



Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of November 4, 2019

Report covers from October 19, 2019 to November 1, 2019

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

A. Town Department Reports/Requests

(1) Finalization of Town Water System Master Plan

The Board of Public Works has now approved the final version of a Master Plan for the Town's aging water system. The Plan was written by consultant Wright-Pierce and recommends a host of maintenance and renovation/replacement work to be performed over time. The Plan has been posted to the Water Department home page and may be [accessed here](#). It is likely that the Water Department will recommend some initial actions for consideration by the Town Meeting in the spring of 2020.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(2) Essex Housing Coalition Meeting Summary (*)

The Essex Housing Coalition met on October 29, 2019 to continue to develop a strategy to elevate awareness around community housing needs in Essex. I attended the meeting which featured planning for a community open house that will be held on January 22, 2020. The group also discussed its support for the evolving downtown mixed-use overlay district bylaw that the Planning Board may propose at the Annual Town Meeting in May of 2020. The Coalition will meet again on December 11, 2019 for further planning.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(3) Strategic Planning Committee Meeting Summary (*)

I attended the subject meeting on October 30, 2019, along with Town Planner Matt Coogan. The meeting featured a discussion relative to the addition of a tenth major goal, or "pillar" to the Town's Strategic Plan: Coastal Resilience. The Committee overwhelmingly supported this addition and I have revised the [Strategic Plan](#) to reflect the addition. The Committee also discussed a variety of ongoing projects and initiatives that are related to the goals of the Strategic Plan.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

B. Computer Systems

No items.

C. Personnel

No items.

D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects

(1) Award of Construction Contract for Public Safety Facility (*)

General bids for the construction of the Town's new public safety facility were received on October 30, 2019. The apparent low bidder was G&R Construction, Inc. of Quincy, with a bid price of \$12,427,000. The bid price is below the estimated budget of \$13,287,944 by \$860,944. Since the bid opening, our Project Manager has worked to vet the bid and it has been deemed to be completely in order. The process was relatively rapid, since all bidders on this project were pre-qualified under a previous process. G&R is presently working on posting the required bonds and providing the required certificate of insurance. The Board can now consider issuing a Notice of Award and Notice to Proceed on the project, via our Project Manager, subject to final contingencies.

***Recommendation:* Board vote to issue a Notice of Award and Notice to Proceed to G&R Construction, Inc., through the Town's Project Manager; and to authorize the signature of the construction contract outside of a meeting, when all bond and insurance issues have been addressed, and the contract has been prepared by the Town's Project Manager.**

(2) Use of Ipswich Light Department to Convert Street Lights to LED

At the last meeting, the Board was in favor of using the Town of Ipswich Light Department as the labor force to convert Essex's street lights over to LED lamps. We have learned from the State that this will be possible, without competition, so long as Ipswich's labor rate is in line with the commercial market (or lower). Our conversion consultant, Citelum, has contacted the Ipswich Light Department and we are waiting for information concerning pricing and availability that will allow for a final decision to be made. The Board has already voted to authorize using the Town of Ipswich if all requirements are met.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

E. Insurance

(1) Builder's Risk Policy for New Public Safety Facility Construction Project (*)

When a building is substantially renovated or a new building is constructed, a Builder's Risk insurance policy is required, to protect the building against perils that are present during construction activities. After the project is complete, a traditional property insurance policy replaces the Builder's Risk policy. It is generally more cost effective for the property owner (the Town in this case) to acquire the Builder's Risk policy than it is to required the project contractor to

acquire it. As such, the Town carried a separate budget for the required policy and we will soon be provided with a quote from our insurer for the policy.

Recommendation: Board vote to authorize the Chairman to instate the Builder's Risk policy for the project at the appropriate time. The quote may be available by meeting time.

F. Facilities

(1) Parking, Speed Limit, and Crosswalk Discussion with State DOT (*)
Chairman Spinney, Chief Francis, and I met with Senator Tarr and MassDOT District Highway Director Paul Stedman (and other DOT personnel) on October 28, 2019. The Board had asked that we set this meeting up to discuss roadside parking near Farnham's Restaurant on Route 133 and speed limit and crosswalk issues along Route 22. We also had a chance to review the DOT's past commentary on the speed limit in the area of the future public safety facility (also on Route 133).

At the meeting, we determined that parking adjacent to Farnham's is limited due to safety concerns on that stretch of Route 133. If traffic calming measures could be put in place that would decrease the actual speed of motorists in that area, the Chief of Police may see fit to open up additional roadside parking that is presently restricted with painted hash lines. To that end, DOT has agreed to research the cost of two speed feedback boards (one approaching that area from either direction) that have been shown to be effective in keeping actual speeds down (and also log speed data for future decision-making). The Town may need to share the cost for those devices. DOT will also review the width of the travel lanes in the area. If adequate width is present, it may be possible to narrow the travel lanes down the next time lines are repainted in that area. That would calm traffic, would allow more space for multi-modal transportation, and would have the effect of widening the shoulder where motorists would like to park. DOT will begin to look at both the speed boards and the lane width issue with an eye toward the next summer season, when things will again get busy in that area.

