



Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of August 28, 2017

Report covers from August 12 to August 25, 2017

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

A. Town Department Reports/Requests

No items.

B. Computer Systems

(1) Setup and Configuration of Two Additional Workstations

The Assessors' Office had need for an additional workstation and the Treasurer/Collector will soon be bringing a part-time Assistant Treasurer/Collector on board. Both offices were designed for this expansion and I set up and configured new workstations in each office.

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

C. Personnel

(1) Safety Committee Meeting

The Safety Committee will meet on September 21, 2017. I have placed a draft agenda in the Board's reading folder.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects

(1) Contract for Visual Renderings, Public Safety Buildings

At the last meeting, the Board opted to hire Lincoln Architects to produce visual renderings of two options for future public safety buildings in the vicinity of the existing building. After I worked with the firm regarding final contract language, Chairman O'Donnell signed the contract. Lincoln plans to meet with the Town Building Committee on August 29, 2017 to review hundreds of photographs that the firm will have taken by then so the Committee can choose the various angles and backdrops their rendering work should focus upon. At a second meeting, the Committee will be able to review preliminary work conducted by Lincoln and can offer further guidance as to whether that initial effort is on target or needs adjustment.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(2) Finalization of Request for Proposals for Centennial Grove Master Plan (*)

At the last meeting, the Board reviewed comments from other boards regarding the scope of services that would drive the preparation of a Master Plan for the Centennial Grove. The Board asked that all comments be incorporated into a consolidated draft and that the scope be placed into the larger RFP document framework. In addition, the Board asked that I recommend a series of rating criteria that will be used to arrive at the best proposal and a draft timeline for procurement.

Recommendation: Board review of the draft RFP with attention to the proposed rating criteria and procurement schedule.

(3) Update Concerning Status of Army Corps of Engineers Study (*)

As the Board may recall, the Army Corps of Engineers had initiated a beneficial sediment re-use study this past January. The study will take 18-36 months to complete and I have received a status update from the project manager. Presently, the Corps is working via its Project Delivery Team to complete schedule estimates and the Project Management Plan (which should be available to the Town within a few weeks). The Plan should provide guidance regarding how the Corps will study various salt marsh restoration techniques and their suitability for use in our system. Salt marsh subsidence, storm and wake-caused erosion, previous marsh degradation from mosquito ditches and the like, and other factors may exacerbate the threats that are expected from sea level rise and climate change and we hope that the study will help to address some of these existing issues.

Recommendation: Board discussion as necessary.

E. Insurance

No items.

F. Facilities

(1) Review of Options for Possible Relocation of Shipbuilders' Memorial (*)

At the last meeting, the Board reviewed with members of the Essex Lions' Club possible options for the relocation of the shipbuilders' memorial from the back of the Town Landing to some other location. Options include relocation on the Town Landing or relocation to property that could be acquired along the Essex causeway. The memorial could also just remain in its present location. It is possible that Community Preservation funding could be used to assist with the desired final option.

Recommendation: Further Board discussion relative to the location of the memorial.

(2) Closure of 9 Beach Circle to the Public

At the last meeting, the Board voted to close the property at 9 Beach Circle to the public on an indefinite basis. As such, I worked with the DPW to rope off the frontage to the property and to post appropriate signage during the week of August 14, 2017.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(3) Use of Conomo Point Park Float for Certain Mooring Holder Dinghies (*)

The new float at the Conomo Point Park has now been opened to the public. At the last meeting, the Board agreed that mooring holders in the mooring field west of the park who reach moorings in non-motorized (rowed) boats can tie up to the float. I will work with all known parties in this category to have them register with the Selectmen's Office, including a liability waiver recommended by Town Counsel. I will post a sign on the float indicating that unattended tie-up is only allowed via written permission of the Selectmen.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(4) Pouring of Concrete Pads for Chimney Swift Boxes and Memorial Benches

At the last meeting, the Board agreed that the Town should retain the services of Mark Haskell to form and pour concrete pads at the Conomo Point Park site (for three memorial benches) and at the new Conomo Lane parking lot (for eventual chimney swift boxes). Mr. Haskell's scope of work is identical to another concrete company that quoted higher pricing. I will be working with Chairman O'Donnell with respect to final placement and any technical issues that need to be sorted out for either application. Selectmen O'Donnell and Spinney and I met on August 17, 2017 with the three parties who will be donating benches and half of the cost of each slab. All three parties have paid into a new gift fund and the benches have been ordered (expected in mid-September). Mr. Haskell should be ready to start work on all six pads in the near future.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(5) Town Hall Sprinkler Pipe Painting and Library Ramp Lattice Work (*)

