

TOWN OF RYE BEACH COMMITTEE

Monday, October 16, 2023

5:30 p.m.

Rye Town Hall

Committee Present: *Chair Mary-Ann Sullivan, Vice-Chair Mary Connolly-Mitchell, Anne Robert, Tom Mack, Selectmen's Rep Tom King, Alternates Doug Beattie and Mike Hammond*

1. Call to Order

Chair Sullivan called the meeting to order at 5:34 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Public Comment

None

3. Approval of Minutes from Site Walk – 9/18/2023

Motion by Mary-Ann Sullivan to approve the site walk minutes of September 18, 2023 as presented. All were in favor.

4. Fire Chief Mark Cotreau – Review of beach safety and surf/swim flags

Fire Chief Mark Cotreau, along with **Lieutenant Jake MacGlashing**, met with the Beach Committee to discuss this past season's activities at the beach, in terms of beach safety.

Chair Sullivan noted that this past summer, the lifeguards were generous in letting the surf groups go down further and further along the beach. What started happening is that it looked like there was a tiny area for swimming. The surf flags were further down the beach. Some of the residents complained that there were surfers way down closer to the Beach Club area; south end of Sawyer's Beach. Towards the end of the summer, when there were not as many lifeguards and some gorgeous weather in September, there were surfers everywhere and it was tough for swimmers. She suggested that there be some discussion about how to handle this with possibly some surfer guidelines, so no one gets hurt. She pointed out that she is supportive of the surf groups and thinks it's great for the participants; however, there are also potential safety issues.

Fire Chief Cotreau noted that Lt. MacGlashing is the Department's lifeguard coordinator. He works directly with the head lifeguards and is probably the most knowledgeable about the day-to-day issues. Chief Cotreau continued that from his perspective, he loves to have the input and address any questions. There were several years where at the end of every year, the Department would be getting questions for issues from June or July and nothing can get rectified that way. He appreciates the Beach Committee reaching out. Chief Cotreau explained that apparently, one of the lifeguards was allowing the surfers to expand past the flags, on days when there were not a lot of swimmers. He also explained that when the surf clubs get their permits for the classes at the beginning of the season, there is a discussion with the Select Board of how things are going to be done.

Chair Sullivan pointed out that this issue was happening in August and September when it started to get warm. On non-rainy days, it was suddenly packed at the beach and the surf camp was in the middle of the beachgoers. The camps were dominating so other people couldn't swim. She commented that the way the flags were posted, it looked like there was just a small area to swim.

Lt. MacGlashing explained that the flags and swim zones have been tough. Over the past ten years, there have been many changes that Rye has gone through, in terms of surfing and swim zones. He continued that the question was brought to him by the lifeguards whether the swim zone could be smaller on rainy days, with the surf zone opening expanding, to make some of the surfers happy. Lt. MacGlashing pointed out that he allowed this, but once it warmed up, the message to the lifeguards was to make sure the chairs were the swim zone. He noted that the lifeguards are usually really good about whistling surfers out of that zone. He's always open to further comments about how things can be better. He pointed out that there was discussion at the end of the season meeting about adding more verbiage to the signs to clarify the zones. Lt. MacGlashing also pointed out that the Department had a tough year in trying to get a full staff of lifeguards; sometimes there would be one guard at Sawyer's and sometimes there'd be two. Later in the season it becomes tougher, as a lot of the lifeguards head back to college in August. He reiterated that in the early part of the season, during foggy and rainy days, there were only lifeguards and surfers on the beach and it was about trying to make everyone happy.

Chair Sullivan commented that what ended up happening is that it crept down the beach, so people coming onto Sawyer's had a hard time getting to the ocean. She noted that it continued into September. She would like to look ahead to next summer.

Member Mack stated that he goes to both Cable and Sawyer's through the summer. He noticed at Sawyer's that on a lot of rainy days the guards would let the surfers expand a bit. However, he saw that the lifeguards reigned them in a bit during the season. The surf area would expand on rainy days because no one was around, but the lifeguards would reign it in on nice days.

Alternate Hammond commented that he is at Cable Beach almost daily. There is some push and pull always between the surfers and swimmers; however, there's enough beach for everyone. He suggested that maybe if the signs were constant and moved less with conditions it might inform the surfers of the zone and remind them that it doesn't change with the weather or the amount of people who are on the beach.

