



TOWN OF VINALHAVEN BOARD OF SELECTMEN

MINUTES

Thursday, April 2, 2020

Immediately Following Public Health Team Meeting at 5:00 pm
Meeting held virtually through Facebook Live

1. **Roll Call** – *Selectmen Eric Gasperini, Pamela C. Alley, Phillip Crossman, Donald Poole, and Jacob Thompson; Town Manager Andrew J. Dorr.*

Also Present: Jen Desmond, Kerry McKee, and Marc Candage

***This was a virtual meeting in which some BOS members participated remotely. The public may view the meeting by going to the Town of Vinalhaven Facebook page. This recording will also be made available and posted to the Town of Vinalhaven YouTube page. ***

2. **Approve Agenda**- *Motion by Eric Gasperini to approve the agenda as presented. Second by Phil Crossman. Vote 5-0-0. Motion carried*

3. **Covid-19 Update**

Andrew Dorr opened with a greeting:

Good Evening everyone, and thank you for joining us tonight. My name is Andrew Dorr and I'm the Town Manager. With me tonight is our Fire Chief and Emergency Director, Marc Candage; our EMS Director, Kerry McKee; and Jen Desmond, our Public Health Officer and ICMS Clinical Director. Together we make up the Public Health Team and are part of the Emergency Operations Center. The Public Health Team's job is to keep informed about the threat of Covid-19 to Vinalhaven, and plan and implement the best practices for protecting the community. The folks here have done an amazing job and a huge amount of work in a very short time. Based on some of the questions we have got from you in the community we want to have to change to go through and provide the answers to those questions and share any information we have received we think is relevant. If you have questions as this meeting goes along, please feel free to email them to vheoc@townofvinalhaven.org or to my email townmanager@townofvinalhaven.org and we'll follow up with those at another time.

The most asked questions were about the Stay at Home order: Does this mean I can't go outside, go for a walk, or get fresh air? Can I still walk, run, or bike with friends? Jen Desmond answered that if you, or the people you live with want to go out for a walk that is ok. If you want to walk with a friend, you must keep at least 6' apart. We recognize that being outdoors and getting fresh air is rejuvenating for some, so please go for a walk if you are feeling cooped-up. And as Florence Nightingale said many times "Please keep your windows open. It is very good for both sick and non-sick people."

Can we still meet with friends at the fish house? None of us are sick. What does this mean? Marc Candage said the answer to that was a very strong no.

Can I ride around the Island or not? I want to go for a ride with my friends. We are young and healthy. Why are you saying we can't go do that? Kerry McKee answered that according to the CDC as many as 20% of people infected with Covid-19 have no symptoms for the first few days. That means if you are riding around with your friends you could be giving the disease to someone else. You could be getting the disease and bringing it home to your family, and never show symptoms for the first few days.

Questions on Essential Services:

Construction: Is any construction at all permitted? Is it ok if the crew is one person? Is it ok if the crew is more than one, but everyone keeps their distance? Is it ok if the work is outside? Or if the work is inside, but the occupants are not there? Is it ok for the work crew to come from the mainland? Is it ok to burn brush? I work alone in non-essential retail; can I go work in my studio? What about fishing with a crew of three people? Andy answered that for some of these questions there isn't a clean answer in the new mandate, but the Town has contacted the State to help clarify some of these further. At this time the non-essential retail and non-essential construction questions are still being answered. If you are one of these businesses owners and have a question, we have been provided with email for you to contact: business.answer@maine.gov to ask for clarification. The State has confirmed that burn permits may still be issued. Fishing is an essential service for food production, but it still must be conducted in a safe manor with at least a 6' distance maintained throughout the day, so it may no be possible to go to work with a crew of three depending on the space you are working with.

