself and Thomas Gram, and that three required non-Board members were Jeff Brown, Jennifer Milne and Marty Pryor. On behalf of the Nominating Committee, Kristin

presented the following slate of Officers for the fiscal year 2016-2017 and the following members of the Board (new terms in bold):

		Term Ending
President	James McAuley	2017
<b>Vice President</b>	<b>David Krupp</b>	<b>2019</b>
Treasurer	Ethan Tower	2017
<b>Clerk</b>	<b>William Taylor</b>	<b>2019</b>
Director	Thomas Gram	2017
Director	Lee Hisle	2018
Director	Kristin Foster	2018
Director	Greta Jones	2018
<b>Director</b>	<b>John Parry</b>	<b>2019</b>
Tax Collector	Lydia Herd	

Jim McAuley asked if there were other nominations from the floor. Hearing no other nominations, Jim moved to close the nominations and accept the report of the Committee. M/S/P to accept the slate of Officers and elect as Directors David Krupp, William Taylor and John Parry to three year terms.

**Presentation of Annual Budget:** Ethan Tower presented the Budget for 2016-2017 as was set forth in column four of the Financial Summary: Budgets & Actuals. Ethan noted that Tax Revenue will decline less than \$700 assuming the motion on the Agenda discontinuing tax billing for \$10 or less is passed. Interest in the coming year will also be lower since money in the Road Reserve will decline when the paving is completed. He removed the contribution from the Novitiate as they have not contributed in two years. Insurance is projected to cost \$500 less, the tax collector payment was dropped from the budget, and the cost of future audits will be added as an annual, accrual expense. Traffic Control and Safety was increased to cover the cost of additional weeks and experimental hours. The Budget projects an excess of income over expenses of \$43,304 which would be transferred to the Roads Reserve at next year's annual meeting. Capital expenditures of \$251,854 will cover the cost of paving, including Schoolhouse Road down to Heron, \$12,000 for side roads and cut-outs that CWC would have performed in their repaving, and a 5% contingency. After payment of these costs and the addition of the \$43,304 excess income, the Reserve for Roads should be \$90,000 at the end of the next fiscal year. Due to the additional \$78,000 from CTW (\$90,000 less the additional \$12,000 in costs), the MIFD will be 1 to 1-1/2 years ahead on funding for the road repaving. The mill rate will remain unchanged at 1.63.

M/S to approve the Budget as presented including the expenditure of \$251,854 to repave the Chippechaug and Schoolhouse Roads. After some discussion and questions, the motion passed on a unanimous voice vote.

**New Business:**

- 1. Motion to exempt from taxation all motor vehicles and personal property with an annual tax assessment under \$10.** Jim McAuley stated that these taxes are more expensive to collect than they are worth. Most fire districts as well as the Town of Stonington have set a minimum for tax bills between \$5 and \$10. In July, 2015, 170 tax bills under \$10 were generated for a total of \$670 in taxes. M/S/P
- 2. Fire Hydrants.** Jim McAuley opened the discussion of installing fire hydrants and moving \$9,000 from the increase of the Roads Reserve to Fire Protection Charges. M/S to authorize the Board of Directors of MIFD to take any and all actions necessary to facilitate the installation of fire hydrants by Connecticut Water Company within Masons Island Fire District as soon as practical in locations selected by the Roads Committee in consultation with the Mystic Fire Department and the Connecticut Water Company, and, furthermore, to add \$9,000 for associated Fire Protection Charges to the 2016-2017 budget, removing an equal amount from the budgeted increase in the Roads Reserve.

Jim next asked for a motion to limit debate to 5 minutes per person, one speech per person and 30 minutes in total. M/S/P.

Speakers were called on in alternating order, with each speaker in favor of the motion followed by one speaker in opposition. Kevin North spoke first, referring to his long experience in fighting fires, the difficulties encountered in using sea water to fight fires, the inability of the Fire Department to use the Ice Pond stand pipes, and the superiority of using water from hydrants to fight fires. Dan Van Winkle opposed hydrants based on the availability of sea water around Masons Island, suggested a special assessment for those benefitted by Phase 1, alluded to the current inadequate water pressure, and his concern that the water company would have complete control once hydrants are approved. He also stated that hydrants would put an unfair tax burden in that those who need hydrants the least, whose houses are on the water, would pay the most due to the valuation of their properties. Cathy Doherty supported hydrants, saying that with new water pipes the pressure would be better and our biggest investment is in our homes. Bob Johnson spoke in opposition, asking how you can provide hydrants for some people, while denying them to everyone else. He stated that many water mains will need to be upgraded, requiring blasting, which will be a larger inconvenience than you would expect. Marcia McGowan spoke next, saying she was neither for nor against but was concerned about the increased costs of hydrants as side road water mains are upgraded. She also objected to the process and the lack of a written contract with the

water company. Bob Martin spoke of the compelling need for better resources to respond to a fire on a timely basis. New developments in Stonington are required to have 6-8" water mains and fire hydrants. Hugh McGee objected to the proposal and the way it was promoted. He thought the committee to consider hydrants was formed last summer and objected that the first notice after that was in January and even after that there had been no way to have any input. He suggested there were ways to deal with the unfair taxation based on building and land values including going to the legislature, that there was no urgency to hydrants and paving of the roads should not drive the installation or timing of hydrants. Tom Flaherty suggested that the most important opinion is that of the Mystic fire chief and that to fight a fire you need a source of water, you need the equipment to get the water to the fire and you need trained people. The chief told him that the fire department would not use the pond stand pipes, and you need to get a pumper within 20 feet of adequately deep ocean water. The chief called installing hydrants a no brainer. Linda Watkins urged people to vote their conscience and stated she wanted improved water pressure at her house. She said the current cost of hydrants was not bad but that future costs were unpredictable. She then made a motion to table the vote until the bylaws can be amended to allow absentee ballots. There was a second and some discussion of this motion, followed by a motion to end debate of this motion. The motion to end debate was seconded and passed on a show of hands. The motion on whether to table today's vote until the bylaws could be amended lost by a vote 55 to 53. A ballot vote was then taken on the main motion.

The Clerk read the section of the bylaws that defines eligibility to vote and explained the procedures to be followed in voting by ballot. The voting period was set for the later of ½ hour or the time it took all those present to vote. Three tables on the Yacht Club deck with two people at each checked off voters on the voter list prepared by Lydia Herd. Voting issues were referred to Lydia. For those whose qualification to vote was at issue, ballots were placed in an envelope as a provisional vote. The Clerk had announced that if the margin of victory was greater than the number of provisional votes, there would be no resolution of the provisional votes. Voting commenced and concluded in ½ hour. The ballot box was taken into the Yacht Club and the votes were counted and recounted by a committee that included the Clerk, Hugh McGee and Sarah Lathrop. Excluding the 11 provisional ballots, the final vote was 79 in favor and 61 opposed. The motion passed.

Meeting Adjourned – 2:00 pm

Respectfully submitted  
Bill Taylor