



Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of April 8, 2019

Report covers from March 23, 2019 to April 5, 2019

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

A. Town Department Reports/Requests

(1) Town Building Committee Meeting Summary (*)

The Selectmen met jointly with the Town Building Committee on March 27, 2019. Our design professionals are moving along well with design revisions and the design is presently in the first phase of cost estimation. An application for the demolition (via dismantling) of the structure at 11 John Wise Avenue has been filed with the consent of the present property owner and the demolition delay review process clock has therefore been started. Further, Town Counsel has opined that the project, as designed, will not require any variances and that opinion is now under review by the Building Inspector. The Committee will meet jointly again with the Board for a public forum concerning the project on April 10, 2019.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

B. Computer Systems

No items.

C. Personnel

No items.

D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects

(1) Affirmative Marketing Program Quarterly Report

I have filed with the State the subject quarterly report for the quarter ending March 31, 2019. The report documents any woman or minority-owned business utilization on State-funded construction projects. No such utilization occurred during the past quarter.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

E. Insurance

(1) Freeze-up Prevention Logs

Each year, during the coldest months, the Police Department and the Department of Public Works inspect all Town buildings at least once per weekend, to ensure

that heating systems are operating. The season is behind us now and I have collected the logs and provided them to our insurer for insurance premium credit as part of the MIIA Rewards Program.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Monthly Pothole Log

I have obtained from the Department of Public Works the pothole log for month of March. One pothole was reported and was promptly filled.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

F. Facilities

(1) Memorial Park Restrooms Open for Season

The public restrooms at Memorial Park opened for the season as of April 1, 2019. The restrooms are open from 8:30 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. daily, through September 30, 2019, with a shortened schedule for the month of October. I have coordinated the nightly locking of the restrooms with the police department.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Quarterly Facility Self-Inspection Checklists

I completed the subject checklists for the Town Hall/Library and the Senior Center during the week of April 1, 2019. The checklists are aimed at discovering safety hazards within or around buildings to prevent accidents and injuries. At Town Hall, the custodian is focusing on additional basement cleanup, especially with respect to our map and plan storage areas. Other departments complete checklists with respect to other buildings.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

G. Fiscal/Budget

(1) Finance Committee Recommendation/Town Meeting Booklet

At the last meeting, the Board made various final budget decisions in conjunction with the Finance Committee. Thereafter, I worked with the Town Accountant to assemble the Committee's recommendations to be incorporated into the Town Meeting booklet. The booklet was delivered to our printing contractor at the end of the week of April 5, 2019 and should be available in the next couple of weeks.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

H. Complaints

No items.

I. Meetings Attended

(1) Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce Caucus

I attended the subject meeting on March 29, 2019. The caucus featured a discussion relative to how Cape Ann communities can promote affordable housing on a regional basis. Ms. Dana LeWinter of the Citizens' Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA) accompanied us in order to better understand the affordable housing situation in our region. At the meeting, Ms. LeWinter summarized the effort in Essex and we also had a chance to hear from our legislative delegation with respect to housing and other initiatives at the State level.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Essex Merchants' Group Meeting Summary

(*)

Selectman Spinney, Finance Committee Chairman Buttrick, and I met with the Essex Merchants' Group on April 3, 2019. The Group asked us to attend due to the Finance Committee's recommendation not to fund the promotion of the Town line item in fiscal year 2020, because of extreme budget constraints. At the meeting, we explained the logic behind arriving at the budget cut and the Merchants' Group provided information concerning how the use of the promotional money translates to economic development and continued meals tax revenue. Chairman Buttrick invited members of the Group to the next Finance Committee meeting on April 9, 2019 to discuss possible near-term and long-term restoration of funding, at least in part.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

J. Town Meeting, By-Laws, and Regulations

(1) Draft Town Meeting Motions

(*)

I have developed preliminary motions for the Annual Town Meeting.

Recommendation: **Board review and discussion of the draft motions.**

(2) Guide to Select Annual Town Meeting Articles

(*)

As was the case with the Fall Town Meeting, I have developed a guide to select Annual Town Meeting articles that may be offered on the Town's website in advance of the Town Meeting.

Recommendation: **Board review and discussion relative to the draft guide.**

K. Legal Issues

No items.

