



# TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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## BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES

May 20, 2020  
5:00 PM

### Meeting Conducted via Zoom

Due to the COVID-19/Coronavirus crisis and in accordance with Governor Sununu's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, this Board is authorized to meet electronically. The public has access to contemporaneously listen and participate in this meeting through the video conferencing platform Zoom.us

#### **PARTICIPATING:**

Janet Kidder, Chairman  
Nancy Rollins, Selectman  
John Cannon, Selectman  
Kim Hallquist, Town Administrator  
Wendy Johnson, Finance Officer

#### **ALSO PARTICIPATING:**

Police Chief Emily Cobb  
Fire Chief Jay Lyon  
Recreation Director Scott Blewitt

Selectman Kidder called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM.

#### **OPERATION OF TOWN BEACHES UNDER STATE OF NH STAY AT HOME 2.0**

Chair Kidder explained that the Governor of New Hampshire has issued orders over the past several weeks aimed at protecting the health and safety of New Hampshire citizens, first responders and healthcare workers. These orders are designed to stop the spread of the Corona virus by limiting exposure to it. These orders include requiring many businesses to temporarily close, the canceling of public functions that attract large groups of citizens and encouragement to stay at home except for necessary outings for food, medical needs, exercise and work. Citizens are also encouraged to wear masks and observe social distancing guidelines of staying at least six feet apart and not to have groups larger than 10 people.

The Selectmen of the Town of New London have a responsibility of managing town property in a way that will best protect the health and safety of the citizens and the employees that will be called upon to serve the citizens. In thinking about that responsibility, the Selectmen are now considering Bucklin and Elkins beaches and whether changes should be made in the usage of the areas to observe the Governor's guidelines designed to stop the spread of the coronavirus.

At the Selectmen's meeting this past Monday, the Board decided to have the picnic tables removed from both beaches to discourage groups from congregating at the beaches and to eliminate potential sources of contamination given that there would not be adequate staffing available to keep the surfaces disinfected between uses. For similar reasons, it was decided to keep the bathrooms closed.

Police Chief Cobb stated that a few days ago, the Selectmen, department heads and Town Administrator Kim Hallquist met at Elkins beach and ultimately decided to recommend to the board to close the beaches until further notice. This is in an effort to mitigate the risk to our community members of exposure to COVID-19 and to continue to do our part in New London to slow the spread of this disease. If the beaches stay open, the lack of staff and lifeguards will be problematic, and this poses a safety hazard. The closure of the bathrooms is also a big problem as it invites issues such as public urination, defecation, and indecent exposure in a normally highly populated area.

Chief Cobb noted that if beaches are open, it could open the town up to civil liability if a person were to contract COVID-19 at one of the town beaches. Enforcement of social distancing would be challenging for the Police Department and there are concerns about potential conflict with people on the beach. It would ultimately be a gathering of a group larger than ten.

Chief Cobb also noted that it's important to remember that the New Hampshire state beaches are closed at this time. With those closures we are bound to see an influx of people in New London who would normally be utilizing those state beaches. Even though parking passes are required, this is not always a deterrent and people are willing to pay the fine to park there. Instead of a straight closure of the beaches, many alternatives were considered such as not issuing guest passes, decreasing parking spaces by half, getting creative with how to block off parking spaces and incorporating 2-hour parking spaces. Ultimately those measures were not enough to be in accordance with the spirit of the stay at home order and could not be managed effectively.

Chief Cobb reminded the Board that this is temporary and will hopefully change very soon. The Governor has stated that he is looking for a phased in re-opening of the state beaches by June 1, 2020. Chief Cobb thanked the Board for considering their recommendation and urged the public to not become complacent as this virus is a very real threat in our community and can easily be spread. If we reopen too soon, we could see an uptick and could be in a worse position than we are today.