What about the Ferry? They've already cut runs from our schedule, are they limiting walk on passengers? Does freight get a priority at this time? Are they stopping people from traveling if they say the travel is non-essential? Andy answered that we all know the ferry serves as our lifeline to the mainland, essentially our bridge, and what we've been told from the manager of the ferry service is that they'll continue to be operating on the published, but reduced, ferry schedule. They have acknowledged that they are not an enforcement agency, but they will be asking the question when selling a ticket if the travel is for essential activity as outlined in the newest order of the Governor. They are working with all the Towns on solutions, as the pandemic has created a very fluid situation. They will be posting the executive order of the Governor and a list of the essential businesses at the ferry terminals. I expect more changes to come over the next few days, and we will stay in contact with the ferry service to learn those changes and as soon as new information is provided we will share that with the community.

Will Bunker's, UPS, and the Post Office continue to deliver? Will PIA continue to fly? Is it ok to go to the dump? Marc answered that as of right now Bunker's is still delivering freight. The Post Office is deemed an essential service so they will remain open. PIA, at this time, is still flying. You can definitely still go to the dump, but please keep an eye on the Town website as those hours of operation may change.

Questions specific to Covid-19: I work in essential service. Are there steps I should take to protect my family when I come home from work? Jen said it's important to change your close including your shoes when arriving at home. You should create a plan for disinfecting and laundering your clothes without infecting your family. You should take a shower and don't forget to clean things like your glasses, cell phone, keys, work tools, computers, etc., and be diligent in self-checking your own health.

Many islanders have prescriptions and medications that have ordinarily been picked up at mainland pharmacies and brought over to the island by friends and neighbors. I feel like this is a big issue given restrictions on travel and recommendations, especially for older islanders. Kerry answered that ICMS has been doing a good job at making sure prescriptions are arriving. Some pharmacies are mailing prescriptions and they have been working with insurance companies on modifying a regular prescription to a 90-day prescription when they are able to. There are other options for taxiing or other delivery options that may be possible if you contact your health care provider.

Will the community know if someone on the island is confirmed to have Covid-19? Kerry answered that the Public Health Officer will be notified by the CDC if there is a positive test. It will not be kept a secret. At this time, we have no positive tests on the island. The information about the patient will not be given out – name, demographic, where they live, etc. A confirmed Covid-19 should no change our behaviors, however. We are already practicing social distancing and that is what we will continue to do. How we live our lives today may affect how those in the community live their lives tomorrow.

What's the difference between staying at home and quarantining? Marc answered that if you are quarantining, you and your family members cannot go to town, or anywhere, even for essentials. With stay at home, we are allowed to do essential things as outlined in the executive order, but if you are quarantined you are at home and don't leave for any reason.

What will happen if a lot of people get very sick here? And all at the same time? Jen answered that this team has been working very hard, along with ICMS, to think about what will happen if that is the case. We have plans in place to help patients care for themselves at home, as well as us being able to assist with their care at home. If a

patient becomes too sick for home-care we will transport that patient to a mainland hospital. A worst-case scenario would be that more people are critically ill than we can individually treat at home, and/or mainland hospitals are unable to take patients, if they are full, we will modify how and where we provide our care. We are close to completion on an alternative care plan and we would likely open an emergency site so our ICMS and EMS providers could care for patients until they can be transported to a hospital. We will keep people posted on that.

What basis will be used to decide when it is safe to stop self-isolation? Kerry answered that we should rely on the guidance from the CDC to determine when the virus is no longer a threat to our community. Even more than that, today we are under State mandated a stay healthy-stay home order and that will be lifted before resuming normal lives.

Staying at home with my family all day is driving me nuts. I used to have tea in the afternoon with a friend, but can't do that anymore. What can I do? Jen asked if they had tried having a virtual cup of tea together on Zoom or other virtual platform like FaceTime, or talking on the phone? As mentioned before, you can go for a walk on your own or with a friend, as long as you maintain a safe distance, and abide by the CDC safety guidelines. To destress, maybe there is a place you can 'hide away' from your family, to give yourself some private time with a book or get some outdoor time for fresh air, but just remember you can't go for a ride with a friend and be the recommended 6' apart, so if you plan to meet a friend for a walk make sure you take separate vehicles.

