



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

Report covers from February 23, 2019 to March 8, 2019

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

A. Town Department Reports/Requests

(1) Essex Police Department Accreditation

The Essex Police Department received official accreditation from the Massachusetts Police Accreditation Commission on March 26, 2019. I attended the ceremony along with Selectman Spinney. The Department has worked diligently to achieve this standard after first receiving certification a number of years ago and is to be congratulated on this work.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Town Building Committee Meeting Summary/Public Safety Project Status(*)

The Town Building Committee met jointly with the Selectmen on February 27, 2019. After a presentation from the Town's design professionals, the decision was made to pursue to a combined facility on the combined site at John Wise Avenue (comprised of former, unutilized Town cemetery land and an adjoining parcel to be purchased at 11 John Wise Avenue). This arrangement will translate to the most cost-efficient project from design, construction, and future operations perspectives.

Also, on March 5, 2019, the Selectmen and our design professionals met jointly with the Essex Conservation Commission to consider how the project might be designed and controlled in consideration of the wetlands to the rear of the combined site. While the Commission will not be able to officially comment until a Notice of Intent is actually filed concerning the project, it was evident that careful storm water management design work will likely assuage concerns.

Further, Chairman O'Donnell and I met with the Chairman of the Appeals Board. The new, combined facility along John Wise Avenue will require zoning relief from the front yard setback requirement, which is 50 feet, due to the building being over 10,000 square feet in area. It will likely be necessary to decrease that setback to 25 feet. We learned from the Chairman what the process entails and the standards that will be used by the Appeals Board in reviewing the Town's application. It will be important to begin pulling together an application with Town Counsel relatively soon.

Recommendation: **Board discussion relative to project status and next steps.**

(3) Request for Mechanical Clearing of Alewife Brook Channel (*)

The Chebacco Lake Association recently wrote a letter to the Town asking whether the Alewife Brook (which is the outlet to the lake) could be cleaned out using machinery, as opposed to the hand clearing work that has been done periodically over the years. The Association has indicated that a stream channel clogged with debris, sediment, and vegetation has contributed to property flooding and shoreline erosion adjacent to the lake (due to high water levels from poor drainage).

I referred this inquiry to both the Board of Public Works and the Conservation Commission. The Board of Public Works is willing to continue to provide a means of disposal for items hand-cleared from the stream channel. However, they are not in a position to offer machinery, even if such undertaking is properly permitted through Conservation Commission. The Commission has commented that, without a specific proposal for work, it is unable to answer definitively. However, generally, the Commission is not particularly comfortable with the prospect of the use of machinery of any type. If the Association cares to hire an expert to develop a formal Notice of Intent to the Commission, it certainly may do so. Any work that does receive approval would not, however, be supported by Town equipment and personnel.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

B. Computer Systems

(1) Replacement of Network Wiring at Water Filtration Plant

The computer network wiring at the Water Filtration Plant, which also serves at the Department of Public Works' administrative offices, is almost twenty years old. The wiring was originally run up to a switch on the second floor, with a single cable connecting the network with outside resources. Various, older hubs and switches were also still in place. In order to take full advantage of the recently-installed fiber optic switch that interconnects the Plant with other Town buildings, it was necessary to install more modern cable, with each run directly terminating at its own port on the new switch. This new work was completed by our electrical contractor during the week of February 25, 2019 and performance improved dramatically at every workstation after I connected all of the new drops. Town Hall already has modern wiring and the new public safety facility project will take care of shortcomings with wiring in the present public safety facility.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary. Total time – 2 hours.

(2) Renewal of Antivirus Client Licenses

Each year at this time, a portion of our client licenses for our antivirus software become due for renewal. As such, during the week of March 4, 2019, I ordered

and installed the required licenses renewals. Another portion of our client licenses will be renewed in December.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary. Total time – ½ hour.

C. Personnel

(1) Preliminary Fiscal Year 2020 Wage & Salary Scale (*)

I have developed a preliminary version of the Wage & Salary Scale that the Board reviews and ultimately recommends to the Annual Town Meeting, in its capacity as Personnel Board. This year's revision features a proposed 2% general increase as a cost of living allowance (COLA). The Board will be asked to vote on the COLA and to recommend the Wage & Salary Scale to Town Meeting at its next meeting, on March 25, 2019.

