



## Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of February 11, 2019

Report covers from January 26, 2019 to February 8, 2019

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

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### A. Town Department Reports/Requests

No items.

### B. Computer Systems

No items.

### C. Personnel

#### (1) Continued Collective Bargaining, EPBA and AFSCME

The management team engaged both unions in continued collective bargaining (EPBA on January 31, 2019 and AFSCME on January 30, 2019). The parties have reached tentative agreements, subject to the Board's final review and approval.

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

### D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects

#### (1) Potential Purchase of 11 John Wise Avenue (\*)

The Board would like to enter into a Purchase and Sale Agreement with the owners of 11 John Wise Avenue (something that had not occurred as of the time of printing of this report) and tonight's Special Town Meeting is one contingency that will need to be cleared in order to actually allow the Town to take an interest in new property and to approve an appropriation of the purchase price. It is possible that the Town Meeting will authorize the Board to proceed with a purchase if the seller does end up offering the property for sale, either by meeting time, or in the future. The Town's appraiser has placed a fair market value of \$610,000 on the property. A final public forum highlighting the work of the Town Building Committee with respect to the site selection and recommendation process was held on February 6, 2019 and the Board met on February 6 and February 8, 2019 to further its discussion and understanding of this matter.

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

#### (2) Review of Draft Water System Master Plan

The Department of Public Works has received from the Town's consultant, Wright-Pierce, a draft version of a Master Plan for future of the Town's water

system. Wright-Pierce was tasked with developing this plan after the Annual Town Meeting appropriated \$50,000 for this purpose, back in May of 2018. Presently, the Board of Public Works (BPW) and its staff are reviewing the content and recommendations in the draft Plan and will be providing feedback to our consultant in order to produce a final version of the Plan. The BPW will then recommend some first steps and it is expected that one or more of the highest priority recommendations will be considered by the Annual Town Meeting in May of 2019. In this way, steady progress toward maintaining and renovating the Town's aging water system can be made, in a step-wise fashion, over the next decade and beyond.

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

## **E. Insurance**

### (1) Pothole Log for the Month of January

I received the subject pothole log from the DPW during the week of February 4, 2019. No potholes were reported during January.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

## **F. Facilities**

No items.

## **G. Fiscal/Budget**

### (1) Final Budget Hearing, School District FY20 Operating Budget

I attended the subject hearing on January 29, 2019, along with members of the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee. The School District proposed a 3.48% increase with respect to Essex's apportionment. At the hearing, I described on behalf of the Selectmen and the Finance Committee how the Town is facing some unusually-large increases in certain areas in the coming budget year. That evening, the Committee agreed to consider implementing some sort of budget relief as part of its final budget vote on February 5, 2019.

*Recommendation:* This item may be discussed with item G2, below.

### (2) School Budget Group Meeting Summary

(\*)

Chairman O'Donnell, Finance Committee Chairman Buttrick, and I met with Manchester and School District officials on February 1, 2019 to continue to discuss the fiscal year 2020 operating budget proposal and the upcoming Memorial School construction project financing. District Director of Finance & Operations Avi Urbas shared excellent news with the group relative to the recent bond sale, highlighting an interest rate of 3.289% on the initial \$35M of funding.

The School Committee met on February 5, 2019 to review the Town's recent request to consider avenues that may allow for a small decrease in the fiscal year 2020 apportionment from the District. We have learned that an approximately \$33,000 reduction for Essex is being pursued (translating to an overall budget reduction of around \$100,000).

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

## **H. Complaints**

No items.

## **I. Meetings Attended**

No items.

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

### (1) Draft Annual Town Meeting Warrant (\*)

I have revised the draft Annual Town Meeting warrant per the Board's guidance at the last meeting.

*Recommendation:* **Board review of the revised draft warrant.**

### (2) Public Forum Concerning Public Safety Site Selection Process

The Selectmen and the Town Building Committee presented a public forum on February 6, 2019 concerning the Committee's recommendation for the use of existing Town property and the acquisition of private property for a new fire station. While the Town owns property associated with the cemetery that abuts John Wise Avenue, that site is not ideal for a single-story fire station with ample parking. However, according to the Town's design professionals, use of that single site is feasible, just not ideal. The Selectmen have placed on tonight's Special Town Meeting Warrant an article proposing that voters authorize the purchase of the abutting property at 11 John Wise Avenue. A second article would re-purpose a portion of the Spring Street Cemetery property that abuts John Wise Avenue. The forum was well attended and many residents asked a variety of questions. At the conclusion of the forum, both the Selectmen and the Town Building Committee unanimously voted to support the construction of a fire station on the Town-owned parcel alone if the ability to purchase the abutting, private parcel does not materialize.

