

**Arrowsic Board of Selectmen
Emergency Meeting, May 5, 2020
Minutes.**

The meeting was held via Zoom. Present: Sukey Heard, Walter Briggs, DeeDee Jorgensen, Sheila Spear, Josephine Ewing, Paul Schlein, Anita Lichman, Steven Paul, Dena Bachman, Rachel Morse, Samantha Malsch, Susan Fenn, Clarke Cooper, Norma Dreyfus, Stan Lane, Matt Caras, Will Neilson, Tony Correale, Jim Arsenault, Heidi Kunz, Lisa Holley, Karin Sadtler, Jon Biehler, Bob Nelson, Brett Jensen.

The meeting was called to order by Sukey Heard at 4.03 p.m.

Sukey read a prepared statement (attached) in which she outlined the concerns of the Board and town residents following incidents of overcrowding and over-parking at Sewall Pond Conservation Area and trespassing on abutting lands. The Select Board has been researching responsibilities and options. The Town has authority over the conservation area, not the pond itself. Nor does the Town have any mechanism for enforcement. The Board has examined Town Meeting records, consulted the Health Officer and the County Sheriff as well as the legal department of the Maine Municipal Association.

Phine Ewing was asked to present a statement (attached) from the Conservation Committee (attached.) The Commission distinguished two issues: the problem of overuse and that of safety during the Covid-19 pandemic. The CC has no position on the latter, but would welcome action on the former, while noting the problem of enforcement.

Will Neilson, Chair of the Planning Board, said that the PB has no position on the issue at this time.

A motion to close the Sewall Pond temporarily for reasons of public safety during the corona virus pandemic was moved by DeeDee. She pointed out that the motion if passed would allow time for the Board to develop longer term solutions. There is no perfect solution but there is a need for tools, to keep people safe both in the conservation area and on the road.

The motion was seconded by Walter who said the primary concern is for public safety; he pointed out that the state parks are now open and this might relieve pressure on the pond. The motion was approved unanimously by Board members. Walter was then appointed moderator and the floor was opened for discussion.

Discussion

Clarke: closing a bad idea; cant be responsible for other people distancing. Concerned re overuse – we do need some way; posting signs wont do it; unpopular policy leads to contempt for other policies.

Samantha: parking on 127 side could be made worse if parking restricted on OSR

Matt: has observed daily and supports closure; boulders to restrict parking should not be too expensive.

Walter asked whether the town can change parking. SH: temporarily, not sure about long-term. But clear that the town does have authority to close the conservation area, and can put up signs and block the parking area.

Phine recommended consulting with the Road Commission before making any decision on parking on the 127 side.

Sheila proposed limiting access to town residents who would be provided a parking permit; she suggested that the majority of people are responsive to signs.

Lisa swims in the pond every morning; she has noticed there are more outsiders this year. She normally picks up trash while there but is hesitant to do so now because of the pandemic. She supported the idea of a permit, and suggested that people would have to get it from town hall where they might have a chance to learn about conservation.

Paul Schlein pointed out that the Conservation Commission picks up trash weekly. He felt that the single issue here is public safety during the Corona virus emergency and if social distancing cannot be controlled it is not safe and could become unmanageable. He supports the motion that the area should be closed until the virus is under control.

Anita and Don Lichman: their voices could not be heard but they posted the following comment which was read aloud by Sukey: "why don't we try a stepped plan, where we begin with a simple sign explaining the safety issues & ask people to honor a specified # of cars to visit. If it works, great, problem solved. If it does not, we've documented a cooperative effort to solve, & then go to a more restrictive solution, such as permits, even/odd license plates on even/odd days, etc., with a final solution of temporary closures."

Stan Lane supported closing the pond.

Dena Bachman takes her 2 small children to the pond regularly, where they swim on the 127 side. She too brings a trash bag. She is not in favor of closing the pond, and suggested there was confusion over two issues: the number of cars and safety during the Covid-19 pandemic. Closing the pond is treating the symptom not the problem. The Governor's guidelines allow for 50 people to gather. Whether people abide by the guidelines is a personal issue, not for the Town to decide.

Walter pointed out that while the number has been raised to 50 people are still required to keep a six foot distance, and there is not the necessary space for this at the pond.

Will Neilson: if closing the conservation area leads to making the parking on route 127 worse, which would be more dangerous than OSR, then closing the pond has not improved public safety. It's like a balloon: squeeze one area, another expands.

Samantha said that the owner of the land on the 127 side, who lives out of state, had wanted to close the pond but was advised by lawyers that it was impossible.

Walter asked people to stay to the issue of temporary closure.

Jim Arsenault asked how long is "temporary".

DeeDee said the Board did not know.

Sukey said they would ask Sheriff Merry for advice.

Will said he was warming to the Lichman's proposal to take a gradual approach rather than starting with the most stringent option.

Bob Nelson also swims there every day, and said on the day in question you could not have found a place to sit on the rocks. He pointed out that every beach in the country is contending with this. He supports closing the area temporarily then re-opening after a short while would lead to social distancing improving. He also pointed out that parking on the 12 side is off the road which is not the case on OSR.

There being no other comments, the open portion of the meeting was closed.

it was agreed that the decision would be reviewed at every meeting of the Board and that residents were invited to share their experiences.

Board members then voted on the motion, which was moved by Walter, seconded by DeeDee and passed unanimously.

In considering next steps it was agreed to post No Parking signs; to post the closure notice at the Town Hall and on the Town's website and to send it out via email; to inform the media.

A motion to close the Emergency Meeting of the Board was proposed by Walter, seconded by DeeDee and passed unanimously. The meeting was ended at 5.03 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Sheila Spear