Fire Chief Lyon concurs with the comments from Chief Cobb. He added that the primary goal of public officials, especially emergency services, is the health and wellness of individuals. He is concerned about Police Officers having to respond to complaints about people not wearing masks or not properly social distancing. Closing of the bathrooms and cold waters are also concerning to him. He feels it is important to be consistent with the state guidelines.

Town Administrator Kim Hallquist thanked all those involved with this process, explaining that a lot of thought and work went into making this decision. It is important to remember that citizens have the right to use town property and it the Selectmen's responsibility to manage that property in a way that best serves the citizens with regards to health and safety. She supports the recommendation to close the beaches temporarily until we receive more guidance from the Governor and institute necessary procedures to make the area as safe as possible. It is critical to keep the virus from spreading to the citizens of New London. Ms. Hallquist pledged to work with the department heads to plan for re-opening of the beaches at which time the Selectmen can meet for further consideration.

Selectman Rollins echoed Kim Hallquist in thanking all the department heads and others who have worked on this and she appreciates the recommendation. She concurs that there should be a clear message to the community that the beaches are closed. She stated that our beaches are small in size and not conducive for walks on the beach and can't properly socially distance if there are numbers of people there. Moving forward, she would like to have written policies and procedures that are very clear around expectations for our lifeguard staff and how cleaning and sanitation of rest rooms will take place. Perhaps COVID funding could be used in order to do this in a professional manner that will ensure the health and safety of our citizens.

Selectman Cannon agrees with the comments that have already been stated and believes we should be consistent with the state guidelines. If we open the beaches now, we may create more problems in the future. He is hoping by July 4, 2020 we could have policies and procedures in place to make it as safe as possible. He has concerns about the impact on town employees.

Recreation Director Scott Blewitt noted that he appreciates the comments and agrees with what has been said. He is especially in favor in having policies and procedures in place, especially for the lifeguards and staff as this is generally a younger group of employees. Sometimes young people can be easily intimidated so he wants to make sure there is a plan to protect them. He has a small supply of personal protective equipment (PPE) but will need more.

Chair Kidder explained that considering the closure of the beaches is the last thing the Board of Selectmen wishes to do. She stated that because we are living in unprecedented times, we have an obligation to the citizens of New London and the staff that works for the town to do everything in our power to keep them safe and healthy.

**IT WAS MOVED (Nancy Rollins) AND SECONDED (John Cannon) to accept the recommendation of the Police Chief, Fire Chief, Town Administrator and other town Department heads to close Elkins and Bucklin beaches until further notice. Roll call vote: Janet Kidder: Yes, Nancy Rollins: Yes, John Cannon: Yes. . THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

#### **DETERMINE VOTING LOCATION FOR SEPTEMBER 8<sup>TH</sup> PRIMARY ELECTION**

Town Administrator Kim Hallquist stated that it is the responsibility of the Selectmen to select the voting location for all elections. The next election coming up is the September 8, 2020 state primary. For decades, elections have been held at Whipple Memorial Town Hall for voting but due to the Coronavirus, a larger space is needed to space out workers and voters.

Yesterday, the Moderator, Town Clerk, Assistant Moderator, Public Works Director, Town Administrator and supervisors of the check list toured the Public Works garage to determine if it would be suitable for voting. It was agreed that the larger garage is a suitable place and can accommodate the social distancing requirements that will keep voters and election workers safe. The recommendation is that the Selectmen select the Highway garage for the September 8, 2020 primary.

**IT WAS MOVED (Nancy Rollins) AND SECONDED (John Cannon) to select the Highway Garage for voting on September 8, 2020. Roll call vote: Janet Kidder: Yes, Nancy Rollins: Yes, John Cannon: Yes. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

#### **Motion to Adjourn**

**IT WAS MOVED (John Cannon) AND SECONDED (Nancy Rollins) to adjourn the meeting. Roll call vote: Janet Kidder: Yes, Nancy Rollins: Yes, John Cannon: Yes. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Trina Dawson  
Recording Secretary  
Town of New London