



Municipal Corp. of Cape Charles

PUBLIC MESSAGE #13 RE: COVID-19

May 29, 2020

Notice to all residents and business owners:

There has been a lot of confusion lately over beach openings in Virginia, and I'd like to take a moment to try and explain this situation. Governor Northam closed all public beaches back on March 30 due to the COVID-19 public health threat. This closure was through June 10, though the Governor often said he would extend that date if he felt the danger to public health required it.

So, it is important to keep in mind that the whole reason for closing the beaches was because they were considered unsafe. Nobody wanted to hurt our economy. Everyone wants the beaches reopened as soon as safely possible. The only question is, when is it safe to do so?

The Town of Cape Charles does not have access to the public health data needed to answer that question, but the Governor does. So only the Governor is in a position to exercise judgment on acceptable public health risks regarding beaches.

So, the City of Virginia Beach approached the Governor and asked him what special procedures would be required to get him comfortable with reopening their beach. After several weeks of coordination, they agreed on a complex and resource intensive plan to allow restricted recreational use of Virginia Beach. When the Governor announced that the City of Virginia Beach was granted an exception to the statewide beach closure, many people misunderstood and thought that all Virginia beaches had been reopened.

After seeing what the City of Virginia Beach did, the Cape Charles Town Council asked the town manager last week to start researching what it would take to put together a plan to reopen our beach, using VB as a model. The CC plan was nearing completion, when yesterday the Governor took us by surprise and announced that all beaches in the state could reopen as soon as May 29, "if" they could meet a very long list of safety protocols. Opening the beach before these protocols were in place would be considered unsafe.

With only one day's notice, it became physically impossible for Cape Charles to meet all these safety requirements to open this weekend (May 30-31). Therefore, the Town Council decided to set a beach reopening date of June 5 to allow the town manager and staff one week to develop the necessary safety protocols. While it may be disappointing to some that our beach will not open this weekend, it is important to note that we are still ahead of the original June 10 date, and we'll be doing so in a way that can mitigate the public health threat. The Town wishes to thank all of you for your understanding and patience during these unprecedented times.

John Hozey
Town Manager