

TOWN OF ALLENSTOWN
Emergency Selectboard Meeting
16 School Street
Allenstown, New Hampshire 03275
March 16, 2020

Note to the Public: What you are reading is measures that were effective on March 16, 2020. This COVID19 Emergency is evolving and changes every day. Some of the measures and actions that were discussed in this meeting are no longer reality as they have changed, and services are further limited or alternative measures are now in place. Please watch the Town Website and the Facebook pages of the Town, Police and Fire Department for the latest updates to service levels from the Town of Allenstown. Everyone be Safe!

Call to Order

The Allenstown Emergency Selectboard Meeting of March 16, 2020 was called to order by Vice Chair Sandy McKenney at 6:00 pm.

Vice Chair McKenney called for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call

Present on the Board: Sandy McKenney, Scott McDonald

Maureen Higham arrived at 6:46 pm.

Allenstown staff: Debbie Bender, Finance Director

Others present: Michael Stark, Police Chief; Eric Lambert, Deputy Fire Chief; Chad Pelissier, Road Agent; Kathleen Pelissier, Town Clerk; Ron Eisenhart, Emergency Management Director/ Health Officer; Denise Deblois, Deputy Emergency Management Director/ Health Officer; Trish Caruso, Administration/Welfare

Present via conference call: Jeff Backman, Sewer Department Superintendent; Derik Goodine, Town Administrator

Agenda: Allenstown's COVID-19 Response

Ms. McKenney stated that the purpose of this meeting is to discuss the COVID-19 situation and what can be done to help employees and residents through the process. She said that New Hampshire now has 17 cases, none in Merrimack County thus far.

Police Chief Stark stated that most departments have put out directives for their own departments. He said they need to balance providing needed services and following directives to avoid spreading the virus. The Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), he said is working on extending expiration dates for permits, licenses and ID's. For his own department, he has emphasized the basic important steps: washing hands frequently and avoiding touching one's face. He has asked his staff members to notify him if they have been exposed to the virus, and also if they have plans to travel out of New England. His officers will go to medical calls only if they need to be there. The sign outside of the Police Station has

been changed, directing people to call #211. There is a different number for first responders to call. Police officers have been told to be packed and ready to stay at the Police Station if necessary, with clothes, sleeping bags and toilet articles. He said he does not foresee keeping his entire staff at the station. He added that, with Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) closed down, they could use that facility if necessary. Also, the Department of Safety (DES) has a place to quarantine, but the location hasn't been disclosed yet. The courts are closed, so Prosecutor Walsh can work from home. At the station, Chief Stark said, they have a drawer for the exchange of papers; it doesn't have to be touched right away. Any tasks and requests which can be put off will be put off if they involve interaction with people. If we must provide fingerprints, gloves will be used. People are getting more upset than they need to be. It is important to get in front of the virus, which we are doing. This is very contagious, and we want to avoid overwhelming the health care system, the Chief said. Stopping the spread as quickly as possible is the most important thing to do

Ms. McKenney asked about the Police Department clerical staff.

Chief Stark said they will stay for now. As an example of how quickly the situation changes, at noon the State had no plan to close restaurants and bars; but now they have been closed except for takeout service.

Ms. McKenney said that people have to use good judgment.

Mr. Pelissier said that he has told his employees at the Highway Department to stay home if they feel sick. He said that Highway is in a down time now. They are doing maintenance. They cannot take the plows off of the trucks yet because there could be more snow. He said that most employees could stay at home on standby; he would like to keep them out of the public if it's not necessary for them to go out.

Ms. McKenney asked about the dump.

Mr. Pelissier said the dump needs to stay open. He has talked with Alan Turcotte, who will wash his hands frequently and keep his distance from people. The dump could be open but unattended.

Ms. McKenney asked about having the dump open only on Saturdays. She asked if Highway employees staying home on standby would be paid

Mr. Pelissier responded yes.

Chief Stark added that if they are full-time, they would be paid.

Ms. Bender said there is a timing issue. That is, employees might stay home this week, and then find they must stay home for another three weeks.