L. Grants

(1) Discussion of Possible Municipal Essex/Manchester Collaboration Ideas (*)

At the last meeting, the Board received a preliminary memo from the Collins Center relative to some possible municipal collaboration steps between Essex and Manchester. The memo focused on those areas that would be relatively easy to implement and which do not require additional study or development time.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(2) Essex Housing Coalition Update

Town Planner Matt Coogan and I discussed the status of the Essex Housing Coalition with Citizens' Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA) personnel on March 25, 2019. The Association is presently working with the Town to identify what affordable housing should look like in Essex, eventually building support and moving toward implementation. Presently, CHAPA personnel are working to present the need for more affordable housing in Essex to various community groups. CHAPA views the Planning Board's effort to possibly recommend mixed-use zoning for the downtown Essex area as the first important step. To that end, CHAPA will likely host a public forum in September, after it is confirmed whether the Planning Board will propose a mixed-use zoning district to the Fall Town Meeting.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(3) MVP Action Grant Workshop, Sediment Deposition

Dr. Gregg Moore of the University of New Hampshire provided a formal presentation of his recent research concerning the ability of the Great Marsh to rebound from a January, 2018 natural sediment deposition event. The research is being funded by the State as part of the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Action Grant program. Dr. Moore demonstrated that several large areas within the Great Marsh are recovering well and the project represents a new addition to the scientific literature, since an event of this magnitude has not been previously studied at this level of detail. The Board will be applying this year for a second season of recovery monitoring. After the workshop, participants had a chance to visit one of the recovery sites, at Jeffrey's Neck in Ipswich.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(4) Downtown Boardwalk Feasibility Grant Quarterly Report

I have filed with the State the subject report for the quarter ending March 31, 2019. This project is still on hold, since State funding is not available to move toward final design or construction.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(5) Official Award of District Local Technical Assistance Grant (*)

As the Board may recall, the Town Planner had applied to the subject grant program for assistance from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) for the production of an Economic Development Plan for Essex. We had been waiting to know whether the project would be officially funded and we learned during the week of March 25, 2019 that it has been. This project will help the Economic Development Committee write the Plan, in much the same way that MAPC helped the Strategic Planning Committee write the Town's Strategic Development Plan.

In the past (including during this year's application process), the grant program did not require a local match. However, we have been informed that, due to high demand for the program, MAPC is asking for modest local matches in order to better leverage their available funds. In this case, the total project cost will be \$32,080 and MAPC is asking for a local match of \$5,000 (about 16%). No money has been programmed in the fiscal year 2019 operating budget for this purpose, so a Reserve Fund Transfer will need to be requested.

***Recommendation:* Board vote to request the local match from the Finance Committee via a Reserve Fund Transfer (separately listed on the meeting agenda) and to authorize the Chairman to sign the grant paperwork when it becomes available.**

(6) Applications for FY19 MVP Action Grants

At the last meeting, the Board agreed that the Town should apply for two Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Action Grants during the present funding cycle (applications are due April 19, 2019). I have been working with personnel from the University of New Hampshire on an application that would provide a second season of marsh recovery monitoring with respect to the natural sediment deposition event that occurred in January of 2018. I have also been working with personnel from Boston University with respect to a sediment dynamics study of Castle Neck Island (a barrier beach system commonly referred to as Crane Beach). Both projects are regionally significant and the Board already authorized the Chairman to sign both applications, when they are completed.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(7) Massachusetts Dredging Grant Program

(*)

The Baker Administration announced during the week of April 1, 2019 that the subject new grant program will accept its first applications this spring. The program is focused on providing up to 50% funding for dredging projects that are “shovel-ready”. In Essex, the Army Corps of Engineers has been steadily working on the design, sampling, testing, and permitting (also known as approvals) for future maintenance dredging within the Essex River. The grant program will accept as a match the value of the work that the Corps has completed and will continue to do in order to get our project to the shovel-ready state (up to three fiscal years back).

I have learned from Corps personnel that their process will likely take us to the end of calendar year 2020, at the earliest, in order to be considered shovel-ready. As such, until that process is complete, the Town will not likely be able to produce a competitive grant application. Considering that the Corps will eventually do for the Town everything that any dredging applicant would have to do (and pay for) prior to actually dredging, it would be to the Town’s advantage to just let the Corps’ process play out, and then apply for construction funding. In this way, the pre-construction work gets done with Federal dollars and those same dollars can count toward the 50% non-State match.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

M. Emergency Planning

No items.

N. Other Items

(1) Town Administrator Vacation Leave

I was out of the office on vacation leave on April 1, 2019.

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