



## Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of March 12, 2018

Report covers from February 24, 2018 to March 9, 2018

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

---

### A. Town Department Reports/Requests

#### (1) Quarterly Safety Committee Meeting

The next Safety Committee meeting will occur on March 29, 2018. I have placed a draft agenda in the Board's reading file.

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

### B. Computer Systems

No items.

### C. Personnel

No items.

### D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects

#### (1) Further Discussion Relative to Potential Affordable Housing Project (\*)

At the last meeting, the Board expressed basic agreement that getting more affordable housing units in the Town is a good overall goal. Details on the specific project that was on the last agenda were not available from the project proponent (Harborlight Community Partners) by meeting time. I have since learned that the seller of the available property is not inclined to wait through a Town Meeting cycle and will sell the property on the open market. However, Harborlight would still like to engage the Town in a discussion relative to other future potential projects. The organization could come and speak with the Selectmen or perhaps the Strategic Planning Committee or Economic Development Committee, in the future.

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

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

At the last meeting, the Board again briefly reviewed a revised complete Request for Proposals for a firm to develop a Master Plan for the Centennial Grove. The Board wanted more time to review the document and to determine whether other elements should be added, for discussion at the present meeting.

*Recommendation:* **Board vote to finalize the content of the RFP.**

## E. Insurance

No items.

## F. Facilities

### (1) License for Use of Centennial Grove for Rowing Program (\*)

At the last meeting, I informed the Board that the Pingree School would like to utilize a portion of the Centennial Grove to operate its rowing program from. The Board was interested in entering into a license with the school, and would expect a one-time payment, or perhaps some renovation/upkeep work on the Grove Cottage or garage. The school would like to start with a late-March to late-May agreement and would then perhaps look to enter a more long-term license or other agreement, on separate terms, thereafter.

I have since met on site with school personnel and the school does like the facility and does want to move forward. At this point, the school has proposed use of the Grove Cottage, its parking lot, its garage, and its waterfront area. In exchange, the school will pay \$1,000, repair a railing that was damaged by a tree limb, and possibly conduct some maintenance on structures. The school will bring in its own, portable sanitation until the water is on for the season and may either store boats in the garage or perhaps just on outdoor racks. If the garage is used, the school is aware that it needs to acquire a dumpster to dispose of junk in the building and may make some non-structural, interior modifications to both house the boats and to make the front bay doors operational again (currently screwed closed).

*Recommendation:* **Board approval of a license with the Pingree School.**

## G. Fiscal/Budget

### (1) School Budget Group Meeting (\*)

Chairman O'Donnell and I attended the subject meeting on March 5, 2018, along with Finance Committee Chairman Dyer and personnel and officials from the Regional School District and the Town of Manchester. The meeting featured a discussion relative to planning for the March 21, 2018 joint capital budget planning public forum. The forum will seek to illustrate various capital needs of the District and the two towns and how those competing needs combine to forecast debt loads in the future. The group also discussed how the District continues to revise the fiscal year 2019 operating budget to meet overall town apportionment targets.

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

## H. Complaints

No items.

## I. Meetings Attended

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

I attended the subject meeting along with Police Sergeant Paul Francis on March 7, 2018. I provided a Town update, highlighted the fact that a fire station replacement article will be on the Town Meeting warrant, and provided an update on the status of the Regional Dispatch Center.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

## J. Final Judgment

No items.

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

### (1) Review of Draft Final Annual Town Meeting Warrant (\*)

The Board reviewed the draft Annual Town Meeting warrant with the Finance Committee at the last meeting and requests from departments for article inclusion were due on February 28, 2018. I have developed a draft final version of the warrant based on the Board's guidance from the last meeting and requests that have been submitted since that meeting.

*Recommendation:* **Board finalization of the warrant for signature at the next meeting, to be held March 26, 2018.**

## L. Legal Issues

No items.

## M. Grants

### (1) Review of Thin-Layer Deposition by Local Scientists (\*)

As the Board is aware, one of several strategies that could be implemented in the future to make the marsh more resilient to climate change and sea level rise would be to build up the marsh elevation in thin layers (thin-layer deposition, or TLD). Given the predicted, exponential rate at which sea level will rise, the marsh may not be able to keep up with future mean high water levels, causing it to degrade and eventually provide much less storm protection than it does now. Sediment from the adjacent river channel could be pumped up onto the marsh in progressive, thin layers, thereby keeping channel navigation open and helping to

keep pace with rising water. Presently, regulators are unsure as to whether TLD will help or harm the system, but agree that the technique warrants further study.

The recent severe storm of January 4, 2018 naturally deposited sediment over a wide area of the Essex marsh. As such, local scientists are interested in working with State regulators to monitor how the marsh recovers from this natural event. What is discovered may help regulators determine whether human-placed sediment would be a suitable solution for the future. This group of local scientists held a site visit for State regulators on February 26, 2018 and then met in Town Hall to discuss initial findings. All are in agreement that taking advantage of a chance to study the recovery of the marsh is important. However, there is not presently a State grant program that would fund this work.

Subsequent to the meeting, I contacted the office of Congressman Seth Moulton and his office is willing to assist to determine if Federal funding could be acquired this late in the fiscal year. If a particular Federal grant program has not expended all of its funding, perhaps a project of this nature could be funded on short notice. I also reached out to the office of State Senator Bruce Tarr, in the event his office could assist with reviewing prospects for other State funding.

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

(2) Coastal Resilience Grant Monthly Report

I provided to the Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management the monthly report for the subject grant program for the month of February during the week of February 26, 2018. The report focused on preparations for three public forums in three different communities during the month of April. We are also preparing to produce new educational signage to be placed in Essex.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

(3) Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Program Status Update

As the Board is aware, Essex will hold its MVP stakeholder meeting (invitation only) on April 5, 2018. The meeting will be facilitated by our MVP contractor (the Ipswich River Watershed Association - IRWA) and will highlight for the attendees the various natural hazards that we can expect to see more frequently as the climate changes. Essex has already done much work with respect to the coastal aspects of climate change and the meeting will cover those predicted effects along with other predicted hazards like more frequent heatwaves, threats for wildfires, droughts, etc.

I met with IRWA facilitator Kristen Grubbs on March 1, 2018 to go over the status of planning for the meeting but also the status of all of the background planning that is necessary for the meeting to be successful. Ms. Grubbs has been very busy putting together the meeting presentation, which draws on a number of

data sources and reports, so that the Town can be informed about the whole range of predicted effects. At our status meeting, we reviewed meeting logistics and the agenda and we feel we are in great shape for the event.

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

#### **N. Emergency Planning**

No items.

#### **O. Other Items**

(1) Essex National Heritage Area Kiosk Project (\*)

Personnel from Essex Heritage have provided the Town with proposed content that will be included about the Town of Essex on several informational kiosks along the Essex Coastal Scenic Byway. Although no kiosk will actually be placed in Essex, Essex Heritage wants to ensure that the Town is comfortable with the content that will be posted in other areas.

*Recommendation:* **Board discussion relative to whether the Town has any comments on the proposed content.**

*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.*