



Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of Dec. 11, 2017

Report covers from November 25 to December 8, 2017

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

A. Town Department Reports/Requests

(1) Renewal of Order of Conditions for Alewife Brook Periodic Cleanout (*)

The Board had filed a Notice of Intent several years ago in order to allow volunteers and the Department of Public Works to conduct annual cleanouts of the Alewife Brook channel to allow for better drainage and for the annual fish run. The Order of Conditions for this work was subsequently renewed for a three-year period. I am presently awaiting word from the Conservation Commission as to what type of process must be followed for an additional renewal.

Recommendation: Board authorization for me to proceed with whatever process is necessary to secure the renewal.

B. Computer Systems

(1) Memory Repair, Fire Department Computer

The Fire Chief informed me that the Fire Department computer was not booting to the operating system. I reviewed the matter and found the report codes to be indicative of a memory chip problem. I reseated both memory chips and the problem has been resolved. At least one of the chips had probably become partially dislodged due to expansion and contraction over time.

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

(2) Renewal of File Backup System Subscription

As the Board is aware, we maintain a redundant user-created file backup system via Carbonite, as a fail-safe to our backup and disaster recovery program hosted by the City of Melrose. Our Carbonite subscription expires in January and I have arranged for the necessary renewal.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(3) Additional Network Penetration Testing and Other Services (*)

As the Board may recall, a private contractor performed external penetration testing on all of our Internet-facing interfaces about a year ago. The contractor did not gain any access. However, our auditor recommends testing each year and I have begun to discuss testing one interface each year, as discussed with the Board in the past. All of our interfaces are identical. So, any problems noted at one interface would be applicable to all others. Also, in the past, the same vendor

conducted some test e-mail phishing and phone phishing. These should be completed to some degree each year as well.

Recommendation: **Board discussion relative to additional testing.**

C. Personnel

(1) Quarterly Safety Committee Meeting

The subject meeting will occur on December 21, 2017. The loss control representative from our insurer will attend the meeting to make recommendations for upcoming training and safety initiatives. I have placed a draft copy of the agenda in the Board's reading folder.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(2) Town Administrator's Performance Review and Goal Setting (*)

At this time each year, the Board arranges to review my performance and to set goals for the upcoming year. In the performance area, I will rely on the detailed reports filed with the Board at each Board meeting as a record of my activities and accomplishments. As the Board may recall, my evaluation template was updated with six specific goals at the outset of this calendar year for use at this time.

Also, it is necessary to work with the Board to develop goals for the upcoming calendar year. In addition to the general roles and responsibilities in my position description, which I will continue to update the Board on in detail for each new Board meeting, I recommend the following specific scope and welcome discussion with the Board:

- Implement the construction of a fiber optic municipal area network (FMAN) interconnecting computer infrastructure in various municipal buildings. Buildings are presently interconnected using virtual private network (VPN) connections over Comcast Internet connections in each building. The FMAN would allow for better connectivity (ultra-fast with no VPN latency) without the need to pay for Internet connections in each building. This project will be contingent upon agreement from Town Counsel that the Town is within its rights to secure the fiber cables to existing National Grid/Verizon utility poles and may require additional interaction with those utilities and/or additional funding.
- Hire and work with a new, dedicated custodian for the Town Hall/Library building to establish a comprehensive cleaning, maintenance, and organizational routine that completes organizational and cleaning tasks still lingering from the move and keeps the Town's new investment in excellent condition for years to come. A system will be developed that establishes regular cleaning tasks and schedules along with ongoing priorities for deeper maintenance and special projects.

- Continue to work with the Town Building Committee (TBC) to firm up a recommendation regarding the best siting alternative for new or renovated police/fire headquarters building(s). Two options exist at 24-30 Martin Street and the purchase of new property may also be explored. After one option is chosen by the TBC and the Selectmen, in consultation with the Finance Committee, prepare for a proposal to the Annual Town Meeting to potentially fund design, construction, and construction oversight of the new facility. Work may include a process to acquire new land by the Town.
- Continue to advance the Town's readiness for Essex River dredging. Work will involve continued collaboration with the Army Corps of Engineers to conduct a beneficial use study concerning the re-use of dredge spoils within the Essex River/Essex Bay system.
- Serve as principal organizer and administrator of the regional Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management's Coastal Resiliency Grant regarding the interconnectedness of emergency planning and coastal resiliency planning. Work will include ensuring that our contractor (National Wildlife Federation - NWF) continues to receive clear input from the Cape Ann Emergency Planning Team; the coordination of three public forums on the topic (one each in Essex, Ipswich, and Gloucester); the fabrication and deployment of informational/educational signage along the Essex causeway; and collaboration with NWF relative to the production of a Coastal Hazards Atlas and ongoing resiliency project compendium. In a related fashion, also coordinate the entire Municipal Vulnerability Grant program with the Ipswich River Watershed Association, to round out the Town's understanding of climate change resiliency with respect to non-coastal issues, such as wildfires and oppressive heat.
- Continue to work with the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) to implement the Town's Strategic Plan by taking stock of progress to date and by working with the Town Planner to target the next several logical steps. Tasks will include working with the new Economic Development Committee to organize its affairs and to review existing Town parking study recommendations; and to advance selected other elements of the Strategic Plan as identified by the SPC.

