

Minutes of the Board of Selectmen Meeting

This emergency meeting of the Board of Selectmen was called to order on Monday, August 3, 2020 at 6:00PM at the North Brookfield Police Department. Dale Kiley, Jason Petraitis and John Tripp present.

This emergency meeting was held to address issues at Lake Lashaway Beach and Brooks Pond Beach.

Lashaway:

Jason Petraitis stated that it appears we are getting out of town people and there have been altercations, assaults, and a near drowning. There are also issues with littering, disruptive boaters, and people going onto the private islands. Dale Kiley asked representatives from East Brookfield if they've considered a "user" fee and stickers. They stated that it's been considered but there are potential problems with it, and who is going to be checking the stickers? Mr. Kiley stated that there are issues with or without the stickers and asked if everyone could agree that better signage is needed. East Brookfield said the signs are blatant, big, red, and next to the gate. If there was language about trespassing after dark then the Police could enforce that.

East Brookfield resident stated that he knows a family that has a sitter come to the house and take the kids to the beach, the sitter is not a resident of EB or NB, would they not be allowed to use the beach? East Brookfield feels more police presence at the beach would solve most issues. East Brookfield would like their police department to be able to stop by the beach.

Mr. Kiley asked if there are lifeguards at the beach. EB said no, not this year. They didn't want to hire anyone b/c of the COVID pandemic, they weren't sure they would even open the beach. They did explain that they've increased their beach budget in order to increase staff and hire a director for the lifeguards. Mr. Tripp asked if EB has a beach committee, yes it's included in the Parks committee. EB also said that the beach agreement between the two towns states that the budget should be shared equally. The committee typically meets a few times over the winter to set a budget and plan for the season, which is very short.

Mr. Kiley asked if we could staff someone a few hours a day with a "staff" shirt and a radio that connects directly with the PD. EB said that in years past when they had lifeguards it helped with the issues. Mr. Kiley asked if EB has issues after dark. They said there were a few parties early in the season and a damaged gate, but nothing recently.

Mr. Kiley asked Chief Smith if he heard of any issues. Chief Smith said they've increased patrol at the beach. He stated more clear signage stating Mass General Law "trespassers will be subject to arrest" and user stickers would help them out. A vehicle sticker with a visitor pass for those families that have sitters from out of town. The police don't want to have to ask for ID, a sticker or pass would work well. EB is concerned about towing vehicles that don't belong. Chief Smith said they wouldn't tow vehicles without announcing/going to the beach to find the owner of the vehicle.

East Brookfield stated they wouldn't charge a fee for the pass. They offer free swim lessons and most of those families are the same that utilize the beach frequently.

Fitzgerald Pucci inquired about the free-swimming lessons and asked why there would be a fee for residents to use the beach. Mr. Kiley explained a fee would potentially be instated only to offset the cost of the Lifeguards and other services provided at the beach. The question was posed why the Town

would charge for a beach pass, but not for someone to play basketball at the playground. Mr. Kiley explained that the Town doesn't provide a service at the playground. If the Town provided a referee, then they could charge a user fee to offset the cost of the service.

The Police Chiefs from NB and EB will talk about patrol shifts at the beach.

There was discussion about the budget for the beach from both NB and EB. Mr. Kiley asked EB to send the BOS notice of any meetings/plans for the beach, Mr. Kiley would attend as rep for NB (unless a beach committee is established by then). EB said more and more people are using the beach and improvements need to be made. Mr. Kiley said that the Highway superintendents from each town were supposed to meet to discuss fixing drainage issues at the beach. Doug Blood, who served on the NB Beach Committee for many years, stated that NB pays for the lights, port-o-potty, shed, dumpster, have replaced windows in the building, with EB they bought a lawn mower, they helped repair the roof. Doug also explained how Luther Hill Park in Spencer has changed their beach protocol (asked for vehicle reg, \$30/year for a sticker).

Mr. Kiley stated that going into next year they'd like to formulate a plan with EB. Maybe this year they can use the Lifeguard funds that won't be spent to increase patrol at the beach.

Doug Blood stated some more issues at Lake Lashaway: boats docking at the public swimming area, people loading boats onto trailers at the beach, boats disrupting lake traffic.

