

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

MARCH 16, 2021

1. COVID-19 UPDATES FROM THE HEALTH DIRECTOR –

As of March 14, 2021, the State reported 1,004 new confirmed cases. 68 of those new cases were reported in Barnstable County. Daily new cases in Barnstable County are increasing again after a major decline since the holiday season surge. Over the last 7 days, Barnstable county is averaging 58 new cases per day. There are currently 25 active cases in Dennis.

Vaccination efforts continue across the State and the County at this time for eligible individuals in Phase I and Phase 2. As of March 11th, this now includes K-12 educators and school staff as well as child care workers. The State has designated several days for vaccination of K-12 educators and staff at all mass vaccination sites. These dates include March 27, April 3, 10 and 11th. In addition to information regarding the various vaccines, eligibility and vaccine availability by location, the State has now included a pre-registration option for individuals interested in receiving the vaccine at any one of the States Mass Vaccination sites. Eligible residents will complete an online form at mass.gov/COVIDVaccine to request an appointment at a mass vaccination site nearby. When an appointment becomes available the individual will be notified and will have 24 hours to accept the appointment once it is offered to them. If an appointment is not accepted after 24 hours, the individual will go back into the queue to wait for another appointment.

Regionally, Barnstable County continues to operate a high through-put vaccination clinic at Cape Cod Community College. Approximately 1200 doses of J&J vaccine are being administered at this clinic this week. In addition, the County continues to operate several regional clinics with their focus on second dose administration this week.

Locally, in partnership with Outer Cape Health Services (OCHS), Dennis Senior Affordable Housing will be receiving first doses of vaccine for residents and staff this Friday, March 19. The Dennis Fire Department EMS staff will be assisting with vaccination and subsequent observation of residents participating in this clinic. OCHS, and the Dennis Fire Department will also partner in the Town's effort to provide vaccination of homebound Dennis residents in the coming weeks.

Data reported by the State indicates significant progress has been made towards vaccinating some of the State's most vulnerable residents. As of March 12, 2021, 75% of all Dennis residents age 75 or older had received at least one dose of vaccine and 53% of all Dennis residents age 65 to age 74 had received at least one dose of vaccine. Though increased vaccination rates are encouraging, now is not the time to let our guard down and residents are reminded that vaccination is not an alternative to other, very effective, public health measures. Please to continue to follow CDC guidelines and State Orders regarding the wearing of face coverings, social distancing and travel orders.

Of note, the State has recently updated Travel Orders adding two additional exemptions to quarantine or testing for individuals traveling to or returning from travel to the State. These two additional exemptions include individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 and deemed recovered, meaning individuals who tested positive more than 10 days but less than 90 days ago and who do not have symptoms, and individuals who have been completely vaccinated for COVID-19 more than 14

days prior to their arrival in the State, and who do not have symptoms. Details regarding the updated Order including documentation required to substantiate an exemption may be found on-line at the following address: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-travel-order>

Based on improving rates of infection, the State remains poised to move into Phase 4, Step 1 of the re-opening plan on March 22nd. Effective on that date, gathering limits will increase for public event venues and public settings to a 100-person limit for indoor events and a 150-person limit for outdoor events. Gathering limits for private residences will remain the same at 10 persons for indoor gatherings and 25 persons allowed at outdoor gatherings at private homes. More details regarding the re-opening plans and guidance for operators can be found on the State's website at www.mass.gov/reopening.

Kristen Keller
Health Director

2. TOWN MEETING –

Due to the continued presence of the COVID-19 virus in the community and safeguards in place state-wide, the Select Board after consulting with the Town Moderator, has voted to hold the May Annual Town Meeting -- again outdoors at the Wixon School Parking Lot on **Saturday, May 8, 2021** under a tent. The meeting will begin promptly at **1:00PM** and continue until our business is completed.

As with the previous Special Town Meeting in October and the last Annual Town Meeting, a working group consisting of the Moderator, Members of the Select Board, the Town Administrator, Town Clerk and various Town Employees have worked on arranging an environment that will permit Town Meeting to be held safely, while at the same time ensuring that Town Meeting Voters may participate meaningfully.

3. SELECT BOARD HOSTS WASTEWATER MEETING –

On March 23rd the Select Board will hold a meeting with a series of Wastewater updates. Topics will include, an update on the independent peer review of the Swan Pond Watershed, as well as a presentation from the Friends of Bass River, and status updates on Dennis Wastewater and DHY.