***Recommendation:* Preliminary Board discussion relative to this year's evaluation process using the current template and the goal setting process for the upcoming calendar year.**

(3) Informal Staff Meeting

I hosted the subject meeting on December 7, 2017, as I do from time to time. The meeting featured a discussion regarding upcoming staffing changes and initiatives in the coming year, including the planned upgrade of the Town's website platform.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(4) Town Clerk Resignation, Interim Coverage, & Process to Hire New Clerk (*)

Town Clerk Christina St. Pierre has accepted a position in another community and has tendered her resignation to the Board, effective January 13, 2018. As such, it is necessary to develop a process for the hiring of a new Clerk. An advertisement can be run in the Massachusetts Municipal Association's publication *the Beacon* and in the local newspaper, which has an on-line component as well. Given the time necessary for advertisement and interviews, the Assistant Town Clerk is willing to serve as the Interim Town Clerk, beginning January 16, 2018, until that process has been completed (likely sometime in February).

Recommendation: **Board acceptance of the resignation, discussion relative to interim coverage and pay scale, and the process for hiring a new Town Clerk.**

(5) Town Accountant Resignation, Interim Coverage, Process for Replacement (*)

Town Accountant Roxanne Tieri has resigned to pursue other opportunities with an effective date of early February, 2018. As such, it is necessary to develop a process for the hiring of a new Town Accountant. As noted above, *the Beacon* and the local paper can be used for advertising. The Town Accountant's Clerk will be able to assist with the preparation of weekly warrants, which is an essential process, during the transition. The new Town Accountant would be free to negotiate salary and benefits by statute, as was the case for the outgoing Accountant.

Recommendation: **Board acceptance of the resignation, discussion relative to interim coverage and pay scale, and the process for hiring a new Town Accountant.**

(6) Hiring of Town Hall/Library Custodian (*)

At the last meeting, acting in its role as Personnel Board, approved a revised position description for the vacant Town Hall Custodian position (the present custodian works under the Town Property Custodian position description). The Board agreed that the position should be advertised by local posting, on our website, in the local paper, and via social media (all of which has been done). Presently, we are still within the application window, which closes on December 14, 2017. Thereafter, the Board needs to decide whether it wants to be involved in the interview process versus my making a recommendation.

Recommendation: **Board discussion relative to whether I should conduct all interviews and make a recommendation to the Board versus the Board being involved in the interview process.**

D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects

(1) Presentation of Public Safety Bldg. Renderings & Acquisition of Property (*)

Our architect will soon complete the necessary visual renderings to schedule a public forum with the Town Building Committee to present these materials for public input and comment. Also, I have worked with the Fire Chief to arrive at a final set of evaluation criteria for properties that may be offered for sale to the Town, should the Board decide to solicit proposals for property acquisition. We have eliminated the evaluation criteria regarding maximum slope on the property since a sloping site may actually open up some favorable design options and since another criterion already deals with the slope of the connection from the road to the site.

In order that the process of vetting the best option and estimating project costs can be completed in advance of the Annual Town Meeting in May of 2018, both the public forum and the potential for property acquisition should be addressed no later than January. With respect to property acquisition, while it is possible to solicit proposals for real property pursuant to defined criteria (see above), most communities are able to identify a well-suited property of interest and to acquire the property sole source, by filing a uniqueness determination with the State.

***Recommendation:* Board discussion relative to advancing the public safety building project on parallel tracks (assessing options on Town land versus possibly acquiring new property).**

(2) Alternative Mechanism for Conversion and Maintenance of Street Lights (*)

At the last meeting, the Board met with Mr. Keith Schollard of PowerSecure to discuss how the Town's street lights might be converted to LED lamps using a long-term subscription service. This would save the Town more money than if the utility converted and continued to own the lights but less money than the Town managing the entire conversion and owning the lights. Several potential options were discussed at the meeting:

a) The Town could purchase the street lights and make the conversion to LED; PowerSecure would then maintain the lights. b) The Town could purchase the lights and PowerSecure would convert and maintain them. c) PowerSecure could purchase the lights, make the conversion, and maintain them. Mr. Schollard is presently researching each of the potential options and I may have more information by meeting time.