The Board had agreed that I should seek a quotation from the contractor who recently completed work at the Senior Center (a sole proprietor) for straightening the Town Hall lamp posts, painting Town Hall sprinkler pipe in the belfry with galvanic paint, and replacing broken lattice on the Library ramp. That particular contractor is not equipped for the lamp post work but priced the other two items at \$3,400. Change order proposals for those two items from the original project contractor had totaled \$6,216. The expenditure of remaining available funds should be undertaken only after the Building Inspector provides final guidance on any remaining requirements relative to code compliance.

***Recommendation:* Board discussion relative to possibly proceeding with the two items, after all code compliance matters have been settled.**

(6) Consideration of Street Light Purchase Package from National Grid

National Grid has completed its official inventory of the various street lights that are owned and operated by that utility in Essex. The Board had asked for this action in preparation for possibly taking ownership of the lights and converting them to LED lamps. The hope would be to get grant funding for all of the conversion cost and then the Town would have to retain a contractor to be on call for emergencies or to eventually change lamps. The initial purchase of the fixtures from National Grid requires the Town to pay directly, since grants do not cover purchase.

Interestingly, National Grid's recent inventory puts the purchase cost over \$17,000 when a 2014 preliminary inventory was just under \$14,000 (the figure used for the recent Town Meeting appropriation for purchase). I have asked the utility to determine why this occurred and to ensure that the two lights in front of the Town Hall that were recently removed are not included in the cost. National Grid's package came with a variety of legal agreements and stipulations that will require careful review by Town Counsel if the Board determines that the Town should proceed.

The Board needs to consider the likelihood of grant funding for most or all of the conversion costs (since, typically, a community cannot apply for grant funding until after the lights are purchased), the need to retain a contractor to serve as an emergency and maintenance resource, any legal ramifications resulting from Town Counsel's review of the documents, and why National Grid's cost figure increased even though the fixtures have depreciated for an additional three years. Also, it would be beneficial to understand whether National Grid may offer LED conversion services on its own in the future, allowing the Town to continue simply paying the utility for their use, at a lower monthly energy rate. The Town Planner, who has experience with conversion in Gloucester, will be in attendance to join the conversation.

Recommendation: Board discussion with the Town Planner at the present meeting, per the posted agenda.

(7) Installation of Writing Shelf in Treasurer/Collector Office Vestibule

The Treasurer/Collector had received feedback from the public that the narrow ledge in the public vestibule provided as part of the Town Hall renovation does not provide enough space for some customers to comfortably complete transactions. As such, I was able to find a collapsible shelf that can be offered to any customer who needs more space for check writing or personal belongings during a transaction. I assembled the shelf and hung it in the vestibule with assistance from officer personnel.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(8) Provision of Telephone for Assistant Town Clerk

The Town Clerk's Office is usually staffed by a single person. However, there are times when a second person is in the office and could use a second telephone for making calls out. As such, as we have arranged in other, similar situations where only minimal phone use is expected, I have connected a phone to our infrequently used fax number, in order to provide service without having to pay for an additional line.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

G. Fiscal/Budget

No items.

H. Complaints

No items.

I. Meetings Attended

(1) Initial Meeting of Reconstituted Youth Commission

I attended the subject meeting on the evening of August 16, 2017 to assist the newly-reconstituted commission with general direction relative to the Open Meeting Law, the development of a position description for a new Coordinator or Director, and various other items. The Commission plans to meet again in a few weeks after digesting some examples of position descriptions from other communities and I will keep the Board informed about progress.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

J. Final Judgment

No items.

K. Town Meeting, By-Laws, and Regulations

(1) Preliminary List of Possible Topics for Fall Town Meeting (*)

As is the case each year at this time, I begin discussing with the Board topics which may be appropriate for warrant articles to be considered at the Fall Town Meeting. I have developed a prioritized list for the Board's review.

Recommendation: **Preliminary Board discussion relative to this list of possible topics.**

L. Legal Issues

(1) Update Concerning Fiber Optic Municipal Network (*)

Neither National Grid nor Verizon has acknowledged the Town's existing right to place a new fiber optic cable on their jointly-owned poles after the Town started a dialogue with each utility back in May. Instead, both utilities have presented non-negotiable agreements that they are asking the Town to sign and have refused to discuss matters further with the Town. Verizon did agree that that no costs would be assessed to the Town and National Grid agreed that a much lesser figure than originally asserted would be required of the Town. Further, neither utility provided a list of communities that had already signed similar agreements, after being asked for that information. As such, Town Counsel has recommended that the Town simply reassert its rights through a second letter to the utilities and make plans for the installation this winter or next spring.

