



## Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of Sept. 27, 2021

Report covers from September 11, 2021 to September 24, 2021

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

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### A. Town Department Reports/Requests

#### (1) Strategic Planning Committee Meeting Summary (\*)

I participated in the Strategic Planning Committee meeting on September 20, 2021 along with Town Planner Dana Menon and Chairman Pereen. The Committee has been working on the next iteration of the Essex Strategic Plan and individual members have been assigned various focus areas. The Committee continued to hear recommendations on specific goals from individual members and agreed to meet again on October 25, 2021. The Town Planner will be working to compile all recommendations and input received to date into the first rough draft of the new version of the plan.

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

### B. Computer Systems

#### (1) Municipal IT Collaborative Proposals for New Services

I met with members of the municipal IT collaborative on September 16, 2021 to review what the Town of Danvers may be offering in the near future to augment its current level of regional service. Specifically, Danvers will be offering a comprehensive security system that will even be effective against ransomware attacks, along with favorable pricing for a web-based permitting application. We are also exploring the possibility of a new voice-over-IP (VOIP) telephone system. Funding may be sought at the upcoming Fall Town Meeting.

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

#### (2) Provisioning of New Laptops for Senior Center Staff

Senior Center staff have historically utilized stand-alone laptop computer systems that did not interface with the Town's central network. The Council on Aging Director recently purchased two new laptop computers that needed to be replaced due to age and wanted to join the central network. As such, I joined the two new computers to our domain and set up the users with Windows accounts on our server. This will allow for centralized antivirus protection and much more robust file and Windows desktop backup. The upgrade will also allow personnel to access the Town's network remotely.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

## C. Personnel

No items.

## D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects

### (1) Public Safety Facility Roof Defect Meeting Summary (\*)

Chairman Pereen and I met with personnel from the general contractor that constructed the new public safety facility, our project manager, our designer, and members of the Essex Police Department on September 16, 2021. The meeting featured a discussion of the report of the Town's third-party roofing consultant (Northeast Roof Consultants, LLC) concerning the probable major cause of defects concerning the building's shingle roof. While all parties agree that the nail boards beneath the underlayment and shingles warped and buckled due to exposure to moisture, there is not agreement from the contractor that the moisture was introduced through any type of storage, exposure, or construction error.

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

### (2) Preparation for Advertising of Conomo Point Seawall Replacement Project

I worked with our engineering consultant, GZA Geoenvironmental, during the week of September 13, 2021 to prepare to advertise the Town's Conomo Point seawall replacement project. Advertisements ran in the Central Register, the Gloucester Times, and on the State CommBuys site on September 22, 2021 (in addition to local posting). A site visit for prospective contractors will be held on October 7, 2021 and bids are due on October 14, 2021. The Board may be in a position to award a contract at its meeting of October 18, 2021.

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

### (3) Old Fire/Police Station Demolition Project Update (\*)

Chairman Pereen and I attended a project update meeting along with our project manager and our designer on September 21, 2021. Our demolition contractor for the subject project anticipates completion of asbestos abatement work as of September 25, 2021. Abatement work went faster than our contractor originally anticipated and should result in the project being completely wrapped up by early November.

The electric feed from the street to the building was removed by National Grid on September 20, 2021, after our contractor completed abatement operations on the interior of the building. We anticipate asking the Essex Water Department to turn off the water on or about September 27, 2021 (water was still needed for abatement work on the roof) so that our contractor can sever that connection underground. As of the printing of this report, we were still waiting for National Grid to turn off the natural gas supply at the main in the street (National Grid had already capped the service line and removed the gas meter at the building).

Verizon and Comcast had ample time to remove their service drops and these will be cut at the time of demolition if those utilities do not remove the drops by then.

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

(4) Army Corps of Engineers Report Concerning Beneficial Re-use of Sediment

As the Board is aware, the US Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) has been studying how both silty and sandy sediment that are presently clogging the navigable channel in Essex could be dredged up and beneficially reused in our system. For example, silty material might be able to be spread over the surface of the marsh to help the marsh platform keep pace with sea level rise. With respect to the sandier material near the mouth of the Essex River, it is possible that nearby barrier beaches (such as Crane Beach) could be nourished to help keep the beaches intact and to break wave action and currents coming in from the open ocean.

