

OAK BLUFFS JOINS MARTHA'S VINEYARD COMMUNITIES IN ADOPTING NEXT-PHASE CONSTRUCTION STANDARDS AND MOVES FORWARD TO ADDRESS ITS OWN DOWNTOWN REOPENING ISSUES

May 12, 2020 – In what has become a common refrain for our Island communities, the Town of Oak Bluffs has joined the other five Island towns in adopting the next phases of expanded construction activity for the Island, along with the detailed guidelines to help ensure that all construction will be conducted in a safe manner to help slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus. The latest rules keep all of the towns unified in phasing-in the restarting of construction and also cover guidelines for related activities such as housekeeping services. In addition to allowing housecleaning in un-occupied dwellings as of May 11, the rules expand the one to two-person construction crews to up to five persons effective May 11 and up to ten or more crew members effective May 18. In addition, the new rules extend the stay at home order to May 18 while allowing seasonal restaurants not open as of the original March order to open for curbside service.

In addition to adopting the jointly developed guidelines along with all of the Towns, Oak Bluffs has further examined a host of local procedures and initiatives to address its own unique circumstances to help facilitate social distancing and safety for the downtown area as the Governor prepares to release additional guidelines for more businesses to resume operations. These initiatives include new standards of cleaning and sanitization for public restrooms, distributed sanitizer locations in the downtown, signage and educational materials at key locations and entry points, adding picnic tables and additional trash receptacles in the town's open areas to facilitate the new restaurant rules by creating safe places to eat while maintaining social distancing and controlling trash and litter.

Chairman of the Selectmen Brian Packish explains the Town's philosophy:

“As we approach the expiration of the state stay-at-home order on May 18, there are some issues we need to address proactively. It is my belief that while the summer season will be less crowded and most likely very different than recent years, seasonal residents and visitors will still arrive looking to enjoy the island and town. Many are already here, and more will be arriving regardless of how we decide to move forward. We would be well-served to make everyone feel welcome and safe enjoying our town and island, as well as building and maintaining confidence among in our ability to navigate and handle this year’s influx under these unique circumstances. It is vital to the safety of our residents and our visitors that we address these issues immediately, and stay alert and flexible for whatever is coming in the future.”

The Selectmen will meet in the following week to further develop the implementation of their plan based on the guidelines developed through the State’s Advisory Committee on reopening.