

Rye Beach Committee Meeting
Wednesday August 19, 2020 at 5:00 p.m.
via Zoom

Members present: Frank Hwang, Mary-Ann Sullivan, Roseann Vozella Clark, prospective member Seanna Zelazo

Guest speakers: Fire Chief Mark Cotreau, Police Chief Kevin Walsh

Frank called the meeting to order. He welcomed the chiefs and Seanna to the meeting. He read the Attestation. There were no public comments. The members approved the Minutes of the July 15, 2020 meeting.

Frank asked if would be ok to take the agenda items out of order. The members agreed.

Frank then introduced prospective Beach Committee Member Seanna Zelazo and asked her if she had anything to say in addition to her introduction letter. She thanked the board for its warm welcome and said she would love the opportunity to serve on the committee. Brendan Carney's letter requesting a seat on the Beach Committee was read by Frank as he was unable to attend the meeting. The committee members voted unanimously to send Seanna and Brenden's names on to the Selectmen for their approval. Frank agreed to send a letter to the Selectmen so their appointment to the Beach Committee could happen as soon as possible. These new members will bring the committee to a full complement of five members.

The next agenda item addressed was the Beach Committee Charter. Mary-Ann had spent time on this and shared a draft with the members. Frank and Roseann thanked her for her efforts and some suggestions were made. Mary-Ann said she would revise the draft based on these suggestions and have it ready for the next meeting.

Frank asked Chief Walsh to give the members some background on his interactions with the Beach Commission and share any other history that he thought might be useful. Chief Walsh stated that in his twenty-five year tenure things have evolved from 1994 when there were three members of the committee to the present day. Currently he works with various boards, town officials, as well as the Selectmen to address beach related issues. He spoke of the lifeguard program and praised the lifeguards for their work in locating missing children at the beach within 10 to 15 minutes.

Fire Chief Walsh informed the committee that the town pays \$30 per sample water sample from Eel Pond, Wallis Beach, and at Sawyer Beach. These samples are taken on a weekly basis. Chief Cotreau reported that Amanda (the woman who takes the samples) went to look around when the report of feces in the water was made. The tide had taken care of the situation. He further explained that when high bacteria numbers occur there are signs posted at the beach stating swim at your own risk. Additional water tests would be done in a day or two.

Frank inquired as to who would enforce the signs which were called "an advisory" by the Chief. He replied that the lifeguards are the first level of education. There is also a Beach Patrol person Wednesday through Sunday from 11 to 7 until Labor Day to help reinforce this message as necessary.

Chief Cotreau credited Larry Rocca former Beach Commission member as being very helpful with the lifeguards. Beach lifeguards are sixteen years old or older. Currently there are two lifeguards a day at

three beaches. On the July fourth weekend there are three at each beach. A member of the Fire Department works directly with the lifeguards training and mentoring them. He checks in with them through the week. When a situation arises the lifeguards can radio for backup and the Fire Department can quickly respond. There was a beach rescue at Wallis Sands on Monday. The lifeguards are in radio contact with Hampton lifeguards. The Chief made the Committee aware of the Jet Ski which is stored at Rye Harbor as well as rescue swimmers who are part of the department. There are trained and certified people who perform these tasks.

Both Chiefs explained that parking restrictions along Route 1A are the Governor's jurisdiction. They frequently meet with the Emergency Management at the state and local level. Due to the Covid 19 pandemic the parking restriction help to decrease the number of people who have access to the towns and beaches. They emphasized that this is due to a medical crisis and the situation will change and hopefully be going back to normal in the future when a vaccine is available. They further acknowledged that permit parking spaces fill up fast as the number of permits far surpass the amount of parking spaces available to Rye residents.

As a result of limited parking the amount of parking tickets issued has tripled and if all were paid the revenue to the town would be \$100,000. Chief Walsh said that there is an appeal process for these tickets. He said that as of January 2020, 2,566 tickets were issued and 418 unpaid. Revenue from parking tickets goes into the general fund. When asked about towing Chief Walsh replied that that gets complicated. At times there are multiple events such as towing, underage drinking, and speeding which involve Police Department personnel simultaneously.

Mary-Ann asked about nonpermitted groups hosting activities at the beaches and how to handle that information. Both Chiefs said please send emails with any information and questions to them.

Frank thanked the Chiefs for their time.

Possible topics for the next meeting are the eel grass taking up beach space between E Street and Jenness Beach and E Street and Cable Road and updates on water quality issues.

The next meeting date will be announced pending the new members' approval by the Selectmen and their ability to be sworn in. The meeting adjourned at 6:35 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Roseann Vozella Clark