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***Important Information
Regarding Conomo Point and
Annual Town Meeting
on Monday, May 6, 2013 is enclosed.***

Please visit the Town's website for additional information on Conomo Point at

www.essexma.org/CP

Please feel free to contact the Town Administrator or any member of the Board of Selectmen with your questions.



**Town of Essex
Board of Selectmen**

30 Martin Street, Essex, MA 01929

Hello Essex Residents,

The Essex Board of Selectmen has prepared the enclosed information to help better inform all residents about the issues and decisions still facing the town regarding the town-owned property at Conomo Point.

Please do not underestimate the importance of this issue to all residents, even if you have no stake or interest in the area. The decisions that the Town makes over the next two years will have an indelible effect on the character and financial well being of the town for decades to come.

Wise decisions will put us on a stronger financial footing and will allow us the flexibility to start to address other issues which are critical to the town, including deteriorating infrastructure and maintaining the level and quality of services our residents deserve.

We have enclosed our recommendations herein. These come from careful and well thought-out plans, developed in conjunction with much public input and professional guidance, which consider all aspects of our town, not just the Conomo Point issue. Our plan has been developed to provide the best mix of financial security while still providing better access and facilities at Conomo Point to make it a more park-like destination for our residents.

We urge you to read the enclosed material, understand the issues and come to Annual Town Meeting on Monday, May 6th. Everyone's voice should be heard in making decisions that will affect all taxpayers.

The warrant includes six articles proposed by our Board, articles 10 through 15, and we urge that you learn about and vote in favor of these articles, as they will help the Town continue on a path of forward progress and come closer to meeting the DEP requirements. Please note that articles 16 through 20 are citizen-petitioned articles, are not consistent with our plan of best-use recommendations and could have significant fiscal implications that the town is not prepared to meet. Articles 16 through 20 are not supported by the Board of Selectmen.

Please contact any one of us or Town Administrator Brendhan Zubricki with questions.

Best regards,

Jeffrey Jones, Chairman

Lisa O'Donnell

Susan Gould Coviello

Why Conomo Point matters to everyone in Essex

The decisions that the Town makes, through Town Meeting, will determine how the property at Conomo Point is used in the future. These decisions all have direct and significant effects on property taxes for ALL Essex home and land owners.

Parks, waterfront access and other amenities and issues aside, Conomo Point is first and foremost a financial issue for the town.

Smart and responsible planning can improve Essex's strained budgets. Ill-advised decisions, not considering the many financial ramifications to the town, could leave the town financially strapped for decades.

What the Town needs to do about Conomo Point

The DEP is requiring the Town to comply with the Consent Agreement and reduce the wastewater flow from the town owned properties to 10,000 gallons per day.

This equates to 90 bedrooms at 110 gallons per bedroom, allowing the town to continue to own approximately 30 properties or about one-third of the residences at Conomo Point. The rest need to be sold or removed.

The Board of Selectmen's plan

The plan laid out by the Board of Selectmen over two years ago includes the following provisions, which have been somewhat modified as a result of the master planning work completed by the firm of Brown-Sardina earlier this year, working with the Conomo Point Planning Committee.

- The residences in Southern Conomo Point (south of Robbins Island Road) should be sold. This has been done through a series of votes at Town Meeting.
- The residences on Robbins Island and along Beach Circle should be sold. The zoning by-law for this area is before Town Meeting on Monday, May 6th. If this is successful, the Board will propose a subdivision and present an article for permission to sell this area at the 2014 Annual Town Meeting.
- The Town should retain ownership of the majority of, if not all of, the area of northern Conomo Point (the area north of Clammers' Beach). This may be achieved through a process of reducing bedrooms, attrition or limited sales of a few properties in the vicinity of Conomo Lane or, perhaps, a combination of all three.
- The Town should continue to own the maximum amount of property that it can in accordance with DEP in order to
 - Continue lease revenues, at fair market rates, to supplement the Town budget, for a period of 10 to 15 years.
 - Preserve options for future generations by keeping this parcel in town ownership.

- The Town should immediately begin design and construction work to improve public access to the Conomo Point waterfront, nearly all of which remains in town ownership and is currently accessible. Please see **Figure A** in the insert.
 - Improvements should include increased parking, rest facilities and inviting areas for Town residents to enjoy the scenery that Conomo Point provides.
 - Money for improvements to public access should be solely funded by increased revenues from the leased properties, such that no burden for this work is passed to taxpayers.
- A process of incremental improvement to the Conomo Point waterfront should be planned and completed over the next 5 to 10 years.
 - Incremental improvements will allow sound budgeting.
 - Incremental improvements will allow townspeople to use the new facilities and find what works and what is popular, so that additional improvements can be tailored to suit townspeople's interests and desires.

Why this plan is the logical and responsible choice

- The Selectmen's plan provides a thoughtful balance between responsibly protecting the Town's financial standing and providing more public access to Conomo Point. The Town could realize greater one-time revenue by selling more property, however this would be at the cost of losing the waterfront land forever. Decisions to take more property for use as park space in the near future will have uncertain results at best, as the land will not become "immediately" available and will cost the Town in lost revenue, additional legal fees, and increased construction and maintenance costs, all of which we can ill-afford at this time.
- The plan includes work to improve public access to the waterfront, which has been the comment most often heard regarding the Town property at Conomo Point. Furthermore, with careful financial planning, increased revenues from the leased properties, as well as interest from the capital from the sales, should help provide thoughtful and creative amenities at the Point, for all townspeople to use.
- The plan keeps the most desirable portions of the Point in town ownership, preserving options for future generations. Please see **Figure B** in the insert for a future "master plan". Current residents will be able to enjoy improved public access, have a voice in continued improvements and will not be additionally taxed for these amenities.

Proceeds from property sales

As properties are sold, the revenue from these sales is put into a separate fund and is considered a capital asset of the Town. This money cannot be used for operating expenses and cannot be used without appropriation by Town Meeting. The Board of Selectmen hopes to work with the Finance Committee to plan reasonable strategies that will help create a revenue producing endowment for the Town while addressing the needs of other areas in town.