



## Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of July 17, 2017

Report covers from June 24 to July 14, 2017

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

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### A. Town Department Reports/Requests

#### (1) Formation of Economic Development Committee (\*)

At the last meeting, the Board agreed that input from both the Essex Merchants' Group and the Essex Division of the Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce would be important before continuing planning for the assembly of a new Economic Development Committee. The Town Planner met with the Merchants' Group on June 28, 2017 and I met with the Chamber on June 30, 2017. The Planner also developed a memo updating the recommendation of the Strategic Planning Committee (summarizing the Committee's discussion from its meeting of June 12, 2017).

Both the Merchants' Group and the Chamber were very supportive of the EDC concept and were pleased that four members of the local business community will be included on the Committee. I discussed how the EDC should be something that strives to help both the Town and the business community. One major benefit to the Town will be in the area of infrastructure, since many economic development grants fund infrastructure improvements to promote economic growth that also helps local residents without requiring tax dollars.

**Recommendation: Board discussion relative to populating the new Committee.**

#### (2) Reconstitution of Essex Youth Commission (\*)

At the last meeting, the Board discussed several possible candidates for appointment to the Essex Youth Commission. It is possible to reconstitute the Commission, with the Commission's first order of business being the development of a position description for a Youth Director or Youth Program Coordinator. Thereafter, the Commission would conduct a search for a suitable candidate who could then begin implementation of programs. After sending a reminder to those who had expressed initial interest, plus to two others that had been recommended, a pool of at least four interested candidates now exists and it is possible that the number will be at five or more by meeting time.

**Recommendation: Board discussion relative to potential appointments to the Youth Commission.**

(3) Oyster Reef Research in Essex Bay

(\*)

The Shellfish Constable hosted a meeting on July 13, 2017 involving the Harbormaster, Mike DeRosa from DeRosa Environmental, graduate student Alison Frye of Northeastern University, and myself. The meeting concerned research that Mr. DeRosa and Ms. Frye are collaborating on to determine how creating oyster reefs might be beneficial to Essex Bay. First, the question of where the oysters may grow best in our system will be addressed. Then, it will be possible to determine if the creation of oyster reefs could help absorb tidal and storm energy from the mouth of the Essex River that is presently degrading the salt marsh.

As the Board may recall, the Army Corps of Engineers is presently conducting a study relative to how various mitigation techniques may help the Town to become more resilient to sea level rise and storms in the future by using “green” elements in our own river system. This oyster propagation research will feed directly into that study, as one possible option and may also provide a harvestable, renewable resources one day. The team will be working with the Conservation Commission, the Harbormaster, and the Shellfish Constable directly to properly situate the study gear and I have introduced the team to Army Corps personnel.

*Recommendation:* **Board discussion relative to this proposed project.**

**B. Computer Systems**

(1) Workstations for Building Inspector and Shellfish Constable

In the pre-renovation Town Hall, wiring and lack of space prevented a good computer workstation solution for the Building Inspector and the Shellfish Constable did not have an office or a workstation. I have now set up workstations for both employees at their own desks and have provided the Shellfish Constable with an orientation relative to our system.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary. Total time – 2 hours.

(2) Replacement of RAID Controller Battery

A battery that supplies power to the RAID controller in one of our older servers failed recently. However, I was able to take that necessary part from an identical server that had been taken off line in the past and the situation has been corrected. The failure did not affect the operation of the server but could have become an issue under certain circumstances.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary. Total time – 1 hour.

## C. Personnel

### (1) Safety Committee Meeting

I attended the subject meeting on June 29, 2017. The meeting featured a discussion relative to formulating new safety goals for the upcoming fiscal year. Generally, the group wants to focus on additional vehicle driver safety programs and perhaps bloodborne pathogen protection training.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

### (2) Review of Workplan and Scale Replacement with Shellfish Constable

At the last meeting, the Board reviewed a past iteration of a work plan aimed at focusing the activities of the Shellfish Constable toward matters of importance to the Board. At the Board's request, I went back over the work plan with the Constable and he will rejuvenate efforts to focus his work back toward this plan. We also reviewed the status of the shellfish scale and we determined that a loose battery problem was the source of recent scale inoperability. After installing fresh batteries and securing them with tape, the scale appears to be functioning very well.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

## D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects

### (1) Final Analysis of Street Light Purchase by National Grid

As the Board may recall, National Grid was asked to inventory and provide a final purchase price for the Town's potential purchase of all Grid-owned streetlights back on May 15, 2017. Recently, I received an update from the utility concerning that process and we are still in the queue, with others ahead of us.

