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M. Renée Cahoon
Commissioner

J. Webb Fuller
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Kevin Brinkley
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MEMORANDUM

To: Board of Commissioners

From: Cliff Ogburn, Town Manager

Date: April 29, 2020

Re: Update on plans for summer 2020 re: tents on the beach, lifeguards, and enforcement of social distancing on the beach

At Commissioner Fuller's request, I will update and discuss with the Board plans for the upcoming summer (2020) to include tents on the beach, lifeguards, and enforcement of social distancing as part of relevant state and local orders.

As of May 1, 2020, the Town of Nags Head is under a State of Emergency Order with restrictions to maintain the public's health, safety, and welfare due to the impacts of COVID-19. The Governor's Executive Order No. 121, issued on March 27, 2020, prohibits gatherings of more than 10 people and requires social distancing to the extent individuals are using shared or outdoor spaces outside their residence. All individuals must keep a six-foot distance between one another unless they are part of the same family.

Dare County's Stay at Home Order, which the Town included in its most recent State of Emergency proclamation, further requires that all individuals are required to wear a mask or cloth face covering in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain. This requirement is in place, currently, until May 22. The earliest a decision will be made regarding visitor entry into Dare County is May 8.

On April 23, 2020, NC Governor Cooper held a press conference to announce several important updates regarding the stay at home order and plans to reopen the state. First, he announced that the original stay at home order from Executive Order 121, which was set to expire on April 29th, has now been extended through Friday, May 8th. Governor Cooper also laid out a multistep plan for reopening the state in phases after May 8th, provided that certain metrics are met pertaining to the trajectory of cases, the ability to test and trace, and the availability of personal protective equipment. If and when those metrics are met, the state's reopening would impact the town's beach as follows:

Beginning May 8 - Phase 1

- Continue to limit gatherings to no more than 10 people.
- Continue to recommend face coverings in public spaces when 6 feet of social distancing isn't possible, which is required as part of the Dare County Order.
- Encourage employers to continue teleworking policies.
- Continue rigorous restrictions on nursing homes and other congregant care settings.
- Local emergency orders with more restrictive measures may remain in place.

At least 2-3 weeks after Phase 1 (May 22-29) - Phase 2

- Lift Stay at Home order with strong encouragement for vulnerable populations to continue staying at home to stay safe.
- Increase the number of people allowed at gatherings.

At least 4-6 weeks after Phase 2 (June 19 – July 3) - Phase 3

- Lessen restrictions for vulnerable populations with encouragement to continue practicing physical distancing and minimizing exposure to settings where distancing isn't possible.
- Further increase the number of people allowed at gatherings.

Ocean Rescue Staffing for Summer 2020

At the present time, the status of 16 of our 22 J-1 Visa Ocean Rescue staff is uncertain. The earliest date they may enter the US for employment has been moved from May 15 to June 15. Six of these guards have confirmed that they will not be able to wait until the June 15th date, seven are undecided, and nine are committed to coming at that time. Captain Motz has been able to recruit a few guards locally. At this time, it is unknown when visitors will be permitted entry into Dare County or what the beach population will be this summer. Ocean Rescue must be prepared ahead of a re-entry decision for visitors due to the need for advance training and education. Guards will be prepared for Memorial Day but with a reduction in the number of Lifeguard stands from 15-10. In addition to the guards assigned to those stands, six guards will patrol the beach via ATV, four supervisors will be split coverage on the beach and one Captain will be assigned daily, bringing the total daily staffing number to 21 guards for 11 miles of beach. This is a process that is continuously evaluated with the goal of having a highly trained and capable Ocean Rescue staff ready when the visitors are allowed reentry. Guards will train in groups of 10 or less. They will undergo daily health screenings to include temperature checks. Guards will be instructed to adhere to social distancing restrictions as much as possible.

Additionally, we will be following the suggestions made by Peter Wernicki, Medical Advisor of the USLA:

- Follow the directives of your employing agency, which should be informed by and consistent with the directives of state and local public health authorities.
- Use social distancing at work, avoiding large meetings, close training, and close proximity to others (example: one guard per stand/tower).
- Practice good personal hygiene, including regular hand washing.
- Use universal precautions when providing medical aid. Avoid mouth to mouth or mouth to mask resuscitation. Use a bag-valve-mask or positive pressure ventilator.
- Regularly clean the surfaces with which you, your fellow lifeguards, and the public come in contact.
- Avoid touching other people, including your fellow lifeguards, unless necessary.

- Consider regular temperature checks by lifeguards.
- If you feel ill, advise your supervisor.

Tent Monitoring and Removal

The Public Works Facilities Maintenance Division will conduct beach monitoring & removal of unattended equipment from 5am to 7am, Monday thru Saturday, from May 23, 2020 to September 7, 2020. Ocean Rescue staff will tag tents on Sunday and Public Works will tag tents Monday to Saturday. All tagged tents will be photo documented and logged. Tagged tents will be removed by FM staff Monday through Saturday. Staff will hand out pamphlets explaining the rules and providing visitors with town staff contact info if they have any questions. If the collection crews are stopped by an owner prior to the removal of a tent, staff would leave the equipment, provide the owner with the pamphlet, and answer any questions they may have. Large umbrellas are included in the monitoring and removal process. After collection, all items are treated as trash and disposed of. No retrieval is possible.

Two trucks will be used for the process; one will run north to south beginning at Eighth Street and another will run south to north beginning at McCall Court. Facilities Maintenance will adjust the process as necessary to develop a successful and consistent program.

Social Distancing – Enforcement on the Beach

While these requirements remain in effect per state and local orders, the Town's Beach Ambassador and Ocean Rescue staff will educate and inform our beach goers of the importance of gathering in groups of less than 10 individuals while maintaining a six-foot distance between parties. Obviously, enforcement will be nuanced and it is impractical to enforce distancing requirements on related or affiliated groups. Where we see the greatest potential for conflict is when someone establishes their location on the beach and another party places their equipment too close. While the town's beaches are spacious and most beachgoers are at least six feet apart, occasionally this may happen and someone may become uncomfortable and ask for assistance; most likely from our Ocean Rescue staff. Our protocol will be to ask the offending party for voluntary compliance followed by a response from the Town's Beach Ambassador or other Police staff if necessary. Our efforts will be strongly focused on compelling compliance through education and signage; not with heavy-handed enforcement. We do understand that even after the social distancing and mass gathering mandate is lifted, we may still receive calls from concerned citizens. We will play a role in mediating any disputes in order to provide a safe environment for our residents and visitors. Police staff will be training our Ocean Rescue staff in conflict resolution and de-escalation techniques to help them in these situations until LE arrive.

I am concerned that the public will expect that we strictly enforce this requirement. If visitation resumes before state and local orders are lifted, it will create practical difficulties with enforcement of these requirements. A clear effort from our staff to educate the public will hopefully show that we are making an attempt to inform the public of the social distancing requirements.

It is important to note that the town has not increased staffing levels to enforce social distancing and we will do our best to keep the beaches safe and our visitors compliant while maintaining a friendly visitor experience. We do not plan to try and limit beach populations via partial beach access closures or using any other means, as has been done in southern beach communities. If there is an inherent conflict between local and state orders, additional limitations may be something that the board should discuss.

Public beach bathhouse facilities will remain closed at this time until further guidance is received from Health Department officials regarding their safe opening.

I have attached a rendering of a potential sign for education purposes that will be placed at beach accesses and on lifeguard stands.