

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE
MISQUAMICUT FIRE DISTRICT
HELD SATURDAY, JUNE 11, 2022

The Annual Meeting of the Misquamicut Fire District was held at the Misquamicut Fire Station House, 65 Crandall Avenue, Misquamicut, Rhode Island on Saturday, June 11, 2022, at 10:00 a.m. Written notification was provided by posting in three (3) locations within the District, by direct mail, and by notice in The Westerly Sun, a local newspaper publication.

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Annual Meeting was called to order by Moderator Michelle Vacca at 10:00 a.m. Officers present at the meeting were the Moderator, Michelle Vacca, the District Clerk, Dianne Vumback, the Fire Chief Todd Findeisen, the Tax Collector, Mary Delisio, the Treasurer, William T. Sisco, the Assessor, Leone D'Onofrio, Members at Large, Marilyn Bellesheim and Holly Sisco Bowen, and the District Solicitor, John P. Toscano, Jr., Esq.

2. CALL OF THE MEETING

Dianne Vumback, District Clerk, read the Notice of the Annual Meeting. A copy of the Notice of Annual Meeting is available upon request.

3. SALUTE TO FLAG

All stood for the Pledge of Allegiance, led by Moderator Vacca.

4. INTRODUCTION OF OFFICERS

Clerk Vumback introduced all Fire District Officers and the Fire District Solicitor, all of whom were present.

5. MEMORIALS

A moment of silence was observed for all deceased Fire District residents, namely, Maryanne Aluzzo, Vija Bachmuts, Nancy Bilyak, Diana Castelli, Thomas Danios, Sandra Daggett, Mary Jane DiMaio, John Garofalo Sr., Mike Kaschuluk, John Ludko Jr., Michael Lynch, Ronald Seppa, John R. Stewart, Richard Weller.

6. MODERATOR'S OPENING STATEMENT

Moderator Vacca began the Annual Meeting by welcoming all taxpayers – whether new to the district or lifelong residents – to the 107th Annual Meeting. She reviewed the purpose of the meeting (to elect officers, to set the tax rate, to establish a budget and to discuss any legal business that shall come before said District). Moderator Vacca expressed her gratitude for the service of our firefighters, the Board of Officers, our volunteers and committee members, our webmaster/photographer, the beach pass distribution team and all those that served in the best interest of our beloved beaches and District.

GERARD J. NARDONE ANNUAL SERVICE AWARD

Moderator Vacca reminded the taxpayers present of the history of the Gerard J. Nardone Award, established in honor of the longest serving Moderator of the MFD. Moderator Nardone served for over 35 years and his pressing work was in the rebuilding of Misquamicut after Hurricane Carol in 1954. During his tenure, he accomplished many great things for the district – particularly by bringing in beach buildings with bathroom facilities and septic systems to the beaches. This year's recipient knew Gerard. For many years he was a fulltime resident of the District. He worked fulltime at Electric Boat, he was on the police reserves, he served as Chief of our Fire Department, was our Beach Manager and our first tractor operator. It is an honor to recognize Harold Steadman, Senior – Misquamicut's "everything man" with this service award.

CONSENT CALENDAR

1. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE 2021 ANNUAL MEETING

Clerk Vumback asked for a motion to waive the reading of the 2021 Annual Meeting minutes and to accept said minutes as presented.

Upon motion made and duly seconded to dispense with the reading of the minutes of the June 2021 Annual Meeting and to accept said minutes, it was unanimously

VOTED: To dispense with the reading of the minutes of the June 2021 Annual Meeting and to accept said minutes.

APPOINTMENTS

1. APPOINTMENT OF 3-MEMBER FINANCE COMMITTEE

Moderator Vacca appointed Taxpayers Michelle Colucci-Pinto, Andrew Delisio and Margo Sisco to the 3-member finance committee. She encouraged anyone interested in volunteering or serving on a committee to reach out to Dianne Vumback, our District Clerk.

