

Mason's Island Fire District President's Report for the Fiscal Year ending 2026

Dear Residents,

The Annual Meeting of the Mason's Island Fire District (MIFD) will be held on Saturday May 23, 2026 at 10:00AM at the Mason's Island Yacht Club. I hope you will be able to attend.

I am always impressed by the time, interest, and dedication of the MIFD Board. Even though we do not agree on every issue, the Board members truly have the best interests of the community at heart and our community is well represented by a variety of opinions. This will be my last year as President of MIFD, but I will continue serving on the Board for one more year to provide support to our incoming President Kevin Riley.

After two very busy years for the MIFD Board, this Fiscal year was a relatively quiet one. I have summarized a few issues below that will be discussed at the annual meeting and any that require approval from the voters will be brought for a vote at that meeting.

Vote to Change By-Laws to Allow for Board Members to Attend Monthly Meetings Remotely

We are going to ask the voters to approve a change to the MIFD By-Laws to allow Board members to call into the monthly MIFD Board meetings using a phone or a computer when they cannot attend them in person. The main reason is to give us a greater pool of residents to pull from to serve on the MIFD Board and Board Committees to include the many MIFD residents that want to serve on the MIFD Board but who do not live on the island 12 months per year. The current By-Laws require MIFD Board members to attend monthly Board meetings in-person. Fortunately, while our By-Laws require us to follow Roberts Rules of Order when holding meetings, there are provisions in Roberts Rules of Order that allow for remote attendance, but it does require the organization to specifically allow for it in their By-Laws. Our Secretary Ricardo Kleinbaum will make this motion as part of his report.

Changes to the Contract with the Mystic Fire Department

We were approached earlier in 2026 by the Mystic Fire Department (MFD), who we contract with for emergency services, to warn us to expect a larger than normal fee increase this year mostly driven by payroll increases as they are forced to increase the number of paid firemen instead of relying on volunteers. The model of relying on volunteer firemen is in trouble in many communities nationwide and locally has even driven towns such as East Lyme to consolidate their fire houses to try and alleviate the problem of rapidly rising fire protection costs.

While MFD fees look like they will increase by 14% this year within their district, negotiations by the MIFD Board led by Board member Jeff Miceli were able to limit the increases to MIFD to 9% this year, 7.5% next year, and either 4% or CPI, whichever is larger in the three years after that. While 9% still seems like quite a hike, Jeff was able to successfully protect MIFD taxpayers from even higher increases.

Completion of Shoreline Protection Task Force

In the previous fiscal year we completed the project to protect Chippechaug Trail, the primary access route for the majority of residents within the Fire District, from the shoreline erosion occurring north of Allyn's Alley by installing the buried rock wall revetment that was presented and discussed at MIFD meetings in 2024, and installed in early 2025.

Accordingly, because this project came to an end, the Shoreline Road Protection Task Force was ended earlier this year. I would like to thank Kristin Foster and Christie Williams and the other Task Force members for dedicating considerable time and effort to look for and present options for protecting the road. Going forward, a team will continue to monitor and track any future erosion for further action. More information on the entire project, including the outcome of the Living Shoreline option that was researched and designed but not installed, will be available in a final report created by the Task Force that will be made available on the MIFD Website.

Further Changes to Facilities/Roads Committee

Rufus Allyn retired as Roads Manager and the Facilities Committee assumed those responsibilities effective on July 1, 2025 as prescribed in the changes approved at last year's annual meeting to the *Road and Recreational Facilities Maintenance Reimbursement Agreement*. The Facilities Committee members Tom Giola and Bob

Domurat were hard at work all year keeping up with the myriad of construction projects that have been underway in this fiscal year.

While the changes made last year to the *Ordinance re Permits to Work or Excavate In or Under MIFD-managed Roads* gave Bob and Tom the oversight they needed to ensure that building activities do not interfere with the roads and other structures owned by MIPOA and maintained by MIFD, it was a learning year for the MIFD and MIPOA Boards, the Committee members, and for the local builders, who had become used to less oversight in how their construction projects impact community-owned property. I thank Bob and Tom for persevering through some tough discussions with home owners and builders as the community got used to the higher level of oversight that now exists to protect our community assets.

From the experience we had this year in asking Bob and Tom, as volunteer members of the MIFD and MIPOA Boards, to take on the responsibilities that had previously been done as a paid position, we have come to the conclusion that the position of Roads Manager requires too much time to be done by volunteers, and we will return to the services of a paid professional. MIPOA will look to hire an individual to perform the duties that had been performed by Rufus Allyn and taken over by Bob and Tom on the Facilities Committee. The Facilities Committee will continue to exist to provide support and oversight of this new Roads Manager, and our Treasurer has placed money back in the budget for next fiscal year to fund a paid Roads Manager role as had been the case for many years. Jean Anderson, the president of MIPOA will discuss this in more detail in the MIPOA annual meeting to follow since the Roads Manager role reports to the MIPOA Board.

Regardless of who is in the role as Roads Manager, my request is that any homeowners that will be modifying their homes or landscaping to please read the MIFD and MIPOA ordinances and protocols **PRIOR** to beginning the process. Changes to a home or landscaping that will impact storm water drainage will be closely scrutinized and the Facilities Committee retains the right to require changes to landscape designs to lessen the impact on, and prevent costly upgrades to community-owned stormwater systems.

