

**Georgia Emergency Selectboard Meeting
Chris Letourneau Meeting Room
Monday, March 16, 2020 9:00 am**

Approved: **Approved**

Present: Selectboard: Matt Crawford, Steve Lamos, Tara Wright, Scott St. Onge. Town Administrator/Treasurer: Amber Baker. Selectboard Clerk: Samuel Gould.

Absent: Jason Burt

Public Present: Todd Cadieux, Highway Foreman; Sharon Bessette, Bookkeeper Cindy Deyak, Zoning Administrator; Dawn Penney, Assistant Town Clerk; Cheryl Letourneau, Town Clerk; Keith Baker, Fire Department Chief; Andrew Dunsmore, EMS Chief; Lt. John Grismore, Sheriff Department; Sheriff Roger Langevin; Michael Frett, St. Albans Messenger; Bridget Stone-Allard by phone, Library Director; Gary Deziel – Library Trustee

Matt Crawford opened the emergency Selectboard meeting for March 16, 2020 for the Town of Georgia in the Chris Letourneau Meeting Room at 9:00 a.m. to talk about all the concerns and comments over the last few days about the COVID-19 virus and whether the town is overreacting or under reacting.

Motion to approve the First Response COVID-19 policy by Tara, seconded by Steve, all in favor.

First Response: Report provided by Chief Andrew Dunsmore

Andrew explained the policy to the Selectboard and how he developed the policy in such a way that it would work for any pandemic that the town may face in the future. Andrew has been in contact with other agencies, EMTs, dispatch and has provided them all with a copy of the policy.

He further informed the Selectboard; how the virus is transmitted via droplets, the plan to keep first responders safe, keeping them from getting infected as the infection rate is very high and spreads very quickly.

Andrew then told the Selectboard how the process will work if somebody who or believes they have the COVID-19 virus calls for help. The call to respond will not go to Georgia First Response, as a dedicated care team will respond. The call will not be put out over the general air to help prevent any negative public response or panic. If Georgia First Response is contacted to help it will be mostly as a driver and the Georgia First Responder will be kept away from the patient and everyone will follow the CDC guidelines.

Andrew also discussed the issues of the nationwide surgical mask shortage, the new notices put out by CDC on using other masks and what rules and procedures to follow while wearing these masks. The CDC is also stating that EMTs should wear gowns, gloves and eyewear should if possible during calls. One of the biggest issues that has led to the quarantine of EMS agencies has been because of the lack of eye protection. Normal safety glasses are effective and are what most EMS responders now wear as a normal part of their personal protective equipment (PPE). Andrew informed the selectboard of the

current stock levels of the N 95 masks and gloves currently on hand. Some discussion followed on how to procure gowns for the Georgia EMTs as they currently have none in stock.

Notification procedures have been put in place for incidents of a town member with a positive test for COVID-19 to include dealing with any EMS responders who may have come in contact with that individual. Discussion followed on; the current percentages of individuals who have died from the virus, the overall number is 1% which does not take into account that most of those individuals are the elderly and that the percentage for those over 70 is much higher.

Currently, Northwestern Medical Center has only two entrances open so they can screen individuals before they come in, conference rooms are all close, visitations have been limited and all volunteer valet programs have been suspended. Northwestern has a process and place for individuals who call their primary care physicians and or show up at the emergency room if they are not feeling well for testing. The tests are sent to UVM Medical Center and these potential patients will be held in the negative pressure rooms or sent home depending on their symptoms. At this point the CDC has informed the hospitals that the only treatment is to isolate individuals or send them home to isolate themselves, ensure they drink plenty of water and get plenty of rest. Keith explained to the board that this is pretty much how all the hospitals in the region are working and that EMS workers do not enter the building, as hospital employees come out to get patient's and bring them into the hospital to help prevent transmission.

Fire Department: Report provided by Chief Keith Baker

Keith informed the board that the fire department building is closed up, all private and public events have been canceled and the use of all rooms has been restricted. At this point there's not much else that can be done as far as securing the building.

He also informed the Selectboard that nine days ago the Williston FD had contact with a person who later tested positive for COVID-19. Keith did call the CDC who informed him that it should not be an issue at this time and everyone who would've been or was involved is being tracked. The CDC also informed him that everyone needs to where the appropriate PPE at all times.

The fire departments overall risk opportunities are much less than First Response. Similar to the First Response, the Fire Department could use more protective equipment. Keith believes at this time that all the protective equipment they require can be purchased within their budget and he will let the Selectboard know if they can't or if they have any procurement issues. He stated that they can go through masks rather quickly and provided an example using a recent cardiac arrest response in which 10 were used.

The Fire Department currently has about 200 masks in stock. Keith stated that the state does have a cachet of protective gear and equipment and that EMSs and fire departments throughout the state are asking the state to begin releasing some of this equipment and gear as they are all beginning to run low on their stocks. This is due to the nationwide demand which is causing all departments issues.

Keith stated that UVM also has a mobile autoclave unit available. Fire departments and EMSs can request to use it when they have responded to a situation in which the individual may be positive for COVID-19 to sanitize their equipment.

