

**TOWN OF GROTON**

Board of Health

173 Main Street

Groton, MA 01450

**BOARD OF HEALTH**

Jason Weber, Chairman

Susan Horowitz, Member

Robert J. Fleischer, Member

Date: Tuesday, March 24, 2020

Time: 6:00 PM

Location: Emergency Board of Health Meeting - Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Members Present: Jason Weber, Chairman; Dr. Susan Horowitz, Member; Robert J. Fleischer, Member; Ira Grossman, Nashoba Associated Board of Health Agent

Others Present: Mark Haddad, Town Manager; Dawn Dunbar, Executive Assistant to Town Manager; Takashi Tada, Land Use Director; Corey Brock and Bob Kiley

Jason Weber called the Emergency Board of Health meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

**CONSIDER ISSUING EMERGENCY ORDERS TO RESTRICT CONSTRUCTION DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC**

As follow up to last night’s Emergency meeting held by the Select Board, the Board of Health is having an Emergency meeting to discuss whether to place an order to stop all construction activity and close all restaurants in town. The Board of Health Chair Jason Weber did not feel comfortable making an informed decision regarding these two matters without having completed the proper research first.

Chair Weber consulted the town’s Emergency Management Director Steele McCurdy. The general consensus is that there is no health based reason at this time to cease all construction activity provided that all CDC and MA DPH guidelines are followed at job sites. Member Dr. Susan Horowitz asked why construction was an issue. Town Manager Mark Haddad explained that his main concern was having town inspectors go into private residences and risking employees’ safety. This concern is shared by the Land Use Director Takashi Tada who said that inspectors have expressed that they do not feel comfortable performing inspections at this time, specifically any jobs involving interior work of an occupied structure.

Ira Grossman suggested limiting exposure to indoor construction activity and allowing outdoor work to continue provided that all CDC and MA DPH guidelines are followed and also encouraged that people continue to work in a safe manner. Mr. Grossman does not believe it would be a service to the community to shut down all construction activity completely. The town should defer on projects where inspectors are placed at risk but he does not foresee an issue with outdoor projects such as a trench inspection.

Mr. Haddad said that the state is currently working on putting together a relief act that will relax the regulations associated with building permit applications and inspection timeline requirements.

Brief discussion ensued. Board members agreed that it was not necessary to ban all construction activity at this time. Mr. Haddad along with Mr. Tada will ensure that all safety rules are enforced. They are currently trying to discourage inspections but are allowing inspectors to have some discretion if there is a compelling need to do one such as a trench inspection or anything that may pose as a public hazard. Mr. Grossman will provide additional safety guidelines that are currently being practiced.

Builder Bob Kiley thanked the Board and all other meeting participants for having a rational discussion regarding this matter and ensured that all recommendations can be followed within new construction projects.

**Jason Weber moved to not cease construction and to encourage all active parties to be aware of and follow best practice policy guidelines provided by the CDC and the MA DPH.**

**Dr. Susan Horowitz seconded and the motion carried.**

Mr. Haddad will meet with Building Department tomorrow to provide guidelines for this process moving forward.

**CONSIDER ISSUING EMERGENCY ORDERS TO RESTRICT TAKE-OUT AT LOCAL RESTAURANTS DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC**

Chair Jason Weber did some research and understands that this request is coming from a good place. However from a policy perspective he does not believe all restaurants should be banned.

Dr. Susan Horowitz referred to the presentation provided by Mark Haddad as to why restaurants should remain open during this time. As long as all CDC and MA DPH guidelines are followed they do not believe restaurants should be closed. Allowing restaurants to remain open will help to accommodate for those who do not cook or those who may have limited options.

With regard to forms of payment there are people who do not have a credit card or debit card and are only able to pay with cash. Therefore requiring that all payments are done using a card would be somewhat unfair for this category of consumers.

The MA DPH has already communicated to business owners the proper process by which cash transactions should be handled to ensure that safety guidelines are being met.

In speaking with the Emergency Management Director, he made a couple of recommendations below:

1. Take all employees’ temperature at the beginning of each work shift
2. Track who is serving which orders so if someone becomes sick all parties involved can be notified

The Chief Food Inspector has been in regular communication with restaurant owners and will provide these recommendations to them.

**Jason Weber moved to not further restrict restaurant operations beyond what the state has already directed, encourage restaurant owners to acquire a thermometer and check employees’ temperatures prior to their work shift and advises to discourage cash transactions when possible.**

**Dr. Susan Horowitz seconded and the motion carried.**

The Emergency Board of Health meeting was adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

Minutes by Sammie Kul.

**APPROVED: April 9, 2020**