



Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of July 15, 2019

Report covers from June 29, 2019 to July 12, 2019

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

A. Town Department Reports/Requests

(1) Economic Development Committee Meeting Summary (*)

The Town Planner and I met with the Economic Development Committee and personnel from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) on July 8, 2019 to begin work on a new Economic Development Plan (EDP) for the Town. Selectman Pereen was also in attendance. The group received some initial business and economic demographic information from Raul Gonzalez of MAPC concerning the Town's present state of affairs and Mr. Gonzalez reviewed the overall process for developing the EDP. MAPC will conduct some additional background work and will contact various parties recommended by the EDC before the EDC meets again, likely on September 17, 2019.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

B. Computer Systems

(1) Configuration of Laptop Computer

The Conservation Commission purchased a laptop computer for its Clerk to be able to utilize primarily during Commission meetings. I assisted to prepare the computer for use by joining it to the Town's domain, installing software, and providing access to various network resources.

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

C. Personnel

(1) Mock OSHA Standards Inspection, Police and Fire Headquarters

At the Town's invitation, the State Department of Labor Standards (DLS) visited our existing Fire and Police Headquarters building at 24 Martin Street on July 11, 2019. DLS personnel provided useful background to those assembled from the police and fire departments, the Town's OSHA Coordinator, and the Chairman of the Town Building Committee concerning what DLS is focusing on and how DLS wants to be more of a resource than an enforcer at this point. All agreed that, first and foremost, we want to avoid accidents and illness. After asking about whether certain, written, key policies were in place (and most are), DLS conducted a facility inspection and provided feedback on which building aspects could be improved upon without the need for major spending. The Department acknowledged that the features that are included in the proposed, new public

safety facility at 11 John Wise Avenue will address all of the other items. It is possible that DLS will return in the future for a voluntary inspection of the Town's DPW-related facilities.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects

(1) Contract with mooringinfo.com for Future Mooring Payment/Management (*)

As the Board is aware, the Town has been working with an on-line mooring payment and management software vendor, mooringinfo.com, toward replacing our in-house mooring management database that I developed many years ago. This new cloud-based system does not require any on-site program or data storage or management and, similar to our relationship with City Hall Systems, the vendor is paid by the system users (mooring holders), not by the Town. Mooringinfo.com has now accepted important contractual language concerning liability and the potential for data breaches and ample time exists between now (the start of fiscal year 2020) and the spring mooring season to get the program ready for use.

Recommendation: **Board signature of the contract with mooringinfo.com.**

(2) Possible Solid Waste Contract Amendment with Covanta (*)

At the last meeting, the Board reviewed information from our solid waste disposal contractor, Covanta, with respect to the company's desire to discontinue providing its own employee to manage and maintain the Town's transfer station. The Board agreed with the preliminary opinion of the Board of Public Works that it would be advantageous of the Town to perhaps negotiate a long-term contract extension at favorable disposal rates to help compensate for the cost of the Town taking over daily management and supervision.

I contacted Covanta personnel during the week of July 1, 2019 and was informed that Covanta is not interested in a long-term extension, since prevailing solid waste disposal rates have risen so sharply as Essex has been enjoying a long-term, low rate. The Town has about four years left in its existing contract, which carries a tipping fee of \$66.35 per ton and the market is presently as high as \$110 per ton. However, Covanta is willing to look at reducing some of the monthly maintenance and rental charges that are part of the current contract so that the Town may be able to hire a benefitted employee and still have a lower monthly solid waste fee than we do now, albeit for a limited number of years. I may have more information by meeting time.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(3) Further Research Regarding Alternate Electricity Suppliers (*)

At the last meeting, the Board agreed that they did not want to use the services of an energy supply broker. Instead, the Board asked if I could check directly with some other suppliers (the Town is presently with Constellation as part of the MunEnergy Program), just to understand other pricing that may be available. After working with Selectman Preen to identify an alternate supplier (Engie), I have taken steps to receive quotes that can be compared to our pricing being quoted by Constellation. Presently, we are awaiting the Engie pricing and I am working to connect with other suppliers in order to get additional quotes. It is possible that the Town of Manchester (which also has expiring contracts with Constellation) will want to collaborate on the best successor contract option.

Recommendation: Board discussion as necessary, depending on what new information is available by meeting time.

(4) Soil Testing at Property the Town is Selling on Sumac Drive (*)

At the last meeting, the Board agreed that I should visit the subject site with a Town backhoe to determine whether areas of the property that have not been soil tested in the past might have adequate soil depth to support a septic system for new construction. All of the evidence we had reviewed to that point suggested that the lot is shallow to bedrock and will not support new construction under Title 5. I visited the site on July 9, 2019 and witnessed the digging of four additional test holes on the property. It was easy to verify that most of the property is very shallow to bedrock and that a small portion may have an adequate thickness of naturally-occurring soil, but it is not “pervious” – defined as soil with a percolation rate of over 60 minutes per inch, for new construction. Under Title 5, for new construction, the property must have 48” of naturally-occurring pervious material under the entire area of the proposed leaching facility. This is certainly not the case on this lot, which is mostly shallow to bedrock with any deeper areas consisting of silty clay material not capable of meeting the percolation rate cutoff.

