

SELECT BOARD

Minutes of the Meeting of August 10, 2021. The meeting took place via remote participation using Zoom Webinar. Members of the Board present were Jason Bridges, Matt Fee, Kristie Ferrantella, Dawn Hill Holdgate and Melissa Murphy. Also present from Town staff were Town Manager C. Elizabeth Gibson; Police Chief William Pittman; Fire Chief Stephen Murphy; Licensing Administrator Amy Baxter; Culture and Tourism Director Janet Schulte; Operations Administrator Erika Mooney; and Public Health Director Roberto Santamaria.

Chair Bridges called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM and read a prepared statement as to how the meeting would be conducted via remote participation and the ground rules for any discussion and called roll Board members and staff present.

Ms. Mary Malavase, Chair of the Visitor Services Advisory Committee (VSAC) called the Committee's meeting to order at 10:02 AM.

LARGE SCALE EVENTS WORKSHOP MEETING

Chair Bridges introduced the topic for the meeting. Ms. Ferrantella spoke about the need to find a way to have events, safely and be able to manage them, noting they are important for the Island's economy and for non-profit fundraising purposes. Mr. Fee commented that he is looking forward to public input but that from his perspective, large events have become very difficult to manage and the Town resources may not be there to continue to hold them, as is. Ms. Holdgate said that some of the events have become tradition but understands the need to perhaps "reimagine" them. Chief Murphy thanked the Board for considering the public safety concerns. He reviewed Fire Department staffing with respect to what is managed seasonally by the Department with the seasonal increase in population. He continued to review the various types of events for which the Fire Department provides resources, while also responding to a variety of calls. He noted that mutual aid is unrealistic for the island, for immediate needs. He spoke on the evolution of various venues on the island that are used for large events but are not really designed for them, which can present safety challenges. He noted that another evolution has been the lack of emergency planning by the event sponsors, with an expectation that the Town will take that on. Chief Pittman spoke on the challenges faced by the Police Department and what has changed with staffing, law enforcement changes, including with the Massachusetts Police Reform bill, types and size of events, over the past 20 or so years. He spoke about the various resources that events require, including security, traffic control and parking. He added that volunteers are not generally a suitable substitute for a police officer regarding these issues. He emphasized that advance planning is also necessary. He referred to an existing Town bylaw that lays out event requirements, which are not always followed. He compared some of Nantucket's large-scale events to similar events elsewhere and noted some striking differences in security and event management. He said that fake identification has become problematic lately with respect to checking on underage alcoholic consumption. He said there are ways to make events more manageable, such as advance planning, specifically with regard to securing additional resources and making arrangements for overnight accommodations. He suggested that alternate locations, such as Tom Nevers Park be considered, noting that a location like that would take less staff to manage. Ms. Baxter spoke on the need to use the "pause" created by the COVID pandemic for the community to determine how it wants public spaces to be used. She said this workshop is not about "abolishing" events but more to focus on how to make them safer, with available resources. Ms. Schulte said that the VSAC met three times in July to discuss large events and has put forward several recommendations, which are contained in the Board's packet, including an event risk assessment. Mr. Fee asked how much of these event "issues" are "fueled by alcohol", adding that if alcohol was not allowed, would that make these events less difficult. Chief Pittman responded affirmatively,

noting that would make a significant positive difference. Mr. Santamaria commented on the number of people on the island is a significant factor with regard to events. Chair Bridges said he would start taking public comment at this point.

Matt Peel, a member of the VSAC thanked the Chiefs for their comments and said he believes that the Town is so supportive of events that it takes them on without necessarily requiring the event sponsors to provide them with necessary resources. He suggested the formation of an events committee to develop specific criteria for what is necessary for the various types of events.

Carole Beller, representing the Brant Point Association, expressed appreciation for the workshop. She commented on the number of events that take place in the Brant Point area. She suggested that event permitting include requirements for clean-up and parking plans.

Adam Dread thanked the Town for having this workshop. He spoke on his experience in Nashville with tourism and events. He suggested a "volunteer-based assistance force" be established, who are trained by the Police Department. Chief Pittman responded that historically such an effort has been challenging and that interest in such volunteerism generally is not sustained. Chief Murphy said that the Fire Department has a volunteer fire department and that the training requirements tend to limit participation. He added that the liability presented by volunteers can be an issue.

Linda Williams spoke on her own experience being an event volunteer and said she has never seen any "issues" at any of the events for which she has volunteered. She said that housing should be established for police and fire personnel to "beef up" the staffing levels; and, added that they should be paid more.

