



Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of April 11, 2022

Report covers from March 26, 2022 to April 8, 2022

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

A. Town Department Reports/Requests

(1) Strategic Planning Committee Meeting Summary (*)

I attended the subject meeting along with Chairman Pereen (who is a member of the Committee) and Town Planner Dana Menon on March 31, 2022. The meeting featured a discussion with respect to finalizing the pre-public forum draft of the Strategic Plan update. The Committee plans to hold a public forum concerning the document in May so that the Plan can be revised in accordance with public input before it is made final for the next five years. The Committee will meet next on April 28, 2022 and the public forum date will likely be selected then.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(2) Economic Development Committee Meeting Summary (*)

I attended the subject meeting along with Town Planner Dana Menon on April 7, 2022. The meeting featured a discussion regarding the general direction of the Committee and the firming up of assignments to various Committee members. At the next meeting, the EDC Chairman hopes to have an in-depth discussion concerning the Economic Development Plan that the Committee completed just prior to the onset of the COVID pandemic, and where the Committee should focus its efforts. Two members have agreed to review the various parcels held by the Town of Essex and to make recommendations concerning parcels that the Town should potentially sell.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

B. Computer Systems

(1) Regional Security Fabric Rollout Update

I attended a virtual meeting hosted by Danvers IT personnel on April 7, 2022, along with representatives of other communities who are participating in the rollout of a new, regional security fabric in our area. Danvers itself will be the first community to put all of the new tools in place over the next month or so (and had already been using some of the tools). Essex will be the first participating client community to have the security fabric installed for the region, likely beginning in May. In addition, the Regional IT Collaborative is supporting a fiber optic grant that the City of Gloucester plans to submit that will allow the new network to also have access to Gloucester. Like Danvers, Gloucester has a robust IT department and the Collaborative could certainly grow to include the City. Further, the Town of Manchester will soon be connecting through Essex all the

way to Danvers, which will give Manchester access to the same resources that we now enjoy.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

C. Personnel

(1) Continued AFSCME Collective Bargaining

Management engaged the union in continued collective bargaining on March 29, 2022.

Recommendation: Board discussion in executive session per the posted agenda.

D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects

(1) Essex River Bridge Replacement Project Update

(*)

I attended a construction meeting with personnel from MA DOT and the contractor for the Essex River Bridge replacement project on March 29, 2022. The meeting featured a discussion regarding the near-term schedule. Since the contractor is presently working on utility preparations, the project will involve intermittent closures of one travel lane through the month of April, 2022 (between 7 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. daily). Once the temporary bridge is put into operation (late-April or early-May), lane closures are expected to cease for many months, while the contractor begins to work on the demolition of the old bridge. As such, two-way traffic over the temporary bridge should be the norm for quite some time to come.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(2) Conomo Point Seawall Replacement Project Update

(*)

At the last meeting, the Board authorized Selectman Phippen to approve any change orders due to changes in methods necessary for the contractor to adapt to varying bedrock profiles. The Board expects that any change orders be deemed reasonable by our engineering consultant and that each change order result in a net savings to the Town, due to the smaller volume of concrete that is poured when bedrock rises up. Selectman Phippen and I participated in a construction meeting with the contractor and our engineering consultant on March 30, 2022. After our contractor provides the additional backup necessary to substantiate the cost of change order 2 (which should result in a net savings to the Town of at least \$14,000), Selectman Phippen will approve the change order.

Work is proceeding along smoothly and our contractor still expects to have the job completed prior to the end of May, 2022. I met with the contractor and with our engineering consultant in the field on March 31, 2022 to go over some technical and logistical issues concerning upcoming work. Most of the technical issues were worked out in the field and one issue needed to be put off until the

contractor actually gets to that area in order to better understand the specific site conditions. With respect to logistics, although clambers have been cutting through the Town lot known as the “Fire Lane” when a portion of Conomo Point Road needs to be closed due to the construction project, the next segment of work will require an additional jog across a small corner of a leasehold in order to keep that traffic moving. I reached out to the leaseholder and he graciously allowed this temporary intrusion (2-3 weeks) to occur, after which the general contractor will fully restore any impacts to his leasehold.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(3) Old Fire Station Site Restoration Project Update (*)

At the last meeting, the Board countersigned a final change order for the subject project that will be completed by April 30, 2022. Work on the restoration project is set to resume on April 11, 2022.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(4) Quarterly Affirmative Marketing Plan Report

