March 15, 2020

To: Vinalhaven Community

Since our letter to you on Friday, there has been a lot of new information and changes to the state’s current situation regarding COVID-19. We are learning more daily as our state and nation responds to this epidemic and provides us with their recommendations. Given that information is constantly added and updated or that recommendations will change, we will continue to strive to provide you with the most relevant and timely information.

For those looking for the highlights of this letter...

1. **#FactsnotFear** – there is nothing to gain by spreading fear. Rely on credible sources for your information, particularly if you are sharing it with others. If you have questions, do not hesitate to reach out to the resources included.

2. **Social isolation on an isolated island.** It has not gone unnoticed that some seasonal friends and neighbors, as well as some new faces, are heading to the island seeking social isolation or a safe place. While we may often make light of being isolated, please consider the increased risk that travelling long distances may have on our isolated island community.

3. **Recommendations today may change tomorrow.** We will only be able to promise to provide you with the best recommendations based on the information we have available now. We ask that you be calm and flexible as circumstances are constantly changing.

4. **Look out for one another.** We know many of you never stop doing this, but we never know how anyone is doing unless we ask. Please pass no judgement or shame on anyone that is having a difficult time. We should not look down on our community members or look to blame someone who has, is, or will be returning from somewhere afar.

The facts we know as of today:

- There are no confirmed cases of COVID-19 on the island.
- The Maine CDC releases an update daily (M-F) about the number of test and the positive/negative results. As of March 13th, at 2:00 PM, the Maine CDC reported that there were 2 Presumptive Positive cases and 1 preliminary presumptive positive case.
- You can carry the virus for up to two weeks without showing symptoms and be contagious.
- The virus may be able to live on surfaces (Counter tops, writing instruments, door handles, faucets and toilets etc.) up to 48 hours.
- Young and healthy populations are affected the same way the flu or cold would affect them. Elderly and those with pre-existing health conditions can experience a serious effect from this virus.
Things everyone can do:

- Stay informed with facts, consider following the recommendation provided, and offer to help those in need.
- We cannot emphasize enough the importance of self-quarantine if you have returned or travelled from a long distance.
- Wash hands frequently; soap and water are as effective as hand sanitizer
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using regular household cleaning spray
- Have food and extra medicine on hand
- Stay home if you are sick. If you are sick and need care, call your healthcare provider for further steps and direction
- To minimize the spread of the virus or your chance to contract the virus, please minimize your activity in public spaces.

Why do we need to care?

Many of our friends and family are away and looking to come home, some have already returned, and our neighbors are looking to leave places that are perhaps worse off and find comfort on our beautiful island. This is a global challenge and we are now realizing that our small island in Penobscot Bay isn’t that far removed from the rest of the world. IF you MUST travel to Vinalhaven, please consider the following.

- We are isolated and we are being asked to isolate.
- Your medical providers are limited in the number of people and how they can be of assistance based on the resources available.
- Your first responders are volunteers and are limited by the equipment they have available.
- The logistics and dependency on transportation systems are beyond our control and can be challenging.

It should be of no surprise at this point the toll this pandemic has put on health care systems in other countries. Maine is only just beginning to see some of their first few presumptive positives cases while other parts of the country are seeing a staggering increase in cases. Our first responders and medical providers on the island give you everything they got and need to be prepared to continue helping those in need. The resources available to assist those in need are incredible for our small, isolated island community, yet there are already times we know a trip to the mainland is required. Please take strong considerations in following the recommendations to do the steps you can so reduce the spread of the virus.

Continuing to Provide Services

As of Monday March 16th, all town facilities will be closed to the general public. We will continue to provide you with the services we have but ask that you call first.

- Town Office 864-4343 – we can process most requests over the phone and will accept payments by mail. You also have the option to pay over the phone with a credit card, but will be expected to pay an additional 2.5%.
- Town Library 863-4401 – still want to read? Call in your book request and we can figure out a pick-up time or have it delivered.
- Public Safety Building 863-4604 or 863-2119 – perhaps you want to hide in the woods and burn brush. Did you know you can call in for the burn permit? Contact Mark or Kerry at the numbers listed here or call the Town Office if you get no answer.
• You will be able to take your trash to the town transfer station, but we ask that you buy stickers a head of time, do not bring items for the swap shop, and do not come into the building. If you have questions about this or any other services, please contact Andrew Dorr at 863-2042.

Our first responders will be able to assist those as they have, although they may likely wear appropriate personal protective equipment. As you likely see every time you go the hospital, our volunteers may have a face mask and medical gown to protect themselves, so they are able to help the next person in need.

Staying informed and following the advice above will go a long way in reducing the amount of infection in our community and will help protect all of us.

To stay informed we recommend using the following sources:

Town of Vinalhaven: https://www.townofvinalhaven.org/home/pages/covid-19-resources

For general questions about the coronavirus, please call 2-1-1.

Please contact Andrew Dorr for general questions about town services at 863-2042. Visit the Town’s Facebook page or the Town website for up-to-date info about our services.

If you have the symptoms or a good reason to think you have been exposed, call ICMS at 863-4341.

Decisions made during situations like this are not made lightly and are always done with your, our community’s best interest in mind. Please think about those that are responsible for providing services and care to those in need when you are not quite sure if you should join that gathering or travel. Above all else look out for your family, friends, and neighbors as your call or lending hand may be just want they need at that moment.

Sincerely,

Jen Desmond,          Andrew Dorr
Public Health Officer  Town Manager

Kerry McKee          Marc Candage
Ambulance Director    Fire Chief