

**Essex Strategic Planning Committee**  
**January 31, 2018 7:00 PM**  
**Town Hall, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Conference Room, 30 Martin Street**

MINUTES

Members Present: David Gabor, Chair, Mike Burke, Vice Chair, Charlie McNeil, Andrew Spinney, Westley Burnham, Bob Coviello, John Bediz

Staff Present: Brendhan Zubricki, Town Administrator, Matt Coogan, Town Planner

Mr. Gabor opened the meeting at 7 PM.

There was no public comment.

June 12, 2017 Meeting minutes: A motion to approve the meeting minutes from the June 12, 2017 was made by Mr. Burnham, seconded by Mr. Bediz, and unanimously approved.

Strategic Plan Implementation: Mr. Coogan presented the Strategic Plan Quarterly Report to the Committee. The Committee specifically discussed the options for the new public safety building. Mr. Zubricki explained that there is not a perfect option and all have several issues. He reported that public feedback has been that any improvement, whether a renovation or new building would need to blend in to maintain the character of the neighborhood. The least liked option at the public meeting was to tear down and rebuilt because of the cost and potential environmental hazards.

Mr. Coogan also reported that the Town had already received over \$300,000 in grant funds since the Town received Green Communities Designation in 2015. The grants helped fund the Town Hall renovation, as well as phase one of a LED lighting upgrade and HVAC improvements at Essex Elementary School. The Town would be applying for more grant funding for additional projects at the Elementary School in March.

Mr. Gabor reported that the Finance Committee was working on options for funding capital improvements for the Town.

Mr. Zubricki provided an update on the Town's climate change and coastal resiliency initiatives. The Town is working with the State office of Coastal Zone Management (CZM) on pilot projects to establish oyster reefs in the Essex River as well as using materials to be removed from the river bed in a future dredging project for thin-layer soil disposition to raise the level on the marshes and address rising sea levels. Mr. Zubricki also mentioned that the Town received grant funding to become a Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) community, a process

that helps Towns prepare for climate change and coastal vulnerability, as well as provide grant opportunities.

Economic Development Committee: The Committee discussed the formation and membership of the new Economic Development Committee. Brendhan mentioned that members of the Strategic Planning Committee and the Board of Selectmen have put together a list of residents that are qualified and willing to serve on the committee. This list includes Westley Burnham, Bob Coviello, Georgeann Richards, Martha Mazzarino, Bob Coviello, Donna Roy, Mike Cataldo, Chris Larson, and Gayle McKinley. On a motion by John Bediz, and seconded by Mike Burke, the SPC voted to recommend that the Board of Selectmen appoint the list of 8 residents to the new Essex Economic Development Committee.

The Committee discussed economic development for the Town. Members felt that it was important to spur business growth and new business in order to bring in more tax revenue for the Town. It was noted that businesses pay taxes but do not use many of the Town's services, specifically the school district, and thus business growth is more desirable than residential growth because they bring in more tax revenue and cost the Town less in services. The committee discussed whether there was land available for new businesses to locate to Essex, and whether a business park was feasible. Mr. Zubricki mentioned that the Town has completed a build-out analysis with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) several years back, and there was a map that showed growth areas. The committee felt that this information would be useful for the new Economic Development Committee.

The Committee decided that Mr. Zubricki and Mr. Coogan would invite the new Economic Development to the next Strategic Planning Committee in March in order to have a joint meeting to discuss the Town's Strategic Plan and the economic development initiatives.

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Burnham, seconded by Mr. Spinney, and unanimously approved. The meeting concluded at 8:30 PM.