Who can we reach out to if we are anxious or need someone to talk to? Andy answered that there are a few options in the community right now. If you do need help, do reach out. Hope is just a phone call away. Maine statewide crisis hotline is available 24/7 for immediate crisis-oriented help. You can reach them by calling 1-888-568-1112. You can also call the Maine warm line, which is also available 24/7 which is available for connecting someone in need with mental and emotional support. Their number is 1-866-771-9276. For those that are unaware, ICMS offers behavior health services. You can contact Dan Kenniston at ICMS at 207-863-9959 (option 3). There are also anonymous peer recovery programs: narcotics anonymous (namaine.org), alcoholics anonymous (csoaamaine.org), also nar-anon.org and maineafg.org. For those that tuned-in last week, you can do so again Saturday at 4:30 we will have a live Facebook conversation to talk about managing stress and anxiety. Our guest will be Avrum Weiss, ICMS behavioral psychologist, and Kelly Richards who teaches stress relief to adults and kids. Watch the Towns Facebook page and public poster for details.

That concludes the question and answers that have been received so far. If you have additional questions you would like answered you can email vheoc@townofvinalhaven.org, call 863-2168, or email townmanager@townofvinalhaven.org

- a.** *Town Operation/Services – Andy discussed what services are deemed essential (statues, etc.), being able to fix roads and sidewalks in a timely manner for example, those things will continue, and what things can be relaxed and dealt with at a later date, dog licensing for example. Andy is asking the Board to consider allowing alternating two front office employees to work half days in the office (one in the morning, one in the afternoon) and the third employee work from home. Starting today, the library staff are working from home, but still doing a building check on days they would typically be open, collecting returns, etc. Public Works work plan may change depending on what jobs can be done while maintaining a safe distance. There was discussion on hours and staffing of the Transfer Station. The Swap Shop is closed, but another obstacle is working with the altered ferry schedule. Because of the schedule change there is already an increase in the cost of coming to get the solid waste as the driver is on island longer between boats. The Code Officer has been asked to only come in a couple times a week to check phone messages and email, while still being available for emergency situations. The Assessor is being set up with remote access so he can work from home. Some of the Community Development work has been scaled back and Gabe has been working with the Public Health Team on community support. Mark and Kerry have been primarily working with the Public Health Team. Harbor Master and ACO licensing and regulations have been relaxed so he is responding only to emergency situations.*
- b.** *General Update/Concerns – Eric mentioned that Wells, ME, BOS voted to ban all air B&B rentals that are less than 30 days and close hotels. He asked if Andy had heard that the State pushed back on that. Andy hadn't heard anything, but also noted that those Towns also regulate short-term rentals and that there is licensing or an ordinance that would allow the BOS to ban those entities. The hotel business part of that is under the Governors order.*

Jake asked about having the staff alternate full days so there wouldn't be the need to clean in between shift changes. There are certain days that payroll and other things need to be done, but he will discuss that with the staff. There is also another phone line available upstairs so that could be another work space.

Jake also asked about having the Public Works crew do a trash pick-up so there are less people going to the Transfer Station. Andy said it was definitely something to look into.

Jake mentioned that the Casco Bay ferry was having their crew work a two week on/two week off rotation so if someone was sick there was time in between shifts and asked if that was something the Maine State Ferry was looking into. Andy said he hadn't heard that was a consideration, but would check with them.

Phil asked about patients with controlled substance prescriptions that cannot go through the mail (were previously picked up by someone on the mainland) and will the Medical Center see to it that those will be taken care of. Jen answered that the Medical Center has talked generally about getting prescriptions and not specifically about patients with controlled substances. She knows two pharmacies that will mail controlled substances, while others won't, but patients should definitely call the Medical Center if they are having problems getting their medication because they can help with that and work with the patient to get those problems resolved.

Andy wanted to briefly come back to the alternative care plan and having an emergency care site. That draft will be brought to the Board when the plan is complete and there may be questions on insurance and potential for legal review.

- 4. Adjourn** – Motion by Eric Gasperini to adjourn. Second by Phil Crossman. Vote 5-0-0. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

Elizabeth Bunker, Deputy Town Clerk