

BEACH COMMISSION MEETING

Rye, New Hampshire

Minutes of March 17, 2009

Town Hall Meeting Room

4:30 PM

Members present: Michael Labrie, Chairman, Jack Panopoulos, Tim Sanborn

Chairman Labrie opens the hearing at 4:55 and conducts the Pledge of Allegiance.

Commission members discuss the DES Safe Swim Program and the report received for 2008. A letter was sent to Chairman Labrie dated March 4, 2009 regarding “preparing for the 2009 Summer Swim Season” from the DES. They state the town is responsible to comply with “Env-Wq 1100 Public Bathing Administrative Rule”. These rules require the beach owner to provide a lifeguard at each beach or post a sign stating no lifeguard is available. The beach owner must also provide a telephone or radio for reaching emergency services within 200-ft of the water and to provide emergency rescue equipment, or post signs stating where the closest radio/telephone is located and/or that no such emergency equipment is available. The signs are free from the department.

The DES samples the water at a charge to the town, which is a “not to exceed” amount. The DES did close a beach down last year due to bacteria counts. The commissioners discussed the role of Blue Ocean and their volunteers with “adopt a beach” and would like to enhance their relationship with this organization. The commissioners would like to continue their community outreach program with more education about keeping our beaches clean.

Panopoulos states we need the signs up year round regarding the rules for dogs on the beach. There are no signs or enforcement currently and we need to control the bacteria count for dog waste left on the beach. This must be a top priority for the upcoming year. The weather turns warm and people are out on the beach with or without dogs but there is no enforcement or signs stating the rules. The solution may be to request the selectmen leave the signs up year round. Panopoulos discusses other ideas on how to educate the people who bring their dogs on the beach to pick up after their dog and not to leave it behind either in or not in bags, and to have their dog under control.

Sanborn had thought the town issued the regulations with beach permits. The organized dog lobby had prepared some educational information but we are not sure who distributes that or if they still are distributing that information.

Panopoulos states that we need to have enforcement on the beach when the dogs are allowed on the beach and it just isn't happening. The DES water quality results have shown elevated bacteria levels on the beach and the dog waste left behind contributes to this.

Sanborn states the major contributor to the bacteria counts are the birds.

Panopolis states the Blue Ocean Web site indicates the number 1 problem on the beaches is dog waste. Now with the DNA testing, they can identify what species the bacteria (feces) comes from and it has been shown to be the dogs waste left behind. It is a huge contaminant.

Labrie states everyone is frustrated with the lack of enforcement of picking up after your dog and the amount of dog waste left behind. We can only try by educating dog owners through signage and web sites and get some volunteers each weekend at least, to greet all dog owner before they go on the beach to explain the rules about picking up the dog waste. He agrees we need to communicate more with the Blue Ocean group and get outside help with the education of dog owners.

Labrie states that a new beach supervisor of life guards must be hired. There are two people who have expressed interest so far, Collin Drake and Jason Schuff. Labrie will coordinate with Nancy Weiland to advertize for the position and for lifeguards. They will schedule interviews on a Saturday.

Sanborn makes a motion to run the advertisements for the positions. Panopoulos seconds it. All in favor.

Labrie will convey this request to Ms. Weiland. Labrie will check on the required credentials, including the Water Safety Instructor Certification.

Next on the agenda is the consideration of the open seat. Labrie mentions to Sanborn that since it is his seat up for appointment, he can not sit on the board as a member, but is welcome to stay for the discussion. Sanborn provides additional information for his consideration, including his length of contribution, but leaves the room

Labrie identifies all five individuals interested in the seat: Tim Sanborn, Jane Holway, Peter Kane, Brian Dewsnap, and Peggy Taylor.

Ms. Holway served on the commission over 10-years ago, and most recently been the chairman of the Historical District. She is a strong advocate to allow dogs on the beach.

Mr. Sanborn has served for 10-years. He has done a good job and has contributed a lot.

Peter Kane is an avid beach goer and is well rounded and balanced in his view on all the aspects of what the commission is responsible for.

Brian Dewsnap also is an avid beach goer and does all sports on the beach and is also balanced in seeking solutions and understands all that is involved with the position.

Peggy Taylor has submitted a few emails to the Chairman regarding dog waste and out of control dogs on the beach.

Labrie believes it is good to get fresh blood and ideas on the board. Both commissioners were surprised that there were no term limits on serving, especially when there was so much interest from other residents willing to serve.

Panopoulos states that Sanborn has seniority with his service of 10-years. He knows Peggy Taylor and describes her as passionate about the cleanliness of the beach. He feels whoever takes this position must be predisposed to compromise. He states that he is concerned that some of the applicants are more interested in the position to impact the situation of dogs on the beach as opposed to all the responsibilities that go along with being a beach commissioner. It is great to have all this interest, and whatever gets people interested in volunteering their time is commendable but we still have to be careful and identify someone who is well balanced in their views on all aspects and not just the dogs.

Panopoulos and Labrie discuss that they feel strongly that someone new should be give the opportunity to serve on the board, and they both realize there is a lot of interest now, which was not common before.

Sanborn has been very helpful and served well on the commission in recruiting lifeguards and in training and the town has benefited greatly from his dedication.

The commissioners discuss the problem that occurred over Labor Day with the lack of guard coverage. Apparently the supervisor at the time mentioned to Sanborn that he was aware that there may not be life guards on one of the days but no one informed the Chairman. It was a very unfortunate situation and can not be tolerated in the future. The previous supervisor had a difficult time carrying out the commissioners repeated requests for monitoring the surf flags and the parking for the life guards.

Holway has already served on the beach commission and on other commissions and her service is appreciated.

Panopoulos motions to recommend Peter Kane for the position. Labrie seconded it. Motion carried.

Tim Sanborn comes back into the room. Labrie explains they are recommending Kane because they feel he can present an unbiased view on the issues the commissioners need to address and he acknowledges Sanborn's dedication. He explains he and Panopoulos feel that there should be a limit on terms to provide other interested residents the opportunity to serve.

Labrie asked the public if there were any concerns. Jack Driscoll asked about the surf flags. Labrie mentioned it was a problem last year and that they plan on widening the area for non-surfers. The life guards have had that responsibility but he spoke to them last year about enlarging the swim zone and will be having this discussion with the new lifeguards.

Panopoulos describes low tide and high tide beach conditions and how crowded the beach can get with sitting.

Labrie mentioned they had a problem with the supervisor last year with the surf flags. It will be different this summer. The previous supervisor was repeatedly told to monitor the flags to make sure there was plenty of "non-surf" areas and also to make sure the life guards parked away from the resident sticker parking area. It had been brought up to the Chairman last summer that the life guards were parking in resident spaces close to the beach and that was not acceptable. Labrie reinforced that this summer must be different and that is why they are going to hire a supervisor willing to carry out the requests from the commission.

They discussed enforcement on the beach and when ticketing begins. Discussion on dog owners must pick up the waste immediately and not leave the bags for someone else to clean up, which unfortunately happens a lot.

The commission discussed some of the problems they had last summer and how to best avoid them this summer. They will demand better communication with the supervisor and educate the life guards on the flag system and monitoring the size of it.

Sanborn suggests that since there is so much interest in the beach this time, where it has been difficult in the past to find someone to volunteer, that maybe the commission could develop a subcommittee to study the dogs on the beach or other challenges.

The Commissioners thanked Sanborn for his thoughts, dedication, and ideas.

Meeting adjourned at 5:45.

Respectfully submitted by,

Susan Labrie