

## MINUTES OF THE SELECT BOARD

Wednesday, June 30, 2020,

10:00am at the Recreation Room

Present: William Stewart, Chair, Tom Maher, Selectman, Dave McGuckin, Selectman, Steve Tabbutt, DPW, Ben Jankowski, DPW, Ross McLellan, Seasonal Park Manager, Police Chief Don White, Fire Chief Ted Hartmann, Christiane McAllister, Town Accountant, Ken McDonald, Admin Project Coord., Dr. James Zuckermann, Health Officer, Pam Cullen, Administrative Assistant to the Select Board and Jennifer Smith, Recording Secretary.

Chairman Stewart opened the public portion of the meeting at 10:08 AM.

Curt Springer, 98 Cranfield St, asked if the Select Board would disclose what the topic of the Executive Session had been.

Chairman Stewart responded that the topic was an existing personnel issue.

Chairman Stewart stated that the purpose of this meeting was to review the current plan in place with regards to the Great Island Common and revise it if necessary. Chairman Stewart informed those present that he had recently been contacted by some residents who expressed concerns about opening the GIC due to the potential risk of additional exposure to Covid -19.

Selectman Maher gave a brief historical review of how the GIC had come to be open to pedestrian traffic only. He stated that in mid-May the Governor started the re-open phases for the State of Emergency. At that time, the Town of Hampton had substantial pressure to re-open to the public. On June 1<sup>st</sup>, Hampton opened at 50% capacity. Limiting parking did not prevent private parking. The initial response to opening the beach was that it should be transitory. By June 5<sup>th</sup>, it was apparent that it was not sustainable to keep the numbers of visitors down. At that same time, the Select Board held off opening the GIC to parking. Selectman Maher stressed that the Select Board has worked diligently with Police, Fire and DPW to be methodical in its decision making, while keeping a vigilant eye on the spiking numbers.

Selectman Maher further stated that a lot of planning went into the opening of the GIC and it is his belief that the public should know the Select Board has not been reckless in its decisions. The GIC is the last stretch of New Hampshire beach not to open.

Chairman Stewart stated that Governor Sununu opened the last phase yesterday and that it appears the New Hampshire numbers continue to trim down.

Chief Hartmann gave a brief report of the current Covid-19 cases in the surrounding towns, as well as the total numbers in Massachusetts, Maine and Vermont. He informed those present that there had been 968 confirmed cases in the State of New Hampshire, with 75% having already recovered. Chief

Hartmann further stated that by and large the numbers in Hampton and Rye have reduced, but no one has seen an indication of a flattened curve.

Selectman Maher asked if the guidelines called for more than a 14-day curve.

Chief Hartmann responded that the CDC is looking for a decline in contact exposure.

Selectman McGuckin stated that he had not been approached by one resident who was in favor of opening The Common to the general public and he felt that the statistics were not as accurate as we would all like them to be.

Selectman McGuckin further stated that if it were put to a vote today, he would vote to push the opening back another two weeks, or to not even open at all.

Chairman Stewart agreed that the data does float all over the place. He stated his belief that if the CDC Guidelines for social distancing are followed the Common can be opened safely. Given that people might not adhere responsibly to the guidelines, the Select Board has tried to plan accordingly to mitigate the risks.

Mr. Jankowski gave a brief status update on the equipment and plans put in place for staff and maintenance. Eight portable bathrooms will be sanitized 3 times a week by the rental company, along with Common staff sanitizing them 4 times daily. Each cleaning will be logged in. The staff has been trained and will be supplied with masks, gloves and barriers. Exposure at the toll booth will be limited by a plexiglass barrier and flat rate entrance fees will minimize contact with customers. The plan is once the Common has reached the limit of 160 cars, a barricade will be put in place to block the entrance and closed signs will be put in place.

Chief White asked if staff has been trained on the use of PPE.

Mr. Jankowski responded "yes".

Selectman McGuckin asked if there was a charge or limit for bikes.

Mr. Jankowski responded "no".

Chief White opined that there could be a lot of "drop offs".

Chairman Stewart suggested locking the second gate while the main gate is open to reduce the ease of drop offs.

Selectman McGuckin opined that the real test would be July 2<sup>nd</sup> as good weather is planned. He suggested that the Select Board closely monitor the numbers and could close the park if crowds cannot be controlled safely.

Chief White stated that his additional concern is traffic.

Mr. McDonald reminded the Select Board that the staff will not be using the fee system to track the numbers of individuals entering the Common. Historically, that number was gathered by taking a head count of individuals in the vehicles. The current system could be programmed to be able to enter "free adult", "free child", etc., for the purpose of gathering that that information, but is not currently being used because of the potential for increasing the backup of traffic along Route 1B.

Chairman Stewart asked if staff could keep track of the number of individuals on paper for the time being.

Mr. Jankowski responded "yes".

Pam Yonkin, 90 Mainmast Circle, asked why the Town will not be utilizing the system now to ascertain a true number of those entering the park.

Chairman Stewart supported capturing the data without slowing down traffic.

Selectman Maher asked what traffic is like under normal, non-covid, circumstances.

Mr. Jankowski responded that morning rush traffic, 9am to 11am, can be backed up to the Wentworth by the Sea Hotel.

Mr. McLellan, stated that he could take ownership of gathering the data, but only as a rough estimate, as there are 4 new staff members who will still be in the training process.

Mrs. Yonkin suggested getting volunteers to gather the information.

Mr. Springer asked if nothing is done today, the Common will open tomorrow?

Chairman Stewart responded "correct".

Mr. Springer suggested the Board re-assess the ongoing situation at it's July 6<sup>th</sup> meeting and pointed out the lack of attendance at Town meeting this year, indicating a definite fear among residents.

Selectman Maher reported that Fort Stark will be open Friday to Sunday 10am-4pm with limited capacity. He has spoken with the State and they have mostly met the Town's concerns. Their staff will open and close the gates.

Chairman Stewart gave a status update on non-resident sticker sales and pavilion rentals. To date, the Town has sold approximately 60 passes, which is about half of what was sold last year at this time. All new wedding requests have been denied and pavilions rentals were not allowed this year.

Chief White informed the Select Board that the police will have a floating officer assigned to the Common all day.

Chairman Stewart suggested having the officer be present when the park hits full capacity for vehicles.

Mrs. Yonkin expressed her support for keeping the Common open siting Rye and Portsmouth have opened themselves to New castle residents and New Castle should do the same.

Selectman Maher opined that the Town has been diligent and methodical and can open the Common with a sense of vigilance. He further agreed that the Town can modify its plan if circumstances call for it.

Chairman Stewart expressed his belief that the Town has put together a responsible plan. He stated that while he is comfortable moving forward, the Select Board must remain super vigilant and close the Common down if there becomes any sense of danger to the town.

With there being no further business to come before the Board, Selectman McGuckin made a Motion to Adjourn, which was seconded by Selectman Maher. The motion carried unanimously and the meeting closed at 11:13am.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Smith, Recording Secretary