EB stated there should be a sign on the building at the beach that states the address if someone needs to call 911 and to clearly state they are at the beach. There was a near drowning last week and it took first responders too long to get to the beach because the caller just said they were at Lake Lashaway, they were from out of town and didn't know any details.

There are issues with Shore Rd-too many cars parked on the side of the road near the boat ramp.

NB uses the parking lot at the beach to store road grindings and gravel. Mr. Kiley asked how long it had been there, EB said all winter, it is usually gone by the Spring, NB Highway uses it to fix the private roads around the Lake. Mr. Kiley is going to ask Highway to remove it all. There are telephone poles marking the parking area, maybe they can be moved to make it bigger. Mr. Tripp asked if there was a limit, EB said no, that park is quite big and much larger than just the beach itself.

Drainage issues also need to be fixed, water from Sylvania Grove and Pine Road run down the beach and wash out the sand. A few years ago, Dave Bercume provided the beach with 5 loads of sand.

Chief Smith stated he's got two full time divers on his force and his researching costs for a new boat, the boat we have is very old.

Brooks Pond:

A resident thanked the BOS and Chief Smith for stepping up so quickly to address the issues at Brooks Pond, but there are still issues occurring. People are still parking on the side of the road. Mr. Kiley asked Chief Smith to increase patrols at Brooks Pond. Mr. Kiley suggested putting large boulders on the side of the road to prevent parking, and pushing the boulders back in the winter to make sure snow removal is not hindered. Brooks Pond Association has used old jersey barriers in the past.

A resident of Brooks Pond Road was unable to get home because too many cars were parked on the road, she also stated that people treat Brooks Pond Road as a speedway. Mr. Kiley asked if the association has seen any improvements in the last three weeks, they answered yes and no. The first week they saw a great response, the second week they saw less police presence. The resident also stated there are large Mack logging trucks coming down the road constantly.

The electronic sign that was placed on Brooks Pond Road broke down and needs to be repaired. Mr. Kiley stated that they've mounted a trail cam in the area.

Brooks Pond residents stated they've made several calls to the police about people being on the pond after dark. There was a situation with a group of visitors that were cussing at everyone, 2 police officers came and handled the situation. A resident said that hundreds of people show up at the beach and there are fires, grills, alcohol and litter. They've called to report to police.

The Beach should be the only access to the pond. People are going through the woods to access the pond, which is private property. Signs should be put up that clearly state beach access only and no trespassing.

Someone mentioned groups of kids gather at the spillway, Mr. Kiley stated that is in Spencer, so NB can't do anything about it, but Mr. Kiley did send a letter to Spencer to inform them of our decision and plans going forward with the parking at Brooks Pond. The electronic sign will be repaired and placed closer to the beach and parking area. Chief Smith is also going to put up "No parking per order of the North Brookfield Police" and place them close together along the road. Chief Smith also stated that the department hasn't received many calls, he checks with officers on duty over the weekends as well. He stated that standing order is for the officers to make a sweep of Brooks Pond road 3 to 4 times per shift.

Mr. Tripp asked about ticketing vehicles parked illegally. Chief Smith said the officers will first try to ask people to move, otherwise they will write a ticket. NBPd logs their citations, so they'll know when to increase the penalties.

A resident stated that although the parking lot closes at 8pm, they see people pulling in at 10pm. Chief Smith said that the pond association should get signs that state the parking order and parking after 8pm is considered trespassing.

Brooks Pond Association is meeting next week to go over and tighten up rules. Other issues include trespassers on the islands, gasoline powered boats and parking on Washburn Drive blocking mail boxes. Mr. Kiley stated that as far as Washburn Dr is concerned, that road is in Spencer, it is a private road that is maintained by the residents but plowed by the Town. The residents should put up a sign that clearly states "Private Road, No Parking, Cars will be towed at owner's expense."

Chief Smith stated he can help the association with enforcing laws, but they need to clearly state the rules so that NBPd can take more action (example: No Trespassing ect)

At 7:14PM, there being no further business, Mr. Petraitis moved, and Mr. Tripp seconded, a motion to adjourn. So voted.

Respectfully Submitted, Ashley Barre