***Recommendation:* Board discussion as necessary, depending on the information available at meeting time.**

(3) Request for Written Offers, Surplus Fire Squad

The Essex Fire Department is using the Town's procedure for the disposal of items valued at less than \$10,000 to dispose of a surplus squad vehicle (the old forestry truck). Sealed written offers are being accepted in my office through December 20, 2017 at 11:00 a.m., at which time offers will be opened and read aloud. The minimum offer will be \$1,000. Full details of the disposal and all necessary forms are available from the Town Clerk.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

E. Insurance

(1) Monthly Pothole Log

I obtained the pothole log from the Department of Public Works for the month of November during the week of December 4, 2017. No potholes had been reported during November.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

F. Facilities

No items.

G. Fiscal/Budget

(1) Proposals for Potential New Auditing Firm

(*)

As the Board may recall, the Management and Operations Audit performed by the Department of Revenue in the past recommended that the Town go out to bid for a potential new auditing firm. The Board and the Finance Committee agreed that this action should take place after our engagement with our present auditor, Clifton Larsen Allen, LLP, is completed. The engagement runs through the fiscal year 2017 audit, which is almost complete. Options include reaching out to firms informally for proposals or developing a formal Request for Proposals document for wide advertisement. The Board should also determine if our present auditor will be eligible to apply.

Recommendation: **Board discussion relative to the process of potentially changing auditing firms, starting with the fiscal year 2018 audit.**

(2) Five-Year Operating Budget Projection Joint Town/School Meeting

I attended the subject meeting with the boards of selectmen and finance committees from Manchester and Essex and with School District officials on November 29, 2017. I presented the Town's five-year operating budget projection tool to the group. The Manchester Town Administrator and the District's Director of Finance and Operations made similar presentations and the group had a chance

to discuss both the annual operating budget formulation process and tools and major factors involved in predicting future cycles.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(3) Joint Town/School Budget Group Meeting (*)

I attended the subject meeting along with Chairman O'Donnell and Finance Committee Chairman Michelle Dyer on December 8, 2017. The meeting featured a discussion with School District and Manchester officials regarding planning for the December 19, 2017 large joint meeting concerning existing capital debt and planning for future capital debt, for all three entities.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(4) Further Review of Fiscal Year 2019 Capital Budget Request (*)

I have made additional revisions to the Board's fiscal year 2019 capital budget request package in accordance with the Board's guidance from the last meeting. I plan to bring a draft final version of the package to the Board for approval at the next meeting. Any additional comments can be incorporated into the final submission package that will be approved by the Board on January 8, 2018.

Recommendation: **Further Board discussion relative to the capital package.**

(5) Preliminary Review of Draft Fiscal Year 2019 Operating Budget Request (*)

I have begun to develop the Board's operating budget proposal for fiscal year 2019. The Board will have the opportunity to also discuss this proposal on December 18, 2017 and January 8, 2018.

Recommendation: **Preliminary review of the draft operating budget proposal for fiscal year 2019.**

H. Complaints

No items.

I. Meetings Attended

(1) Essex County Transportation Summit

I attended the subject summit on November 28, 2017, along with town administrator, town managers, and mayors from all over Essex County. The gathering was sponsored by the Essex County Community Foundation and State Senator Thomas McGee (Mayor-elect for Lynn) helped from the conversation. Public transit across the region is inadequate and what we do have works poorly. It is possible that future efforts can help establish better networks that people will use to get to and from work hubs and places of interest, rather than driving. This

will, in turn, lead to less congestion on roadways, something that will help Essex commuters even if Essex never sees a major transit stop. I will continue to monitor the work of the group.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(2) PIE Rivers Annual Conference

The Ipswich River Watershed Association sponsored the subject annual conference to discuss issues related to the Parker, Ipswich, and Essex Rivers on December 5, 2017. I attended the conference and this year's focus was on how the State will be revamping its drought monitoring and classification system as well as how private land conservation projects involving upland areas are beneficial to clean air and water.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

J. Final Judgment

No items.

K. Town Meeting, By-Laws, and Regulations

(1) Preliminary List of Potential Article Topics for Annual Town Meeting (*)

I have begun to develop a preliminary list of potential Annual Town Meeting article topics for the Board's review and initial discussion. The next Annual Town Meeting will be held on May 7, 2018.

