

**MINUTES OF SELECTMAN'S MEETING  
TOWN OF GORHAM  
WEDNESDAY, JULY 20, 2016 6:00 PM  
TOWN HALL CONFERENCE ROOM**

Gorham Selectman present: Grace LaPierre, Terry Oliver

Also present: Robin Frost, Town Manager; Sergeant Mark Santos; Chad Miller, EMS Director/Interim Fire Chief; John Scarinza, Building Inspector; Officer Richard McClure; Michael Waddell; Bob Langlands, White Birches Campground; Abbie Evankow; Mike Guay

**1. Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order by Chairman LaPierre at 6:00 pm.

**2. Discussion re. Dry Camping and Parking for Camp RZR Regulations and Public Comment**

A copy of Berlin's City Ordinance for Special Event Camping and parking was distributed to those present.

TM Frost advised that in speaking with the Chamber of Commerce, parking is needed more than camping in Gorham.

Sergeant Santos asked that if any campsites are permitted in town, the police department would like to know where they will be, the layout of the site, and how many will be there in case of an emergency or public safety concern.

Chairman LaPierre advised that the Chamber would rather there not be any dry camping in Gorham, as there is no access to the trails except through Absolute Power Sports on the Berlin-Gorham Road. Chairman LaPierre advised that she had heard Absolute Power Sports did not want others using the trail during the festival.

Chad Miller asked if the trail by Absolute Power Sports was state owned and managed. If it is, it would not be right for a business to restrict access to and from a trail to abutting properties if that trail was built and is maintained by the state. Otherwise there would need to be trails built to each and every business, which would not be practical.

Chairman LaPierre advised the group that she was not in favor of allowing dry camping in Gorham and Selectman Oliver agreed. **A motion was made by Selectman Oliver that at this time, for the two festivals planned, there would be no special permits issued for dry camping. The motion was seconded by Chairman LaPierre, and it was approved by the Board.**

TM Frost advised the group that state law does allow camping on private property.

John Scarinza asked how dry camping complaints would be enforced if any were received. Sergeant Santos also asked where the town would draw the line, and will there be a limit to the number of people allowed on each property. Scarinza advised that violations may be able to be issued under the state law.

Mike Guay advised that it could be enforced with a town ordinance in place. Chairman LaPierre advised that there was not enough time before the ATV Festival for this to be in place. Guay also requested that the public works department put up signs advising people that there is no dry camping allowed,

especially at Walmart. Chairman LaPierre advised that she felt it should be the responsibility of the property owner to post the property, not the town.

Chad Miller asked reference camping at Walmart, that if it is normally allowed for people to overnight there on a regular night, would the town be able to change that rule on just these weekends. Mike Guay advised that there is a difference between overnighing, such as just parking at Walmart for the night, and dry camping. TM Frost will contact the manager at Walmart to see how he feels about the town voting to not allow dry camping for the festival weekends, and possibly voting to not allow it year round.

Bob Langlands shared the NH RSA covering campgrounds, and advised that more than two at a location would be considered a campground per that law. He also advised that any more than two would require the property owner to keep a registration book. Abbie Evankow asked if just one camper would be allowed on each property and TM Frost advised that yes, only one would be allowed, even if the property was large.

Mike Guay asked if someone was charging for the use of their property, would it be considered a commercial business.

Mike Waddell stated that even if a complaint was received, nobody would admit to the exchange of money for the use of the property. He advised that most complaints will probably be about noise, and Officer McClure agreed, stating that the noise ordinance could cover most of those complaints, and the violations could be issued to the property owners. Selectman Oliver stated that if the property owners were fined for violations of the noise ordinance, it would discourage them from renting their property again. Officer McClure also asked if anybody has inquired about permits for dry camping. TM Frost advised that there were no requests, but that property owners in town have been asked if they would be willing to allow camping on their property.

Mike Waddell advised that there are property owners in town who are looking to rent their homes, or their driveways, to people coming for the festival. He advised that this would probably be a bigger issue than dry camping.

Waddell also advised that the camping issue is a gray area, as many families set up tents in their yards for the kids to sleep in, have had family members come and stay in a tent in their yard, or park their camper in their yard, and it has never been enforced before. Also some properties in commercial areas may have camping as a permissible use for the property, but would have to file with the zoning board for a variance to change the use.

John Scarinza asked about the hours for OHRV's on the roads, and was advised that they could operate until 10pm.

Bob Langlands asked Chad Miller about campfires being allowed on properties. Miller advised that the permits would be issued to the landowners. He also advised that more than one campfire would be allowed on each site as long as each fire met the safety regulations. Mike Guay asked about fire lanes being required like they are in Laconia and Miller advised that is a special event and is governed by special regulations.

Chad Miller stated that the town should get the message out to residents advising them of the Board's decision to not allow dry camping. Chairman LaPierre asked if the Chamber was putting out information about the event and TM Frost advised that they are including information about Gorham.

Officer McClure asked if the state would be willing to put up a large sign advising OHRV's that they were not allowed on the Berlin-Gorham Road. TM Frost will check with the state, but feels that most of the resources will be concentrated on Loudon that weekend.

Chad Miller advised that in speaking with the state about personnel available for that weekend, he was told that only the regular patrol units would be available from state police, and only three officers from Fish and Game.

Sergeant Santos advised that some of the trail bikes that are registered in other states as motorcycles can be driven on any roads, as because of the out of state registration, they are considered legal.

The discussion then turned to the issue of parking. TM Frost advised that the ordinance in Berlin allows property owners to park 10 or less vehicles on their property. 11 or more vehicles would require a permit and the site would require a manager and that they post bus stop locations.

Bob Langlands asked if the parking area for more than 10 vehicles would have to approved and TM Frost advised it would be. Sergeant Santos asked about the permit process and who would approve the permits. John Scarinza advised they would be signed by him. Chairman LaPierre stated that there should be no fee for the permit to encourage property owners to apply for them.

Sergeant Santos asked about properties in town that are already being used for overflow parking for the motels. He asked if they would be required to apply for the permits. Several businesses have arrangements with property owners to use their property for parking, such as the Mt Madison Motel, the Top Notch Inn, and the rafting company on Main Street.

Sergeant Santos asked if the permits would need to be posted at the lots and TM Frost advised that copies would be given to the police department.

TM Frost stated that although there were no parking issues during the ATV Festival last year, something should be in place for the RZR event in September. Chairman LaPierre advised that the town will have to see how things go this year and make adjustments as needed for future years.

Sergeant Santos asked if the town would be getting any money from Polaris to help offset costs for the event and TM Frost advised that she did not think so. However, Polaris will be charging \$10 per person for the event, and some of that money may come to the town.

### **3. New Business:**

**a) Sign Abatement Refunds** – Chairman LaPierre and Selectman Oliver signed the abatement refunds that were approved at the June 13 meeting.

### **4. Non-public Session: RSA 91-a:3, IIa**

**On a motion by Chairman LaPierre, seconded by Selectman Oliver, the Board unanimously voted to move to non-public session at 7:35 pm.**

**On a motion by Selectman Oliver, seconded by Chairman LaPierre, the Board unanimously voted to return to public session 8:04 pm.**

**5. Adjournment:** On a motion by Selectman Oliver, seconded by Chairman LaPierre, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 pm.

**REVIEWED AND APPROVED:**

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**Grace LaPierre**

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**Terry Oliver**

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**Patrick Lefebvre**