



## Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of August 26, 2019

Report covers from August 10, 2019 to August 23, 2019

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

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### A. Town Department Reports/Requests

#### (1) Possible Future Reallocation of MBTA Assessment to CATA (\*)

The Town gets assessed against its State local aid each year for service by the MBTA (\$22,455 estimated in fiscal year 2020). The local assessment for the Cape Ann Transportation Authority (CATA) is much less, at about \$2,600. Neither of the two organizations provide any appreciable service in Essex. The new CATA Administrator, Felicia Webb, has offered to look at providing out of town medical ride service and possibly rides into town for workers in local businesses. If any of this service is possible, it would be funded by getting the MBTA assessment reduced and the CATA assessment increased (no net increase in assessment for the Town).

The Council on Aging is in favor of exploring the medical rides possibility and a ride to work pilot program that is presently unfolding will help inform CATA as to whether that service should also be more fully developed. Both types of service would probably begin in fiscal year 2021, if the need is borne out and it is possible service could start earlier depending on whether CATA can work internally to find funding even in advance of any formal local assessment reallocation at the State level.

**Recommendation: Board discussion with respect to whether this change is supported and should be explored further.**

#### (2) Town Building Committee Summary (\*)

I attended the Town Building Committee's meeting of August 21, 2019, along with the Selectmen. The meeting featured updates concerning the finalization of the proposed public safety facility's design plans and the process for project bidding and awarding. Presently, we are awaiting the completion of the 60% CD cost estimates by two, independent cost estimators. Those figures will be available in early September and the Finance Committee will begin discussion with the Selectmen and the Town Building Committee with respect to recommended funding mechanisms (available cash versus borrowing and consideration of borrowing program and terms).

**Recommendation: Board discussion as necessary.**

## B. Computer Systems

### (1) Possible Grant for Customized Accounting Software (\*)

The recently-released draft final version of the Collins Center study concerning possible future areas of collaboration between Essex and Manchester discusses the development of customized accounting software. Both communities are dissatisfied with their current applications and it is possible that the most common application, known as MUNIS, could be developed to suit the needs of each community. To that end, the State IT Grant program may consider funding the initial purchase of the application for each community, with the inclusion of some customized content that would improve the out-of-the-box version of the software. The two town accountants could potentially work with Tyler Technologies (the company behind MUNIS) to get a quote on provision of the software, with customization, training, and complete migration from the two existing platforms. After we have that information, we can see if the State IT Grant will cover these costs by making an on-line application for funding.

*Recommendation:* **Board authorization to apply to the State IT grant for software funding.**

## C. Personnel

### (1) Informal Staff Meeting

I hosted the subject meeting on August 22, 2019 as I do from time to time. The meeting featured a discussion relative to the status of the proposal for a new public safety facility, along with updates on projects and initiatives from various departments.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

### (2) Safety Committee Meeting

The next Safety Committee meeting will be held on September 26, 2019. I have placed a draft agenda in the Board's reading file.

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

## D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects

### (1) Possible Amendment of Solid Waste Contract with Covanta (\*)

At the last meeting, the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Public Works asked me to again approach Covanta concerning the company's proposal to amend the present solid waste contract. The boards asked me to see if the company would entertain an extension of the contract period beyond December of 2022 as part of their proposal to cease providing labor for the day-to-day operation of the transfer station. The company may not be interested in an extension of the contract term but is offering approximately \$90,000 in annual contract cost reduction for the

Town to take over the operation of the station with its own employee. I may have the company's position on an extension and/or more specific language with respect to a proposed amendment for the Board's review by meeting time.

***Recommendation:* Board discussion of any proposed amendment language and inquiry with the Board of Public Works as to whether that Board concurs and along what timeframe.**

#### **E. Insurance**

No items.

#### **F. Facilities**

No items.

#### **G. Fiscal/Budget**

##### (1) State Funding for a Portion of Town's Bicentennial Celebration Costs (\*)

Our local legislative delegation was successful in getting \$35,000 into the fiscal year 2020 State budget to help defray the cost of the Town's ongoing bicentennial celebration. I was advised by the Senator's office that the Town had to make an administrative request for the funds, which I completed on August 13, 2019. Thereafter, the Chairman of the Bicentennial Committee received and submitted initial paperwork from the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism and that office has provided the Town with a contract to facilitate the transfer of funds. Once the funds are released to the Town, they are eligible to pay for new costs or to be used as reimbursement for costs already incurred.

***Recommendation:* Board signature of the contract with the State that will facilitate release and use of the funds.**

#### **H. Complaints**

No items.

