

COVID-19 Response

The past month has been a challenge for everyone. Our neighboring states of Maine and Massachusetts elected to close their state beaches and our Governor did the same. The Select Board voted to close our own beaches in deference to the potential infection due to proximity of individuals. To ensure that we kept our beaches as safe as possible, parking was banned on our 8-mile seacoast as well. Supermarkets and other retail outlets have been stripped bare of some of the everyday items we have taken for granted. Schools closed for the duration of the year and social distancing is the new normal for now. All of this in the name of safety. We know the COVID-19 virus can be deadly. We accept the restrictions that come with it. We know this will pass in time but in the interim we must make provisions to make the damage as light as possible. This has been inconvenient for some but for others it has been a devastating economic blow.

The administrative staff, consisting of the Town administrator, department heads and the Select Board are keenly aware of the situation and want to give you a snapshot of the steps we have taken thus far to mitigate the financial impact now and what we anticipate over the next several months. We have directed all departments to halt all non-essential purchases. Unfortunately, we have had to lay off 11 part time recreation staff members and 6 program employees. Additionally, 1 full time recreation employee has been furloughed along with a member of the clerk's office. The State is in the same situation and we anticipate a significant downturn in revenue which has traditionally been available to us. Yet unknown is the impact on our real-estate taxes which are due in July. To a large extent, any negative decisions we will be forced to make will be based on what we collect on time.

As you know, as a result of the last election in March a few warrants for large expenditures were voted in by the electorate. We have consulted New Hampshire's DRA (NH Department of Revenue Admin.) which has informed us that we cannot pick and choose which warrants we will fund. We can affect capital purchases, however. To that end we have postponed the following until we can ascertain the full impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the effects on our town's economy.

Compactor for the transfer station (\$50,000)

Road Paving Analysis (\$30,000)

MS4 Stormwater Asset Management Permitting fee (\$25,000)

Digital speed limit sign (\$6,000)

Police Tasers (\$1,400)

Portable Radios (\$3,089)

Regarding the above-mentioned warrants. Although we cannot totally disregard the expenditures from the election, we can defer them to a later date when the economic picture is clearer. They are the new dump truck (\$70,000), new police cruiser (\$51,000), salt shed (\$350,000). We will continue to monitor this situation closely and keep you informed to the best of our ability.

Rye Select Board