Mr. Pelissier said he would rather be ahead on this. He said that some of his employees are high risk, and the young employees think they are invincible.

Ms. Caruso said that the State Welfare Office has set up a rotation whereby half of the staff stays home for two weeks while the other half works; then they switch.

Mr. Eisenhart stated that the CDC says there could be restrictions for eight weeks. If businesses close and people isolate themselves at home, it could be contained in three weeks; if not, it could take much longer.

Ms. Pelissier said that the State is already taking measures so that new and transfer registrations can be done at the State. They are working on extensions of registration renewals and license renewals. She said she is encouraging people to complete transactions online. Their software vendor has agreed to waive online fees. However, the credit card companies aren't waiving fees. Ms. Pelissier said she plans to stay open until there is a case in Merrimack County. She said she is working mornings and going back in the evening. She drives her mail to the post office after so that people can get their renewals as quickly as possible. Luckily, she said, 90% of the transactions in her office can be done online.

Chief Stark has told his employees that if they are exposed to the virus at work, they should tell him and do the paperwork to file a report with Primex. For testing, he said, employees should always go through their Primary Care Physician (PCP). Tests for first responders can be done at the Public Health lab, with a turnaround of two to eight hours. The commercial labs can handle the New Hampshire volume, they claim, but results will take three to five days. Tests are conducted outside in the parking lot to limit contamination. They can handle a volume of 4,000 per day. He said it is important that people know that the incubation period for this virus is fairly short: five (5) days. People who are not symptomatic should not be tested. The one case of exposure at Pinkerton was a teacher, so they are confident about possible exposures. Also, he said, contact does not mean you will get the virus.

Mr. McDonald asked Mr. Lambert about Capital Area Mutual aid.

Deputy Fire Chief Lambert said he has not heard anything. A recent meeting was postponed.

Chief Stark said the Police mutual aid system is easier: the officer assisting becomes an Allenstown Police Officer. He continued, saying that in this political climate, people decide what news to listen to based on political affiliation. He said he had some important information to share about this virus. He said it is similar to the flu in that it can't survive above 64 to 65 degrees. The flu is a mutating virus which has been around for thousands of years. This virus, however, is novel. It is encouraging that in China, the virus seems to be subsiding. Also, once someone has the virus, they cannot catch it again. It is scientifically valid that having everyone stay home who possible can is the best way to control and eliminate the spread of the virus.

Ms. Caruso said she can do a lot of her work by telephone. With the courts suspended, eviction cases will not be heard. However, this will open the floodgates later. Some people, unfortunately, see this as an opportunity to take a vacation from bills.

Ms. McKenney said that people are temporarily laid off should be able to collect unemployment.

Chief Stark said the State is doing whatever it can to suspend rules. At the federal level, a bill for assistance has passed the House and the Senate will be taking it up. That is a political process. It is good, he said, that everyone is going through this. Someone on Facebook was concerned about his new, unlicensed dog. Chief Stark assured him that his officers do not hunt down unlicensed dogs. If stopped in traffic, officers will understand if someone has a recently expired registration or license.

Ms. McKenney asked Deputy Fire Chief Lambert about Chief St. Germaine's plans for the Fire Station.

Deputy Chief Lambert said the Fire Station door is shut. They are issuing no permits. The administrative assistant is not in the office. People who come to the station are held in the front entrance after pressing the buzzer. They are directed to online services whenever possible. Evan McIntosh is in every day with one per diem firefighter. There are no meetings or training sessions – nothing non-essential. The Explorers have been postponed for at least three weeks. Tri-Town, he said, is operating basically the same way.

Mr. Pelissier said he will operate under the normal schedule for the rest of the week. Then, he will begin a rotation of half of the crew one week and the other half the next week.

Ms. McKenney asked if they can be paid.

Ms. Caruso said they would be paid.

Ms. Pelissier asked about the cleaning staff. She suggested allowing cleaning people to stay at home, isolated. She said she has heard that the Boys & Girls Club may close tomorrow and that she and other employees can continue to keep everything clean. She said that the message to stay home, if possible, should be loud and clear.

