

Sconset Civic Association July 6, 2016 Meeting Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 6:40 pm on July 6, 2016

Civic Association Board members in attendance were Martha Polachi, Gene Hilzenrath, Kathy Cheek, Chip Cruice, Sheila Daume, Cathy Bowman, Susan Ried, Kate Starrett, Snooky Eldridge, CO North, Mark Donato, Marianne Felch and Janet Eyre

Sconset Civic Association President, Martha Polachi welcomed everyone and read out the names of the board members.

Martha Polachi read the necrology which was followed by a moment of silence.

Sconset Civic Association Treasurer, Gene Hilzenrath gave the Treasurer's Report. He explained the new donations envelope which includes a space for tax deductible donations which can be made through the Community Foundation for Nantucket. He reported that we are in sound financial shape.

Al Lussier gave a brief history of the Sconset Civic Association scholarship. He then presented this year's \$2,500 scholarship to Elizabeth Eldridge who plans to become a firefighter and EMT and come back to serve Sconset.

Siobahn O'Mahon gave an update on the Playground. She thanked everyone who contributed. Playground is now 97% complete and open. Guidelines for the playground include (1) carry in, carry out (no trash receptacles), (2) no dogs and (3) it will be open from 7:30 am until dusk. There will be a welcome sign with the guidelines posted at the playground. She also gave a special thanks to the Lockharts for donating the land initially.

Rob Benchley reported on the test results of the Sconset water. Everything was well within the national guidelines.

Gail Walker made a presentation of NextDoor Sconset a private, online social network for the Sconset neighborhood. A venue for sharing a variety of information such as people providing/looking for services, local events, lost pets, etc. The more who join, the more useful it can be. Gail is available to help anyone join who has questions or problems.

Betsy Grubbs updated us on the Sconset Trust. They did major work on the Sankaty Lighthouse and hosted a Preservation Tour of Codfish Park. Their annual meeting is Friday, July 8 and their big Gala is Sunday, July 17. They have partnered with Nantucket Preservation Trust to do architectural walking tours beginning this Friday leaving the Sconset Trust office at 4 pm - they would appreciate reservations for the walking tours but walk-ups are also welcome. Their land committee continues to monitor the Loran Station.

Susan Reid joined Betsy Grubbs to honor and thank our retired Sconset volunteer firefighters with a special, mounted and framed Susan Reid print. The prints were presented to Nelson Eldridge (56 years of service), Gerry Eldridge (54 years of service), Skip Volans (37 years of service), and Rob Benchley (25 years of service). Carol Moffit (25 years of service) was not present but her service was acknowledged.

Nantucket's new Fire Chief, Paul Rhude thanked the Sconset volunteer firefighters for their many years of service. The Firemen's Association and Sconset Civic Association are putting up a plaque in the

Sconset Firehouse with the names of all Sconset firefighters.

On behalf of the Sconset Civic Association and all of Sconset, Martha Polachi gave each retired Sconset fireman a picture frame engraved with "In gratitude for your service from the Sconset Civic Association"

Fire Chief Paul Rhude spoke about his plans for the Fire Department. Chief Rhude joined the Nantucket Fire Department 10 months ago. Worked on staffing and service plan for next 4 years. Two major goals. First is to meet national standards for response times for EMS and firefighters, which is within 5 minutes for 90% of calls (currently within 5 minutes for only 40% of calls). Second is to increase medical service to Advance Life Support (ALS). Currently all firefighters are EMT providing basic life support. Goal is to have ALS (paramedics) who can administer drugs and provide emergency room level of service on location. Currently we are the only community left in the state that doesn't have Advance Life Support (ALS). Plan to train current full-time firefighters to paramedic level. Anticipate being at ALS level by January, 2017. On the staffing side, currently minimum 3 firefighters on duty 24 hours a day in the winter; 4 on duty 24 hours a day in the summer. As a result can only respond to one call at a time. Unfortunately 20% of calls are concurrent, which means have to bring in off-duty to staff the second call. Need to increase staff. Compared to other firefighters in the state ours do double the number of calls in the winter and triple the number of calls in the summer. Other communities have mutual aid (help from another jurisdiction) which we don't have. Got approval to hire 4 new paramedic firefighters this year and 4 more next year. Want to have 5 on duty 24 hours in winter and 9 in the summer. An issue for response time is distances thus want to (and working on) moving (summer) seasonal staff to Sconset and Madaket. Asking town to approve funding in 2017 budget to upgrade Sconset fire station to house 24-hour firefighters. Plan to have full time summer seasonal firefighters in Sconset starting in 2018. Hope to have some summer seasonal firefighters in Sconset, at least during the weekends, in 2017. Will work on Madaket the following year. Sconset gets double the calls of Madaket so we are first priority. Have recruiting drive to increase staffing in call (volunteer) department; unfortunately not a lot of response. Just hired 5 call (volunteer) firefighters. Sconset residents who are firefighters are Earl Eldridge (who is a Nantucket firefighter) and Elizabeth Eldridge who is a volunteer firefighter (both are able to respond to the Sconset firehouse when off duty). If could find housing for firefighters in Sconset, off duty firefighters could be a local resource. Also hoping to get more volunteer firefighters from out here. Increased the cost of ambulance calls to about the state average and are using the increased funds to help pay for increased staffing and ALS training.

