

Administrator's Report
Board of Health Meeting of January 21, 2021
Report covers from 01/07 – 01/20/2021
Items requiring Board vote are noted with an asterisk ()*

A. Inspection Report Reviews

None.

B. Soil Evaluations / Waiver Explorations

(1) 73 Pond Street, Balili, Map 154, Lot 1

I witnessed a soil evaluation as the first step in subdividing this parcel.

C. Septic System Design Plan Reviews

(1) 97 Conomo Point Road, Kelley, Map 110, Lot 44*

I have reviewed the plan for the proposed new construction home to be connected to the existing septic system. The plan, designed by John Morin and dated June 3, 2020 with a revision date of January 21, 2021. The plan now meets all Title 5 and local regulations pertaining to on-site wastewater systems.

Recommendation: I recommend the Board of Health send a letter to the property owner stating the septic system connection for the new proposed dwelling at this location, designed by John Morin with a final revision date of January 21, 2021, is approved. Prior to the issuance of a building permit, the property owner shall submit the building plans to the Board of Health for review.

(2) 1 Laurel Lane, Laurel Lane LLC, Map 209, Lot 29*

I have reviewed the plan for the proposed tight tank at this property, designed by Chris Rokos of Meridian Associates with a design date of December 9, 2020. During my review, I have noted the following technical errors or deficiencies: The full legal boundaries of the facility and a locus plan were not depicted on the design plan (310 CMR 15.220(4)(a), 310 CMR 15.220(4)(t)).

1. The existing grade of each soil test hole is required on the design plan (310 CMR 15.220(4)(h)).
2. A note needs to be added to the design plan to indicate to address the presence or absence of surface water supplies within 400' and tributaries to surface water supplies within 200' (310 CMR 15.220(k)(l)).
3. The designer's certification needs to be added to the design plan (EDS 600.3.5).
4. A note needs to be added to the design plan to indicate all non-leach lines shall be tested for watertightness if within 6" of ESHGWT (EDS 500.3.1).

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5. The design plan did not depict the ESHGWT in the location of the proposed septic tank and pump chamber. If the bottoms of the tanks are below the ESHGWT then buoyancy calculations will be required (310 CMR 15.221(8), EDS 100.3.1). The buoyancy calculations need to assume the ESHGWT is at existing grade since a test pit was not conducted in the proposed location of the tanks (EDS 100.3.1).
6. A note needs to be added to the design plan to indicate the manhole covers shall be set slightly higher than existing grade (EDS 100.2.1).
7. The design plan did not indicate the center manhole of the pump chamber shall be permanently sealed (EDS 100.2.1).
8. Confirm if the proposed pump meets the requirement of passing 3/4" solids handling and 10 starts per hour (EDS 1100.2).
9. A note needs to be added to the design plan to indicate the pump controls will be lockable (EDS 1100.2).
10. Please indicate the size of the weep hole proposed in the force main pipe.
11. An inlet tee is required on the distribution box inlet (310 CMR 15.232(3)(a), EDS 200.2.1).
12. Neoprene seals at the openings of the distribution box are required (EDS 200.2.1).
13. A note needs to be added to the design plan to indicate the distribution shall be made watertight (310 CMR 15.221(1)).
14. The proposed elevations of the distribution box differ between the site plan view on sheet 1 and the profile view on sheet 2.
15. The inlet elevation of the leach field was not depicted on the design plan.
16. The breakout elevation of the leach field needs to use either a range or the highest elevation above the 2" peastone layer at the inlet of the leach field (310 CMR 15.255).
17. A note needs to be added to the design plan to indicate the stone in the leach field shall be double washed (310 CMR 15.247, EDS 700.2.2).
18. A note needs to be added to the design plan to indicate whether the leach laterals will be capped, connected together or vented (EDS 700.3.2).
19. Please explain the reason for a proposed 2:1 slope instead of a 3:1 slope on the southwest side of the leach field.
20. Although not a reason for disapproval you may wish to consider adding the height of the floats (inches from floor bottom) in the pump chamber to better assist the installer.

Recommendation: I recommend the Board of Health send a letter to the property owner stating that the plan for the proposed tight tank at this property, designed by Chris Rokos and dated December 9, 2020 is disapproved for the reasons outlined above.

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D. Complaints

(1) 21 County Road, Heeney, Map 133, Lot 4

We received questions from the owners of this property about the septic system abandonment and subsequent sewer connection for this property prior to their purchase in 2014. The owners stated they were having a significant sewage problem in their basement. Our records show that the existing system was in fact abandoned by John Duncan and inspected by Elaine, and I determined that it was likely an issue with their municipal sewer connection; as such, I advised them to call the DPW.

DPW Superintendent Mike Galli conducted an interior inspection of the dwelling with the homeowner, and determined that only a single toilet is connected to municipal sewer; the rest of the interior plumbing in the house is still being served by a (failed) septic system, which is causing the backup.

Recommendation: None – informational only due to ongoing investigation/inspections.

E. COVID-19 Updates

(1) Public Hearing for Extension of Timeline for Plastics Ban*

In November 2019, Essex residents passed a bylaw which bans single-use plastics at all establishments in town. This includes take-out and to-go containers, single-use plastic bags, and plastic utensils provided by gas stations, convenience stores, and restaurants. This ban was to take effect in January 2021. Since then, the pandemic has resulted in a decrease in overall business, as well as the temporary closure of several restaurants in town. As a result, establishments have a backstock of products containing the prohibited materials.

We have received a request from Maureen Woodman to extend the enforcement of this bylaw due to the financial hardship this requirement may cause. We have also received a short email from the owners of The Farm with a similar request.

Recommendation: Discussion. The Board of Selectmen are interested in working with business owners to lessen the burden the pandemic has caused for them; in addition, we have also received confirmation from Town Counsel that, although only 2 establishments in town have requested a variance from this requirement, the BoH is permitted to grant a blanket variance for all establishments, to extend the effective date of this bylaw from January 1, 2021, to any other date in the future.

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(2) Case Count

As of January 21, 2020, Essex has had 116 confirmed positive cases – an increase of 22 from the last 2 weeks – and one death. Our webpage is updated with current numbers when we receive notification of new cases. This week will be our 5th week in a row having a “yellow” status on the state map, based on the 2 week reporting period prior to the updated map being released each Thursday afternoon. The color status for a community of under 10K population depends on the number of cases in the 2 week period: fewer than 10 new cases is gray, 11-15 new cases is green, 16-25 cases is yellow, and over 25 new cases is red.

We continue to remind residents of the importance of social distancing, wearing face coverings, and hand washing. Contact tracing continues to be an issue, with positive cases not providing the identifying information for their close contacts or acknowledging the isolation requirements.

(3) Vaccination status

First responders in Essex who wanted to be vaccinated against covid-19 were provided the opportunity to receive the first vaccine dose last week in Gloucester via a Memorandum of Understanding. This MOU only provided for the first dose of this two-dose vaccine, and we are currently waiting for an updated MOU to ensure our first responders can receive the second dose within the required time frame.

In addition, there will be many opportunities for town residents to be vaccinated, including mass vaccinations sites, local pharmacies, and individual care providers. It is cost-prohibitive for the Essex Board of Health to consider operating public clinics at this time, considering the staffing and space requirements for this process. We are still discussing how to ensure our homebound and highly immunocompromised individuals may be vaccinated, and are encouraging all other individuals to utilize the frequently-updated map of vaccination locations available the state website.