I filed the subject report with the State in my capacity as the Town’s Affirmative Marketing Construction Officer (AMCO) during the week of April 4, 2022. The report is intended to document the Town’s utilization of woman or minority-owned businesses on State-funded construction projects. No such utilization occurred over the past quarter.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

E. Insurance

(1) Monthly Pothole Log

I received the monthly pothole log from the Department of Public Works during the week of April 4, 2022. The log is designed to document rapid repairs to any reported potholes. No potholes were reported during March.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Quarterly Building Self-Inspection Checklists

I completed the subject checklists for the Town Hall and the Senior Center on April 4, 2022. The checklists are aimed at finding safety hazards in buildings and taking any necessary corrective action before an accident occurs. No issues were noted this quarter.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

F. Facilities

(1) Memorial Park Restrooms

The restrooms at Memorial Park are now open for the season, seven days per week, from 8:30 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. This schedule will remain in place through September 30, 2022.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

G. Fiscal/Budget

(1) Finance Committee, Selectmen, School Officials Meeting Summary (*)

I attended the subject meeting on March 29, 2022 along with the Town Accountant. The meeting featured a discussion between the Finance Committee and Manchester Essex Regional School District Officials and personnel with respect to some of the finer points of the School District budget. All participants had a chance to ask a variety of questions and the detailed discussion shed light on the level of annual funding increase necessary to maintain a level program.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

H. Complaints

No items.

I. Meetings Attended

(1) Chebacco Lake Coalition Meeting Summary (*)

I attended the subject meeting along with Selectman Phippen on April 8, 2022. The Coalition is in the process of working with an engineering firm (Interfluve) to develop recommendations for the future permitting and implementation of the Alewife Brook stream channel cleanout in the upper reaches of the Brook (about 1,000 feet from the lake to Pond Street). The work is being paid for partially with Town funds and partially with funding that Senator Tarr (who coordinates the Coalition) was able to provide via the State earmark process. Presently, Interfluve has deployed water level loggers in the stream to understand the stream's relationship to lake level under different rainfall scenarios. Interfluve is also studying the relationship between the Town of Essex public water supply wells and the surrounding watershed (since any future cleanout of the stream channel could have an effect on the wells).

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

J. Town Meeting, By-Laws, and Regulations

(1) Draft Annual Town Meeting Motions

(*)

I have developed draft Annual Town Meeting motions for the Board's review.

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

(2) Annual Town Meeting Booklet

The Town Accountant and I finalized the Town Meeting booklet which contains the Annual Town Meeting warrant, the Finance Committee Report, the Personnel Board Report, and other resources during the week of April 4, 2022. The booklet is presently out for printing but a digital version is already available at the [Town Website](#).

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(3) Interim Compliance with MBTA Communities Zoning Compliance

As the Board may recall, I provided a summary of new draft guidelines that were authorized by a new Section 3A in the State Zoning Act during the second public forum with respect to the overall review of Essex zoning on March 23, 2022. After personnel from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) provided me with minutes of that forum, I attached both the agenda and the minutes to an on-line form that has been required by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD).

In addition to documenting the presentation, the form asked various questions about the present makeup of the Town's zoning and inquired as to the types of resources Essex might need in the future in order to achieve full compliance with the law. The form was reviewed by MAPC staff and I submitted it to DHCD on April 6, 2022 (well in advance of the May 2, 2022 deadline). Full compliance will be necessary in the future in order for the Town to remain eligible for several major State grant programs and the draft guidelines will hopefully be modified to provide more flexibility for compliance. Essex joined other local communities recently to voice a variety of concerns with the draft guidelines during the public comment period, which ended March 31, 2022.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

K. Legal Issues

(1) Quarterly Review of Executive Session Minutes

The Chairman has reviewed the Board's unreleased executive session minutes as is the case each quarter. No minutes were found to be suitable for release.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

L. Grants

(1) Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Grant Application (*)

As the Board is aware, we have been steadily working to study and design improvements to an Apple Street stream crossing and the elevation of the Apple Street roadbed on the Southern Avenue end of Apple Street. To date, the Town has received three grants for this purpose and we are ready to move into the final design and permitting phase. As such, I am presently developing an application to the subject grant program that will fund all remaining work to bring the project through permitting – shovel-ready status. The hope is to then apply for a combination of State and Federal funding to actually have the project constructed.

***Recommendation:* Board vote to authorize the Chairman to sign the electronic grant application, along with any other necessary supporting documents, when available.**

M. Emergency Planning

No items.

N. Other Items

(1) Town Administrator Leave

I was out of the office, on leave, for a portion of each day on March 31 and April 5, 2022 and all day on April 1, 2022.

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