Questions from the floor:

Are all firefighters EMT's?

PR: Yes, currently all full-time firefighters are EMT's (requirement of the job) and all are being trained to be paramedics. The the call (volunteer) staff is split. Some are both firefighters and EMT's; some are only firefighters and some are only EMT's.

Does Sconset having anyone living out here who is an EMT?

PR: One. Also have three full-time firefighter/EMT's in Tom Nevers area who can respond here for emergencies when off duty.

Is the volunteer corps to continue?

PR: Yes, still have call (volunteer) department. Trying to expand it. Advertised in paper looking for more call firefighters. Started a recruit training program. Have to train to high standard thus it is a big commitment to be a volunteer firefighter.

Do you have adequate equipment for the proposed increase in staff?

PR: Short answer is yes. This year adding a fourth ambulance. Upgrading all tankers to be all-wheel drive off-road. Got brush breaker surplus army at good price. Are looking at getting more equipment. Also looking at building a new fire station. Central fire station we have is an antique.

Insurance rates are cheaper if one is within a certain distance of a fire station – is the seasonal staffing of the Sconset fire station going to qualify for that?

PR: Yes. This is a fire station. We are not closing it down. It is a call staff fire station with plans to be a full staff fire station seasonally. It still counts.

What is the estimated response time for a fire call in Sconset?

PR: The equipment from the central station can get here in about 10-12 minutes. We have two firefighters who live in Sconset and three full-time firefighters who live in Tom Nevers all of whom can respond directly here if off-duty. Their response time to get the truck is probably also about 10 minutes. Once have seasonal full-time staff here that will drop to under 5 minutes.

Who is driving the truck and who is pulling the hose?

PR: Each of the Sconset call (volunteer) firefighters can do both. All call firefighters have to meet exacting standards and pass agility tests.

How many fire stations are there and where are they?

PR: We have four fire stations. (1) Central downtown on Pleasant Street (2) One here in Sconset (3) One in Madaket and (4) One on Tuckernut.

How many fire trucks are there?

PR: Two front line pumper trucks. Two off-road, urban interface pumper trucks. Two tankers. One ladder truck. An additional engine which is used as a brush breaker. Just got a free Humvee from the government for off-road beach fires.

How many firefighters?

PR: Have 24 full-time permanent firefighter/EMT's and approximately 12 call (volunteer) firefighters.

Do all 24 full-time firefighters live on the island?

PR: No. Not a requirement to live on island to be a full-time firefighter. Currently have two firefighters who have residences off island. One of those has an apartment here to use off and on and the other has family here to stay with. It is very expensive to live here and we don't pay more than people paid off island.

Can you explain the shifts?

PR: Full-time firefighters work two 24-hour shifts every eight days. They are not required to be here on their off days, but most are and we depend on them heavily. We are also working in coordination with other organizations. Doing drills with the land bank. The land bank has about six people and we do brush fire drills with them. Train and share equipment with the land bank. Work together in organized manner on brush fires. State forestry does drills with us. The DPW and police department are also

helping out. Trying to develop relationships and training with other town organizations to help if needed. Off-island departments can rely on mutual aid (from nearby departments) in the 50-60 people range, but we obviously don't have any mutual aid.

Do you have a fire truck on Tuckernut?

PR: Yes, have a 1968 power wagon pick-up truck with skid tank and F350 pick up with skid tank. Working on training the residents of Tuckernut to use them.

How much of the plan you have laid out has been approved in the budget?

PR: We have laid this all out to them. So far selectmen have not objected to any of the plan. They have funded the extra ambulance, extra brush breaker, four more firefighters, new fire station in town and training of existing firefighters to paramedics. So far, everything which has been asked for has been funded.

Does the money for the central firehouse facility come from the same pocket as the staff? If the central fire station is delayed do we get more firefighters or is it from a different funding source?

PR: All funds come from tax dollars, but I think they are funded differently. I think fire station is funded over a longer period of time on bonds whereas funding for staff is in the operating budget of the town. Bottom line is that if we took away the fire station we wouldn't get any more firefighters.

How does our emergency ambulance tie in with the fire department?

PR: The same people respond to fires and health calls. They are trained to do both.

A concern was voiced that on many Sconset streets people are parked so that no emergency response vehicles could get through.

