



TOWN OF VINALHAVEN BOARD OF SELECTMEN

MINUTES

Thursday, June 4, 2020

5:00 pm

Virtual Meeting

1. **Roll Call** – *Selectmen Eric Gasperini, Pamela C. Alley, Phillip Crossman, Donald Poole and Jacob Thompson; and Town Manager Andrew J. Dorr. Also present: Marc Candage and Jen Desmond.*

This was a virtual meeting in which 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 Pam Alley. Vote 3-0-0. Motion carried.*
3. **COVID-19 June Letter – visitor expectations** – *Andy shared a couple different versions of a June letter to be mailed out. Andy has attended three “coffee hour” virtual meetings, and shared the business owners concerns (staff safety, amount of business, service providers from the mainland). Businesses are hoping for an encouraging/welcoming letter to seasonal guests. Phil pointed out that we have all learned new skills and how to cope with the pandemic, but wants to acknowledge the dependency that the community has on seasonal residents, and as Carver’s Harbor Market pointed out in their letter, “find a way to protect our community without discouraging the business we need to survive,” without diminishing the concerns of the Public Health Team. Pam doesn’t want anyone to feel unwelcome, but is concerned about opening up too much. Phil proposes writing with a tone of ‘it is possible to come’, vs. telling them not to come (which was what previous letters stated), and acknowledge the economic dependency. Pam asked for the Public Health Teams thoughts.*

Jen agreed that the goal isn’t to be unwelcoming, but is concerned what fall will look like after an ok summer, and what supplies will be available. Even though there may not be as many people around, there is still a lot of work going on and crews are stretched thin. She is worried about a big influx of people from different places.

Andy pointed out there are two groups: the seasonal and year-round property holders that are conscious of the town’s concerns, and those that aren’t seasonal residents, and how to reach that particular group that may be coming for shorter periods of time or visiting people on the island. Pam expressed concerns about ‘day-trippers’ and how to discourage that. Eric pointed out the limited cabin capacity on the ferry, and if it is difficult for islanders to travel off island, then maybe not to encourage travel, especially with the Curtis on for the Thompson currently, and the Curtis and Philbrook both limited to 5 people in each cabin.

Eric suggested not specifically saying ‘don’t come,’ but point out that this won’t be the summer that everyone is used to. Jake pointed out that those that come for longer than 14 days are welcome to come, but those that come for less than that might as well not come due to quarantine guidelines. Phil said the previous letters sent to property owners were intended to discourage travel to the island, but now we’ve learned new ways of coping and adapting while still protecting ourselves.

Pam pointed out that most people that come here year after year are very aware of what is expected of them and doesn't think they would come and not be respectful. But they don't want to come and be disrespected for coming. Jen is hopeful that the majority is still listening and adhering, but her tone continues to be cautious because of the amount of people who are coming.

Jake asked about the people who say they have stayed at home and quarantined wherever it is they live, but then travel here, and think they don't have to quarantine here because they've already done that at their home. He feels there's no way to keep those people from not coming here or not going out. Jen pointed out that there is no good way to "police" people traveling. There was discussion on having faith in the community that the majority will adhere to guidelines and be respectful if they choose to come here.

Eric brought it back to the tone of the letter and not saying 'don't come' but make sure it is clear it is not going to be a typical summer and everyone knows what they are coming to. Donald agreed that we still need people to come, but they know the steps they need to take to make sure they're safe and everyone else on the island is safe.

There was discussion on 'curb-side' pick up being available, but if you're quarantined and not suppose to leave your property, then coming to pick up curb-side is sending mixed messages. It should be clear in the letter that certain services are able to be delivered, but if you're quarantined than even curb-side is not an option.

Phil clarified that the letter should say that these are the precautions and parameters that are set if you come here. If you own property here and you want to come then these are the requirements.

Jen wanted to make sure she and the Public Health Team feel comfortable before signing the letter. Marc pointed out that the letter could come from the Selectmen and not just the Public Health Officer (Jen) or the Team. Marc expressed concern with people who come to visit long-term summer residents and may only stay a few days, and his concern that those people are following guidelines as well. That the host needs to quarantine as well as the visitor for the 14 days. Marc suggested the Board give Jen the opportunity to write the June letter, but also if the Board feels comfortable to have the Board write and sign the letter, taking into consideration both the concerns of the Public Health Team and all the concerns of the Board to find a middle ground. Pam asked if the Board was to write the letter, if Jen would like to include a piece as Public Health Officer. Phil suggested giving the final draft to Jen to review and make sure all parties are comfortable.

There was discussion on waiting for the Governors updated, which is coming early next week (June 8) before finalizing the letter, and what might change because of her update. There were two drafts proposed, so Eric asked for clarification on which letter to continue with. Andy suggested using the second version, which may require less edits. The letter will be shared via email when complete.

- 4. Report of Members** – *Phil forwarded an email from Dave Miramant letting him know the letter the Board sent to OPEGA for review is now part of a huge process, and wanted to make sure Board members read the email.*
- 5. Adjourn** – *Motion by Eric Gasperini to adjourn. Second by Phil Crossman. Vote 5-0-0. Motion carried.*

Respectfully Submitted,

Elizabeth Bunker, Deputy Town Clerk