

Island Community Board Meeting Minutes  
 Public Meeting  
 April 6, 2007 at 4:45pm  
 Fishers Island Union Chapel

**Board Member Roll Call**

Fishers Island Development Corporation	Kathy Parsons
Fishers Island Ferry District	Chippy duPont
Fishers Island Fire District	
Fishers Island School Board	Karla Heath
Fishers Island Utility Company	John Spofford –representing
Island Health Project	Susie Ferguson
Waste Management	Mike Imbriglio
Walsh Park Benevolent Association	Frank Burr
Seasonal Representative	Tom O’Neil
Seasonal Representative	Bill Ridgway
Seasonal Representative	
Year-round Representative	Patty Faulkner
Year-round Representative	Judi Imbriglio
Year-round Representative	John Spofford

**Call to Order –John Spofford**

John welcomed everyone and Mere took roll call. John asked to add an Utilco update at the beginning. He said that the ICB Memorial Day meeting will be at the School on the 26<sup>th</sup> at 4:00pm and that he will try to get the Conservancy to change their time slot. He quickly reported that the Community Center is moving along well and the Town Planning Board is approving the plans on Monday and the ICC is still working to get the rest of the \$, they have 3.1 Million already. They should start demo at 98 in 2-3 weeks. He also mentioned that the report Mere and Nate Gray wrote for the Island Institute about the Fishers Island fellowship had been published and is available at the Museum, Island Office and Library. [Also Available online on the Island Institute website or by going to <http://www.islandinstitute.org/story.asp?id=71> ]

**Utility Co. Update:**

Bill Ridgway reported that they have polls sending signals to Groton and everything is going well at the four spots they are testing at. We should have wireless internet by the summer on the Island with little antenna place at your house you will get from the Utilco.

**Ferry Update:**

Chippy started by reading a statement that the FIFD had prepared for release. He said they did not use this because the Day printed an article about this before they could get this out or respond and they see no need to issue it now.

- The Fishers Island Ferry District has settled a case filed by the U.S Attorney for Connecticut against the M/V Race Point and M/V Munnatawket under the Rivers and Harbors Act. The case was settled without a trial of the allegations of the complaint, and the parties have avoided the need to litigate the disputed claims.
- The complaint alleged that between 2000 and 2004, sewage releases occurred from ferries operating between New London and Fishers Island.

- The settlement includes payment of a civil penalty and interest totaling two-hundred thousand dollars.
- Since 2004, the Ferry District has documented each shipment of sewage from its vessels to sewage treatment plants. Since 2005, all sewage from the ferries has been directed to the landside sewer system connection at the ferry terminal in New London.
- The Ferry District has taken measures to ensure that ferry operations comply with environmental laws, including the use of an environmental management plan addressing various aspects of ferry operations.
- There will be no interruption or modifications of normal vessel operating schedules.
- No admission of wrongdoing or violations of laws were made in settlement of the case. Nevertheless, The Ferry District publicly renews its commitment to its passengers and the community to ensure the protection of the environmental quality in its operations.

FIFD will pay \$50,000 per year for 4 years. This fine was negotiated down by the FIFD with the court from a \$500,000 fine; this fine will end the case and the investigation. He explained that the recent tax increase was to pay for a FIFD oversight in identifying a short-term, \$1.5 million bond from the NL terminal project. This was a short term bond out of the \$4.5 million bond. The increase was to pay off this short-term debt at a lower rate than transferring it to long-term debt. This tax will hopefully be reduced as we get that paid off. On the new ticketing system, it is running OK. Leaving is easier now and we are still working on it. Year-rounders still are going at ½ price. We spend \$250,000/year sending them at ½ prices.

Q: Can you give an explanation of what went wrong to the FI people?

A: The Valves were left open, it had always been done, and we were unaware of it. Mark Easter was responsible for this and he went to jail for it. We wish he hadn't done it. Now there are no connections from the discharge valves to the holding tanks anymore at all, it is removed differently at the terminal in NL.

Q: Is there any public apology issued to those affected?

A: To my knowledge there has been no effect. We had an expert come out and he said that with the most sophisticated instruments on the east coast he could not have detected this dumping. Mark Easter apologized to the commissioners at a meeting.

Comment: I recommend that FIFD take an ad out in the Day to apologize.

A: there was no effect.

Comment: A lot of lobstermen would disagree with you.

A: All I can say is that it has been corrected.

Comment: That is not apologizing.

A: That is not apologizing.

Q: Why would an experienced captain do this?

A: I don't know, it happens a lot.

Q: Was there not a budget item for septic pump out?

A: We pay bills, not investigate budget. We don't look closely at each bill that comes in and this issue was never on our radar screen. It should have been, it is now.

Q: didn't the new building plans have a place for disposal?

A: Sure, that should have put this issue on our radar screen, but it didn't. We had other distractions, like funding the project and we all have regular 'real' jobs and other things we do. We rely on the captain and managers for these details.

Q: Will the winter ferries have fresh water running in the bathrooms?

A: They should be now.

Comment: It is routinely off.