Alternate Beattie stated that at Pirate's Beach the signs are pretty well laid out. There's a lot of area to the north and south that's not swimming only, there are surfers. However, there's so many people in the water that it's a dangerous situation.

Fire Chief Cotreau noted that over the winter, the Department is going to work on a strategic plan for the lifeguard program; planning for the next three to five years. The intent is to make good use of off-season time to try to recruit lifeguards. He explained that part of it is recruiting, access to training, and the wage scale, which the Department has been working on for several years. He is hoping that next year at this time, they will have a good idea of where the program

is going. He commented that the Department will probably come back during that time to meet with the Beach Committee to get input.

5. 2024 Budget – Line items discussion and vote, including support for Surfrider/Water Testing/UNH Jackson Lab, Blue Ocean/Beach Cleanups

The Committee reviewed the proposed budget line items for the Beach Committee Budget for 2024, along with the year-to-date expenditures for 2023.

- **Environmental Services** – This line item is used to cover costs for lab testing related to the water sampling conducted for E.coli and bacteria, which is done by NH Surfriders. The samples are taken to Jackson Lab at UNH. Surfrider does sampling in the shoulder seasons with NH DES conducting sampling during the summer months. Five beaches are tested: two in Rye; two in Hampton; and one in North Hampton. It was recommended by Chair Sullivan to budget \$600 in the 2024 budget in the environmental services line item. Surfrider tests five locations along the Seacoast with one of the sites being Sawyer’s Beach in Rye. The results are available on Surfrider’s website. It was agreed that it’s important to continue to fund the testing, which can always be reevaluated in the future.

All were in favor of continuing to fund Surfrider in 2024 to cover costs for water quality sampling.

The Committee continued to review the proposed 2024 budget prepared by Chair Sullivan. Line items included printing, office supplies, and contracted services (for transcription of meeting minutes). There were no issues or concerns with the budget numbers being presented. There was discussion on the possibility of additional water testing next year and the best locations for testing.

All were in favor of adding one hundred dollars to give to Surfrider to cover any volunteer expenses in case additional testing is done. The environmental services line was set at \$700 for the 2024 budget.

All were in favor of moving the proposed 2024 Beach Committee Budget forward as discussed.

6. Update on RES 2024 Eco-Posters and RJH 2025 Beach Sticker

Chair Sullivan reported that the 4th grade team at the elementary school will be doing the posters. Rye Junior High will be doing the beach stickers.

7. Beach Access Entryways – Feedback, updating map, status of G-Street

Chair Sullivan noted that the beach access points haven’t been updated on the town’s website since 2012. They are not exactly accurate and it seems that some are missing. She would like to have a work session as a committee to update the map. Chair Sullivan also noted that Janice Ireland has said that she can help update the information on the website.

There was some discussion about access points and whether there is access to the beach off G Street. It was noted by Chair Sullivan that G Street is listed on the website, but it's unclear at the site whether there is access or if it is private property. Selectman King agreed to follow up on this for clarification.

8. Support of Dog Waste Containers and Bike Racks

The Committee agreed to support the continuation of the dog waste containers and bike racks. Chair Sullivan commented that DPW Director Jason Rucker may meet with the Committee to discuss the dog waste containers and bike racks. There was some discussion about attaching signs to the cans listing the rules. The DPW Director is in favor of having the signs.

Selectman King noted that he received a call about the dog waste dispensers being missing at Cable Beach. He called DPW Director Rucker and was informed that the dispensers are put away every winter and just the cans remain. His concern is that people are trained all summer to just grab a bag and clean up, with a place to put it. During the off season, the Town still wants people to clean up and dispose of it, but the bags aren't provided anymore. Human nature is that people are not going to show up with a bag and they won't be able to clean up after their dog. He pointed out that the dispenser and signs are removed because of the posts during storms.

The Committee agreed this is something that should be addressed with Director Rucker.

9. Division of Beach Committee Responsibilities

Chair Sullivan spoke about dividing up some of the committee's responsibilities amongst the members. She asked the Committee to think about what responsibility they may want to take on. This will be discussed at a future meeting.

10. Other/New Business

None

- **Next Meeting: Monday, November 20th, 5:30 p.m., Rye Town Hall**

Motion to Adjourn

Motion by Mary Connolly-Mitchell to adjourn at 6:55 p.m. Seconded by Tom Mack. All in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,
Dyana F. Ledger