



## Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of February 24, 2020

Report covers from February 8, 2020 to February 21, 2020

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

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### A. Town Department Reports/Requests

#### (1) Quarterly Strategic Planning Committee Meeting

Town Planner Matt Coogan attended the subject meeting on February 12, 2020. The meeting featured updates on a number of projects and initiatives which are ongoing in Town and the Committee's first effort at preparing to update the Strategic Plan for the next five years. The original plan covered 2015 to 2020 and a revised iteration of the plan will be developed and released in the future to cover 2021 to 2025.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

### B. Computer Systems

No items.

### C. Personnel

No items.

### D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects

#### (1) Public Safety Building Construction Project Update (\*)

Chairman Spinney and I participated in construction meetings on February 13 and 20, 2020. The contractor is presently focusing on the actual pouring of foundation footings and walls.

*Recommendation:* Board discussion as necessary.

#### (2) Change Order: Relocation of HVAC Condensers to Public Safety Bldg. Roof (\*)

In the past, the Board has discussed the need for the relocation of some HVAC condensers to the roof of the new public safety building, along with a roof hatch and ladder/stairs. Our construction contractor has priced this work and the change order carries a cost of approximately \$18,000. Our Project Manager and architects are reviewing the proposal.

***Recommendation:* Board approval of the change order for condenser relocation and access after final review by our Project Manager and our architects has been completed.**

(3) Change Order: Installation of Bottle Filler in Physical Training Room (\*)

In the past, the Board authorized the Chairman to sign off on a change order to provide a bottle filler in the physical training room that will be part of the new public safety facility. The original design did not include this amenity and it was thought to be a low value change order. Recently, when our contractor worked up the pricing, however, it came in at over \$7,000. Our design professionals and our construction contractor are presently reviewing the proposal with the plumbing subcontractor that developed this pricing.

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

(4) Change Order: Time Extension for Public Safety Building Project (\*)

The Board discussed in the past the concept of extending the public safety facility project completion date through the end of January, 2021. The extension was to allow the contractor to absorb most small setbacks and would really only mean moving into the new facility at the beginning of February, 2021, as opposed to mid-January. More recently, our contractor has indicated that even more time is desired, through the middle of March, 2021. While the exact date for building occupation is not critical to the Town, going beyond the end of January, 2021 has much more of a potential to require the payment of additional project carrying costs. This issue will require additional discussion with the contractor and with our design professionals.

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

(5) Finalization of Exterior Colors and Materials, Public Safety Building (\*)

At the last meeting, the Board reached agreement with the Chairman of the Town Building Committee (Lisa O'Donnell) with respect to the Town's preferences for materials and colors to be applied to the Town's new public safety building, which is now under construction. Chairman O'Donnell and I provided a detailed breakdown of those requests to our Project Manager and to our designer to understand: a) if the preferences are possible, b) whether any of the preferences will carry a net cost increase, and c) what drawbacks might be associated with the choices.

Subsequently, on February 19, 2020, personnel from our architect and Town personnel and officials participated in a conference call to review the Town's preferences in more detail. Generally, everything that was discussed by the Board at the last meeting can technically be done. However, our architect has indicated that both short and long-term building aesthetics may be adversely affected.

*Recommendation:* **Board discussion with respect to the expected outcomes associated with making certain choices.**

(6) Conversion of Essex Street Lights to LED Lamps

Our street light conversion contractor, Arden Engineering, commenced work on converting all of the public street lights in Essex to LED lamps on February 10, 2020. Work has proceeded smoothly on the cobra head street lights and that work was completed during the week of February 17, 2020. About fourteen lights (all parking lot and spotlights) have not yet been converted over, since some of the lights that were shipped from our lighting supplier were not compatible with our situation. Our lighting designer is working to arrange for the return of the wrong fixtures and the shipment of the proper fixtures. Thereafter, our installer will return to Town for one day to install the remaining lights.

