



## Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of June 4, 2018

Report covers from May 19, 2018 to June 1, 2018

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

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### A. Town Department Reports/Requests

#### (1) Economic Development Committee Meeting Summary (\*)

I participated in the subject meeting along with the Town Planner on May 29, 2018. The meeting featured the Committee's review of two past studies: the downtown parking study (Nelson\Nygaard), and the downtown mixed-use zoning district study (Harriman). Both of the studies include recommendations that are intended to foster economic development. The Committee determined that the best place to start is with respect to the wayfinding signage recommendations and the formalization of on-street parking recommendations (line striping) in the parking study. To that end, the Committee would like the Board to reach out to the State, through me, to discuss how we can achieve those recommendations, which mostly involve the State highway.

Also, the Committee agreed that the Town Planner should apply for a technical assistance grant that will help the Town develop an Economic Development Plan. In a fashion similar to the assistance that the Strategic Planning Committee received to write the Town's Strategic Plan, the EDC will strive to summarize the important themes and to attach recommended, future actions to each topic.

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

#### (2) Town Building Committee Meeting

I am working with Chairman O'Donnell to pull together a Town Building Committee meeting to discuss options for public safety building replacement after the Village Restaurant property purchase proposal failed to move forward. The Committee will consider how the Board would like to explore phased construction of an entirely new, combined public safety building at the existing site, along with options for possibly purchasing other properties.

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

### B. Computer Systems

#### (1) Expansion of City Hall Systems On-Line Software for Building Permits

The Building Department presently uses a combination of outdated software programs to issue and track building permits. Since the Town already has a master contract with City Hall Systems for vendor-hosted tax collection and other software, it makes sense to explore expansion of the company's offerings. City

Hall System offers its software as a service, at no cost to the Town. I met with Building Department personnel and City Hall Systems personnel on May 23, 2018 to discuss what can be offered and when. We subsequently provided City Hall Systems with some historic data and some necessary new data fields that we will want to track. The new system is up and running for internal use so that the legacy software we have been using can be retired. Once the system is fully assessed for compliance with our needs internally, we will begin a second phase that will offer on-line permit applications for our customers.

*Recommendation:* I will update the Board as necessary. Total time – 1 hour.

### **C. Personnel**

No items.

### **D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects**

#### (1) Criteria and Process for Land Acquisition RFP (\*)

At the last meeting, the Board agreed that the Town should issue a Request for Proposals for interested parties to offer for sale to the Town property that would be suitable for the construction of a new fire station. The Board first reviewed this potential course of action in late 2017 and the Board briefly reviewed the potential evaluation criteria at the last meeting. I have received input from the Fire Chief and it will be important to receive input from the Town Building Committee before the RFP is finalized.

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

#### (2) Solicitation of Quotations for Promotion of Town Resources

As is the case each year, the Town has appropriated funds for the promotion of the attractions and resources within the Town, in order to encourage tourism and economic growth. The funds represent a small portion of the approximately \$200,000 per year that is paid to the Town via the local meals tax. I have solicited quotations from the Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce, the Essex Merchants' Group, and the North of Boston Visitors and Convention Bureau. Quotations are due on June 14, 2018 and the Board will consider all submissions at its next meeting, on June 18, 2018.

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

## E. Insurance

### (1) Safety Committee Meeting

The next Safety Committee meeting will occur on June 28, 2018 and I will attend as a member of the Committee. A have placed a copy of the Committee's agenda in the Board's reading folder.

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

## F. Facilities

### (1) Possible Longer-Term Arrangement, Pingree School at Centennial Grove (\*)

As the Board may recall, the Pingree School utilized the cottage area of the Centennial Grove for its rowing program this past spring (via license issued by the Board). The school was very pleased with the Town's facilities and location and would like to explore with the Board the potential for a longer-term, more durable relationship. To that end, I met with personnel from the school on May 22, 2018 and, in concert with the Youth Commission and the YMCA, the school would like to explore a future arrangement. It is possible that the school would make available facilities and equipment that residents could use to access the lake or even offer rowing lessons. If the school can arrange for a longer-term relationship, the school may also be able to more fully commit to repairs and upkeep at the property.

*Recommendation:* **Board discussion relative to an expanded relationship with the Pingree School, possibly in concert with the Youth Commission and the YMCA.**

### (2) Seawall Repairs at Conomo Point

The Department of Public Works and its contractor have completed work necessary to make various areas of the Conomo Point seawall system and adjacent ground safe for the upcoming season. Our masonry contractor also assisted with this work in certain places and has completed his own work on the two stone piers. Work will soon wrap up with our masonry contractor making repairs to the seawall at 7 Beach Circle.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

### (3) Status of Traffic Management Plan for Failing Route 133 Bridge (\*)

At the last meeting, the Board asked that several non-structural strategies be employed to ease the traffic situation caused by the Route 133 bridge being narrowed to a one-lane situation. These strategies included:

1. At the Martin Street and the Southern Avenue intersections with Route 133, the Board requested painted lines and signs that inform motorists not to block either intersection.
2. Regarding Route 22, the Board requested: a) coming from Hamilton, signage sending traffic destined for Ipswich or Gloucester up Western Avenue (making a left or a right at the Western and Main intersection) b) coming from Gloucester on Route 133, signage sending traffic destined for Hamilton to the Western Avenue and Main Street intersection c) coming from Ipswich on Route 133, signage sending traffic destined for Hamilton to take the immediate right onto Western Avenue.
3. The Board requested no parking signage from the Martin Street and Main Street intersection to the Route 133 Bridge, on the Village Restaurant side.
4. Along Apple Street, after a motorist gets beyond the main intersection at either end, the Board requested signs saying “Drive with Caution”.
5. The Board requested that Essex Fire and Police vehicles be outfitted with stop light pre-emption controllers once a new, more advanced set of lights gets put in place.