Recommendation: **Preliminary discussion relative to the subject list.**

L. Legal Issues

(1) Notice of Project Commencement, Fiber Optic Municipal Area Network

At the last meeting, the Board agreed that a letter should be sent to Verizon and National Grid advising these utilities of the Town's intent to start work on the subject network. We have learned from our contractor that the Town's project could begin as soon as about ten weeks from entering into a contract. I worked with Town Counsel to complete this final notification letter for the Board's signature and the letter has been sent. The Board can begin to discuss a potential contract with Comm-Tract Corp., under the auspices of the State Contract, at the next meeting.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

M. Grants

(1) Fiscal Year 2018 Coastal Resiliency Monthly Grant Report

I provided the subject report to the Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management during the week of November 27, 2017, after receiving it from our grant contractor at the National Wildlife Federation. Work concerning the coastal hazard atlas and associated project directory is proceeding well and we are continuing to work with the Cape Ann Emergency Planning Team to prepare for the spring workshops.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Green Communities Grant Program, Annual Report

Town Planner Matt Coogan has worked diligently to produce required data summaries and program accomplishments for the Green Communities Grant Program for calendar year 2017. This annual report was due December 11, 2017 and Chairman O'Donnell provided the necessary signature for its submission.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(3) Mass in Motion – Cape Ann Grant Update

As the Board may recall, the Town has been participating with the other Cape Ann communities with respect to the subject grant. I recently met with Mr. Steve Winslow of the City of Gloucester, who is the principal for the project. Presently, MiM-Cape Ann is continuing to coordinate a study of regional priorities for the promotion of healthy diets and physical fitness. Mr. Winslow will be taking other employment in the new year and the program will be coordinated by a new Gloucester Board of Health part-time staff member thereafter.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(4) Massachusetts Downtown Initiative Grant Mixed Use Zoning Planning Mtg.

I attended the subject grant meeting with Town Planner Matt Coogan and personnel from the Harriman firm on November 29, 2017. The meeting was intended to make final preparations for a public forum concerning the potential for future mixed-use zoning by right in the downtown area. That forum is scheduled for December 14, 2017. The group assembled for the meeting made some final decisions and discussed questions that will likely surface at the public forum. Harriman subsequently provided a revised draft of the presentation to Chairman O'Donnell and Planning Board Acting Chairman Burnham for their final comments prior to the forum. The forum was advertised at the recent Fall Town Meeting and we have requested that the Gloucester Times produce a story in advance of the event.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(5) Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Grant Update (*)

As the Board is aware, Melissa Merriam of the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) had taken the State training to become a service provider for the subject grant program. However, Melissa is transitioning to a new position within NWF and no others in the organization had participated in the training. As such, NWF has recommended that we instead partner with Kristen Grubbs of the Ipswich River Watershed Association (IRWA). We have partnered closely with IRWA on other projects and I agree with that recommendation. IRWA is the only organization that understands the extensive coastal resiliency planning work that the Town has already completed.

Recommendation: Board authorization to designate IRWA as our MVP service provider and to enter into a contract with IRWA, when available. A contract with NWF was never signed and the full amount of funding is still intact.

N. Emergency Planning

No items.

O. Other Items

(1) Great Marsh Coastal Adaptation Plan Released

The National Wildlife Federation (NWF) has released a report that is the product of several years of study and public involvement concerning the likely effects of climate change and sea level rise in our region and includes potential strategies to mitigate negative consequences. The Plan can be found at: <https://www.nwf.org/greatmarshadaptation>

The Great Marsh Coastal Adaptation Plan details an adaptation planning effort led by NWF in partnership with the Ipswich River Watershed Association that focused on six vulnerable coastal communities in northeastern Massachusetts (Salisbury, Newbury, Newburyport, Essex, Ipswich, and Rowley). This report assesses regional and town-specific vulnerabilities to current and future coastal threats and identifies near and long-term ecosystem-oriented strategies that reduce risk and increase target resiliency.

Strategies include natural and nature-based solutions, building retrofits, policy measures, and outreach and education initiatives—all of which are operationally feasible and can be implemented in the near to moderate term. Shovel-ready projects have been identified and vetted and relevant municipal policy measures have been identified that incentivize climate-smart development and/or prohibit development in hazard-prone locations. In addition, this plan provides key recommendations for advancing the implementation of nature-based adaptation strategies in the Great Marsh Region.

This report was developed by the National Wildlife Federation, in partnership with the Ipswich River Watershed Association, with financial support from the U.S. Department of the Interior, administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Hurricane Sandy Coastal Resiliency Competitive Grant Program, and from the Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management's Coastal Community Resilience Grant Program.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

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