Recommendation: **Board review of this preliminary schedule.**

(2) Safety Committee Meeting

The next Safety Committee meeting will be held on March 21, 2019. I will attend as a member of the Committee and a draft agenda has been placed in the Board's reading file.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects

(1) Future Application for Permit to Dismantle Structure at 11 John Wise Av. (*)

Now that the Purchase and Sale Agreement for the Town's purchase of 11 John Wise Avenue has been signed by both parties, it is necessary to begin the process of considering the future of the existing structure on the parcel. To date, the Town Building Committee has suggested that the structure could be dismantled and moved slightly to be joined to the new building as the building's meeting room. The structure could also be stored in a dismantled state, used on other Town property, or even sold for its appeal.

The home on the property was formerly the carriage barn for the Cogswell Estate. Given that the structure is over 100 years old, the Historical Commission may vote to put in place a four-month delay before any dismantling can occur. The Commission has 30 days after the Town's filing of the demolition permit to schedule a meeting on the topic, which, along with other lead times in the procedure, translate to a six-month overall permitting lead time. I have learned that it is possible for the Board to apply for the necessary permit, even though the Town does not yet own the property, so long as the present owner consents to the application. The actual dismantling, of course, would not occur until after closing, which will occur on or before June 1, 2019.

The demolition permit application will require several departments to sign off and a full survey for asbestos will need to have been performed, among other things, before a permit is actually issued. However, it is the filing of the permit application that starts the demolition delay clock. All other preparatory matters can be handled between the filing date and the date that an actual permit is issued.

Recommendation: Board discussion relative to this important component of the project.

E. Insurance

No items.

F. Facilities

(1) License to Use Centennial Grove, Saint John's Prep Rowing Program (*)

At the last meeting, the Board agreed that, like the Pingree School and Endicott College in the past, it would be advantageous to the Town to grant Saint John's Prep a license to utilize Centennial Grove for its rowing program (practices only, no actual meets). The Board asked that I work out a standard license with the school for the period between ice out and May 31, 2019, at the rate of \$250 per week of occupancy. I expect to have a signed license by meeting time.

Recommendation: Countersignature of the license with St. John's Prep, if available by meeting time.

(2) Street Light Maintenance, with Assistance from Ipswich

Now that the Town owns the street lights on the National Grid/Verizon poles, it is the Town's responsibility to maintain the lights. Presently, we own the old-style lights, and are pursuing grant funding to convert the lights to LED-style lamps. We have received word from a resident that a light has burned out in a critical area on Southern Avenue. Given that the Town does not have a maintenance division or even a bucket truck, I contacted the Town of Ipswich, which has its own, full-service light division, to inquire if they could help us, for a fee. Ipswich is willing to assist and the bulb will be replaced very soon. We hope to continue to utilize services from Ipswich in the future, both while we continue to maintain the old-style lights and perhaps even after we have converted to LED lamps.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(3) Town Hall Clock Repair

Recently, the Town Hall clock was stopped, due to what we thought may have been ice or wind drag on the clock hands, which is common. I reset the clock but it stopped again, at the same time of day, and it was evident that the hour hand on

one of the clock faces was hanging up on the raised symbol for the number 12. I contacted our clock expert and he was able to determine that the gear system just inside that clock face had been pulled in slightly, causing inadequate clearance for the clock hand. After putting the gear system back into place and shimming it to remain there, our expert restarted and reset the clock and it is again working properly.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

G. Fiscal/Budget

No items.

H. Complaints

No items.

I. Meetings Attended

(1) Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce Essex Division Meeting

I attended the subject meeting along with Chairman O'Donnell, Selectman Spinney, and other Town personnel. The meeting featured a discussion relative to the public safety building project. I was also able to update the group concerning other ongoing Town projects and initiatives.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Northeast Coastal Coalition (NECC) Meeting (*)

The Town once again hosted the NECC, on March 1, 2019. The NECC met jointly with the Merrimac River Beach Alliance (MRBA) to discuss a possible program for the purchase and operation of maintenance dredging equipment that would make regular rounds along the north shore. Senator Tarr coordinates both the NECC and the MRBA and has been instrumental in advancing this concept. Personnel from the Woods Hole Group (WHG) presented their work to date with respect to the feasibility of such a program, which would involve each community securing its own dredging permits.

