



Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of March 13, 2017

Report covers from February 25 to March 10, 2017

Items requiring Board vote or discussion are noted with an asterisk (*)

A. Town Department Reports/Requests

(1) Senior Van Grant - Utilization and Maintenance/Future Use of Van

At the last meeting, the Council on Aging commented to the Board that MassDOT personnel were contemplating whether Essex could keep the senior van that has been operated as part of a Federal grant starting about seven years ago. The Town's ridership numbers have been low in some past years and MassDOT may have the ability to take the van back as a resource to allocate elsewhere if ridership does not increase. The present Council members are committed to additional utilization.

I contacted Mr. Steve Winslow, director of the Mass in Motion – Cape Ann grant that we participate in on a regional basis. Mr. Winslow is in a position to comment to the necessary parties how important the van will be to the Town's growing senior population, vastly improving senior mobility and health in the future. He will inquire on behalf of the Town once the Council on Aging identifies the specific parties who need to be contacted.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

B. Computer Systems

(1) Potential Future Switch to Melrose as Internet Service Provider

Presently, each of our municipal buildings has its own Comcast high-speed Internet drop that we use to interconnect the buildings via a virtual private network (VPN). The VPN gets traffic to and from Town Hall, where a dedicated MPLS fiber circuit connects us to the City of Melrose's datacenter. For zero-client users, the desktop server in Melrose is presently pulling its Internet connectivity from Essex Town Hall. It would be more advantageous to allow that traffic to hit the Internet directly at Melrose, to eliminate redundant transit. Also, in the future, we hope to have a municipal fiber ring that replaces the VPN system. In that case, even PC users who are relying on local Internet drops for service could use the single, Melrose signal without latency (since everything would be via fiber from any building all the way back to Melrose).

Melrose has proposed to provide us Internet Connectivity directly at Melrose, which will improve the experience for zero-client users and could eventually eliminate the need to pay for individual drops at all of our buildings (since the new fiber ring would take care of that). Also, using Melrose as an ISP would

provide us access to their sophisticated, next generation firewall equipment that is very effective at eliminating and keeping up with a variety of evolving threats. The cost for service would be similar to what we now pay for a single drop and, of course, eliminating local drops cannot occur until a fiber ring is built, hopefully with funds from the new cable contract. This new service will not be available right away, but Melrose has committed to make progress toward offering it.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(2) Renewal of Anti-virus Software Licenses

I renewed the subject software and have installed licensing for 30 users during the week of March 6, 2017. Additional seats are renewed later in the year.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary. Total time – ½ hour.

C. Personnel

(1) Recommendation of the Fiscal Year 2018 Wage & Salary Scale

Each year at this time, the Selectmen vote to recommend to Town Meeting a revised Wage & Salary Scale for all non-union, non-contract employees. I have developed a draft document for the Board's consideration that includes a two-percent cost of living allowance.

Recommendation: Board vote to recommend the fiscal year 2018 Wage & Salary Scale in accordance with the posted agenda.

(2) Employee Policy Webinar

I participated in a webinar offered by our insurer on March 8, 2017 concerning the essential elements of employee policies. Given that the Town has union, non-union, and contract employees, policies appear in different documents and agreements. To date, we have used a web-based system to refresh employees about various requirements and responsibilities on an annual basis. I plan to compare the system we have in place to some of the suggestions made in the webinar.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects

(1) Town Hall/Library Renovation Project Weekly Meetings

I attended the subject meetings on March 1 and 8, 2017. The contractor is presently making significant progress on interior finish work. For example, flooring is being installed and much of the interior wall and trim painting has been completed. Most doors have been hung and work on the clock faces (happening

off site) is proceeding well. The finished look of the project is rapidly coming into focus.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(2) Change Order for Town Hall Weathervane Support Rod (*)

The main support rod for the Town Hall's historic weathervane was originally constructed in cast iron. However, the rod was found to be severely weathered during the design process and replacement will be required, using a different steel alloy than originally specified. This change in material will cost around \$200 (with an exact figure to be provided at meeting time). The base bid is covering the full restoration of the weathervane, including the reproduction of some elements that have weathered beyond repair or restoration.

