

**Emergency Meeting  
New Shoreham Town Council  
Town Hall, Old Town Road, Block Island RI  
Monday, March 16, 2020  
4:00 PM**

The New Shoreham Town Council met in emergency session at 4:00 Monday, March 16, 2020. Attending were First Warden Kenneth Lacoste, Second Warden Andre Boudreau, Town Councilors Martha Ball, Sven Risom and Chris Willi, Interim Michael Town Manager Jim Kern, BI Health Services Director Dr. Mark Clark, EMA Co-Directors Bill McCombe, Peter Gempp, and Vin Carlone, School Superintendent Convery and Rescue Squad Captain Tracy Fredericks attended. The meeting was live streamed by the BI Times. Town Clerk Fiona Fitzpatrick took the minutes of the meeting.

Mr. Lacoste stated that although this meeting was called under the open meetings law, as a result of the state of emergency declared by the President, as a result of the state of emergency declared by the Governor, and based on the CDC and the RI Department of Health recommendations members of the public will not be allowed to attend this meeting.

Mr. Lacoste then made a motion that this emergency meeting should go forward on the basis that the meeting was necessary to address an unexpected occurrence, that being the Wuhan Corona Virus outbreak (Covid-19), that requires immediate action to protect the public. The motion was seconded by Mr. Boudreau and after brief discussion the motion carried unanimously.

Ayes: 5 (Lacoste, Boudreau, Ball, Risom, Willi)      Nays: 0

Mr. Lacoste then stated that the meeting has been convened with less than the required time notice and will be limited to essential personnel due to the Covid-19 warnings concerning persons at risk in certain situations. He then stated that the council would only discuss issues that created the need for the meeting.

He asked BI Health Services Director Mark Clark to report.

Dr. Clark stated that now it is all about prevention. He is in frequent contact with the RI DOH attended a teleconference with DOH and other RI Healthcare providers at 12:30. He said there is little new since his post on the BI Bulletin Board last night (attached). Recommendations will be changing to reflect the rapidly shifting situation. The Medical Center is not a long term or acute care facility. This is not a good place come if you are sick or ill. There are three exam rooms and a trauma room, none can be isolated. At this time there is no Covid-19 on Block Island. There is no testing available on Block Island, patients are tested in Providence. Testing is ramping up and possibly in the future swabs will be taken on the island and sent to the mainland for results.

His recommendations – act as if the virus is here.

- People ill with flu-like symptoms should shelter in place at home and call the medical center (requirement)
- Practice good hygiene, frequent handwashing and scrupulous social distancing (recommendation)
- No gatherings of more than 25 people (requirement)
- No gatherings of more than ten for people at risk or over 60 (requirement)
- 14 day self-quarantine for people who have travelled out of the country (requirement)
- 14 day self-quarantine for people who have travelled by airplane (recommendation)

In fact, people should not interact in person unless it cannot be avoided.

EMA Director Bill McCombe is in frequent contact with the Department of Health.

Interim Town Manager Jim Kern reported. The Governor's latest executive order closes bars and restaurants on Tuesday, they may stay only open for takeout service.

Several RI municipalities have passed executive orders establishing states of emergency. The declarations allow towns to receive federal and state emergency aid, and give the authority and flexibility to allow the Town to reschedule the annual Financial Town Meeting. Town employees could use vacation leave in lieu of sick leave. Anyone at risk or over 60 would be eligible for paid leave. Town Hall could be to the public, or public hours could be curtailed. Most Town operations would continue and customers would be served via mail, email or telephone. The order could give the Town the authority to limit or suspend licenses. Mr. Kern and Attorney Merolla will work on drafting an executive order establishing a state of emergency for the Council's consideration tomorrow.

Lifeline services, the Block Island Ferry and New England Airlines, are continuing their regular schedule with increased attention to cleaning and disinfecting. The ferry has closed the concessions and waiting rooms. Transportation of suspected Covid-19 patients off the Island will be in their own car with additional precautions.

A discussion ensued around the Town's inability to limit passengers to residents, homeowners or any other classification, such limits have been requested by many members of the public. The ferries operate under PUC Tariffs and Federal regulations. North Haven, Maine has prohibited access to their Island to year round residents. It seems that many second homeowners are coming as though they believe Block Island is a safe. Messaging to visitors has to include the Doctor's message that this is not a good place to come if you are sick or ill. Also, there are no bars or restaurants, no taxis, no school and meetings have been suspended. People should self-quarantine for 14 days after air travel. There was discussion of suspending hotel and inn licenses. The Town's intention is to protect residents and families.

Dr. Michael Convery reported the Block Island School is taking April break this week per the Governor's order. In preparation for a longer closure they are creating home learning plans for every grade, and reaching out to parents for an assessment of internet connectivity and home computers. For staff, attendance at School is strictly voluntary, everyone may work from home. Mr. Lacoste is conferring with the Town's Land Use Attorney Bill Landry regarding the ability to postpone the March 30 public hearing for several zoning ordinances. The legislature and RI

League of Cities and Towns are working to loosen some aspects of the open meetings act, possibly lifting the prohibition on telephonic communication during meetings.

Mr. Lacoste directs local businesses to the RI Department of Labor and Training website for TDI for employees who are unable to work due to Covid 19, or if they are out of work and not being compensated, and also for RI employers: [dlt.covid19@dlt.ri.gov](mailto:dlt.covid19@dlt.ri.gov)

Mr. Lacoste moved to cancel the Town Council's March 18, 2020 meeting and cancel the Town's Special Financial Town Meeting scheduled for March 23, 2020, in response to the prohibition on large gatherings necessitated by the Covid-19 pandemic. Motion seconded by Mr. Boudreau.

Ayes: 5 (Lacoste, Boudreau, Ball, Risom, Willi)      Nays: 0

At 5:40, Mr Lacoste moved, seconded by Mr. Boudreau, to continue the meeting to tomorrow at 7:00 PM.

Ayes: 5 (Lacoste, Boudreau, Ball, Risom, Willi)      Nays: 0