PR: Call dispatch (police or fire) and tell them that is going on. A town permit is required to obstruct any road. Those responding to emergencies check for permitted obstructions and plot routes accordingly.

A suggestion was made from the floor that people advise their gardeners and guests to park in a manner not blocking the roads.

Why couldn't our retired firemen be phased out rather than let go? Is there a law?

PR: There is a state law that says you have to retire all firefighters (full-time and volunteer) at age 65. There are legitimate reasons for the law. Studies have shown that the older firefighters have a 40-50% higher likelihood of suffering a heart attack on the job, thus it's for their safety and your safety. If something should happen it could open the town up for an enormous lawsuit. We are not ending our relationship with them – they are part of our family and always will be. We value their contribution and want to keep them involved so we have created an auxiliary department and are working on a way to notify them via cell phone so they can do logistics support for us; they can help us train; they can help us pass down the history. We're not kicking them out the door; we just want to keep them and you safe. And it's the law.

Do you have citizens trained in advanced cardiac life support? What that support help?

PR: We would value the support of anyone licensed in this state willing to be a call (volunteer) person.

In the past, Sconset has often been overlooked by the selectmen in the budgeting process. Since the expansion of the Sconset Fire Station to accommodate 24 hour coverage has not yet been approved by the selectmen, is there something that we as a citizens' group should be doing to ensure that it gets passed in the budget?

PR: I have told them about it and they have not objected. I will coordinate with Martha when the time comes in the fall. We do 60 calls a month in Sconset in the summer thus full time coverage is warranted. We do have funds from the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) to repair the steps and paint the Sconset fire house.

Will our request for funds for the Sconset Fire Station have to go through town meeting?

PR: I will be working with town management to get it into the town meeting. If, for some reason, I am not successful in getting it into the town meeting, citizens can sponsor an article for the town meeting. I will keep Martha updated on the process and prospects.

Kara Buzanoski, Director of the DPW, spoke about the rotary flagpole project's history and future plans. Three reasons to address us: (1) an apology, (2) a question and (3) a thank you. Thank you first. The Sconset flagpole was taken down in 2013 when they went to paint it and found that it had considerable rot and was unstable/unsafe. No budget for a new flagpole so approached the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) for funds – that request was not awarded. John Smith thought that even without funding a new flagpole could be secured. Which is where the thank you comes in – the Sconset Civic Association paid \$3,200 for what was intended to replace the main mast with the rounding being done personally by John Smith who had extensive woodworking skills. He spent two years rounding it out but didn't get it as rounded as we needed. DPW spent considerable time and money trying to get the old mast out of the ground with a crane, with an auger, with a chain saw and even tried to burn it out but all without success. The DPW is now going back to the CPC for the funds to completely redo the entire rotary, while simultaneously asking for town money as a backup in the event the CPC doesn't award us funds. Kara has committed that if neither the CPC nor the town agree to fund this she will take one of the trucks off the DPW budget and get us a replacement flagpole. The timeline is applying for CPC funds in August; applying for town money in January; putting the project out to bid to outside contractors in July and hopefully have the work completely by Veterans' Day, October, 2017. She mentioned that one option is a fiberglass pole. She suspects that we would prefer a wooden pole but is here to formally ask the question. The fiberglass pole is going to cost about \$100,000 and the wooden pole about \$200,000. We are hoping to use the pole that John was working on (that was bought by the Sconset Civic Association), but that will require some more work to determine if it can be used and to make it right.

Question from the floor – What is the basis for those cost estimates?

KB: It is a preliminary view based on prior experience. The request for proposal is being prepared now. This a ballpark number.

Question from the floor – You have mentioned the application to the CPC; could you please tell us more about that?

KB: There is a Community Preservation Act that was adopted by the Town of Nantucket by which 1% of our taxes (between \$1 and \$1.5 million a year) are dedicated to preservation. The funds are administered by the Community Preservation Committee. There are three components – recreation, historic and open space.

Question from the floor – Can you explain why it isn't possible to have private funding help out?

KB: The Sconset Civic Association already generously donated money for a flagpole and we didn't feel it was appropriate to come back and ask for more money. If anyone wants to donate private funding I believe it can be made as a specified gift to the town but I need to talk to the funding director to get the details.

You said the DPW was only able to excavate five feet down and that we need to go down ten feet – what is the plan to go down ten feet?

KB: We need to excavate the entire rotary thus requiring more extensive concrete work than we anticipated and that is a big part of the estimated cost.

Originally the cost estimate was \$4,000 and now it is \$1-2 hundred thousand?

KB: The raw materials are not what are expensive. The rotary is an historic memorial so the restoration/replication of it is what is expected to be costly.

Would we get a flagpole faster if we opted for a fiberglass pole?

KB: We still have to go through the same budgeting and bidding process so it would not be less time.