Recommendation: **Board approval of the weathervane rod change order.**

(3) Change Order to Standardize Interior Trim, Second Floor, Town Hall (*)

As discussed at the last meeting, the type of trim in the various, second-floor offices varied between offices and even within an office. As such, the Board favored the standardization of the trim as part of the project. This change order carries a cost of \$4,202.

Recommendation: **Board approval of the interior trim standardization change order.**

(4) Change Order to Install Skirt Board, New Town Hall Egress Stairs (*)

As discussed at the last meeting, the vertical edge of the new, Town Hall egress stairway was originally specified to be finished with a plaster skim coat. However, concern about that material eventually cracking, due to stairway vibration, and for an improvement in overall aesthetics, the Board favored the installation of skirt boards in that area, at a cost of \$1,290.

Recommendation: **Board approval of the skirt board change order.**

(5) Change Order to Refinish First-to-Second Floor Stair Run, Town Hall (*)

As discussed at the last meeting, the base project only provides for light sanding and repainting of the stair run from the first to the second floor in Town Hall. This specification was included to keep costs down. Now that the end of the project is approaching and sufficient contingency is known to exist, it would be preferable to match this section of stairway with the rest of the stairway and with the flooring on all levels, which will all be clear, sealed wood. The Board favored making this change, especially since this stair run is a major feature as one enters the building. The cost will be \$4,802.

Recommendation: **Board approval of the stair run refinishing change order.**

(6) Final Cost to Construct Storage Areas on Third Floor of Town Hall (*)

For two meetings, the Board has discussed the importance of using otherwise hollow areas behind walls in the new, third-floor auditorium as storage areas. At the last meeting, I reported that our architect was working with our contractor to apply unit pricing to some of the necessary work, which was expected to bring the cost closer to the target of \$7,500. We will have a final figure by meeting time.

Recommendation: **Board approval of the third-floor storage area change order.**

(7) Change Order to Finalize Town Hall Clock Face Lighting Arrangement (*)

At the last meeting, the Board reviewed a variety of options for lighting the Town Hall clock faces at night. The base project carries an allowance of \$500 per face and any option selected that carries a higher cost must be approved as a change order. The Board agreed with the Historical Commission Chairman's suggestion that the clock faces should be lit from the protruding decorative detail that sits under each clock face. Our contractor is pricing that solution and we may have that information by meeting time.

Recommendation: **Board approval of the clock face lighting change order.**

(8) Change Order to Cover Town Hall PVC Vent Pipes (*)

The new, high-efficiency natural gas heating system in the basement of Town Hall is vented through and draws fresh air from the chimney, via PVC piping. These pipes are not aesthetically pleasing and the recommended solution is to place a copper cover over them. We expect to have a final price on this work by meeting time.

Recommendation: **Board approval of this copper cap change order.**

(9) Flow Switch, Heater, Elevator Electrical Change Order Official Approvals (*)

At the last meeting, the Board discussed at length the need to approve a sprinkler system flow switch, component, and wiring change order in the amount of \$4,607; a vault in-line heater change order in the amount of \$4,397, and a miscellaneous elevator electrical change order in the amount of \$3,392. All of these have now been officially prepared by our contractor and architect for approval.

Recommendation: **Board approval of the above-described change orders.**

(10) Commencement of N. Conomo Point Public Waterfront Access Project (*)

The Board awarded the contract for the Northern Conomo Point Public Water Front Access Improvement project to Campbell Construction Group, LLC at the last meeting. The company has since signed the necessary contract and has commenced work. To date, I have begun to work with abutters to the parking lot with respect to the final location and makeup of the planned hedgerows; I met

with the contractor and the Conservation Agent on site to go over environmental compliance expectations on March 9, 2017; and we held the pre-construction conference among our designer, our structural engineer, the contractor, and myself on March 10, 2017. We expect work to begin during the week of March 20, 2017 and to be completed by our original target date of May 25, 2017 (in advance of the Memorial Day Weekend).