Ms. Caruso said she is preparing to do payroll from home. Welfare clients are asked to call rather than come into the office. Applications are in the lobby. She said she can do casework over the phone. However, she said, she needs access to the welfare database, for which she needs to be in the office. Although she usually collects paperwork from welfare clients, she has been told she need not collect certain things. She knows her clients already. She said that legal has advised her to avoid meeting with clients, but some have no phone and no computer. When necessary she will talk through the window.

Mr. Eisenhart reported that they are up-to-date on health cases and inspections. He said they will evaluate the best way to handle situations as they get calls. He said the Board of Directors of the New Hampshire Health Officers will be meeting tomorrow (Tuesday) unless the meeting is canceled. He said that the first Hazard Mitigation Meeting is scheduled for tomorrow. They can reschedule for March 27th or April 4th. They also have the option of meeting via webex – online web conferencing. This would be experimental for everyone. They are in touch with Stephanie Alexander from the Central NH Regional Planning Commission (CNHRPC).

Ms. Bender said they would like to move up the payroll schedule, with timesheets in by noon on Monday. Since she does not have a good internet connection at home, she plans to work from her office where she is well isolated.

Ms. McKenney said that employees who routinely visit Ms. Bender in her office should call her if possible. She next asked if committee meetings should be allowed.

Mr. Goodine said Mr. Matt Monahan is trying to arrange for virtual meetings.

Mr. Pelissier said he has a concern about public input, especially for the Planning Board and ZBA.

Ms. Pelissier said people could call in via conference call using a code.

Ms. McKenney asked how people could look at plans that are presented.

Mr. Goodine said that Matt Monahan is working on that. Anything which can be cancelled should be. He said that the Budget Committee chairperson was concerned about a deadline for electing new officers.

Ms. Pelissier said she did not believe there is one.

Mr. Goodine said he could do research from home.

Mr. Backman stated that the Allenstown Sewer Commission (ASC) meeting scheduled for tomorrow has been cancelled. They will be reducing operating hours starting tomorrow. He said he sent home one employee with a weak immune system.

Ms. McKenney asked if employees sent home would be paid.

Mr. Backman said that they would be paid. He added that they have plans to reduce the hours of the administrative assistant, who can work at home on a laptop. He said that sewer payments can be made online or with a credit card over the phone. There is also a drop-off box outside.

Ms. Pelissier said it is important that they all have each other's contact information.

Ms. DeBlois said that if this goes longer, people will need things they may not be able to afford with lost income. She asked if they could set up a donation system.

Ms. McKenney said that Donna Barnett (Facebook) wants to help.

Ms. Pelissier said someone who owns a restaurant wanted to donate food. She directed them to the food pantry.

T. Caruso said that the Community Action Program (CAP) today connected with the food pantry.

Ms. Pelissier suggested that Mr. Goodine could do an email blast regarding donations.

Ms. Caruso said that Allenstown regularly works with neighboring towns – Hooksett, Bow, Pembroke - to distribute food. If one community has extra, they share with a community which needs more.

Mr. McDonald said that students with federal free or reduced-price meals will get them delivered by school buses.

Ms. Dublois noted that an uptick in burglaries is possible. She asked about police patrolling.

Chief Stark said they are constantly patrolling.

Ms. Pelissier asked to be kept in the loop if anything changes so that she can share the information.

Ms. McKenney made a motion to adjourn at 7:19 pm. Mr. McDonald seconded the motion, which carried unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned.

**TOWN OF ALLENSTOWN
EMERGENCY SELECTBOARD
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

MARCH 16, 2020

SIGNATURE PAGE

Original Approval:	
SCOTT MCDONALD, Member	DATE
SANDRA MCKENNEY, Vice Chair	DATE
MAUREEN HIGHAM, Member	DATE

Amendment Approvals:		
Amendment Description:	Approval:	Date:
	SCOTT MCDONALD, Member	DATE
	SANDRA MCKENNEY, Vice Chair	DATE

	MAUREEN HIGHAM, Member	DATE
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