The ACOE has been studying these alternatives to traditional dredging, which usually uses deep ocean or land disposal for dredged sediments. While traditional dredging helps to keep navigation open, it does not work with our natural system to use the materials to create a coastal resiliency benefit. In the end, the ACOE will compare the cost of these novel ideas with the cost of traditional maintenance dredging and we will consider the options further from that point. I have spoken with personnel from the Trustees (which owns and operates Crane Beach) and they have expressed interest in studying possible scenarios involving beach nourishment with the ACOE.

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

## **E. Insurance**

(1) Safety Committee Meeting Summary

The Safety Committee met on September 23, 2021 and I participated as a member of the Committee. The meeting featured a discussion regarding ideas for applying for the annual MIIA Loss Control Grant. MIIA is the Town's insurer and offers up to \$10,000 per applicant, per year for equipment or training that will help to avoid future losses. We are exploring the possibility of applying for a driving simulator for the police and fire departments. Other ideas included lockout/tagout kits, new thermal cameras, and additional traffic safety equipment (cones, horses). Board of Health Administrator Erin Kirchner covered upcoming plans for OSHA training and our MIIA representative provided some updates with respect to required OSHA training and policies that the Town should put in place, if not already in place.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

## **F. Facilities**

### (1) Memorial Park Restroom Fall Hours

The Memorial Park public restrooms will revert back to a fall schedule (Thurs-Sun from 8:30 a.m. until 5:00 p.m.) as of October 1, 2021. The restroom will close for the season on November 1, 2021.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

## **G. Fiscal/Budget**

### (1) MAPC Assistance with Management of ARPA Funding

I met remotely with personnel from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) and other interested communities on September 15, 2021. MAPC is working to help communities properly manage compliance with Federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding. Even though Essex will be using the services of our engineering firm to manage the water projects that will be conducted with its discretionary ARPA funding, if the Town eventually gets more ARPA funding through competitive grants, additional management services may be necessary. MAPC is working on a Request for Proposals (RFP) to bring on suitable assistance.

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

### (2) Annual Risk Assessment & Monitoring Meeting

I hosted the subject meeting on September 23, 2021. This annual meeting gives all department heads a chance to review and revise as necessary the Town's Risk Assessment & Monitoring Plan. The Plan highlights areas in the Town's operations that are susceptible to financial fraud if not managed properly and the meeting focuses on changes in operations that might need to be captured in the Plan. After review, no department had any changes to submit this year.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

### (3) School Budget Collaboration Group Meeting Summary

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I participated in the subject meeting along with Finance Committee Chairman Buttrick on September 24, 2021. The meeting featured a discussion regarding general operating budget considerations for the two towns and for the District looking ahead to fiscal year 2023. Also, although District officials were hopeful a few years back that Essex Elementary School would not need major renovation or replacement for many years, recent signs indicate that replacement could be needed sooner.

The original hope was to allow the middle/high school debt to retire around 2034 before borrowing for the Essex Elementary project. The District is undertaking a study of Essex Elementary now so that all building-related issues and associated

costs and timelines can be known. If action will be required more quickly, perhaps the project can be scheduled when debt for the middle/high school starts to appreciably ramp down, which is in about six years.

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

## **H. Complaints**

No items.

## **I. Meetings Attended**

No items.

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

### (1) Further Review of Draft Fall Town Meeting Warrant (\*)

I have revised the draft Fall Town Meeting Warrant in accordance with guidance from the Board and from the Finance Committee at the last meeting.

*Recommendation:* **Further review and discussion with respect to the Fall Town Meeting warrant.**

## **K. Legal Issues**

No items.

## **L. Grants**

### (1) Submission of IT Grant Application for Meeting Broadcast Equipment

In accordance with the Board's vote in August, I submitted a grant application to the State IT Grant program for equipment that will make the broadcasting of meetings possible, along with an improved ability for interactive remote participation. 1623 Studios developed the grant application for the Town and I added my local understanding and input that content into the on-line grant application on September 21, 2021. If the equipment is funded, 1623 Studios will be able to support the broadcast of public meetings from the Town Hall auditorium at least four times per month.

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

### (2) Possible Building Resilient Infrastructure & Communities Grant Application

The application period for the Building Resilient Infrastructure & Communities (BRIC) grant opened on September 22, 2021. The Town may benefit from this Federal program that is offered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) with respect to the Apple Street roadbed elevation project but first needs

to meet a certain cost/benefit threshold known as the Benefit Cost Analysis (BCA). We are presently awaiting word from the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency as to whether our project is likely to meet that threshold.

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

#### **M. Emergency Planning**

No items.

#### **N. Other Items**

##### (1) Town Administrator Leave

I was out of the office, on leave, for a portion of September 14, 2021.

*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.*