Also, I asked the contractor whether he would honor the bid alternate for granite curbing at the parking lot site as a possible, eventual change order. The cost as a bid alternate was \$7,500 and the contractor is considering that possibility.

Recommendation: Board discussion relative to a potential change order to install granite curbing at the parking lot site.

E. Insurance

(1) Monthly Pothole Log

I obtained from the DPW the pothole log for the month of February. One pothole was reported and was promptly repaired.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Quarterly Safety Committee Meeting

The subject meeting will be held on March 23, 2017 and I have placed a draft agenda in the Board's reading file.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

F. Facilities

(1) Disposition of Temporary Office and Old Town Hall/Library Furniture (*)

In order to operate from our temporary Town Hall and Library facilities since January of 2016, we purchased temporary office furniture for just over \$3,800. Also, when we return to the renovated building, most of the furniture that we have in storage will be replaced by new furniture. As such, it will be necessary to dispose of both the temporary furniture and the old building furniture. One potential avenue is for other Town departments and/or the School District to take these items for their own use. Additionally, the furniture could be offered to other municipalities. Other options include having the temporary furniture picked up by the vendor that sold it to us (likely for no compensation) or offering both the temporary furniture and the old furniture to the public, placing a nominal, minimum price on each piece. The temporary office furniture must be disposed of by the end of May and the old Town Hall furniture by the end of June.

Recommendation: Board discussion relative to the disposition of these items.

(2) Demolition of Structures and 4 and 8 Conomo Lane

Our demolition contractor is set to begin work to demolish two former dwellings and a small garage at 4 and 8 Conomo Lane in late March or early April. All permits are in place and I have worked with the Superintendent of Public Works to line up dumpster service and with the Fire Chief to line up the tanker truck for dust control. All work must be completed prior to April 15, 2017.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(3) Replacement of Senior Center Generator (*)

At the last meeting, the Board discussed with the Council on Aging and the Finance Committee the need to replace the present generator at the Senior Center with a new unit. As such, I visited the site with three different vendors and have collected cost information on the replacement. Also, I learned that a company may be in a position to donate a newer, used generator to the Center. However, I am told that doing so may sometimes create problems with emissions rules and may sometimes just trade existing operational problems for new ones.

I have begun to discuss the matter with our electrical inspector and he is considering whether the new unit can be placed in the existing location. Under that scenario, the exhaust stack will need to be extended upward, so it clears the building's roof line.

Recommendation: **Board discussion relative to the preferred pathway for replacement.**

G. Fiscal/Budget

(1) School District Budget Group Meeting (*)

I attended the subject meeting on February 28, 2017 along with officials from Manchester and the Manchester Essex Regional School District. The meeting featured discussion relative to the emergency replacement/repair of the Memorial School boilers, status of the Memorial School replacement project, the repair of the Lincoln Street footbridge, and a long-term operating and capital budget planning meeting to be held in May.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(2) Senator Tarr's Annual Call for Municipal Funding Priorities

Around this time each year, Senator Tarr's office asks municipalities in the district for funding priorities for the upcoming fiscal year. This year, I highlighted the need for assistance with our police and fire building project, coastal resiliency, environmental assessment of the Allen property, increased local aid, and increased Chapter 70 aid.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

H. Complaints

None.

I. Meetings Attended

(1) Marijuana Regulation and Taxation Law Informational Meeting Summary(*)

I attended the subject meeting with the Board on March 6, 2017. A presentation was offered by Town Counsel and members of the Board of Health and Police Department were also in attendance. Town Counsel provided a good summary of the new law and how the various implementation dates have been pushed back. The new law will affect law enforcement policy, personnel management policy, and, potentially, even local zoning law. The existing law is going to be subject to many amendments in this session of the Massachusetts Legislature and in the next legislative session. Also, the new Cannabis Control Commission has yet to promulgate regulations that will help interpret and administer the law.