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

(7) Application to MA DOT to Line Out No-Parking Zones on Route 133

At the last meeting, the Board agreed that our engineer's plans calling for the lining out of various areas where it is too dangerous to park along the downtown stretch of Route 133 should be officially submitted to the MA DOT for approval. In order to facilitate that process, I signed up for an account on DOT's new State Highway Access Permit System (SHAPS). I was able to designate our engineering firm (TEC) as our agent so that TEC could use SHAPS to submit the permit application on the Town's behalf. Our application is presently undergoing review by DOT, a process that will likely take us through March.

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

**E. Insurance**

No items.

**F. Facilities**

No items.

**G. Fiscal/Budget**

(1) Peer Community Cost Comparison Study

The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) kicked off a peer community municipal services cost comparison study with a conference call on January 10, 2020. The work is funded as a grant through the Town of Manchester and it seeks to review the costs for various aspects of municipal government in eight or ten peer communities in the metro-Boston area. During the kickoff call, MAPC personnel explained that they needed to collect certain financial data from each community, in order to begin the data compilation and comparison process. I have since provided MAPC with all requested data. This first phase of work will likely take until mid-March.

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

(2) Exploration of Moving to a Different Veterans' Services District (\*)

At the last meeting, I reported that the City of Gloucester, which hosts the Gloucester Veterans' Services office, had offered to take over coordination of Essex veterans' issues and benefits from the Eastern Essex Veterans' District in the upcoming fiscal year. The Board and its representative to Eastern Essex agreed that the offer from Gloucester, which already coordinates veterans' affairs for Gloucester, Rockport, and Manchester, should be investigated further. After confirming our obligations to Eastern Essex with respect to possibly leaving that District (the Agreement require sixty days' notice), I was provided more details from Gloucester. Presently, it still appears that the cost to participate in the Gloucester district will be \$15,000 (which is about \$2,000 less than our present fee to participate in the Eastern Essex district).

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

## **H. Complaints**

No items.

## **I. Meetings Attended**

No items.

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

(1) Continued Review of Draft Annual Town Meeting Warrant (\*)

The Board reviewed the first draft of the Annual Town Meeting warrant at the last meeting. One matter that was considered at the time was whether a proposal for a local licensing authority and process regulating the sale of marijuana in Essex should be added to the warrant. The Board met with the Host Community Agreement Advisory Committee on February 13, 2020 and discussed this possibility with the Committee. The Board decided that local licensing should be brought as an option to the voters. As such, I have added an article to the warrant in that regard.

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

## **K. Legal Issues**

No items.

## L. Grants

### (1) Apple Street Culvert Replacement Design Grant Update and Application (\*)

Our engineering consultant, TEC, conducted soil test borings in the area of a culvert running under Apple Street near its junction with Southern Avenue on February 10, 2020. The work is part of a Massachusetts Division of Ecological Restoration (DER) grant that is seeking to make the stream crossing more ecologically sound. At the same time, the design will take into account the need to elevate the roadbed in that area, since coastal storm surges can flood Apple Street in that location. According to our consultant, the test boring work went well and TEC is working to coordinate various sub-consultants to complete this data collection and survey phase.

We hope to get additional DER grant funding to complete design and permitting work by next season (applications for the next round of grant funding are due in late March). Thereafter, we will focus on funding for a design to also elevate a second low point on Apple Street and we will go for construction funding for both areas combined as a final action. With respect to next year's DER funding, members of our project team met in my office on February 18, 2020 to discuss the necessary scope of work and best approach to developing the grant application. Two team members had recently attended a DER briefing concerning the upcoming grant announcement and were well prepared to guide the group toward this year's application development and submittal.

***Recommendation:* Board vote to authorize the Chairman to sign the grant application for next season's funding round once our team has completed it. The application is due on March 25, 2020.**

## M. Emergency Planning

No items.

## N. Other Items

### (1) Presidents' Day Holiday

The office was closed on February 17, 2020 in observance of the subject holiday.

*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.*