Recommendation: Continue to work toward a sale that includes a deed restriction making the lot perpetually non-buildable.

E. Insurance

No items.

F. Facilities

(1) Town Elevator Repairs/Reinspection and Wheelchair Lift Inspection

As the Board may recall, on May 2, 2019, the elevators at the Senior Center and at Town Hall both failed inspection, pending minor repairs. The Town’s new elevator contractor, United Elevator, repaired the Senior Center elevator a no

charge on July 3, 2019, during its first preventative maintenance visit of the new fiscal year. The contractor also repaired the issue with the Town Hall elevator and set the emergency telephones in both elevators to dial its own call center, which is included in the Town's maintenance agreement. The contractor will notify the State of the Senior Center repairs (no in-person reinspection required) but the State actually needs to come out and reinspect the Town Hall elevator, since that issue was more complex. We presently expect the State inspector to perform the reinspection on August 1, 2019 and to inspect the Town Hall wheelchair lift (which occurs every two years) that same day.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(3) Review of Future Possible Town-Supplied and Maintained Kayak Racks (*)

At the last meeting, the Board reviewed a suggestion from a resident that the dilapidated kayak racks that have been placed and maintained at Clammers' Beach by third parties in the past should be replaced with Town-supplied and maintained racks. The Board asked me to take that possibility up with the Harbormaster, since he would have to manage the racks. At this point, the Harbormaster would like to get the new mooring management software up and running for next season. That software has the ability to help manage boat racks and it is something that could be done after the complexities of the software upgrade process have been put behind us. He suggests looking at rack replacement sometime next season.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

G. Fiscal/Budget

No items.

H. Complaints

No items.

I. Meetings Attended

(1) Council on Aging Men's Senior Breakfast

I attended the subject breakfast on July 8, 2019 after an invitation from its organizers. I was asked to speak about the Town Hall Clock and how its operation has been automated over the years. I also provided the group with updates concerning a variety of Town programs and initiatives.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Northeast Coastal Coalition Meeting Summary (*)

Essex once again hosted the Northeast Coastal Coalition, on July 12, 2019. The Coalition is coordinated by Senator Bruce Tarr and is primarily involved with working regionally to work out much-needed dredging in coastal waterways along the north shore. The recent meeting focused on the delivery of a final report produced by the Woods Hole Group detailing what it would take to get a regional shared maintenance dredging program started (similar to the program that presently exists in Barnstable County). Additional information concerning the group's overall impression of what may be possible will be available by meeting time.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

J. Town Meeting, By-Laws, and Regulations

No items.

K. Legal Issues

(1) Review of Draft Purchase & Sale Agreement for Cogswell Road Lot Sale (*)

At the last meeting, the Board agreed that a \$12,000 offer from the abutters of the vacant lot the Town is selling on Cogswell Road was sufficient to work toward a Purchase and Sale Agreement for the transaction. Should the parties reach final terms, the buyers will be expected to reimburse the Town for all of its legal costs, starting with the drafting of the Agreement. The buyers will also need to pay any other associated costs and the deed for the sale will carry a restriction deeming the lot unbuildable for anything requiring a building permit, with the exception of a fence. Town Counsel has completed her development of the draft Agreement and it is available for the Board's review at the present meeting.

Recommendation: **Board review of the draft Purchase and Sale Agreement.**

L. Grants

(1) Formal Submission of Dam & Seawall Grant

In late-May, the Board authorized the Chairman to sign a grant application for 75% of the cost (about \$1.6M of a \$2.2M project) of replacing the Conomo Point seawall when the application was completed. I have been working with our engineering firm, GZA Geoenvironmental since that time and we completed the application during the week of July 1, 2019. The Chairman signed the cover page and the application was submitted in advance of the July 12, 2019 deadline. We expect to learn which projects will be funded in late August.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(2) Memorandum of Understanding for Senior Van Services, Manchester (*)

Previously, the Board signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the City of Gloucester that will allow Gloucester to share with Essex a portion of a State grant that provides additional funding for transportation for low income senior citizens. The Council on Aging and the Board have decided that these additional services should be provided by the Manchester Council on Aging since the two towns are collaborating on service delivery and since Manchester has capacity to offer in its van service program. The Town of Manchester has developed a MOU with respect to the terms of and payment for the service for the Board to review and sign, which may be available by meeting time.

Recommendation: Board signature of the MOU with Manchester, if the final version is available by meeting time.

M. Emergency Planning

No items.

N. Other Items

(1) Independence Day Holiday

The office was closed on July 4, 2019, in observance of the subject holiday.

(2) Town Administrator Leave

I was out of the office, on leave, on July 5, 2019.

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