A: As far as I know it is on all the time unless it freezes, it will do that. It is not a routine policy to have the water off; the ferries are drained down every night and fired back up in the AM.

Q: With all the new people working on the boats, why don't they have name tags/badges? Homeland security doesn't require that?

A: All employees go through background checks. We tried giving them all uniforms with their names on them, but they get covered up by coats in the winter and with turnover, it is a waste to put names on the uniforms. We haven't gotten to the stage of badges yet.

Q: You have lost three captains in the last year, are you hiring new people?

A: We are training and hiring now, we just got a new captain.

Q: Reservations online? Can you buy just a reservation and have a book of tickets in the car and be able to just pull up?

A: Not now, we may get there, but now you have to go into the office and get your ticket (trade your reservation for a ticket) for boarding. We are working on commuter books too this way. Adjustments will be made to this system as we go along.

Q: How do we know what lane to go to?

A: There should be someone there to tell you, now that person comes on at 7am. Eventually, we hope to have a sign, but it is hard because of the positioning of the two different boats and how we need you to line up for each one differently.

Q: How do you get a reservation for times when you don't know what boat you come over on, but want a reservation for a certain time to leave? -Online

A: This should be fixed now on the website where you can buy a reservation just to leave FL.

Q: What do we do with old tickets?

A: Take them to Tom and Nina to swap them. Also, when you buy a book of tickets, the cover will be ripped off for our inventory.

Q: Will you consider a "family ID card" for year-rounders with kids who can't keep up with their cards very well.

A: I don't know

Comment: It seems to me that only year-round people are getting scanned when boarding. I rode all week and only saw them scan year-round folks.

A: It should be random, we don't have to scan everyone, and they just pick a few.

Q: Who is operations manager?

A: Steve is Marine manager, although he is not at Mark's salary as he is not as senior, Mark Easter is administrative and Tom Doherty is the office manager.

Q: Why does Mark still have a job?

A: He does not have his old job; he is now Chief Purser at half his former salary. He does get overtime for administrative work he does. He did this kind of work before the case and is the most qualified. We are working on a new position description for administration and we will advertise and hire. So far we have needed him because we could not do without him at the time.

Q: Is there a budget we can see with a breakdown of budget and expenses, as tax payers?

A: We go though it, charters are stuffed into regular operations and we have all the numbers. Tom has the numbers at the office.

Q: Can we get a copy and what are the legal fees for now?

A: We have budgeted for \$75,000 and yes, you can come get a copy of the budget from Tom at the office.

Q: Where do you go for help on the boat now and after it docks, have you noticed the defibrillators are locked up in the pursuers' office on the boat?

A: The defibrators will be moved and there are crew members all around, so look for them.

Q: Are the crew trained in first aid? A: Yes

Q: Was the fine for the dumping covered by any insurance?

A: No, fines are not covered, it is a federal fine.

Q: How will you pay the fines?

A: The fine is a separate issue from the tax increase. The \$200,000 will be paid as \$50,000/year for the next 4 years by the ferry district. Taxes and fares pay for the bond issue. We try to balance taxes and fares.

Q: Total financial damage to the FIFD?

A: I have not totaled that up, shouldn't say for sure. I will have that information at the May meeting.

Q: Was the tax increase 40 %?

A: Yes, and that was it.

Q: Do you have an unusually high turnover rate with crew on the ferries?

A: No, not unusual. They move on sometimes.

Q: Is the NL project done? Budget?

A: The construction cost came in under budget and the inspections, over. The total is on budget; we are done building and not done paying yet. The CT D.O.T. owes us our reimbursable funds and we ended up getting 6 Million from the federal government. 80% of the costs were covered by grants and such.

Q: Why don't you feel you should release that press release and/or an apology to the FI taxpayers? And is this case over?

A: It is not completely over until the judge signs off on it for good, this closes the matter. Our first check for the fine was dated March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007. We didn't have a chance to comment to the NL Day before they printed their article.

Q: Would your attitude about an apology change after the judge signs off on everything? Might you consider more public communications then?

A: We will discuss this at a meeting and talk to the lawyers. I know this is hard to hear, you may consider running for commissioner if you like and you can apologize. We do get pounded on a lot and I understand your position, but we too are in a very difficult position.

Paul Giles: We have to do what our lawyers tell us to do and this is ultimately what is best for the FIFD and the taxpayers here. When and if we are told we can release a statement we will. We want to when we can, but for now we have to do as we are instructed. We would love to be able to do more, but we are working for the tax district ultimately, you must understand that.

Q: What would you have spent on pump-out if you had done it properly?

A: About \$25,000 for the four years. Now, our costs are \$0 because we are tied into the NL sewer system. This construction cost money, but there is no monthly charge.

George Esser: We do owe recognition of regret to the community, but this all came out of the blue. The bills are very irregular and I agree we should issue a statement/apology and we will when we can. We are willing to let the larger community know that we are willing to make reparations and will when we can.

Q: Will Mark come talk to us at a meeting?

A: Maybe, he has been at FIFD public meetings.

Q: Could the ICB take out an ad in the NL Day and apologize for this mess?

A: Would they want to? It is not the best idea to spread the responsibility.