With respect to analysis of the Route 22 issues, DOT has agreed to put the completion of a speed study in its upcoming work plans. The speed study will review actual speeds versus posted speeds and may indicate one of several possibilities in different segments: posted speed limits are proper, posted speed limits are too high, posted speed limits are too low. The speed study itself does not bind the Town or DOT to making changes based on the results. It only provides data from which future decisions may be made. Additional crosswalks on Route 22 are not the State's responsibility and would have to be designed and installed by the Town, if desired.

Recommendation: Board discussion as necessary.

(2) Adjustment of Spotlights on Main Street (*)

At the meeting discussed above, in item F1, the question of glare from commercial spot lights in the area of CK Pearl Restaurant on Route 133 was raised. The angle of those lights creates a glare to nighttime motorists that makes the crosswalk in that area (and anyone using it) very difficult to see. With respect to that matter, I asked the company that is helping us with our LED street light conversion project, Citelum, to help identify whether the lights in question are Town-owned lights versus National Grid-owned lights, electricity for which is paid for by private parties. Once we have more background information, we can devise a plan to get the angle of the lights adjusted by the appropriate parties.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

G. Fiscal/Budget

(1) School District Budget Coordination Meeting (*)

The School District budget collaboration group consisting of Essex, Manchester, and Regional School District officials and personnel met on October 28, 2019 to review the status of fiscal year 2021 budget preparation amongst the three entities. The District is working on its Tentative Budget proposal, which will be provided to the two towns in early December. The meeting featured a discussion relative to the near-term maintenance of two turf fields and how the two towns can continue to work collaboratively with respect to future Green Community grant program applications. The new School Resource Officer is scheduled to begin work in District schools as of November 4, 2019.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

H. Complaints

No items.

I. Meetings Attended

(1) Informal Department Heads Meeting

I hosted the subject meeting on October 24, 2019, as I do from time to time. The meeting featured updates from the various Town departments concerning ongoing projects and initiatives. We also discussed the upcoming Fall Town Meeting and the rapidly-approaching public safety facility construction project.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Meeting with Congressman Moulton's new Regional Director

I met with Congressman Moulton's new Regional Director, Kelly Bovio, on October 24, 2019. We discussed projects and initiatives that are important to the Town, including the future prospect of Federal dredging funds for the Essex

River. Ms. Bovio will look into how the Congressman's Office may be able to help on both of the Town's dredging tracks (beneficial sediment re-use and traditional maintenance dredging).

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

J. Town Meeting, By-Laws, and Regulations

(1) Draft Fall Town Meeting Motions (*)

I have developed draft Fall Town Meeting motions for the Board's review and discussion.

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

(2) Possible Acquisition of Apple Street Property or Right of Way (*)

As the Board may recall, a resident who had suggested that the Town acquire a certain Apple Street property (or, at least, rights over it) for a second means of access to the Town's transfer station and DPW yard had agreed to make contact with the property owner on behalf of the Board. Subsequently, he has expressed that he feels it more appropriate for the Board to make contact directly. He has offered a sample contact letter that is informed by the past research he has conducted concerning this matter.

Recommendation: **Board discussion relative to the Board itself possibly making contact.**

K. Legal Issues

No items.

L. Grants

(1) Sediment Dynamics MVP Action Grant Monthly Report

Boston University personnel submitted the subject report during the week of October 28, 2019. The project, which is looking at sediment dynamics along Castle Neck Island (Crane Beach) and throughout Essex Bay, has wrapped up its field data collection phase and analysis is underway. The project principal will soon be turning attention to conclusions that can be made from the data.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary at this time.

(2) Kickoff Meeting for Culvert Replacement Design Grant

Selectman Phippen and I participated in a kickoff meeting with personnel from the Massachusetts Division of Ecological Restoration (DER) and Meridian Engineering concerning the subject grant on October 21, 2019. The grant proposal included an attempt to provide a design plan for the replacement of a

culvert under the Southern Avenue end of Apple Street, improving the ecological value of the crossing. The grant proposal also discussed the design of an increase to the roadbed elevation in that area. Presently, during extreme, storm-surge tides, two low areas at this end of Apple Street become inundated, preventing vehicles from using our only other road connecting both halves of the Town. This DER grant project design will address the first low area, which happens to be where the culvert is.

Subsequent to the October 21 site visit, our engineering contractor reviewed the data collection and survey requirements that DER had laid out at the site visit and has indicated that we need to phase the project into two design stages. The \$41,000 we presently have to work with is only enough to get through project data collection and survey. We also may want to bring in another engineering firm (TEC) to run the overall project, with Meridian Engineering becoming a subcontractor. This is because TEC has the structural expertise necessary and has managed all aspects of DER grants in the past. TEC will make contact with DER soon to see if DER will allow us to use the present grant for phase 1 of the design process. If so, we can go for phase 2 in the spring.

After the design for the first low area is completed, including all necessary permitting (which will take two seasons), we can seek grant funds from another grant program to expand the design to include the second low area as well. Finally, after both areas are designed and permitted, we can seek funding from an implementation grant program to actually replace the culvert and raise the roadbed along the entire applicable length of Apple Street.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

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.