



# **SEABROOK FIRE DEPARTMENT**

**87 Centennial Street**

**Seabrook, NH 03874**

**Phone: 603-474-2611 Fax: 603-474-5187**

**seabrooknh.info**



*William J Edwards*  
*Fire Chief*  
*603-474-3880*

*Lawrence "Koko" Perkins*  
*Deputy Fire Chief*  
*603-474-5300*

Date: May 26, 2020

To: William Manzi, Town Manager

From: William J Edwards, Fire Chief

Re: Hampton beach Reopening Traffic Mitigation Plan

Hello Mr. Manzi,

This is the Seabrook Fire Dept Traffic Plan to deal with the reopening of Hampton Beach and the very likely traffic issues the Town of Seabrook will be dealing with. We are anticipating that Rte 1a and Rte 286 will experience heavy traffic backlogs, likely to the state line on both roadways. This is a safety issue for our beach residents in many ways. We will likely see longer than usual response times from Washington Street heading east down Rte 286.

This is something we deal with at "peak" times every summer, usually the July 4th weekend and Labor Day weekend. My fear is with the COVID19 restrictions that have been in place and there being destinations for the public to go, that we will experience these "Peak" traffic jams more frequently and not just around a holiday weekend. I believe with a majority of people still home, not physically going to their place of employment that we may see these "Peaks" on any average or above average temperature day, meaning above 80 degrees, I think we see a rush of people trying to make it to the beach.

How we've dealt with "Peak" traffic in the past is with a Fire Detail, stationed at the Beach Precinct building. We usually would be there from noon to midnight on those holiday weekends. This detail is filled with one Ambulance staffed with two Firefighter/EMTs and one Fire Engine staffed with one Firefighter/EMT. The costs of these details for the OT alone is roughly \$180+/- per hour, or \$2,160+/- per 12 hour block.



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A few of my concerns with these details:

- Frequency, how many days per week would we be utilizing this detail?
- The Fire Detail use of Beach Precinct Building.
- Manpower, with an understaffed department already handling the "normal" volume of calls, an increase in runs will put a strain on the system's abilities.
- Manpower, our department is made up of people who can only perform work for certain periods of time, meaning I have a concern for burn out if these details become frequent. The department can withstand this for a time, but at a point the department will burn out, working the number of hours, consistently with the staffing levels we currently have will run my people down. We run on the ragged edge of burn out each year with the volume of calls we currently have versus the call volume we see, which has increased every year that I've been in this department.
- Do we get reimbursed as a Town for the Detail costs, and if so when? I have some budgetary concerns with this. if we run just weekend details for the summer, beginning June 6th and running through the end of September that is approximately 18 weekends, or \$4,320 per weekend, totalling just under \$80,000 in manpower. That number will likely triple if we run the details on days we anticipate seeing a gridlock of traffic.

I believe this is a serious issue for not only our Beach residents, but our entire community. The likely strain this puts on our system is obvious, that strain will lead to manpower issues becoming prominent, likely increased response times, and a fiscal strain on the Fire Department and Town's overall budget.

I'm not sure what the answer is as these are unprecedented times and we are all trying to work through this in the best way we can. I believe further discussions are necessary. I do believe Seabrook's voice has not been heard at the State level as this traffic issue will fall squarely on our shoulders and I have not seen or been asked by anyone at the state level how this would affect our department's ability to provide our services. I have only been told by local officials that this was what was going to happen.



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I will make myself available for any zoom meetings with the Town Manager and Police Chief to try to work out how Seabrook can deal with this situation as we have throughout this entire COVID19 ordeal.

Respectfully,

William J Edwards  
Fire Chief