

May 24, 2009

An Open Letter Concerning Eagle Island Camp

I want to take a few minutes of your time to give you my thoughts about what I experienced at Eagle Island on May 19th. I've now had a couple of days to think about what occurred. It is not my intention to criticize or to cast blame.

It is my belief based on over 23 + years of experience of opening the camp that there is no reason from a property standpoint that the Island cannot be up and operational in time for both Resident Camp and Women's Weekend.

I did state on Wednesday May 19th that the Island was not ready for the Work Weekend, which was scheduled to start in less than 48 hours. That was based on the fact that a pre-operational drinking water sample had not yet been taken and analyzed as per NYSDH law. The information regarding this regulation can be found in the annual NYS Children's Camp Operator's Application and guidelines packet received by Council in early Spring. There were also the additional issues of the power not turned on, the water not turned on, the boats were not in the lake, the sewers not charged and the food had yet to be ordered for the weekend.

However, my primary reason for stating that the Work Weekend needed to be canceled was the lack of a pre-operational analyzed drinking water sample.

I would like to address what I saw at EIC:

The boats: I understand Dick Rule has been contacted. That means all of the boats will be ready to go very shortly, and I am sure council will follow up with Dick. The issue of having enough PV operators is a separate concern.

The power: The line that services Adirondack / Islanders is down. It is not unusual for this to happen over the course of the winter. I cleared the line and restrung it, and even replaced poles, by myself many times over the years. This task, even with replacing a pole, should take no more than 6 - 8 hours. In addition, that line can be isolated and power restored to the rest of camp.

And I saw no reason why the power cannot be turned on right now to Main Camp, the Service Dock, Pump House, Boathouse, Lakeside and the Waterfront.

In places the power line is attached to trees. That is correct. When the line was put in it met the code standards of the time, which still apply. Remember the electricians who were brought over to the Island are in business to make money. And I stopped using that particular company years ago because I was unsatisfied with the quality of their work. In places the line is held to poles with nylon rope attached to the carrying wire. That is correct. You need to get the line back up in the air before you can reattach it.

The sewers: It should take no more than 3 - 4 hours to reconnect and charge the sewers. There is no reason to assume that they will not function correctly.

The propane: I believe that there is enough propane on the Island to operate for about 7 - 10 days, maybe longer, maybe not. I would reorder some and get a delivery as soon as possible. There is no reason to assume the lines will not function or that the stoves and hot water heaters will not operate.

The truck: The battery was disconnected last fall. It probably just needs to be reconnected or charged. The booster/trickle charger is in the shop.

The water: The water will take a bit of time. Reconnecting all of the lines does take some time; maybe 2 full days. Once the water is being sent to the water tower it will take about 5 - 7 days for the wooden slats in the barrel to swell tight and stop leaking. However, you do not need to wait until the tower has stopped leaking to recharge the waterlines at the camp. There are no doubt breaks in the waterlines. There always were every year. But even in the worst of years it took no longer than 3 - 4 days to find and repair all of the leaks, even when it meant digging up the line under the road to find the leak. And there is enough chlorine in the pump house to restart the chlorination pump and so safely operate the water system; which means there is enough time to have a sample taken, analyzed and approved prior to people coming onto the Island.

The debris on the roofs, roads and paths is the common after every winter build up. Boats are still suspended in the slips and junk has blown into the buildings, grass has not been cut, pollen, fallen branches and dead leaves are all over the place. Someone has to remove all of that so that the camp looks clean and neat. What I saw on May 19th is the way I always saw the camp on April 15th. Well, winters are long and hard in the Adirondacks and no one has yet to clean everything up so of course things don't look their best.

I have the impression that folks in New Jersey had thought that all that was needed to open the camp was for someone to come in, flip a few switches and things would be good to go. And while it is not my intention to sound condescending or trite perhaps that is the way the camps work in New Jersey. Unfortunately, that is not the case with Eagle Island. I do not say these things to be malicious or to seek out scapegoats. These are just my observations.

The council has copies of the "*Opening and Closing Procedure Checklist*", copies of all of my "*Quarterly Management Reports*" from the last few years and now the only known copy of the "*Emergency Turn-Off Manual*". With those documents any competent full-time Camp Ranger, Caretaker or live-at-the-facility Property Manager would be able to get the camp open in time for Resident Camp and Women's Weekend. And, as I have said, I am always happy to talk to anyone who calls. It would be tough, the work would be hard and the days would be long but someone with the right attitude and technical skills could meet that challenge.

Sincerely,


Pete Benson