



Town of Oak Bluffs  
Board of Health  
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William White  
Chairman

James Butterick  
Thomas Zinno  
Board Members

Meegan Lancaster  
Health Agent

**BOARD OF HEALTH EMERGENCY MEETING  
July 9, 2020 – MINUTES**

**Members Present:** William White, James Butterick, Thomas Zinno

**Others Present:** Meegan Lancaster, Lorna Welch, Chief Blake, Ryan Ruley, Bob Whritenour, Brian Packish

Chairman White called the meeting to order at 10:00 am.

**BOARD MEMBER DISCUSSION:**

- **Vote to require mandatory mask use in:**
  - a. **Oak Bluffs Harbor District**
  - b. **Cottage City Historic District**
  - c. **B1 Commercial District**
  - d. **B2 Small Scale Business District**

Ms. Lancaster explained that for the past couple of weeks we have been discussing having a mandatory mask requirement for the Town and the areas it would encompass. Mr. White commented on the amount of foot traffic we have in relation to other Towns and the need for this mask requirement. Chief Blake questioned if this mask order will entail enforcement and what that will look like. Mr. Butterick replied that the point is not to fine people but to get compliance which is very important. Mr. Zinno agreed that it is more about education and making it more simplified about whether to wear a mask or not. We are not looking for the police to do more than they are doing now unless it is an extreme case. Chief Blake is hoping that the BOH can designate certain people to wear the BOH shirts to be out there enforcing. He needs to know the scope of their authority.

Ms. Lancaster feels the order accomplishes a couple of things. One is that people do not have a concept of what 6 feet of separation is. In terms of messaging and getting the word out that this is a requirement strengthens compliance. The public health nurses are working on a plan for public outreach. The other thing is the verbiage in this order puts the onus on the business owners to make sure that people that are queuing to enter their establishments are wearing a mask. Having it be required strengthens the business owners' ability to gain compliance as well. Education is the first engagement but there is the option to take further action. The BOH could look at engaging in external help that could be funded through FEMA/MEMA funds.

Mr. Packish stated he does not have tremendous concerns about the order itself. He echoes what the Chief of Police says regarding enforcement and added that feel good legislation accomplishes nothing. The people that are not wearing masks are going to continue to not wear masks. This will cause an extreme amount of work for every other official in town. He is inundated with photos and concerns about why people are not

wearing masks and Inundated with negative feedback about our police department in light of what is happening nationally. If this is put in place he sees it as strictly the responsibility of the BOH with the police behind them if needed. Ryan Ruley stated that he agrees wholeheartedly with Mr. Packish.

Mr. Whritenour stated that Mr. Packish and Mr. Ruley made critical points in terms of us carrying out this type of regulation that were also on his list of concerns. We are inundated with calls from local residents that are not happy with people coming here and not wearing masks. By having this order it puts the pressure on us to have accountability and show results. Our police resources are limited and they will have a critical backup role for the enforcers. We have the authority to implement more Covid 19 emergency protocols but there are concerns and want the BOH to consider possibly making the area smaller. He doesn't want to see a situation where we cannot deliver results of this order.

There was further discussion regarding mask requirement areas, signage (banners), testing and contacting the smaller ferries to help get compliance with announcements, etc. Mr. White stated he would contact the ferries and feels we should also get the word out via the newspapers. Mr. Zinno stated he would put together a draft message to get out there. He is also working on some large, simple mandatory mask signage.

Mr. Whritenour asked Chief Blake if he would look into the CSO's (Community Service Officers) taking on extra hours to do patrolling on behalf of the BOH. Chief Blake stated he has a couple of CSO's in mind that would be perfect for this and would work on finding three to four suitable candidates. Ms. Lancaster stated that this is a great idea because she had safety concerns about using people that do not have any training in dealing with people. Mr. Whritenour will work with the accounting department to secure some funds to cover the Covid 19 Health Ambassador Program. He stated that he is extremely encouraged in the leadership of the Chief to help us find the human resources that qualify to operate that program and he feels very confident with nine additional large banners going up in the critical parts of Town, people are going to know the message.

The Board agreed to postpone voting on the mask requirement order today until we have a plan in place for enforcement. Ms. Lancaster stated that she has a form we can fill out regarding deputizing certain people to do enforcement at a future date so no vote will be necessary for that today.

There was further discussion regarding having a designated person to respond to complaints. One suggestion was possibly having one of the CSO's having a cell phone to respond to complaints in real time. Ms. Lancaster suggested speaking with Wendy about possibly finding someone for this role. She feels that for someone with a complaint, getting a call back quickly will go a long way to mitigate people's concerns. Mr. Whritenour suggested we get the other situation figured out before we take more on.

Mr. Whritenour acknowledged and thanked Ms. Lancaster's efforts and everything that she is doing. He stated he supports the BOH one hundred percent and for them to not hesitate in coming to him for anything he can do. Mr. Ruley also thanked the Board and Ms. Lancaster for everything they are doing during this time.

Mr. Zinno made a motion to adjourn. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Lorna Welch, Administrative Assistant.