#### **I. Meetings Attended**

##### (1) Conservation Commission Hearing, Proposed Public Safety Facility

I attended a continuation of the subject hearing on August 20, 2019. The hearing was initiated on August 6, 2019 and the Commission's sole outstanding issue was whether or not surface storm water retention basins could be constructed on site, instead of subsurface storm water facilities. Our design professionals showed the Commission how two of the three subsurface facilities could be replaced with surface retention basins and the Commission agreed that this design was favorable, even if the revised design will be disturbing areas closer to the wetland

boundary. The Commission voted to close the hearing and will be issuing a formal Order of Conditions for the project in the near future. The contractor which is ultimately hired to construct the proposed project will need to ensure that all of the Commission's conditions are met throughout the construction process.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

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

### (1) Consideration of Possible Revision to Town Landing Use Regulations (\*)

At the last meeting, the Board asked that I review the finances with respect to the operation of the boat launching ramp at the Town Landing. While boat launching fees from non-residents do amount to positive revenue for the Town (FY19 cost \$3,485, launch revenue \$8,620, net revenue \$5,135), the ramp can get quite congested and the Board wanted to explore making the situation more convenient for residents. Options include increasing the non-resident launch fee or simply closing off the ramp to non-residents.

*Recommendation:* **Board discussion concerning possible revision to the regulations.**

### (2) Continued Review of Draft Fall Town Meeting Article Topic List (\*)

At the last meeting, the Board reviewed a preliminary list of possible Fall Town Meeting article topics and provided guidance with respect to which items should be focused on. I have revised the list for the Board's continued review.

*Recommendation:* **Continued Board review of the draft Fall Town Meeting topic list.**

## **K. Legal Issues**

No items.

## **L. Grants**

### (1) Further Monitoring of Natural Sediment Deposition Event Recovery

As the Board may recall, the State funded one season of natural sediment deposition recovery monitoring during fiscal year 2019 and the Town had applied for a second year of monitoring, in partnership with the University of New Hampshire (UNH). The State chose not to fund the second year and Selectman Phippen and I participated in a conference call with Dr. Gregg Moore of UNH and personnel from the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs on August 12, 2019, to learn more about the State's denial of the grant award. We learned that the State is not looking favorably on the project primarily since it may not produce a coastal resilience management practice within a year's time.

The project is aimed at showing that the marsh's recovery from a large-scale natural sediment deposition event in 2018 could serve to inform a process whereby the Town would place sediment on the marsh in the future to keep pace with sea level rise and climate change predictions. While the State personnel agree that the project might help inform future efforts, the practice would not be possible under present State laws and regulations and the grant program is beginning to favor projects that are presently feasible. State personnel indicated that the project would not be looked on any more favorably in future MVP grant program rounds and suggested other grant programs that might fund a second year of work.

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

(2) Finalization of Municipal Collaboration Report (\*)

The Collins Center completed its draft final report concerning ways Essex and Manchester could collaborate in the future during the week of August 12, 2019. The report was presented to both boards of selectmen on August 19, 2019, at a workshop-style meeting in Manchester. At the meeting, it was decided that final input should be provided to the Collins Center very soon and that the two town administrators will work with the principal author of the report shortly after Labor Day so that the final report may be released by the end of September.

*Recommendation:* **Board discussion relative to the various recommendations made in the report, including which ones may be the best to focus on in the short to medium term timeframe.**

(3) Culvert Replacement Municipal Assistance Grant Award (\*)

As the Board may recall, the Town applied to the Massachusetts Division of Ecological Restoration's (DER) Culvert Replacement Municipal Assistance Grant Program back in March. The application was made in partnership with the Ipswich River Watershed Association (IRWA) and Meridian Engineering. DER has announced that the Town is a recipient of a \$41,050 grant award that will look at improving the culvert that runs beneath the Southern Avenue end of Apple Street, for the sake of ecological improvement, but also to possibly alleviate roadway flooding at storm tides. Apple Street is the only in-Town, alternative, north-south transportation link to Route 133, and, as we observed in the winter storms of 2018, tidal surge that shuts down Route 133 can also shut down Apple Street, leaving Route 128 as a long-distance detour. The project will allow for better stream throughput, especially during times of high flow, which contributes to climate change resilience as well.

*Recommendation:* **Board vote to authorize the Chairman to sign all necessary contracts with the Commonwealth and Meridian Engineering, when each becomes available.**

**M. Emergency Planning**

No items.

**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.*