NEW BUSINESS

1. NOMINATION AND ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Clerk Dianne T. Vumback placed into nomination for re-election all of the present Officers of the Board, namely, Michelle Vacca for Moderator, Dianne Vumback for Clerk, Todd Findeisen for Fire Chief, William Sisco for Treasurer, Mary Delisio for Tax Collector, Leone D'Onofrio for Tax Assessor, Marilyn Bellesheim and Holly Sisco-Bowen for Members-at-Large, and John Toscano for Solicitor. She then asked for any nominations from the floor. Having no nominations from the floor, a motion was made and seconded that all current Officers be re-elected for the 2022-2023 year, it was unanimously,

VOTED: That all the current Officers be re-elected for the 2022-2023 year.

2. BEACH PARKING PASS 2022-2023

Beach Parking Fees for 2022-2023 was discussed by Moderator Michelle Vacca. She reminded all taxpayers that the rate is set this year for the following year. Discussion included that the last increase was in 2017 and that the Board is recommending an increase to the Beach Parking Pass for the 2022 season. The recommended increase is \$50, raising the price from \$250 to \$300 to help offset some of the costs of running the parking lots. The Board recommends keeping the weekly pass at \$100. The Moderator asked if there was a motion from the floor to increase the price.

A motion was made by Doug Turnberg, and seconded by Walter Pawelkewicz to increase parking pass cost to \$300 for the 2022-2023 beach season, and it was,

VOTED: To increase parking pass cost to \$300 for the 2022-2023 beach season.

3. PROPOSED BY-LAW CHANGES

The Moderator presented to the attending taxpayers the following proposal:

That the By-Laws of the Misquamicut Fire District be changed to reflect that the position of Solicitor should not be an elected position nor should the solicitor be a member of the Board of Officers of the Misquamicut Fire District. The Board would have the authority to select a Solicitor who shall serve at the pleasure of the Board of Officers and should be a Rhode Island licensed attorney with at least five (5) years as a practicing attorney. The Solicitor need not be a property owner within the Fire District nor does the Solicitor need to be a resident-taxpayer within the District.

Taxpayer Attorney Matthew L. Lewiss stressed that he did not see the need to make any changes to the By-Laws nor does he feel that the District would benefit from having an attorney on an "as needed" basis. Mr. Lewiss and another taxpayer, Attorney Charles Soloveitzik asked for a vote to maintain the By-Laws as they presently exist.

Upon motion duly made by Doug Turnberg and seconded by Sharon Pelletier to allow the By-Laws to remain unchanged and it was,

VOTED: To allow the By-Laws to remain unchanged.

4. PROPOSED BUDGET (FISCAL YEAR: 2022-2023)

The proposed 2022-2023 budget was presented by Treasurer William Sisco, who addressed the body with his report, a copy of which is available upon request. Treasurer Sisco started his presentation by discussing that the Fire Department operations had an increase of \$17,000; salaries increased by ten percent from last year; insurance increased by \$2,000. The biggest increase was in wages which was an increase of \$67,000. The total increase in the budget was \$8,033. Treasurer Sisco also stated that \$90,000 debt service has been eliminated. Treasurer Sisco answered questions from the floor about the sinking fund, the restrictions on using such funds within the budget, and salaries for beach personnel.

A motion was made by Jim Culyer and seconded by Robert Belden to create a separate Fire Truck Fund.

Discussion ensued regarding three separate line items: storm damage, sinking fund and fire truck reserve funds.

Amended motion was made by Jim Culyer and seconded by Robert Belden to take \$40,000 from the sinking fund to create new fire truck fund and it was,

VOTED: To take \$40,000 from sinking fund to create a new fire truck fund.

A motion was made by Doug Turnberg and seconded by Sharon Pelletier to accept the 2022-2023 budget as presented, and it was

VOTED: to accept the 2022-2023 budget as presented.

5. PROPOSED TAX RATE (FISCAL YEAR: 2022-2023)

Tax Assessor Leone D'Onofrio addressed those present on the proposed tax rate for the 2022-2023 fiscal year. He explained that the MFD tax rate is a function of the budget. The 2021-2022 tax rate was \$0.93/\$1,000. This year the preliminary tax rate is \$0.70/\$1,000. This rate takes into consideration the \$8,033 increase in the 2022-2023 budget.

In closing, Tax Assessor D'Onofrio reminds the taxpayers that there is no voting on the tax rate, rather you vote on the budget.