AJ Williams commented on her experience with event planning in Boston and elsewhere and supported the idea that event planners need to prepare and provide the types of items the Chiefs mentioned, such as emergency plan, security, parking.

Mary Malavase, chair of the VSAC thanked the Town for having this workshop. She agreed this is a good time to plan ahead for proper event management. She said it is time to "reinvent and reimagine" events. She reiterated the VSAC recommendation for a risk assessment.

Campbell Sutton said she thinks event planners are better at getting local volunteers than the Town. She added that the Town should develop specific criteria for various sizes of events. She spoke about egress at Tom Nevers Park.

Chief Pittman noted that with regard to the idea about an events committee, there is an internal committee that does just what is being suggested. He said the issue is timing and that most proposed events come in too late for proper planning. He said that history has shown that despite the laying out of criteria, the event planners frequently do not provide what they committed to, which is only discovered on the day of the event. He noted that often there are concurrent "unsponsored" events such as large beach parties that also take Town resources to address.

Chief Murphy said that a matrix is under development, such as mentioned earlier. He added that there need to be repercussions when requirements are not met.

Aisling Glynn spoke on Nantucket's tradition of events. She said that once the ramifications of the pandemic are over, the staffing situation will improve, and the events should be able to return. She said that no serious incidents have occurred with large events.

Matt Peel spoke about what should happen when event planners do not comply with requirements and supported the idea of shutting that event down. He agreed with what Ms. Baxter said about the community determining what it wants with its public spaces.

Mr. Fee said that while COVID may have "sped up" certain issues with Town resources these were going to be happening anyway. He suggested prioritizing the large events and also, the number of events. With regard to holding the event planners accountable, he suggested they post a bond so that public safety can "pull people in" if needed. Ms. Murphy asked about the Town's internal events committee. She cautioned to be careful as to how other cities plan events because Nantucket's situation is not the same, especially with respect to mutual aid and additional resources. Ms. Baxter explained how the internal events committee functions. She emphasized the need to address public safety concerns. Chief Murphy noted that the Town tends to "do a lot, with less" but that there is a point at which that is no longer viable. He expressed thanks for the support of the community and the Board for public safety concerns. Ms. Holdgate said she appreciates the feedback today. She said she understands traditional events and that in light of the concerns, there perhaps are some specifics that could be reworked for certain events. She said that perhaps consideration should be given to a town location or facility for events, which the Town invests in to accommodate large events. Chief Pittman noted that years ago, the Figawi event organizers came to the Town for help with addressing some serious issues, the event was reworked and is now much easier to manage, from a private and public standpoint. He said there needs to be willingness to try new things. Chair Bridges said that businesses can adapt, they just need a framework. Ms. Ferrantella asked about next steps and follow-up. Ms. Baxter suggested a long-term work group. Chief Pittman suggested the matrix be finalized and that input be gathered from event coordinators. He added that the existing bylaw needs to be taken more seriously. Ms. Gibson spoke on the need for the Board to perhaps develop some policy direction for the staff regarding the prioritization of events, whether or not additional large-scale events will be allowed, the number of events and ramifications when event organizers do not comply with the requirements of their approval. Mr. Fee agreed and added that in order for the Board to set some policy, it needs to understand the resource limits.

There being no further public comment, Chair Bridges thanked all participants and indicated that the Board will likely have further detailed discussion in September on this, once the suggested matrix has been developed.

Ms. Holdgate moved to adjourn at 11:44 AM; seconded by Ms. Ferrantella. So voted by roll call vote: Chair Bridges – Yes; Mr. Fee - Yes; Ms. Ferrantella – Yes; Ms. Holdgate – Yes; Ms. Murphy – Yes.

Approved the 18th day of August 2021.

SELECT BOARD
AUGUST 10, 2021 – 10:00 AM
REMOTE PARTICIPATION VIA ZOOM
NANTUCKET, MASSACHUSETTS

List of documents used at the meeting:

- II. Chapter 105 of the Town Code, Article IV - Public Entertainment; Letter from Police Chief, re: NPD staffing - historical changes/special events; Police list of major events; 2018 Events with Police Details; 2019 Events with Police Details; 2019 Large Scale Events with Police Detail; Fire - Past Issues & Future Changes; Fire list of 2019 events; Letter from Chamber of Commerce; Letter from Visitor Services Advisory Committee