*Recommendation:* I will update the Board as necessary.

### (2) Senior Center Generator Replacement

The new generator for the Senior Center was set in place during the week of July 3, 2017. Presently, our electrical contractor and our plumbing contractor are making the necessary connections and the generator vendor will return to the site to actually start up and balance the new system.

*Recommendation:* I will update the Board as necessary.

### (3) Further Discussion of Final Town Hall/Library Renovation Change Orders (\*)

We have now received pricing for the final two potential changes orders for the Town Hall/Library renovation project. The upgrade of the Library exterior lighting came in at \$1,347.11 and the additional power outlets and data drops for the Library came in at \$1,062.15. Reviewing these figures against other needs and

the available remaining funds, it is evident that the Library lighting and wiring will both be possible, along with the clock tower ladder reinforcement (\$1,800), the replacement of the Library ramp lattice (\$3,916), and the repainting of the bulkhead (\$970) – after all of which, available funds will be reduced to \$3,052. The Board should consider whether the bulkhead really needs repainting, just to exactly match a color, since it is already painted in a brown tone.

**Recommendation: Board consideration and approval of these final change orders.**

(4) Further Review of Scope of Services, Centennial Grove Master Plan (\*)

At the last meeting, the Board discussed a list of items that need to be included in the scope of services that will be found in a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a planner to develop a Master Plan for the Centennial Grove. The Board will add several of its own points, in addition to a list of items that are of importance to the Finance Committee. Once I have the complete picture, I will incorporate the scope into a formal Request for Proposals for final review by the Board and the Finance Committee.

**Recommendation: Board discussion and finalization of RFP scope of services.**

(5) Consideration of Future Fixed-Price Electricity Supply Rate (\*)

Presently, the Town has a fixed electricity supply cost of 5.719 cents per kWh via Constellation Energy, the energy provider under the Massachusetts Municipal Association's MunEnergy Program. Added to that cost are various taxes and Federal passthroughs, along with a factor for the repayment of energy efficient lighting upgrade costs in our municipal buildings a few years back. The present contract began in December of 2014 and goes through December of 2019.

Presently, it is possible to purchase power starting in December of 2019 and running through December of 2022 at 4.762 center per kWh, which represents a five-year low. As such, our supplier has recommended that we look into locking in future years now. The price dip is due to two mild winters in a row and an increase in natural gas production (electricity costs track natural gas costs). However, it would be unusual to have three mild winters in a row and natural gas exportation may start to escalate its cost, due to a lower supply.

**Recommendation: Board discussion relative to potentially locking future years with Constellation.**

## **E. Insurance**

No items.

## **F. Facilities**

### (1) Grand Re-Opening Ceremony for Town Hall and Library

I attended the subject ceremony, which included a formal ribbon cutting, on June 24, 2017. Various Town officials and other dignitaries were present and tours of the building and refreshments were offered thereafter. Ms. Becky Axelrod performed a song that was to have been sung at the original dedication of the building, in 1894, but for the murder of the woman who was going to sing just a few days before the ceremony. Senator Bruce Tarr presented a Senate and a Governor's citation and Representative Anne-Margaret Ferrante was also on hand to offer greetings and remarks.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

### (2) Placement of Sand at Clammers' Beach

The Department of Public Works placed new sand at Clammers' Beach (above the high water mark) during the week of June 19, 2017. The project was applied for through and permitted by the Essex Conservation Commission, after I developed the necessary application materials. We are awaiting a Certificate of Compliance from the Commission and we will record the Order of Conditions along with it, at the Registry of Deeds, when available. Special thanks goes to the DPW for getting this project accomplished prior the Independence Day Holiday week.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

### (3) Installation of Solar Shades in Library and Town Offices

Solar shades were installed in all south-facing offices and on the south side of the Library during the week of June 26, 2017. The sun is very bright and tends to heat up those locations, especially during the summer months. The furnishings budget was utilized for this work.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

### (4) Fiber Optic Municipal Area Network (FMAN) Update (\*)

As the Board may recall, Town Counsel was in the process of recommending various revisions to a standard agreement that Verizon desired the Town to sign in order to install our new FMAN. Counsel completed his work and I provided the proposal to Verizon for review. The Verizon representative was apprehensive and indicated that the utility wanted the agreement to remain very close to its original version. I explained that the Town is not inclined to relinquish our existing rights to hang wires on poles after more than a century in favor of a completely new, utility-drafted agreement. Instead, we would like our age-old rights acknowledged as part of the agreement. I have been told that the matter is under review by Verizon's regulatory group and I also reached out to the municipal liaison at Verizon for additional assistance.