COMMUNICATIONS AND REPORTS

1. MODERATOR'S REPORT OF THE FIRE DISTRICT

The Moderator began her report to the taxpayers by stating the difficult time the District is having in hiring lifeguards. She thanked Vincent Scaramuzzo, Leone D'Onofrio, Marilyn Bellesheim, Holly Bowen, and Karen Zuboff for their hard work helping to hire for the beach seasonal positions. They created incentives to hire and increased hourly wages to keep staff through Labor Day. She mentioned that the district is in solid financial shape. The Weekapaug contract is up in 2023 and work has begun to renew. The Fire Department increased their incentive program to attract new fire fighters. She closed with mentioning that the nationwide lifeguard shortage is negatively impacting the District and may result in closing part of Lawton Beach for swimming. She stated that we may have to close Clark Farms beach all together if Lifeguards are not on duty. The Moderator then answered questions regarding the beaches.

2. FINANCIAL REPORT OF THE FIRE DISTRICT

Treasurer William Sisco gave a report of the expenditures and receipts of the district for the 2021-2022 fiscal year. He reviewed specifics of the balance sheet and income statement as of May 21, 2022. A copy of his report was provided and is also available upon request. In closing, Treasurer Sisco discussed the cost of running the beaches and confirmed that the District has strong financial security.

3. REPORT OF MISQUAMICUT FIRE DEPARTMENT

Fire Chief Todd Findeisen gave the Fire Department report highlighting the number of calls the fire department responded to during the course of the year. To date, there were 131 calls, 23 of which were in the Weekapaug Fire District. Luckily there have been no major structural fires, although some close calls. He mentioned three firefighters completing RI First Firefighters Class (to applause). The Chief reminded the body that outside burning in firepits – per RI DEM no burn ordinance – can't be done due to the slight drought conditions. In closing he stated he would like to form a committee comprised of fire fighters, board members and taxpayers to review the needs of the fire station house.

4. DISTRICT RESOLUTIONS

The following District Resolution was read by Clerk Vumback:

Tax Resolution

Clerk Vumback asked for a motion to accept said Resolution as presented. Upon motion made by Doug Turnberg and seconded by Sharon Pelletier to approve the Tax Resolution as read, there being no further discussion, upon a show of hands, the Tax Resolution was approved.

Prior to closing the Annual Meeting, the Misquamicut Fire District Board surprised Moderator Vacca with cake celebrating her 30 years of dedicated MFD service. All taxpayers were invited to celebrate Michelle and enjoy a piece of cake. Comments of gratitude emerged from the taxpayers in the audience.

A motion was made by Doug Turnberg and seconded by Sharon Pelletier to adjourn the Annual Meeting at 11:49 a.m.

A true copy, attest:

Dianne T. Vumback,
MFD District Clerk

TAX RESOLUTION

That the electors of the Misquamicut Fire District, qualified to vote at the District meeting, legally assembled on this, the 11th day of June, A.D. 2022, hereby order the assessment and collection of a tax on the ratable property of said District in a sum of not less than \$600,915 nor more than \$700,915 said taxes for ordinary expenses and charges, for the payment of interest and indebtedness, in whole or in part, of said District, and for other purposes authorized by law. The Assessor of Taxes shall assess and apportion said taxes on the inhabitants and ratable property in said District as of the 31st day of December, A.D. 2021, at Twelve O'clock (12:00 p.m.) Noon, according to law, and the last evaluation made by the Assessor of the Town of Westerly previous to this assessment, adding, however, any taxable property which may have been omitted by said Town Assessor, or afterwards acquired on or before August 1, 2022, and on the completion of said assessment, the Assessor shall date, clarify and sign the same, and deliver the same to the Collector of Taxes on or before the 1st day of August, A.D. 2022. The Collector of Taxes, on receipt of said assessment, is hereby commanded to proceed and collect said tax on persons and estates liable therefore. Said tax shall be due and payable on or before the 30th day of September, A.D. 2022, and all taxes remaining unpaid on said date shall carry, until collected, a penalty at the rate of fifteen (15%) percent per annum upon unpaid taxes.