He informed the selectboard that the virus can last up to five days on smooth nonporous surfaces like

stainless steel, copper or other metal surfaces.

Law Enforcement: Report provided by Sheriff Roger Langevin

Sheriff Langevin informed the Selectboard that law enforcement also has policies and plans in place on how they will react when responding to calls and when interacting with the public. The goal is to minimize exposure as much as possible. All cruisers and the offices have been sanitized it will be sanitized again as required; hand sanitizer is located throughout the office and in all the cruisers. They ask that they are informed of any homes that become quarantined allowing them to be further prepared if they get a call to respond to that residence. At this time law enforcement needs no special support from the selectboard.

Town Offices: Report provided by Cheryl Letourneau

Keith discussed the massive amount of misinformation that is out in the public being passed through social networks like Facebook and suggest that people just use sites like the CDC or the Vermont Department of Health to find out what's really going on, what the symptoms really are, and what to do. The media is getting people into buying frenzies which is leading to large amounts of people all being at the same place at the same time which is counterproductive to slowing down the spread of the virus. The Vermont Department of Health is a good site to find official guidance.

Keith informed the board that the Hinesburg town offices are closed to walk-in traffic but open for phone calls at this time. Some discussion followed on what the Georgia town offices can do to help minimize exposure. Cheryl stated that the biggest issue is individuals in the vault; if someone sneezes or coughs in that small vault area it could close the vault for a while. She also asked the Selectboard to extending the dog licensing period If possible; calls have been made to the State on their current policy. Lt. Grismore informed the board how they are working this issue, individual screening before an individual walks into the building and sanitation of the person before they enter the building.

The town offices are still delivering Meals on Wheels and Cheryl informed the board of the process; call the individual, drop the food off of the front door and that the number of meals an individual can deliver is limited. The program is continuing to look for ways to limit a person's chance of spreading or contracting the virus.

Discussion followed on; extending licensing periods for individuals, placing a notice on the doors and the website stating that the office is closed to walk-in traffic and that all business will be conducted via phone or email until further notice. The Fire & Rescue Association have also postponed their Calcutta until further notice.

Town Library: Report provided by Bridget Stone-Allard

Bridget described their plan to the Selectboard. The library is closed today, and other town libraries are closing some for a short period of time and some with no reopen dates set. They have do have a plan in place on how to run the library in case employees become incapacitated and they are working on a lot of ideas on how to stay connected with community and provide support. Things like virtual book clubs, story time, tours and other virtual ideas.

It is not possible or in their capacity to sanitize books and materials that are returned or to sanitize the entire library and they plan to quarantine anything that comes in until they have that capability. Other

items of note; they are trying to develop a plan for home delivery, interlibrary loans has currently been put on hold, and ways of providing a virtual library to the public.

They may need to include the cost of a virtual library as a budget line.

As for whether employees will actually work at the library or work from home has yet to be determined. Jeremy is manning the library today even though it is closed, to deep clean some areas, set up the drop box and a few other things. Bridget will be in contact with him throughout the day. The Selectboard asked Bridget to ensure that he has the proper protective equipment such as gloves while he's doing all this work today.

Other Items:

Keith brought up a possible issue with all the help your neighbor volunteer requests going out on social media. They talk about helping the elderly by bringing them things and the issues that can cause as the individuals pick up and bring stuff to the elderly will be in contact or could be in contact with individuals infected when buying the items and then delivering it from one elderly person to another elderly person spreading the virus further. It is a great idea but one that can cause more harm if the individuals do not follow CDC guidance. Care needs to be taken and a plan put in place by these good hearted volunteers.

Matt then switched from COVID-19 to the personnel policy and how many hours a person accumulates towards sick time and how much they can carry forward.

The policy doesn't cover the possibility of someone not being able to come to work due to emergency situations such as a pandemic. We need a way to allow individuals who do not have a lot of sick time for whatever reason to be able to take the time necessary or required even if they do not have any sick time available to them. For fire department and first response volunteers a report of the incident will be made for Workmen's Compensation and we will need to ensure the person is quarantined. Keith stated that this time there has been no employee who meets these requirements.

Cheryl was just informed the selectboard that the state does not allow an extension for dog licensing but late fee goes to the town.

Motion by to waive the late fee by Steve, seconded by Tara, all in favor.

Selectboard Decisions:

Employee assemblies, nonessential assemblies need to be canceled, essential assemblies such as training and maintenance should continue and the number of individuals should be kept to a minimum.

We need to check with VLCT to look at the open meeting laws to see how or if we can control the size of all town meetings.

We need to determine what upcoming meetings would be considered essential, which would be considered nonessential and canceling all the nonessential meetings.

We need to ensure that anybody who does come to any essential meetings knows the signs and

symptoms of the COVID-19 virus so they do not show up at the meeting if they believe they are sick.

The plan for paying employees if we have to completely close any of the offices is not yet completed but it will be based on working from home program if necessary.

Meeting adjourned at 10:43 a.m.