

Goose Rocks Beach Advisory Committee
Meeting on ZOOM
June 29, 2021

A meeting of the Goose Rocks Beach Advisory Committee was held at 6:00pm via Zoom

Attendees: Kate Bauer Burke, Jon Dykstra, Carol Sherman, Barry Engel, Joanne Gustin, Paul Hogan, Jen Wasserman

1. Call to Order

Ms. Burke performed a roll call, confirmed a quorum, and noted the Committee is still missing a representative from the Board of Selectmen.

Ms. Burke also asked if anyone wished to speak, even Committee members, to raise their hand and wait to be called on so that no one is talking over the other person.

2. Discussion of fires on Goose Rocks Beach

Mr. Dykstra reported he and Ms. Gustin met to compile as much information as possible from speaking with town officials and reviewing the information Ms. Burke compiled from other Maine towns and their policies on beach fires. In her research, Ms. Burke found only 2 towns currently allow fires on their beaches and that is Biddeford and Old Orchard Beach. Old Orchard Beach only allows special event campfires which are sponsored by a group of some sort, Mr. Burke clarified and also noted there a lot of restrictions for those fires such as must be in a metal container, no debris or dumping of anything on the beach, certain distance from any nesting area and a clear statement of liability.

With all that information in hand, Mr. Dykstra and Ms. Gustin composed a slideshow presentation which was shared on the screen for the viewing audience and can be found on the town's website.

Ms. Burke asked the Committee members to offer their comments before soliciting opinions from the viewing audience.

Ms. Wasserman commented that limiting the private beachfront owners fire permits to just 3 seemed potentially small given the expanse of the property on that end of the beach. Ms. Wasserman also questioned that signatories of the Beach Use Agreement were already permitted to have small beach fires within their 25 feet of beachfront provided it was in a contained fire pit. Mr. Dykstra agreed with Ms. Wasserman's statement adding that was his understanding as well. Ms. Burke acknowledged she raised that issue when speaking with the Town Manager and it remains ambiguous, but state statute specifies a truly recreational fire, one not used for cooking purposes, whether it is in a metal container or not still requires a permit.

In his review of the state law, Mr. Hogan stated any open fire, except for these narrow exceptions, requires a permit and the statute that applies to the beach states specifically 'residential use of outdoor grills and fireplaces for recreational purposes, such as preparing food'. Mr. Hogan added he agrees with Mr. Dykstra and Ms. Wasserman that the law applies to the 25-foot beachfront as well as beyond that boundary.

Ms. Burke read a detailed statement from the Police Chief regarding this issue. Chief Sanford's response was: "any change to the current practices is an improvement". Some of the other issues raised the Police Chief and Fire Chief are as follows:

- The Police Department will still need to have a police officer check at 10:00pm to ensure fires are out.
- Chief Sanford agreed with this compromise for now but feared they may still have problems with complaints about smoke.
- A lot of permit seekers fail to understand that they are responsible for any and all damage created if that fire spreads.
- The fire can be spread by direct contact to other items or by radiant heat from the fire's blowing embers, etc.
- The permit holder can be held responsible for all extinguishing costs as well which would include costs for manpower, department vehicle use costs and any costs incurred by any other entity that they may have assisting in the extinguishment.
- Another concern with fires on the beach is wind. Winds along the shore can be very unpredictable in the speed and direction carrying embers into dune grasses or onto someone else's property.
- The other issue the wind creates is its drying properties, especially to vegetation in the area since permits are only allowed regardless of location on a lower to moderate fire danger scale provided by the Maine Forest Service where conditions at the beach can be very different and drier than in other places in town.

Mr. Engel offered his appreciation to Mr. Dykstra and Ms. Gustin for their work on this issue and expressed his concern regarding stray embers. Mr. Engel also state he would prefer not have beach fires but if the Committee felt otherwise then he would strongly suggest requiring metal containers.

Mr. Michael Ashley of Westerly Trust at 505 Kings Highway called in to express his support to continue having campfires at the beach.

Ms. Jean Ciarametaro of 42 Wildwood Avenue stated even 3 fires on beach from Broadway to Edgewood is still going to send smoke directly westerly through that neighborhood and suggested the fires be more spread out to ensure there is no measurable affect from that amount of smoke.

Mr. Pete Smith of 8 Summer Breeze Lane and 9 Bartlett Avenue stated his strong support for continuing having fires at the beach.

Mr. Steve Painter of 6 Wildwood Avenue offered his method when he has fires at the beach and supported continuing to allow campfires on the beach.

Ms. Maureen Somers of 15 Wildwood Avenue stated her support of continuing fires at the beach as it is an important tradition to uphold for future generations.

Ms. Sherman asked Ms. Somers how she cools her metal container when she has fires on the beach. Ms. Somers' husband Timothy Somers, a retired firefighter, explained they let the fire burn down all the way, add a small bit of seawater and mix it in which causes the metal to cool enough to grab and it carry it off of the beach. Mr. Somers also offered his opinion as a professional firefighter he would much prefer beach fires be required to be in metal containers rather than on the sand directly.

Mr. Richard Driver of Marshview Circle offered his opinion that it should be same bring in/bring out policy with the fire pits as it is with all other beach apparatus and cautioned to make sure the language on the permit does not specify a limit on the liability should there be damages.

Mr. Steve Painter called in to the meeting again to state the proposed increase in the permit deposit to \$250 should be higher, perhaps \$500 or \$1,000.

Ms. Jannette Alosky of 30 Wildwood Avenue voiced her support to continue to allow campfires on the beach.

Ms. Ann Corbey of 6 Wildwood stated the town needs to seriously encourage responsibility and full liability for permittees and suggested extending the time period before returning the deposit check to ensure no damage has been done.

There were no further comments from the viewing audience.

The Committee members had a detailed discussion on the specific recommendations to propose for continuing campfires at the beach.

Mr. Dykstra made a motion to recommend to the Board of Selectmen to reinstate permitting fires on the beach given that the permit includes the following additions/changes to the existing permit and after reviewing the final document any member of the Beach Advisory Committee may withdraw their vote if they choose so. The proposed changes/additions are:

- 3 permits granted on east end for public at large, 3 for beachfront property owners.
- Raise deposit to \$250.
- Stipulate fires must be within a metal container.
- Permittee must remain with the fire until it is fully extinguished.
- Pit and all burnt logs must be removed that night. No dumping.
- Fire is placed not closer than 20 ft to dune edge if dune is present.
- There will be statement of liability without a dollar amount but stating for suppression costs and any subsequent damage. That statement is signed and a driver's license will be collected.
- No fire within 100ft of posted endangered bird nesting site.
- Must have a bucket for extinguishing and emergency purposes.

Mr. Hogan seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous.

Mr. Dykstra agreed to formally send out an email to the other Committee members with the changes/additions for their review as stated in his motion.

3. Other Business

Ms. Burke reminded the Committee members to please submit possible dates they are available for the next meeting so it can be scheduled with the town.

4. Adjourn