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

## K. Legal Issues

No items.

## L. Grants

### (1) Shared Services Collaboration Grant Update

The boards of selectmen and other municipal and employees and officials from Essex and Manchester participated in a kickoff meeting for the subject grant program on January 31, 2019. Presently, our consultant, the Collins Center for Public Management, is working to interview various department heads and board/committee chairs, in both communities. I have developed a page on the Town website that will serve as a clearinghouse for information as the study unfolds ([www.essexma.org/collaborate](http://www.essexma.org/collaborate)).

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

### (2) CHAPA Technical Assistance Grant Housing Coalition Meeting (\*)

I attended the subject meeting along with Selectman Phippen on February 5, 2019. The meeting featured an exercise to provoke thought and conversation relative to how housing needs change for different groups of people over the course of a lifetime. The Coalition agreed that the next step should be to work with CHAPA staff to develop a presentation that can be used with various groups in Town such as the Chamber of Commerce, senior citizens, the PTO, etc., to bring attention to the need for a larger and more varied housing stock in Town.

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

### (3) Regional IT Services Study Grant Application

The Town of Middleton is interested in being the lead community on a regional grant application to improve regional/remote IT services offered by other communities. In Essex, we have been operating from that perspective for almost ten years (first collaborating with the City of Melrose and now with the Town of Danvers). The grant will not only explore the types of services that Essex is already receiving from Danvers (for the other communities in the region) but expansion of services into areas such as technical support and management of on-site assets. The Town of Danvers is interested in taking on additional clients and broadening its array of services offered. I will provide a letter of support to the Town of Middleton as part of the application.

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

### (4) Conomo Point Seawall Design and Permitting Grant Update (\*)

At the last meeting, the Board agreed that our engineer should look at using colored concrete with form liners to replace the aging, stone seawall system at

Conomo Point. The use of either new stone or a concrete wall with a stone veneer would introduce a durability issue that will require substantial future maintenance to the mortar joints to retain the integrity of the seawall. As such, I asked our engineer to provide some cost estimates concerning that possible construction method. A conservative estimate puts the construction project at just over \$1.5M, plus approximately \$150,000 for engineering oversight (a grand total of about \$1.7M). Our engineer has provided some photographic examples of the types of finishes that can be achieved from liners and colorants.

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

(5) Grant Funding to Replace Existing Street Lamps with LED Fixtures (\*)

As the Board is aware, the Town presently owns all public street lights after purchasing them from National Grid. The next step is to convert the existing, old-style lamps to LED fixtures using grant funding. The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) recently released a second round of funding as part of its LED Street Light Rapid Retrofit Grant program. This program covers 30% of most of the costs necessary for conversion. In addition, the Green Communities Grant program has traditionally covered 100% of street light conversion costs in other communities. In order to effectively compete for Green Communities funding for this purpose, it may be necessary to also take advantage of the MAPC program. Green Communities Grant decisionmakers will want to see that other available programs are being tapped as well. A statement of interest relative to the MAPC program is due by February 15, 2019, whereas the Green Communities grant application will be due sometime in March.

*Recommendation:* **Board discussion relative to possibly applying to both grant programs and approval of the necessary application paperwork at and/or outside of a meeting.**

## **M. Emergency Planning**

(1) Regional Dispatch Center Advisory Board Meeting Summary (\*)

I presided over a meeting of the various Regional Dispatch Center advisory boards as Chairman of the Executive Advisory Board on January 30, 2019. The meeting featured an update from the State 911 Department concerning the status of preparations for taking over the operation of the Center and assuming operational costs as of July 1, 2019. Presently, the Department has provided to the Town a revised draft of the proposed Agreement, which resulted from municipal commentary concerning the original draft. The Department plans to consider one more round of revisions before asking the communities to sign a final Agreement. The Department has been very responsive to comments made to date. However, the process cannot go on indefinitely, since the Department needs to prepare to assume control as of this coming July 1. As such, the Department's next draft will likely be largely non-negotiable.

Also, the Center's Director discussed the need for each of the communities to budget for police and fire training time necessary to learn how to use new dispatch software that will be rolled out in the coming months. The Center presently uses the Spillman software suite but, after much prompting from the participating communities, will be moving to a new vendor (IMC) in the near future. We have asked the State 911 Department to consider funding this cost. If that is not possible, the cost may have to be absorbed in the fiscal year 2020 operating budget (and the Police Department has included the necessary figure in its budget proposal, in the event that is necessary).

**Recommendation: Board vote to authorize the signature of the final Agreement, outside of a meeting, if necessary, once the Department considers making its final round of revisions.**

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

No items.

*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.*