MassDOT worked quickly to review and approve all of those requests and actual deployment of the signage and markings was still in progress at the time of printing of this report.

Relative to the getting two-way traffic over the bridge restored as quickly as possible, Chairman O’Donnell attended a MassDOT technical review meeting, along with Senator Tarr, on May 30, 2018, and will have an update for the Board at the present meeting concerning the considered options and associated timelines.

***Recommendation:* Further discussion relative to the bridge problem, including near-term and long-term solutions.**

## **G. Fiscal/Budget**

### (1) Septic System Loan Program

I met with the Board of Health Administrator and the Treasurer/Collector on May 21, 2018 to review the Board of Health’s plans to begin offering septic system repair loans under the new funding authorization that the 2017 Annual Town Meeting had made. The program will allow any resident access to a loan for a septic system upgrade, with a four-percent interest rate. This loan program does not require means testing and loans are paid back via the establishment of a betterment, which eventually appears in installments on the resident’s tax bill.

Interested residents should get in touch with Board of Health Administrator Erin Kirchner at (978) 768-7111 or [ekirchner@essexma.org](mailto:ekirchner@essexma.org).

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary at this time.

## **H. Complaints**

No items.

## **I. Meetings Attended**

### (1) Massachusetts Municipal Management Association Spring Conference

I attended the subject conference on May 31 and June 1, 2018 on Cape Cod. The meeting featured training concerning workforce diversity and updates concerning changes in municipal law and labor law.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

## **J. Final Judgment**

No items.

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

### (1) Development of Language for Fall Town Meeting Articles, School Vote (\*)

At the last meeting, the Selectmen were in favor of KP Law (which represents both Essex and Manchester) working with both towns on how the towns could phrase potential articles at tandem fall town meetings (October 15-16, 2018). The common goal is that Manchester costs for its desired new recreation/senior center (if built as part of the Memorial School replacement project) are kept separate and not mingled with Essex's portion of the school project costs.

After discussing the disclosure and approval process with each town (necessary to establish joint representation), the firm learned that Manchester is not necessarily still looking to construct its new facilities as part of the school construction project – but perhaps as a separate, Town project, later on.

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

### (2) Preliminary Design and Cost Estimation Work, New Public Safety Bldg. (\*)

At the last meeting, the Board discussed a potential proposal to fund preliminary assessment and design work for the phased replacement of the existing public safety building on its existing site. This preliminary work could include the hiring of an Owner's Project Manager, engineering and site assessment professionals, an

architect, cost estimating professionals, and even possibly a construction manager at risk. The Sale of Real Estate Fund may be used to pay for these services.

Should the Board decide to pose this option to a Special Town Meeting or to the Fall Town Meeting, it will be necessary to have a well-developed estimate for all costs required to prepare for a future construction-funding vote. If the preliminary work is funded, it would include in its scope the estimation of additional funds to pay all of the necessary professionals through the construction phase.

When the School District engaged in these identical preliminary tasks recently, in preparation for the Memorial School replacement proposal, the District was able to draw upon established cost expectations provided by the Massachusetts School Building Authority. In our case, we do not have such a database and it would be prudent to consider hiring a firm that can anticipate all preliminary costs in order to provide a credible number to Town Meeting.

As requested by the Board, I also worked with the Selectmen's Assistant and the Town's archivist to locate maps related to the extent of the Town's former burning dump, which was adjacent to Shepard Memorial Drive. While it does not appear that the dump ever expanded into the area adjacent to the Fire Station, it is possible that ash and other railroad pollutants exist in that area (a railroad line existed near the area in the past).

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

## **L. Legal Issues**

No items.

## **M. Grants**

### (1) Coastal Resilience Grant Monthly Report

I worked with our grant contractor, the National Wildlife Federation, to submit the subject report, for the month of May, during the week of May 21, 2018. The project is winding down after the April public information sessions and we are presently awaiting the delivery of the four public educational signs (two will be posted along the Essex Causeway and the other two will be posted at the Conomo Point park).

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

### (2) Dam and Seawall Repair Grant Program Application

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The subject State grant program is accepting applications for seawall repairs through June 22, 2018. I am told that a competitive application will focus on one particular area of seawall and will take that concept from assessment through

permitting and construction document production. A subsequent application (next year) could then possibly bring funding for actual construction. I have been working with engineer David Smith of GZA Geoenvironmental to assess the Conomo Point seawall system and to choose the most important section for a potential project. We are presently working to complete the grant application and I will have more information by meeting time.

***Recommendation:* Board vote to authorize the Chairman to sign any necessary grant application documents, when available.**

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

No items.

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

##### (1) Memorial Day Holiday

The office was closed on May 28, 2018, in observance of the subject holiday.

*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.*