

Dukes County Commissioners
Minutes
Wednesday April 15, 2020
4:00 PM
REMOTE PARTICIPATION ONLY VIA ZOOM MEETING

Dukes County Commissioners Present: Tristan Israel- Vice Chair, John Cahill (John C.), Christine Todd, Keith Chatinover, *Leon Braithwaite

*** joined late**

Other County Officials Present: Martina Thornton- County Manager, Connie Andrade – Admin. Asst. to the County Manager, Ann Metcalf – Dukes County Treasurer, Chuck Cotnoir – Dukes County Emergency Manager, Karen Tewhey – Assoc. Commissioner for Homelessness

Others Present: Jim Malkin- Steamship Authority, Elizabeth Wallo, Rich Saltzberg- MVTimes, Aaron Wilson- Vineyard Gazette, Brian Packish – Oak Bluffs Selectman, Jim Roberts – Tisbury Selectman, Jay Grande – Tisbury Town Administrator

Tristan called the meeting to order at 4:00pm

Steamship Authority (SSA) DOCK in Oak Bluffs- Update by Jim Malkin: Jim M. gave the DCC an update on the Steamship Authority dock repairs in Oak Bluffs. Christine put this on the agenda and wanted to state for full disclosure that she is the director of the Oak Bluffs Business Association. Jim M. said preventive maintenance on the boats and the physical structures is important. He said the SSA is trying to get Oak Bluffs open for light vehicles and walk on traffic by mid- June. After the season, the SSA will expand on the repairs and really fix this problem appropriately. If it remains unsafe for vehicles, then they will look at ways to just carry passengers and use the Sea Streak dock. Jim said that going forward, money should be in the current year budget to start the work for the next year in a preventative maintenance. The SSA knows that every year the pier gets beat up because it faces into the Northeast. Every year the SSA puts money in to fix it. A discussion was held.

Leon joined the meeting at 4:22 PM.

Brian P. has two short term requests. Brian wants a PR effort that is aggressive and widespread to help the business lost and his long- time request to remove Mr. Davis from the SSA. Jim M. said he spoke to a Vineyard Haven selectman and stated that Vineyard Haven would prefer not to have all the truck traffic at 5 Corners. He also said the SSA expects lost revenue in the amount of \$40 to \$50 million but the SSA is applying for grants on both the federal and state level. There is also a letter going to the governors for additional money. John C. asked if the Tisbury port is safe? Jim M. has heard nothing and seen nothing that would say otherwise. Keith agreed with Christine that this is clearly an Island wide problem because the traffic in Tisbury. Tristan thanked Jim M. for coming to the meeting and wants him to make that June 15th date happen and give updates.

Homelessness Prevention- update Karen Tewhey:

Martina gave the DCC an update on the cost estimates of housing people in motels. More people have reached out since last week in need of housing. The County will be running out of money by the end of April. The

DCC agrees this is an Island wide issue and not just a County issue. Karen said the first group of 14 people has been housed since mid -March were homeless when the other shelter shut down. Those people were housed immediately. There were three other people put on a waitlist because Karen did not have any hotel rooms. There is another group of five or six people at the shelters that Karen could not put in the hotels because they had drug or alcohol addiction and the hotels would not take them. Karen is trying to focus on that group. Karen is also getting calls from people who lost their jobs, lost their money and are living in cars. John C. asked Karen to investigate the possibility of using the schools as a temporary shelter. Martina stated that if the community and the towns want to step up then it's up to them but the County does not have tens of thousands of dollars to house the homeless in hotels and the County cannot be solely responsible for this. Martina told the DCC that Karen has already announced she is going to be stepping down from her role on July 1, 2020. Tristan suggested hosting a ZOOM meeting soon with all the Island clergy and towns to try and come up with some helpful ideas.

Census 2020 update- Keith Chatinover: Keith told the DCC an organizer/outreach coordinator has been hired to help with the census. He also said the postcards with ID codes that were mailed are NOT needed to take the Census online. Most Islanders are not getting the post cards because their street addresses were used instead of their PO box numbers. The Island is behind in responding to the Census. This should be remedied by June 1, 2020. Martina added that there is a link to the Census on the Dukes County website and the final count has been extended until October 2020.

