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# Town of Seabrook

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## Memorandum

To: Chair Ella Brown, Selectman Khan, Selectwoman Kyle

From: Town Manager

CC: Kelly O'Connor

Beach Safety Issues

October 15, 2018

This memorandum is a follow-up to the Board memo sent and discussed at the September 17, 2018 Board meeting. I have attached the following documents:

1. The Police Chief Memo outlining the immediate response. (August 22, 2018)
2. The Fire Chief Memo outlining the immediate response. (August 22, 2018)
3. Police Chief Memo outlining response, and the estimated startup costs of a lifeguard program for Seabrook Beach. (September 13, 2018)
4. The Fire Chief Memo, dated October 12, 2018 on Water Rescue Equipment needs.

The fourth item is new. The top three were submitted with my memo dated September 14.

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At the September 17 Board meeting the Board was hopeful that a report could be delivered for discussion on October 15. While there is still more work to be done this report will attempt to further frame the discussion for the Board in light of additional discussions with Chief Edwards and Acting Chief Walker. I believe there is more work to be done, and with a bit more time a more comprehensive report could be completed. I will continue to work on this issue under the direction of the Board. I will refer to some of the questions raised in my memo of September 14 and highlight the specific areas where additional work or information is needed.

In my memo of September 14 the **first issue** raised was the potential for a marine rescue patrol. All parties have agreed that the rescue function would be properly placed with the Fire Department. The Board of Selectmen, as action items, have approved, after the September 17<sup>th</sup> meeting, the mooring request by Chief Edwards as well as the transfer of two boats in existing inventory from Police to Fire. I would refer you to the Chief Edwards memo of October 12 on the suitability of these two transferred boats to impact future rescue efforts. While more work is needed to determine the condition of these two boats it is clear that even if the boats are fully seaworthy they will not impact, except in a small way, the current discussion. (See Edwards memo) Additionally there has been some discussion of the purchase of a fully equipped boat that would be used for ocean rescue. More work is needed on this issue relative to cost, but it does not seem to me to be practical for the current discussion. Three identified problems with creating a full marine rescue with a new boat.

1. Staffing. At current staffing levels in Fire it is difficult to see how this option can be managed successfully.
2. Placement for response. More work on placement is needed. Even if staffing is not a problem the question of placement, and creating a system that allows rapid deployment in the event of emergency, is key to ensuring that the potential investment addresses the issue properly.
3. Cost. In light of likely costs north of \$200,000 for the equipment alone it is a challenge, especially in light of the other costs for additional services being considered.

I will continue to work on this option if the Board desires but it is not an option that I believe will be possible in the immediate future. That is reflective of the position taken in my memo of September 14. Nothing that I have seen in the last month has changed that view.

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**The second potential** is the placement of lifeguards on Seabrook Beach. In terms of where we are not much has changed. Acting Chief Walker has done the research on the cost of extending the Hampton Lifeguard program to Seabrook Beach. If the Board were to consider placement of lifeguards this option, in my view, is the best way forward. It would eliminate the need for Seabrook to create and manage its own program. It would outsource all of the training and supervision responsibilities to an existing program, saving on some aspects of startup costs, allowing us to take advantage of synergy with the Hampton program. The costs are outlined in Acting Chief Walker's memo. It is my belief that the wage costs to Seabrook would be more in line with the Salisbury numbers outlined in that memo. On that basis my view is that startup costs are \$225,000, and recurring costs will be \$150,000. Those numbers have changed slightly since my original estimates in an upward fashion. From a policy perspective, if the Board would like to consider this option, there are two options.

1. Place the required amount in the municipal budget.
2. Approve a warrant article placing the issue before voters.

I have attached a draft warrant article for your consideration should the Board choose that option. It should be noted that the costs are based on the Acting Chief Walker memo of September 13, which has the daily lifeguard contingent at ten, with eight stations and two supervisors. The Board could reduce costs by placing less than eight lifeguard stations, but that option would need additional work and study.

**The third issue** is the purchase of equipment in the event that the option of placing lifeguards is declined. This option has some challenges that need discussion, and some additional work.

1. Logistical Issues. The issue of equipment placement that would allow for rapid emergency deployment needs more work. Our assumption is that we would require a place at the beach to store the equipment. That location has not been identified.
2. Staffing issues. It needs to be noted that with an ever rising call load there are questions as to whether existing staffing levels in the Fire Department can guarantee optimum response even with additional equipment.
3. Procedural Issues. Some of this equipment would be contained in a prospective lifeguard warrant article, if that is the choice of the Board. If a prospective warrant article is defeated I do not see how we fund an "option B"(equipment without lifeguards.) Separating the lifeguard option from the equipment needed by creating two articles would not solve the problem, as the potential exists for the lifeguard article to win

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and the equipment article to fail, which would prevent us from deploying lifeguards due to lack of equipment. It appears to be “all or nothing.”

**The fourth track** previously discussed centered on the creation of an early warning system. There is consensus that a flag system similar to what is used in Hampton would be appropriate. This option would be implemented as part of a program that includes lifeguards without any logistical issues. There is a desire to implement an early warning system in the event that the lifeguard option is not adopted. That potential has some logistical issues, including responsibility for retrieving necessary information for the flag system, and then assigning responsibility for making the appropriate daily flag changes as needed. That issue is tied to our staffing issues, and includes taking the necessary information in, as well as making the necessary flag changes, on weekends.

There may be other areas for discussion, and my memo is not meant to limit that discussion, but rather to help to frame the issues brought to me for consideration by the Board.