With respect to zoning, one of the options available to communities right now is to adopt a moratorium through June 30, 2018. In Essex, that would allow the State to release its final regulations between this May and next May's Town meeting, so that informed action could be taken, if desired, in 2018. The Town Meeting article would require a public hearing hosted by the Planning Board, which would tentatively take place on April 5, 2017. Further, it is possible to receive local tax from any establishment that does open up. I have placed examples of how these possible steps could be taken, if desired, in the draft Annual Town Meeting Warrant.

Recommendation: **Board discussion relative to any steps that the Board desires to take at this time.**

(2) Town Building Committee Meeting Summary (*)

I attended the subject meeting on March 8, 2017, along with Chairman O'Donnell, who also chairs the Building Committee. The Committee discussed our engineer's most recent update to site planning that would renovate the existing fire and police station into a police-only facility and that would construct a new fire-only facility between the existing building and Town Hall. At the Selectmen's last meeting, the Selectmen and the Finance Committee had agreed that this would be a reasonable approach to pursue.

At the Building Committee meeting, the Superintendent of Public Works and two members of the Board of Public Works (BPW) joined the conversation, along with one member of the Historical Commission. The BPW must be involved in this process since Memorial Park is in their care and custody and the project will

require reconfiguration of the park. Generally, it appears that the BPW will approve of a scenario that puts the new fire building immediately adjacent to the Town Hall side of Shepard Memorial Drive, keeping its footprint as small as possible. Relative to historical considerations, it appears as if some are concerned about how the mass of the new building will appear against the landscape and against the view of the recently-restored Town Hall/Library building. Our engineer is in the process of developing a planning-level budget for this additional scenario.

Recommendation: **Board discussion with the Finance Committee regarding this topic.**

J. Final Judgment

No items.

K. Town Meeting, By-Laws, and Regulations

(1) Review of Revised Draft Annual Town Meeting Warrant (*)
I have revised the draft Annual Town Meeting Warrant in accordance with the Selectmen's and the Finance Committee's discussion at the last meeting. The warrant will be signed by the Selectmen at the next meeting on March 27, 2017.

Recommendation: **Board finalization of the Annual Town Meeting warrant.**

L. Legal Issues

(1) Successor Cable Television Franchise License, Comcast (*)
At the last meeting, the Board discussed potential terms for the negotiation of a successor license with Comcast. The Board was in agreement that one goal of the contract should be to provide the Town with funding for a fiber optic municipal area network (FMAN) to replace the now-obsolete Institutional Network (known as the Cable I-Net). On March 3, 2017, I again participated in the Cape Ann Regional Cable Advisory Committee meeting and we are awaiting word from Comcast as to the status of that discussion.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary, if more information is available by meeting time.**

M. Grants

(1) Green Communities Grant Annual Call for Proposals/Application (*)
Now that the Town's initial Green Communities Grant (energy efficiency improvements to the Town Hall/Library) has been spent and closed out, the Town is eligible to compete for additional funding on an annual basis. This year's

annual proposal round was due by March 3, 2017 and Town Planner Matt Coogan submitted a proposal that will replace the boiler in the Water Filtration Plant and will accomplish three energy efficiency upgrades in the Essex Elementary School. We will learn about the status of funding later this spring.

Recommendation: Board ratification of the Chairman's signature of the Town's application.

(2) Letter of Support for NOAA Coastal Resilience Grant Program (*)

The National Wildlife Federation and the Ipswich River Watershed Association would once again like to partner with the Great Marsh communities as well as inland communities in the Great Marsh watershed on a significant Federal grant. The applicants have submitted a grant application which, among other things, will enhance the ability of communities in our region to actually implement climate change and sea level rise mitigation projects. The deadline for the grant required the Chairman to sign a letter of support in advance of the present meeting.

Recommendation: Board vote to ratify the Chairman's signature of a letter of support for the grant application.

N. Emergency Planning

No items.

O. Other Items

No items.

This report is available at www.essexma.org on the morning after any regularly scheduled Essex Board of Selectmen's Meeting.