Does the DPW currently have engineering drawings and specifications for the project and if so, have they been shown to the Sconset Civic Association for review so that there are no surprises?

KB: We do not have plans yet. Working to get engineering drawings to be used to put project out to bid.

Help me understand how three years can go by and you don't have engineering drawings.

KB: The DPW thought that they could do the project themselves without drawings, taking what was there and recreating it. We have now gone back to square one and are creating plans so a professional can bid on and then complete the project to specs.

What are the appearance differences between a fiberglass and wood pole?

KB: The hole for a fiberglass pole doesn't have to be as deep. It would be a narrower pole. It would still have the jackstaff, running lights and compass rose. It will have a very different sound when the ropes hit it in the wind.

Mark Donato pointed out that there is no way the CPC would fund a fiberglass pole as that is not in keeping with preservation.

What is the height of the flagpole?

KB: We are re-creating the original height which is 45 feet for the main pole without the jackstaff. What is up now is the jackstaff and it has been installed in a plastic tube to protect it and so that it can be removed and placed back on the main pole when that is ready.

Can you speak to the subject of street lights?

KB: The street lamps (the shorter ones) were given to the town by National Grid. Before DPW can fix a lamp they must first ascertain that there is power to the lamp, which requires National Grid look at it first. They are quite backed up. DPW had a problem getting the lamps themselves but that has been fixed. On top of everything else DPW doesn't have the staff to take time out from other responsibilities

to fix the lamps. Fortunately we are hiring someone for whom one of their primary responsibilities will be street lamps.

There are street lights on Ocean Avenue which have been out for six years. Why?

KB: The problem is that the lights were stolen. They were replaced about four years ago and within days they were gone. On Ocean down towards Low Beach there were street lamps but we stopped replacing them after they were stolen several times.

Is there some law which says the town is the only party who can fix/replace the flag pole or can the community do it?

KB: Not at all. It was originally constructed by Sconseters in memorial to David Gray.

If we got someone who knew what they were doing, could that party go ahead and replace the flag pole?

KB: That is definitely an option.

Can we fund the lanterns ourselves?

KB: Sure.

I would like a clarification about the difference between street lanterns and street lights. I think the lanterns are the shorter lights in the core of the village, correct? And the taller vapor lights are the street lights, correct?

KB: Yes. National Grid maintains the (tall) street lights and should be contacted directly for any issues with those. If you give me the locations of those I can report them to National Grid.

Why should the burden be on us, the citizens, to report every street light which is out? Why shouldn't your department proactively go through the neighborhoods checking the lights periodically?

KB: The street lights (the tall ones) are the responsibility of National Grid. If you call DPW to report an outage we pass that on to National Grid – it would be faster and more expeditious if you called National Grid directly to report outages of street lights. DPW is responsible for the street lanterns (or lamps) – the shorter ones.

Martha Polachi asked the floor for any new business.

Helmut Weymar announced that the Sconset Beach Preservation Fund is having a reception with drinks and hors d'oeuvres at the viewing area at 87 Baxter Road overlooking the geotubes project on Thursday, July 21 from 5:30 to 7:30. Everyone is invited. There will be a presentation/update on the geotube project. In a nutshell, the geotubes were installed in early 2014 and since then there has been no erosion at the toe of the bank; there is now a nice, wide beach in front of it; we annually supply more sand to replenish that which is carried away; supplying roughly 50% more sand than the annual average which was being eroded naturally which is why the beach is bigger and why there is no evidence of harm to neighboring beaches. If it continues to function as effectively as it has we will request extending the project to include all the portions of the bank which are partially or fully eroded, from the lighthouse down to mid-Baxter Road. We look forward to welcoming everyone on the 21st.

Martha Polachi thanked:

1. Amy Davidson for watering the rotary plantings and new grass seed daily.

2. Kara Buzanoski and Paul Rhude for attending our meeting, giving us an update and fielding questions
3. Mark Donato for the use of his staff in getting out the newsletter and donating the brownies for tonight's meeting
4. Kathy Cheek for the other desserts and beverages for tonight
5. Mary Longacre for bringing her antique fire truck which is sitting just outside

There was one further comment from the floor. Nick Platt is the mayor of a town in New Jersey which recently completed a review and reinstallation of all the town's street lighting. He voiced a warning that communities need to be very careful with the new LED lights as the new lights are capable of lighting far beyond that which was intended. It is easy to over do it and destroy the lovely night sky and/or have bright lights shining into people's homes. It is very important to have a unified lighting plan that includes the fixtures, the warmth of the light, the objective/intention of specific lighting, etc. With the new technology one can do amazing things, but it should be uniform and done in such a manner as to increase safety but not create an overly lit environment.

The next public Sconset Civic Association meeting is Wednesday, August 3 at 6 pm followed by the BBQ for the members.

A motion was made and seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 7:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Janet Eyre
Acting Secretary