

Beaches Working Group
Conference Room A, Kittery Town Hall
5 pm Wednesday, August 18, 2021

Minutes

- I. Present: Michael Blackman, Mike Murphy, Denise Payne (Parks Commission), Judy Spiller (Town Council), Todd Thayer, Town Manager Amaral, Police Chief Richter, ACO Walsh, Fire Chief O'Brien
- II. With a few wintertime exceptions, all communities from Kennebunkport to Cape Cod require permits for fires on their beaches.
The committee agreed that any resulting policy needed to be fair and equitable, balancing the interests of neighbors and those, particularly residents, wishing to have small fires. It also needed to be easily communicated (simple); enforceable; and protective of the dune-marsh system. The Committee then generated a list of options, ranging from doing nothing to banning fires entirely. It landed on a permitting system, limiting the number of fires each evening to specified locations (firepits). It agreed that Crescent Beach's relative inaccessibility and extensive cobble berm with limited dune vegetation were natural controls, and so it needed no further restrictions. The committee also agreed that fires should be prohibited on the northern end of the beach, reducing noise and smoke impacts on the property owners there. It then reviewed other communities' permitting, eventually agreeing that we needed an online system with an administrative fee. It was agreed that the fee be waived for Kittery residents.
Closing the parking lot earlier than 11 pm, given the time it takes the PD to clear the beach at 11 pm, was considered and rejected as being too unpopular with residents. Logistics to be determined include the number and location of firepits; cleaning the firepits; details associated with permitting, including actual administrative process, how far in advance, multiple reservations by one person' notification of fire danger bans; what may be burned; cleaning the firepits.
The committee did discuss the location of a portable toilet at Seapoint Beach though issues of location (the parking lot periodically floods; the surrounding vegetated area is home to sensitive species; the loss of parking spaces) and the potential for vandalism ended the discussion, which more properly belonged with the Parks Commission.
- III. Town Manager will send out poll to determine availability for next meeting.
- IV. Meeting adjourned at 6:30 pm.