

TOWN OF ISLESBORO

To the Islesboro Community:

Islesboro needs everyone's help right now. The Select Board urges that we defer our personal needs to help the island prepare for and weather the oncoming COVID-19 crisis. We all need to put aside any expectation that this spring and summer can be close to normal in terms of opening up homes, doing repairs, construction, gardening/landscaping and summer vacation activities.

Two COVID-19 related meetings in the past two days plus a new issue that came to our attention yesterday morning trigger this urgent request to you.

At the first meeting, Health Center staff reported on their plans for the arrival of COVID-19. This was a sobering conversation, unlike any I've ever had. The meeting heard that the peak virus time in Maine is still several weeks or a month or more away. We have no reported cases yet. But the Health Center staff made clear that once the virus arrives, our Health Center three-provider staff and small EMS will flip from every day medical care and 24x7 EMS to a 100% focus on COVID-19 patients. Treatment for day-to-day medical needs will not be available on island – except for emergencies. Area medical professional and hospital care will be scarce. Going into an ER or hospital will involve weighing the real risk of COVID-19 exposure. The Health Center is working overtime on stocking, staffing and planning, though preparations will not likely ever be at 100%. ***Protecting our Health Center and staff is job #1.***

This Health Center planning is in addition to all other efforts to protect our vital lifelines - ferry, and deliveries of food, mail and fuel. The Select Board has formed a Crisis Committee. Governor Mills has requested that all non-essential public facing activities stop. Several island-based businesses have voluntarily changed their work plans to limit or eliminate mainland travel. Several have stopped all work. Our two stores are closed to shoppers, doing only online ordering for pickup. The ferry has cut back to four trips a day, and Quicksilver has suspended its commuter service – further stressing our lifelines. The School, the Community Center, Town Office, the Library, and the Second Baptist Church are closed. The Post Office will limit the number of patrons in the lobby – watch for signage.

At the second meeting, Roger Heinen and I met by phone with the Tarratine Club Chair and Club Manager. They are proactive in their thinking about the situation here. They are questioning the chances that the Tarratine can schedule a typical summer of activities and social events. Clearly, this grows more unlikely every day. Unless lifted in time, the Maine State Governor's mandate to limit gatherings sets the tone. Tarratine Club aside, there can be no doubt that the arrival of summer residents during the height of this crisis is likely to overwhelm the Health Center, EMS, the stores and our other lifelines

Finally, on Thursday morning we saw photos of the line for the 8AM ferry line from the mainland. They showed an overload line typical of mid-summer – full of contractors, cement trucks, building materials, and so on. Little or no social distancing. This level of traffic is a direct and immediate threat to our ferry crew, Health Center, islanders and our ability to preserve our lifelines. **If you have a non-essential project requiring such traffic, do your part and reschedule it when this crisis is over. Please direct the people doing or planning such work with you accordingly. Also, realize the downstream financial impact on these workers and please take care of them as best you can.**

Everyone must recalibrate their summer expectations in light of these facts on the ground here. The Select Board is not ready to tell anyone not to come. That choice is yours. I do, however, owe everyone a clear, unambiguous picture of what you can expect. Right now, the Select Board can assure you that this will be a summer unlike any we have ever experienced.

Lastly, all of us here on the island hope that each of you and your family are doing your utmost to stay healthy and safe. We look forward to seeing everyone here on island in better times.

Arch Gillies

On behalf of the Select Board, Janet Anderson, Town Manager and the Town Crisis Committee.

March 27th, 2020

5pm