

**Essex Strategic Planning Committee**  
**March 22, 2017, 7:00 PM**  
**Essex Senior Center, 17 Pickering Street**

**MINUTES**

**Members Present:** Keith Symmes, Westley Burnham (Planning Board alternate), Charlie McNeil, Paul Rullo (DPW Alternate), Peter Madsen, Bob Coviello, Lisa O'Donnell, David Gabor, Chair

**Staff Present:** Brendhan Zubricki, Matt Coogan

The December 12, 2016 meeting minutes were unanimously approved

**Strategic Plan Update**

Generating new Town revenues

- David Gabor reported that the Town will make annual debt payments between \$1.8 and \$2.2 million for \$51.4 million of capital improvements for the next 15 years. The Public Safety Building project, whether it is a renovation or new facility, would increase the annual debt service payments to between \$2.2 and \$2.7 million. There needs to be a plan put in place to pay for future expenditures, including new revenue sources.
- Brendhan suggested that revenue from Conomo Point leases and sales could cover costs associated with a Public Safety Building. In addition, other future major capital improvements, such as replacing the 100 year old water pipes, could be financed from water rates, taxes, or through a betterment. There is also the \$1 million revenue from the local meals tax. The Town has to keep in mind that any new capital improvements would lead to additional operating costs associated with maintenance. Brendhan would provide the Finance Committee with the Town debt schedule for determining when debt is retired.
- There was a discussion of the progress determining the future of the public safety building. Issues being addressed by the Town Building Committee include potentially contaminated soils in certain areas of existing site, site cleanup, temporary location of services, and the relocation of Shephard Memorial Drive with utilities.

## Economic Development Committee

- There was discussion on what the makeup of the new Economic Development Committee would be. Matt will have an analysis ready for the next quarterly meeting.

## Climate Change and Essex River

- Brendhan reported that there will be a feasibility study conducted by the Army Corp of Engineers for using the sedimentation from dredging and rebuilding of channel for thin layer deposition to raise the marsh heights as a means to combat sea level rise.
- Brendhan also reported that Essex will be the lead town for a management plan for the Great Marsh ACEC (Area of Critical Environmental Concern). Ipswich, Gloucester, Newbury, and Rowley are the other participating communities Good for siting new docks.

## Recreation

- There's a proposal in next year's budget from the finance committee for a youth program coordinator. The coordinator's focus would be setting up and running events, Town activities, picnics, etc. They would not be running the summer camp.

## Goal 8 Volunteer Fire Department

- Westley reported that a state bill has been proposed to give tax break for those who participate for call/ volunteer fire and EMT to incentivize participation. This would be in addition to the \$18/ hour on call pay. Brendhan added that 3 probation firefighters are officially joining the department. There's also the successful explorers group program.

## Government Participation

- There will be a new additional member to housing authority. This new member was identified by the survey distributed last fall.

## **Town Meeting**

- There was a discussion on the warrant articles for the Annual Town Meeting. The Town will vote on whether to allocate funding to produce renderings for a potential new Public Safety Building, either rebuilding on the existing site or created a new site by shifting the current location of Shepherd Memorial Drive. The interactive rendering would be used at public forums and for Fall Town Meeting. Also on warrant is funding for a Centennial Grove master plan, and funding for a new forestry fire vehicle, grinder pumps. The Town will vote on whether to allocate \$14,000 to purchase streetlights from National Grid in order to convert them to LED. Marijuana retail facilities will be taken up at the November Fall Town Meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:33 PM.