Covid-19 Island Concerns: Tristan said he is concerned about people coming when the Island has limited resources and no way to monitor if people are honoring the policy of a 14-day self-quarantine. He also wanted to reinforce social distancing and would like the SSA to ramp up their efforts to get the word out with pamphlets etc. Tristan will work with Martina to get the word out for people to bring their own provisions. A discussion was held. Jim Rogers wanted to discuss a comprehensive testing program for Covid-19 on Island. Christine said there are only three main ways of entry between the Airport and the two SSA ports and asked why they cannot have more control at those points of entry. The federal government and MEMA are making test kits available. Tristan suggested the DCC write a letter to the governor to ask for support.

Christine/ Keith made a motion to write a letter to the Governor to put a priority on testing availability for Martha's Vineyard to prevent the Covid 19 virus from entering our community and disastrously affecting our tourism income. So Voted. Leon-yes, Keith- yes, Christine- yes, John C. yes, Tristan-yes. All in favor. Motion carries.

Tristan said Christine, Keith and John will prepare the document and the DCC can review at the next DCC meeting.

DC Emergency Management- Appointments and Update: Martina stated that the DCC wanted a report from Chuck about the property and the emergency vehicles stored at the Airport. Chuck said the Airport put the eviction on hold because of the Covid 19 virus. Tristan wants to move forward on this issue now and not wait.

Chuck said he provided the necessary PPE for the County employees. He also said currently there are only 12 cases of Covid-19 on the Island. Chuck gave and erected an isolation tent to the hospital. They are using it as a rehydration surge tent and for IV and oxygen therapy. The DCC thanked Chuck for his years of service and hopes he will still be part of the County. Martina stated that by making her the primary Emergency Manager it will give her a voice and vote at the table but she wants to talk to Chuck about what parts of the Emergency

Management office he will keep fulfilling because she knows he is really good at some of this and she would absolutely want him to continue.

John C./Christine made a motion that Martina Thornton become the primary Emergency Manager contact for the Island. So voted. Leon- Yes, Keith-Yes, John C.-Yes, Christine- Yes, Tristan- Yes. All in favor. Motion carries.

Chuck wanted to make sure that the DCC knows this is a volunteer position. Martina said there is a possibility of getting some emergency funding assistance from the State. Chuck said he does not want to be a paid employee.

County Manager Updates:

- **Health and Human Services Newsletter:** Martina gave the DCC a copy of the Health and Human Services Newsletter today. It includes updates from each of the departments. Martina also added information about the Census and scams.
- **Treasurer Position Legislation:** Martina shared the updated legislation for the Treasurer's position from elected to appointed.

Keith/Christine made a motion to support the legislation in the updated version as it came from the Legislature. So voted. Keith-Yes, Christine-Yes, Leon-Yes, John C.-Yes, Tristan-Yes. All in favor. Motion carries.

- **Credit Rating:** Martina said she got an email from the County treasurer about our credit rating for the County because it went down. Tristan asked Martina to put that on the docket for discussion at the DCC next meeting.
- **Beach Rules during Covid 19 Virus:** There are no separate rules about the beaches and social distancing from the Boards of Health. The DCC can go with what the Trustees have stated as that is in line with best practices.

Admin Code Review (15 Minutes)

They discussed the revisions from the last DCC meeting. The DCC wants more input on it.

Leon/Christine moved to table this. So voted. John C- Yes, Keith- Yes, Christine- Yes, Leon- Yes, Tristan- Yes. All in favor. Motion carries.

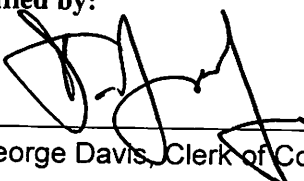
Calendar:

Dukes County Commissioners Meeting May 6, 2020 at 4PM.

Christine/Leon made a motion to adjourn. So voted. Leon- Yes, John C.-Yes, Keith-Yes, Christine-Yes, Tristan- Yes. All in favor. Motion carries.

The DCC meeting was adjourned at 6:41 PM.

Certified by:



T. George Davis, Clerk of Courts

Documents presented at the meeting and part of the official record:

- **Agenda**
- **Health and Human Services Newsletter**
- **Updated Treasurer Legislation**