

# TOWN OF NEW IPSWICH

661 Turnpike Road  
New Ipswich, NH 03071



## BOARD OF SELECTMEN

### DELIVERED VIA EMAIL

August 6, 2020

Leesha Newkirk  
leeshanewkirk@yahoo.com  
The Last Reformation Revival

RE: The Revival Event in New Ipswich on August 14 – 23, 2020

Dear Ms. Newkirk,

This letter contains information regarding the requirements and expectations that New Ipswich has for the revival event referenced above. Our community has serious concerns about the large number of attendees to your event during the COVID-19 pandemic when the State of New Hampshire has advised people that they are safer at home and should not attend large events. While New Ipswich cannot prevent the revival event from occurring, we are providing the following information and requirements that must be complied with:

1. The revival event must comply with the State of New Hampshire's Emergency Order 52's Places of Worship Guidance. That Guidance provides that, while places of worship are encouraged to conduct events online, group events are allowed and outdoor events are recommended over indoor events. In New Hampshire, we consider the large tent or tents your group is using to be a facility under this Guidance.

Your group also must comply with the Places of Worship Guidance, paragraph 3, which requires that:

All places of worship shall limit building occupancy to 50 percent of the building's maximum permitted occupancy level as documented in its occupancy permit on record with the municipal building department or other municipal record holder. However actual occupancy might need to be lower than 50% occupancy in order to comply with social distancing and other guidance contained in these Guidelines. For outdoor services, the maximum number of attendees shall be

the highest number of attendees for which the social distancing requirements contained in this guidance can be met using the space available for the service.

Under New Hampshire law, RSA 155:19, every place of assembly must obtain a permit. Your group is required to obtain a permit for assembly from the New Ipswich Fire Chief. Your group also must comply with other provisions of RSA 155, including RSA 155:20 as your place of assembly is a tent or multiple tents. Your group must comply with the terms of this permit and the Emergency Order 52, Places of Worship Guidance restriction on the number of individuals allowed inside any tent. Fire Chief Lund will determine the occupancy level of any tent that your group erects.

The remaining people attending should be outside of the tent in a number that will allow for maintaining a 6 foot social distance from other non-household members. Additionally, according to the Places of Worship Guidance, under paragraph 4, “[t]he occupant count shall include all persons inside the place of worship, including attendees and staff.”

2. Staff and attendees are recommended to be screened each day prior to entering the worship facility in accordance with paragraph 7 of the Places of Worship Guidance.

3. Hand sanitizer should be made available to attendees, under paragraph 16, and cleaning and disinfecting of all common areas should occur, under paragraph 17.

4. Activities such as close physical contact, handshakes, embraces, and kissing, are discouraged, under paragraph 18. Additionally, singing without masks on can cause a significant spread of droplets to other attendees. If a person has COVID-19 and sings, that individual can spread the virus to many more people. Singing is not recommended.

5. Communal food events, such as coffee hours or sharing meals, are not allowed in accordance with paragraph 18c. And, no childcare is allowed in accordance with paragraph 18b.

6. Under the Places of Worship Guidance, paragraphs 8 - 14, a plan should be developed by your group showing how you will monitor social distancing, different entrances and exits, spacing of chairs to allow people to pass each other safely, one-way traffic flow, schedules to help alleviate crowding, and establishment of areas for lines where social distancing can occur.

7. The Places of Worship Guidance, despite using the word “guidance,” is not a recommendation; it is a regulation issued by the Governor under his statutory authority and is required to be complied with. We have received the following information regarding the legal impact of the emergency guidance from the Attorney General’s Office:

Governor Sununu declared a State of Emergency for the State of New Hampshire, on March 16, 2020, under Executive Order 2020-04, which has been extended several times, most recently under Executive Order 2020-15. The Governor is authorized to declare a state of emergency under RSA 4:45-4:47 and issue necessary orders under those statutes and RSA 21-P, including RSA 21-P:45, which specifically authorizes the issuance of orders by the Governor.

Emergency Order 52, which has been extended under Emergency Order 61, includes the current Places of Worship Guidance, under Exhibit B. Emergency Order 52, paragraph 1, states that “[a]ll businesses or other organizations operating within this State **shall comply with the Universal Business Guidelines** attached hereto as Exhibit A **and any other industry-specific guidelines**

issued by the State of New Hampshire pursuant to or subsequent to this Order....” In accordance with RSA 21-P:47, “[i]f any person violates any order, rule, or regulation made pursuant to this subdivision, such person shall be guilty of a misdemeanor.” Further, Emergency Order 52 states, under paragraph 10, that the Division of Public Health and state and local police have the authority to enforce the Order. (Emphasis added)

8. Under New Hampshire’s Department of Health and Human Services’ Travel Guidance, it is recommended that anyone entering New Hampshire from a non-New England state should self-quarantine before participating in events or society, such as shopping, in New Hampshire. New Ipswich officials understand, based on statements from members of your group, that some of your attendees will be from non-New England states, they do not intend to self-quarantine upon their arrival in New Hampshire, and they will not wear face coverings/masks or social distance while in New Hampshire. This behavior is not recommended under the Universal Business Guidelines, which your group is required to comply with, or the Governor’s executive and emergency orders.


9. New Ipswich officials are also aware that a component part of the revival event is that attendees will disburse throughout the community, and neighboring communities, to spread your faith. We request that your group not follow this practice to occur during the revival event while in New Hampshire. Your attendees are here during a pandemic of a disease, COVID-19, that is highly communicable and easily spread by droplets. By going out into New Hampshire communities, your attendees put New Hampshire citizens at risk for the spread of COVID-19.

10. Finally, we understand that the property owner, Paul Somero, based on public statements from his son, Lars Somero, is providing sanitation and restroom facilities for this revival event and is allowing some individuals to camp on his property. Mr. Somero is responsible for providing for such services and is also responsible for any possible liability for the use of his property.

While New Ipswich is a welcoming community that enjoys community events, these types of events have been canceled this year due to the threat of the spread of COVID-19 and the concern for the health and well-being of our citizens. We request that your group reconsider its decision to come to New Hampshire and risk the health of our communities.

Sincerely,

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

  
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David S. Lage, Chairman  
\_\_\_\_\_  
John Veaser  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Shawn Talbot

cc: Lars Somero, delivered in-hand  
Paul J. Somero, delivered in-hand

Attachments/enclosures:

Executive Orders 2020-04; 2020-15  
Emergency Orders 52; 61  
Exhibits A & B  
Places of Worship Guidance