National Grid has still not contacted the Town in response to the Selectmen's May letter informing that utility that we would be installing the FMAN. As such, after reaching out to the appropriate contact and still receiving no response, I forwarded the matter to National Grid's municipal liaison for further assistance.

*Recommendation:* **Board discussion as necessary.**

(5) Discontinuation of Flood Lights in Front of Town Hall/Library

At the last meeting, the Board agreed that the use of two utility-owned flood lights in front of the Town Hall and Library should be permanently discontinued. Since these lights are part of the inventory of lights that the Town has asked to purchase from National Grid (in favor of an eventual LED lamp project), I contacted National Grid to determine how the lights could be physically removed, so that the Town does not end up purchasing them. The removal of the lights has been assigned a tracking number by National Grid and we can expect both lights to be taken down in the near future.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

(6) Measures to Improve Driver Safety Near 105 Eastern Avenue

At the last meeting, the Board agreed that I should approach officials at the Massachusetts Department of Transportation to request certain work to be done along the State Highway near 105 Eastern Avenue. A series of curve warning arrows exists going in either direction in this area but the signs are old and faded, with no remaining reflective capacity. Also, trees and vegetation have grown out into the State Highway right of way, blocking signage and sight lines. I contacted personnel in the DOT Maintenance Division to request this work and I understand that most of it has already been accomplished, with plans to look at some additional tree trimming work in the future.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

(7) Suggestions for Memorial Bench Donation at Conomo Point Park (\*)

As requested by the Board, I contacted Ms. Nina Fletcher regarding the Board's suggestion that future memorial benches at Conomo Point adhere to a standard style/model, with a seatback, to be placed along the semi-circular border at the new Conomo Point Park. Also, I have learned that the Wendell family is interested in donating a new memorial bench at the park, in memory of Dorothea Wendell. Ms. Fletcher and the Wendell family have been in touch with me and I have recommended they look at the commercial benches that were placed along the Essex causeway a few years back. I am awaiting their feedback.

*Recommendation:* **Board discussion as necessary.**

(8) Development of Policy for Dinghy Tie-up to New Conomo Point Float (\*)

The new ramp and float at the new Conomo Point Park will be put in place early during the week of July 17, 2017. As such, it is necessary for the Board to determine rules for use of the float. For the time being, the Harbormaster has issued an order prohibiting unattended tie-up (essentially only allowing pick-up and drop-off) and signs to that effect will be placed on the float immediately. Per the Board's past discussion, portions of the float may be suitable for dinghy tie-up for certain mooring holders who get to their moorings via rowboat (as opposed to motorized skiff). The Board will conduct a site visit soon to review the situation before making final rules.

Considerations for tie-up rules, which may be included in the Harbormaster's Harbor Regulations, include the following:

- Will the tie-up privilege be for residents only?
- What is the maximum number of dinghies that can tie up to the float?
- Will at least one face of the float be kept clear at all times for loading/unloading of other boats?
- What will be the maximum "length overall" (LOA) for a dinghy to qualify for tie-up at the float?
- Will tie-up privileges be for dinghies that are rowed only (i.e. never have an outboard motor attached)?
- Will tie-up privileges be for mooring holders only?
- Will a fee be charged?
- What type of decal will need to be displayed on a dinghy that is registered by its owner for tie-up privileges?
- Should any type of signage be posted, including signage prohibiting tie-up to the park railing itself?

***Recommendation:* Board discussion relative to how this program should be developed and implemented.**

(9) Update on Possible Use of Centennial Grove for Rowing Programs

As the Board may recall, I had reached out to Gordon College, Endicott College, and the Pingree School, at the Board's request, to determine what these schools could provide the Town in exchange for possible use of the Centennial Grove cottage area for school rowing programs. The three schools had contacted the Town in the past with interest in developing some sort of arrangement and Endicott actually had a license with the Town in the past for this purpose.

I have received more information about the schools' positions on the matter through the Athletic Director at Gordon College. Presently, all three schools are still enjoying an arrangement with the owner of the former Camp Menorah property and may not have a reason to move to the Grove. However, the schools

do view the Grove property as a more ideal fit for their programs and may be in touch in the future if the situation changes.

*Recommendation:* I will update the Board as necessary.