Tick Program Updates

The MIFD Tick Committee has been hard at work preparing for the 2026 season. Based on the results from our most recent Tick Survey, and after considering the tick control research done by the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES) staff as well as discussions with CAES personnel, we have decided to continue with the same tick control application schedule for residential lot perimeters that we used in 2025, with one minor change.

Similar to last year, for those residents selecting the natural cedar oil-based product (Tick Kilz), three applications will be applied on the lot perimeter in the spring by SeaScape. The timing of the application was changed last year on the recommendation of CAES and is based on when tick adults and nymphs are most active.

For those residents selecting the synthetic pesticide (a bifenthrin-based product), two applications will be applied on the lot perimeter, one application in the spring and one in the fall. The change in the program for 2026 is that after considering CAES research and our discussions with them, SeaScape will apply the normal granular Talstar product in the spring using lawn spreaders as has been the case for the last few years, but apply a liquid spray version of bifenthrin insecticide (Bifen IT) in the fall with backpack sprayers. CAES research suggests that liquid spray provides more thorough coverage but they do not recommend applying a spray while pollinators are active in the spring and summer because of its toxicity to other insects. The November timing of the fall application was recommended by CAES in order to wait until bees and other flying pollinators have become mostly dormant for the winter. The cost of the spray or granular bifenthrin is the same.

As always, residents may request to not have their property treated by Seascope and may choose to contract with a licensed contractor privately for tick-related services at their discretion.

The labels for all products used are available on the MIFD website.

Emergency Preparedness Plan

I would like to express my personal thanks to the team of individuals who continue to work hard to develop and refine the emergency preparedness plan. This is exactly the

type of community-minded program that makes the Masons Island community a unique place, with neighbours looking out for neighbours.

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

A reminder that Masons Island Fire District, as a public entity, is subject to the Freedom of Information Act. The Act requires us to provide information that we retain to those that request it. While there are a few carve outs on certain information that may be kept confidential such as salary information and health information, most information that the District maintains in paper and online storage facilities, including paper documents, meeting minutes, emails, submitted forms, mailing lists, etc must be shared upon request. This includes information you provide to us in applications and survey responses such as window decal request forms and tick selection forms. Please assume that if you send in a form or an email to MIFD or to one of its Board members, the information contained in that communication becomes public information and will have to be shared with the public upon request.

Roads Reserve and Roads Maintenance

It is good governance to grow our reserves to address future expected expenses and, when funds are used from the Reserves, it is expected that the Board will look to replenish the reserves in future budgets. At the same time, we recognize that adding funds to reserves creates a tax burden on current taxpayers. So the Board carefully weighs those future needs versus the current tax burden when allocating current taxes towards future needs.

To ensure we are not over-taxing to fund our Roads Reserve, the Facilities Committee each year assesses all of our roads to create an inventory of their condition and uses this information to update the future Roads Plan for when they will likely need to be replaced and to forecast the future costs and fund the Roads Reserve appropriately. Thankfully, due to the recent repaving of most of our roads, the roads are generally in good shape. Based on the most recent roads assessment, in the fall of 2026 we plan to repave Hickory Ledge, Osprey and Mallard Road. A motion to approve this expenditure will be part of the overall FY27 budget approval at the end of the annual meeting.

Changes on the MIFD Board

As will be discussed by the Nominating Committee at the annual meeting, our Board will change a bit as we head into FY 27. Kevin Riley will replace me as President, Nancy Taylor-Ross will become the new Treasurer, and Jeff Miceli and Tom Giola will end their terms on the Board. Adam Duczynski, a new resident on School House Rd has agreed to join the Board for a three-year term while I have agreed to stay on the Board for one more year. At the time of writing this report, the Nominating Committee is still looking for one more Director, which will be announced at the Annual Meeting. The remaining members will continue in their roles.

I would like to thank both Jeff and Tom for their incredible contributions to the Board in their short few years. As head of the Fire & Safety Committee, Jeff has led very difficult negotiations with the Mystic Fire Department, and represented MIFD in the creation of the Emergency Preparedness Plan. He has agreed to continue to assist in managing the Tick Program after he leaves his Board seat. Tom, as head of the Facilities Committee, has had an equally positive impact by bringing his vast knowledge of municipal construction and civil engineering to the Committee, helping us rewrite our building ordinances, initially suggesting the buried rock revetment design that was eventually installed near Allyn's Alley to protect Chippechaug Trail from erosion, and helping us design a new process for roads maintenance after Rufus Allyn resigned as Roads Manager. You will be asked to vote on the proposed slate of Officers and Directors near the end of the annual meeting.

Mil Rate for FY27

To fund the MIFD budget for FY27, the MIFD Board recommends that the mil rate for FY27 remain at 3.4. Despite increases in costs for fire protection, snow plowing and adding back the Roads Manager position, the Board has approved a budget that allows us to maintain the same mil rate which will allow us to fund our financial obligations for FY27, pay for FY27 capital projects, and continue to build our reserves. The Treasurer's report provides more details about the FY27 budget that will be proposed at this year's annual meeting including further details on the 3.4 mil rate for FY27, that you will be asked to vote on to approve.

Sincerely,

William Scott Parry, MIFD President