



May 6, 2020

Good Afternoon,

COVID-19 pandemic has in most cases brought out the best in people. It has not been a surprise that we have seen letters that support the Town's actions and letters that express outrage on actions we have taken during this pandemic. We all have a position and perception on how COVID-19 has and will impact our lives. We do consider all views, as each add value to Topsail Beach.

Our goal with the current State of Emergency Order and the Governor's Executive Orders was to reduce the spread and flatten the curve so our hospitals could handle the prediction of a large number of hospital cases. We have been successful through your actions of social distancing, limiting gathering of groups and reducing travel which required closing or changing how businesses operate. While I am not aware of any COVID-19 cases in Topsail Beach, I am aware of cases in our surrounding communities.

We need to give a heartfelt thank you to our first responders, nurses, doctors, town employees, grocery store employees, post office, construction personnel and many more who did their jobs daily so our basic needs were met. The prediction of high hospitalization has not happened for our region but know actions were taken in advance to ensure there would be available hospital space. There were sites prepared that could be transformed to emergency hospitals if the high prediction for hospitalization had occurred; your actions prevented the need to activate these sites.

The Governor's Stay at Home Order did impose travel restrictions that only allowed travel that was considered essential business. The Governor repeated several times a trip to the beach or mountains is not essential travel at this time. These excluded items or essential needs were listed in the Executive Order #121. Many have complied with the Executive Orders and State of Emergency Orders, for this we are grateful, as this has been key to keeping our COVID-19 hospital case load below predictions.

**Where do we go?** We believe all would agree that at some point we need to move back to a normal or new normal for daily activity. We understand that the government's COVID-19 monetary support does not cover all financial needs and people need to get back to work. This has both financial and mental health implications. Our Governor has laid out a three phased plan to reopen the economy plus his Executive Orders which we are required by law to follow.



We need to understand that we have never been able to prevent a COVID-19 infection, we can only control the rate of infection by our actions. We each have responsibility to take actions that prevent COVID-19 infection. We also have a responsibility to provide a safe community for all who live, work, or play in Topsail Beach during normal conditions and it takes on even a higher level of accountability during a state or national emergency. Please follow the CDC recommendations on wearing masks, social distancing and washing your hands.

Just as if we had a hurricane state of emergency, we set limits on how we return to the island once we are satisfied that with reasonable precautions people will not be exposed to injury and the town can respond to local emergency needs. No one can guarantee you will never have a cold, the flu or if your investment/business will make a profit. You control these items and many more by your actions including how susceptible you will be to COVID-19. During an emergency, we do set the limits for all to have reasonable safety until an acceptable community safety level is reached that allows most to fulfill their personal needs. We do live on an island with two other towns, it is established that we need to work together during times of emergency for the best outcome for the entire island. However, we are individual communities with our own needs and unique character.

As we are tied to the Governor's Executive Orders, we must follow those orders. We will make adjustments to the Town's State of Emergency to match the changes with future Executive Orders from the Governor.

Our cottage lifestyle does not promote congregant opportunities. In addition, business practice adjustments, social distancing and crowd size limits have reduced personal contact. Our local hospital system as of May 1, 2020 indicated they are ready to return to normal services. Our grocery stores, pharmacies and restaurants do provide delivery or a special pickup program to reduce personal contact. Wearing a mask and gloves will also reduce your risk. Please know the actions we take or don't take are not to promote winners or losers. They are taken with the understanding that we need each person in our community to do the right thing for our community to survive. The decisions have been tough on everyone. The COVID-19 virus will be with us until we have a vaccine. It is now time to take the next step with everyone working together and cooperating in using the recommendations from CDC and our health department.



**We will take these steps:**

1. Comply with the Governor's Executive Orders and Phased Plan.
2. May 9, 2020 we will open our short-term rentals.
3. May 8, 2020 @ 10 AM we will open public parking. Although, some public parking will remain closed for repairs and/or use by Weeks Marine and required Turtle monitoring.
4. May 8, 2020 @ 10 AM Bush Marina Parking for vehicles with trailers will open but will be reduced to reserve space for Weeks Marine.
5. The Town Park (including restrooms) will remain closed at this time and be re-evaluated after phase 1 of the Governor's plan.
6. Business Operating Standards — all businesses that operate must abide by the Governor's Executive Orders and the Phase Plan Orders. The orders set limitations on the number of people allowed on the premises, require business owners to provide social distancing measures and only allows restaurants to provide take out service. They also prohibit gatherings of more than 10 people at any location. I am sure your clients will be interested in steps you have taken in your business to reduce the transmission of COVID-19.
7. Social distancing must always be practiced in all locations including the beach and sound side area. This also applies to our boating public using Banks Channel and beach/sandbar areas. Where social distancing cannot be adhered to, please wear a mask and follow other CDC recommendations.
8. We will continue to operate our Town Hall by appointment only and encourage the use of telephone or mail contact. Given its size limitations and availability of PPE we will review once we move to the Governor's Phase 2 position. We do recommend all town employees to wear masks if they must work within six feet of an individual. We ask that all respect social distancing measures if you interact with town employees. Please follow CDC recommendations on Social Distancing and using a mask.
9. Both May & June dates for "Music in the Park" will be cancelled. We will decide on the July "Music in the Park" in June. The ability to maintain Social Distancing will be a consideration before events are approved.
10. Please understand there are situations or other legal requirements that may occur that may necessitate changes to Topsail Beach's State of Emergency.

We each share a responsibility for our own safety and the safety of others. We need to understand the risks and take actions that reduce those risks in a responsible manner that shows respect, kindness and understanding for our new normal. We need everyone to work together, as each member of our community adds to the charm, direction, and value we have here in Topsail Beach. Please continue to stay safe and healthy!

Regards Steve Smith, Mayor  
Town of Topsail Beach