A community would only incur dredging costs when the equipment was actively at work within the community, but at a rate that should be well below market, which has been Barnstable County's experience with its own program. Funding could be from the community or perhaps via State and/or Federal grants. A site visit to view elements of the Barnstable County program is set for this spring and the WHG feasibility study will be completed by June 30, 2019. Selectman Spinney, Deputy Harbormaster Fialho, and I will represent Essex with respect to this effort.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

J. Town Meeting, By-Laws, and Regulations

(1) Draft Annual Town Meeting Warrant

I have revised the draft Annual Town meeting warrant in accordance with the Board's guidance from the last meeting. The warrant has had the benefit of a preliminary review by Town Counsel. A final version of the Warrant will be presented to the Board for approval and signature on March 25, 2019.

Recommendation: Further Board discussion as necessary, as per the posted agenda.

K. Legal Issues

(1) Relocation of Utility Poles at Conomo Point

At the last meeting, the Board agreed that National Grid and Verizon should be allowed to relocate three utility poles along the causeway near Beach Circle on Conomo Point. The utilities have been asked to move the old poles, which are scheduled for routine replacement, out of the marsh by environmental permitting authorities. The Chief of Police and the Superintendent of Public Works have indicated that a 2.5-foot relocation toward the roadway of each pole would not present a hazard to motorists or a hindrance to snow removal. However, the Superintendent of Public Works has stipulated that the holes need to be hand dug, due to the presence of a buried, plastic waterline in the area.

Further, the utility does not have an adequate easement for the new pole locations, despite its original claim to the contrary. As such, the Board asked me to work with Town Counsel to develop the necessary letter of permission to allow for this future work. That letter was developed and the Chairman signed it during the week of February 25, 2019. National Grid has since announced that it will countersign the letter (which we expect to receive soon), thereby agreeing to its terms.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

L. Grants

(1) MVP Action Grant Monthly Reports

I filed the subject reports for the month of February with the State during the week of February 25, 2019. With respect to the natural sediment deposition study, personnel from the University of New Hampshire will conduct a workshop/symposium on the data collected to date on March 28, 2019, at the

Essex Town Hall. With respect to the mussel reef literature study, Northeastern University personnel are steadily working to assemble that report.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) FEMA Site Visit for Potential Seawall Repair Work Reimbursement

As the Board may recall, officials at the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) initially had indicated that the Town's seawall repair work conducted last spring would not be eligible for disaster reimbursement. However, I have continued to work with FEMA staff and I hosted a site visit on March 8, 2018 to review the work that the Town had conducted, for possible, partial reimbursement (up to the program's maximum of 75%). We will receive additional information concerning eligibility in the near future.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(3) Grant Applications for Conversion of Street Lights to LED Lamps (*)

The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) has decided to offer another round of funding under its Rapid Street Light Retrofit grant program. The program covers 30% of the cost of certain eligible components of the conversion process from old-style street lights to new, LED lamps. In Essex, we plan to apply for all remaining costs (i.e. beyond those covered by MAPC) through the Commonwealth's Green Communities grant program. MAPC will soon provide the Town with a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that memorializes what is covered by that grant program and by when the conversion work must be completed. Also, our Town Planner will develop and submit a Green Communities grant application by the March 22, 2019 deadline.

Recommendation: **Board vote to authorize the signature of both the MAPC MOU and the Green Communities grant application, when each is available.**

(4) Culvert Replacement Municipal Assistance Grant Program Application (*)

The Ipswich River Watershed Association (IRWA) has identified a culvert in Essex that may fare well in the Massachusetts Division of Ecological Restoration (DER) Culvert Replacement Municipal Assistance Grant Program. The Board has already begun to consider this culvert, which runs beneath Apple Street at its Southern Avenue end. IRWA has indicated that this stream crossing is not up to environmental standards. In addition, the Board has already written to the Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to request assistance in elevating the road and improving the crossing in that area to make Apple Street a viable alternate route to Route 133 during extreme flooding events. At this stage, IRWA could apply for survey and design work, with no local match required. The hope would be to improve the environmental value of the crossing while working to elevate the roadway. The application deadline is March 20, 2019.

Recommendation: **Board vote to sign the grant application, once the final version is available.**

M. Emergency Planning

No items.

N. Other Items

No items.

This report is available at www.essexma.org on the morning after any regularly scheduled Essex Board of Selectmen's Meeting.