4. SELECT BOARD GOAL - POTENTIAL MVP GRANT APPLICATION–

Staff met with Courtney Rocha, the Southeast Regional Coordinator in charge of the MVP Grant process, this morning to discuss the expression of interest submitted for improvements to Pound Pond (Sea View Park) which as you know is a goal of the Select Board. The expression of interest process allows towns to submit a pre-application description of the project to the grant reviewers to gauge whether a formal grant application may be successful. Based on her feedback (and with input from other grant reviewers), she indicated that Pound Pond Improvements hit upon all of the critical requirements and has potential to receive grant funding.

The grant request would be to fund the final design and permitting of the project in preparation of a future request to ask for construction funding.

Tighe & Bond, our consultant for Pound Pond, is going to prepare a cost estimate to work on the grant application with input from Planning, Natural Resources, DPW and Engineering with the thought of submitting a grant application later this spring.

If intent is to proceed, we will need strong support from the Select Board and community involvement and support to make our grant application as strong as possible.

5. FIRE STATION 2 BUILDING COMMITTEE –

- Jan. 27th held first official meeting of Fire Station 2 Committee and election of officers conducted; Paul Donlan – Chair, Ronald Polaske – Vice Chair, and Leah LaCross, Secretary selected. Decided to meet 2nd Wednesday of each month at 11:00AM. Introductions made of Committee members, OPM, Joe Sullivan of CHA Companies and Town representatives.
- Feb. 10th – Committee conducted site visit of proposed Fire Station location at Paddocks Path and existing station on Old Bass River Road.
- Feb. 19th – Site survey completed of proposed site completed.
- Feb. 21st – Topographical plan completed.
- March 10th – Committee meeting - introduction to Architect and presentation of preliminary sketch plan with some design options.
- The next Meeting will be held in April.

6. CABLE CONTRACT UPDATE –

On March 12th the Town received formal notice from Comcast they are commencing the formal renewal process with the Town.

As you may recall, I briefed the Board on the ascertainment process at your February 2, 2021 meeting. Comcast Renewal Update 2-2-21

I provided the outline below to the Board on license renewal procedures at your February 2, 2021 Select Board meeting and further that I would be providing frequent updates to you.

I reminded the Board the Towns Cable license is due to expire this year on July 11, 2021 and that the IT Director, Finance Director and I were working with Town Counsel on the license renewal procedures.

Dan Proto reviewed the results of the Cable subscriber survey that the Town conducted.

In addition, I gave an overview to the Board on Cable Television Renewal License Procedures and a basic roadmap as suggested by Counsel. I reminded that the process, in general, is called “ascertainment”, and it is designed to determine two separate things, both of which are essential to renewal negotiations: (1) is the cable operator in compliance with its current license?; and (2) what are the Town’s future community cable-related needs?

Next steps are to create a business plan for future cable capital needs. Once this is completed the Board needs to set a public hearing date. After the hearing we will commence informal negotiations with Cable operator.

Finally, I asked for any feedback or direction from the Board and again asked for when they would like a public hearing scheduled.

The term of the renewal license may be anything between 3 and 10 years. Our attorney recommends that we seek a 10-year term, to get a steady income stream in for the support of public access programming for the longest possible time, and also because we think that the long-term trend in

diminishing cable subscriber numbers means that in the long run, cable companies will be less generous in the future;

FCC regulations and the federal Cable Act of 1984 prohibit any license granting authority from conditioning the renewal of a license on rates or programming demands. Accordingly, we will not be able to negotiate for either of those two issues. Similarly, this is a cable television license only, and that means we have no power to negotiate anything dealing with the Comcast's provision of broadband internet service even though it passes through the same cables as the TV signals;

7. REMINDER VACCINATED INDIVIDUALS TO WEAR MASKS, DISTANCE –

While it may be tempting to ditch the masks once you're fully vaccinated, the Commonwealth still has a mask order in place. You may not enter any place of business in Massachusetts without a mask, regardless of vaccination status. The CDC [advised](#) last week that those who have been fully vaccinated continue to wear masks when in the company of those who are at high risk of contracting Covid and those who have not yet been fully vaccinated.

Have a great rest of the week - please stay vigilant, wear a mask and be well!!

Respectfully,

Elizabeth C. Sullivan
Town Administrator