Recommendation: **Board signature of a second letter to the utilities.**

M. Grants

(1) FY18 Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Enforcement and Equipment Grant (*)

As was the case in fiscal year 2017, the Essex Police Department is interested in the subject grant program for materials and labor for the enhancement of pedestrian and bicycle traffic safety. Similar to last year, the grant will cover items such as crosswalk enforcement activities, pedestrian breakaway signs, distribution of bicycle helmets, crosswalk reflective tape, and other items. The total requested amount is \$5,239 and the grant application deadline was prior to the present meeting. As such, the Chairman signed the paperwork authorizing the Chief of Police to apply.

Recommendation: **Board vote to ratify the action of the Chairman authorizing the Chief of Police to apply for the subject grant program.**

(2) FY18 MIIA Loss Control Grant Program (*)

As is the case each year, the Town tries to take advantage of a \$10,000 grant program from our insurer (MIIA) to conduct work that will decrease the likelihood of property damage and insurance claims. This year, the Department of Public Works would like to retain the services of an engineering firm to inspect as many as 300 sewer manholes to better understand structural integrity and infiltration/inflow issues. Components in poor condition can lead to sewer backups, increases to billed sewer flows, and other problems. The Sewer Department would be conducting this work anyway (since the system is now over ten years old) and proposes to seek \$16,000 at the Fall Town Meeting that would

be combined with \$10,000 in MIIA grant funding for a \$26,000 engineering study with full recommendations for corrective actions.

Recommendation: Board vote to authorize the Chairman to sign the grant application.

(3) FY18 Coastal Resilience Grant Award (*)

With Essex as the lead agency, the Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management (CZM) has awarded \$71,450 in grant funding to produce a Great Marsh Coastal Hazard Atlas & Project Compendium; to collaborate with the Cape Ann Emergency Planning Team to demonstrate how coastal resiliency planning and emergency planning can complement each other; and to produce and deploy signage along the Essex causeway that will inform the public about the effects of climate change and coastal resiliency planning. The Board had authorized the application for the grant back in May and Selectmen O'Donnell and Spinney attended the formal award ceremony in Dennis, MA during the week of August 7, 2017. Similar to the fiscal year 2016 Coastal Resilience Grant that the Town administered, the National Wildlife Federation will be the primary technical driver of this work (as noted in the Town's grant application). The Chairman signed the grant contract during the week of August 14, 2017 and a kickoff meeting with CZM will occur on August 28, 2017.

Recommendation: Board vote to ratify the Chairman's signature of the grant contract with the Commonwealth and to authorize the Chairman's signature of a contract with the National Wildlife Federation as a subcontractor, when that document is finalized.

N. Emergency Planning

(1) Migration from Code Red to Swift Reach Notification System (*)

For a number of years, the Town has paid for and utilized the Code Red public notification system for both emergency and routine public notices via telephone. The Essex Regional Emergency Communication Center has recently entered into a contract with a similar company, Swift Reach. The Center will allow all of its members to utilize the system without any additional cost. This would allow the Town to save over \$4,500 per year. The Town's present Code Red contract runs through December of 2017. Residents would be prompted via a final Code Red message to register with the Swift Reach system, which will be available through the Town's website.

Recommendation: Board discussion relative to moving on to this new vendor.

O. Other Items

(1) Coordination of Invasive Plant Removal Assessment Work (*)

A resident contacted me recently about how invasive plants are present in some of our coastal areas (such as pepperweed and phragmites) and wanted to know how residents might organize to assist groups that are working on such issues.

In Essex presently, Mass Audubon is collaborating with the US Fish and Wildlife Service to control pepperweed using herbicides and mechanical methods (with permission from the Board on certain Town properties). That effort is presently nearing its end and has gone well, according to MA Audubon personnel. In addition, another resident recently reached out to our Conservation Agent regarding the removal of a stand of phragmites near Conomo Point. According to the Agent, the resident will enlist volunteer assistance and will come before the Commission (as Mass Audubon did for pepperweed) to receive permission for a phragmites cutting program.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(2) Town Administrator Vacation Leave

I was out of the office on vacation leave on August 25, 2017.

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