Comment: The dumping has not helped my lobster business, people question the quality of my lobsters now, and there is a perception that they are "bad" lobsters. You don't think that is reason enough to apologize?

Response: There are plenty of CT lobstermen who would beg to differ.

Comment: I am just saying that it has hurt my lobster business.

Response: I am sorry your business is lousy, do a better job.

John Spofford interjected to say that we need to get at this better, in a more positive way. By June 15<sup>th</sup> this should be ended, that would be a good goal. When all the legal end is final, we need to look at this one last time and put an end to the discussions.

### **Littering Signs/problem discussion:**

John mentioned that there has been an offer by the town to post signs about littering near the ferry. There has been some concern about the littering on FI that seems to continue unpunished or controlled. It was discussed that this should be dealt with without turning FI into a police state with too many signs and regulations posted. The topic of 'Island Clean-up' came up and it was discussed that the ICB should be doing it, as the FICA did in the past. That was a fun and successful event. The ball was dropped on that and should be picked up again.

### **School Update:**

Karla Heath reported that The Tremaine Foundation has granted the \$ for the Schools Attuned Program and it will start on May 29, with a week in June (26<sup>th</sup>-29). There will be a public presentation with program developer on 26<sup>th</sup> of July. CAST (Center for Applied Special Technology) has partnered with the school, naming them a 'showcase school'. They will receive training by 2 professionals on software for student reading development. She said the play will be on May 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> and they are doing "The Ugly Duckling" and act 2 of "The Importance of Ernest". There are 14 students acting and 16 involved otherwise. The school is looking for a new math teacher because sadly, Dave Denison is retiring. They have a committee recommending one teacher out of 5 interviewed and 8 applications. This person is considering moving to FI. Karla also thanked Barry Bannister for treating Dan Gillan and 3 members of the golf team to a trip to GA to see practice sessions for the Masters Tournament. They were flown down Monday and returned Wednesday. They had a great time! Mr. Bannister said he was very proud to be an Alumni of such a wonderful and special school and that all Alums should do what they can for the school and the students.

### **IHP Report:**

Susie Ferguson reported that the new office is coming long great and is only a little behind; it should be operational by Memorial Day. They still need the CO from Southold and the town planning people just toured the building and made a few suggestions. The interior is coming along well, they ended up having to put some additional sprinklers systems in the attic which we had not planned on, so that slowed them down a bit. Dr. Frank seems well and happy. She joined the Fire Dept. and her office has been busy this winter. The Sea Stretcher runs are down a bit and this is likely because she can handle a lot more calls here because of her skills. Her school concerns seem to be progressing and moving forward.

Q: What are the plans for the existing Dr. Office?

A: We are still working on that, I can not comment now, there should be a conclusion very soon we will announce.

Comment: The building is lovely and a very nice addition to the Island!

A: Thanks you, the credit goes to Allie Raridon and her abilities. She turned a prefab into something very special. Also, BD and Race Rock have done wonderful work.

### **FIDCO Question & Answers:**

Kathy Parsons called for any questions concerning the new policies and stickers for the East End.

Q: Could you go over the new rules?

A: We are asking you to remove all your old stickers if you can. It is confusing for the attendants at the gate. They should be in the upper right hand corner of your windshield, not on bumper. They are not to be removed until next year. I apologize for what seems like a lot of rules; it is just that we have so many people breaking them. We are trying to make it safer up there for everyone.

Q: Road repaving?

A: We are hoping for 08. For now, we are looking into areas that need the most help and will be doing prep work to ready for 08.

Q: Would you consider one gratis sticker for each property owner on east end?

A: We are certainly discussing this and will continue to do so.

Q: How do we take care of FI with the changing dynamics? This is an ongoing issue and ties into everything.

Comment: I think sense of community should come from within and does not need to be enforced with lots of signs and rules. We need to stay away from a police state. The beach fires are a good example. Are we not allowed to have them now?

A: We ask you to notify the State Police as a safeguard to prevent false 911 calls from being phoned in. We need to stay on top of this because a call can be made from FI and the mainland. If they know it is a recreational fire then they don't have to waste manpower going to check on it.

Q: EVERYONE has to call, even if it is a small cooking fire?

A: We would like this. You will not get ticketed, we just want you to notify for safety's sake.

Comment: There is still no permit to have fires. That doesn't exist.

Comment: We shouldn't have to call for small fires.

A: It is a safety issue. This has happened in the past and we have a volunteer Fire Dept, we want to help and save time and manpower.

### **Other: The littering issues.**

Comment: We are having a summer population explosion; people need to learn how to be a good citizen because a few can wreck it for the rest of us.

Pastor Baue: I know a good way!

Q: Would anyone read an article about the rules and how to follow them?

Comment: Probably not, we need creative ideas.

Q: Can't the employers of workers be responsible for their littering?

A: The ICB needs to have a talk or meeting with the island contractors to discuss this. And Island Clean up in May needs to be reinstated.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:55 with a motion to adjourn by John Spofford and seconded by Karla Heath.

Minutes submitted by, Meredith Doyen, Secretary