(10) Repair of Cracks and Scour on Original Conomo Point Park Seawall (\*)

Although new seawalls were poured on top of the original seawalls that bound the new Conomo Point Park at 153 Conomo Point Road, the original walls have some minor cracking and scouring issues that should be dealt with. These issues will only become worse in the future and addressing them now will prevent any potential for wall failure for many years to come. Local mason Mark Haskell has provided a quotation for cleaning all of the areas in question and filling them in with an appropriate compound, at a total cost of \$2,500.

*Recommendation:* **Board approval of this repair work.**

(11) Hanging of Historic Essex Railroad Sign in Town Hall

As the Board may recall, Ken and Sandy Monroe recently donated to the Town an historic sign that once hung at one of the two Essex railroad stations. The Selectmen's Assistant created a small, framed statement that acknowledges the Monroe's donation and Mr. James Witham assisted me with hanging the actual sign above the double doors leading to the Town Clerk's office. Mr. Witham also recently helped us with another small project in Town Hall and we thank him for this volunteer assistance.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

**G. Fiscal/Budget**

(1) Planning for July Capital Budget Planning Meeting, School District/Towns

On July 12, 2017, I met with Superintendent Pam Beaudoin, Asst. Superintendent Avi Urbas, and Manchester Town Administrator Greg Federspiel to discuss the organization of future long-range operational and capital budget planning sessions. As the Board may recall, on May 30, 2017, a joint meeting of officials from all three entities asked us to look at the capital piece first, in an August/Sept timeframe.

However, the Manchester Finance Committee subsequently requested that we look at the operational piece first, since Manchester may try to issue a portion of the Memorial School debt within its levy limit. Also, Mr. Urbas informed us that, within three or four months, he will have much better estimates on the actual cost of the project. As such, it would be much more productive to move the capital meeting back to an Oct/Nov timeframe, when better-vetted (although not final) figures are available.

We resolved to convene the small collaboration group on September 8, 2017 to go over how the long-range operational budgets for the three entities should be presented and for general discussion. The actual operations presentation will occur on Wednesday, September 13 at the High School at 7:00 p.m. The same large group that attended the May 30 meeting will re-convene on the 13th.

*Recommendation:* I will update the Board as necessary.

## **H. Complaints**

No items.

## **I. Meetings Attended**

### (1) Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce Essex Division Meeting

I attended the subject meeting on June 30, 2017, along with Selectman Spinney. At the meeting, I provided the Chamber with an update on plans for the formation of an Essex Economic Development Committee. Town Planner Matt Coogan had attended the Essex Merchants' Group meeting earlier in the week and he and I both collected input from the business community relative to the concept. I also updated the group on a variety of ongoing Town projects and initiatives, including the rejuvenation of a staffed Youth Commission, which will help the business community continue to run events like the Holiday Festival.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

## **J. Final Judgment**

No items.

## **K. Town Meeting, By-Laws, and Regulations**

### (1) Institution of Late Fees for Commercial Clamming Licenses

At the last meeting, the Board voted to institute a \$200 late fee for a regular commercial clamming license and a \$100 late fee for a student commercial clamming license if applications for such licenses are received after the annual deadline for the upcoming season (first Monday in March for the season running from April 1 through March 31). This change will translate to a total fee of \$500 for a late, regular commercial license and a total fee of \$250 for a late, student commercial license. I made the necessary changes to the regulations and the Selectmen's Assistant has made all necessary filing arrangements for an effective date of August 1, 2017.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

## **L. Legal Issues**

### (1) Quarterly Review of Executive Session Minutes

The Chairman has reviewed the Board's executive session minutes, as is the case each quarter. No minutes were identified for release at this time.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

## **M. Grants**

### (1) Cape Ann TV Grant Letter of Support

The Executive Director of Cape Ann TV is applying for grant funding through the Cape Ann Community Foundation for assistance with a film project entitled: *Cape Ann 2027, Spirit of Innovation*. The project is expected to be a powerful promotional tool for our area and it will be coordinated with the Essex Merchants' Group, which has the contract for promotion of Town resources. I provided the Executive Director with a general letter of support for the project.

*Recommendation:* I will update the Board as necessary.

## **N. Emergency Planning**

No items.

## **O. Other Items**

### (1) Independence Day Holiday

The office was closed on July 4, 2017, in observance of the subject holiday.

### (1) Town Administrator Vacation Leave

I was out of the office on vacation leave for the entire week of July 3, 2017.

*This report is available at [www.essexma.org](http://www.essexma.org) on the morning after any regularly scheduled Essex Board of Selectmen's Meeting.*