



Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of May 23, 2022

Report covers from April 30, 2022 to May 20, 2022

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

A. Town Department Reports/Requests

(1) Update Concerning Possible Future Solid Waste/Recycling Arrangements (*)

The Superintendent of Public Works, the DPW Clerk, and I met with a representative of the WasteZero Company on May 3, 2022. WasteZero is in the business of producing, warehousing, and distributing pay-as-you-throw trash bags and stickers and they are a vendor on the State Contract. The Superintendent and the Board of Public Works are planning to visit the Selectmen on June 6, 2022 to discuss the possible scenario in more detail.

WasteZero would charge the Town a fee for every bag used in the Town, to cover the production of the bags and all other overhead, including dealing with local retailers who would sell the bags to residents directly. The Town would no longer have to issue transfer station stickers and the arrangement would free up 1.5 FTE for DPW laborers to increase the capacity for public works services. The DPW's clerical staff would also be freed up to deal better with other issues in the office. The Town would take the cost of paying a curbside hauler for both solid waste and recycling and a for paying separate waste disposal and recycling facilities. We would initially assume that the volume of solid waste will decrease by about 40% (given that pay-as-you-throw encourages recycling. That same 40% would be used to estimate what it will cost annually for recycling.

Moving to full pay-as-you-throw truly holds the Town harmless with respect to the sharp cost increase that will occur when the Town moves from the artificially-low contract we have now to today's market pricing. Moving to some other, more complicated system will have more possible points of failure and likely cost even more. In the future, after what will hopefully be a smooth transition, it is possible that the Town may desire to get more sophisticated.

Keeping the existing transfer station in place after our current, favorable contract with Covanta ends will cost the Town and the user more and it may not provide a reliable transition. The Town would have to continue to provide labor to run the station and there is no guarantee that all trash would be disposed of in approved bags, since the attendant simply cannot monitor everything. With curbside, the contractor would only pick up trash in approved bags. The Town would also need to buy and maintain a new compactor. Curbside would privatize collection and would allow the DPW to get more out of its limited clerical time and its laborers. If, for some reason curbside collection is not desired after a trial period, the transfer station will still be in place and the Town can pivot after a few years.

Perhaps once a month, people could bring bulk items and hazardous items in for disposal, with the payment of the appropriate fee per item.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(2) Economic Development Committee Meeting Summary (*)

I participated in the subject meeting on May 19, 2022, along with Chairman Pereen. The meeting featured a discussion relative to next steps for the Committee and its Chairman suggested that the Town's Economic Development Plan be thoroughly analyzed by the Committee to determine what is already done, what should be worked on now, and what may be dropped or taken up later. During this analysis at the meeting, the question came up as to whether the Centennial Grove could be better leveraged as a revenue-generating asset. All agreed that it would be advantageous to study the prospects for the eventual installation of an on-site wastewater disposal system. In order to understand the possibilities for wastewater, soil testing will need to be performed. We have the ability to handle this investigation in-house among the Board of Health Administrator, the DPW Superintendent, and myself as an approved soil evaluator.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

B. Computer Systems

(1) North Shore IT Collaborative Meeting Summary

I participated in the subject meeting on May 5, 2022. The Town of Danvers is in receipt of the new FortiNet hardware that will be installed in participating communities to create the regional security fabric that has been proposed. After Danvers deploys their own hardware and the Endpoint Detection and Response (EDR) element of the security fabric, Essex will be the first client community to receive these same services. Additional elements of the security fabric will continued to be rolled out over time, including multi-factor authentication provisions.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Renewal of Contract with City Hall Systems for Vendor-Hosted Software (*)

In 2011, software vendor City Hall Systems (CHS) began to provide vendor-hosted software for the Treasurer/Collector, at no cost to the Town (the company's revenue came from fees paid by users to pay tax bills). Service was expanded over the years to also include dog licenses, open burning permits, resident stickers, transfer station stickers, and building permits, all for an annual fee of \$6,000.

CHS has recently announced that it will no longer be supporting the Treasurer/Collector software after June 30, 2023 and the final year will require a lump-sum payment of \$8,500 (in addition to the base \$6,000 fee for all other

applications). The Treasurer/Collector is presently researching other software options and will have a replacement system in place before the end of fiscal year 2023. The Town has discontinued the use of the CHS building permit software but all of the other departments continue to use the other applications. CHS has proposed a three-year extension of our existing contract for the services we mutually agree upon and I should have the document by meeting time.

Recommendation: **Board signature of the contract renewal paperwork.**

C. Personnel

No items.

D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects

(1) Route 133 Bridge Replacement Project Update (*)

I participated in a construction meeting for the subject State project on May 10, 2022 along with personnel from the DPW. Utility diversion has been slower than expected due to a number of technical challenges but the Town sewer system has now been diverted to new pipes running over the temporary bridge and the water system diversion is expected within the coming week. The project contractor is presently expecting that traffic will begin to travel over the temporary bridge by the middle of June.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(2) Conomo Point Seawall Replacement Project Update (*)

Selectman Phippen and I participated in a construction meeting for the subject project along with personnel from our engineering consultant and our general contractor on May 11, 2022. Work on the project is still proposed for completion by the end of the month of May. The contractor plans to work on Saturdays through project completion and we will arrange to cordon off areas where new grass is planted so that it is not disturbed by foot traffic well into the summer. The landscaping subcontractor is required to water all new grass and plantings for six weeks beyond installation and we will work with the DPW to take over the watering regimen after that.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(3) Third-Party Ambulance Billing Agreement Renewal (*)

Our third-party ambulance billing contract is considered on an annual basis. Our present vendor, Comstar, has provided excellent service and has developed a successor agreement for fiscal year 2023. The Fire Chief concurs with this course of action.

Recommendation: Signature of the successor agreement with Comstar for fiscal year 2023 (effective July 1, 2022).

E. Insurance

No items.

F. Facilities

(1) Annual Elevator Inspection/Testing at Public Safety Facility

The State Elevator Inspector tested the elevator at the Public Safety Facility on May 2, 2022 and the elevator passed inspection. I had arranged to have our generator, fire alarm, and elevator contractors on site for the test, as required by the State. Next year, the Chief of Police will take over the coordination of the testing.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Centennial Grove Spring Preparation

Our plumbing contractor has turned on the water to the Centennial Grove Cottage and the Selectmen's Assistant has deployed portable toilets at the Field of Dreams and at the picnic grove. The DPW will soon deploy the fishing dock at the Grove and will bring in a second load of sand for the beach as well. Soon, the YMCA will be working to set up the beach and open up some of the smaller buildings for the season. The YMCA will also be using its own contractor to replace the roofs on the Grove Cottage, its associated garage, and the concession stand. The Town is providing funding for the materials, up to \$12,000.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(3) Conomo Point Park Preparation

Our marine contractor has deployed the ramp, float, and water access stairs for the season at the Conomo Point park.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(4) Telephone Signal Repair at Centennial Grove Cottage

The telephone line that serves the Grove Cottage went out of service during the week of May 9, 2022. I contacted Verizon and service was restored the same day. Our alarm system armed properly after the repair.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(5) Preparations for Smithsonian Exhibit Setup in Town Hall in September

Personnel from the Essex Shipbuilding Museum and former Selectman Andrew Spinney met with the Selectman's Assistant and me on May 18, 2022 to review

logistics associated with a Smithsonian exhibit on Essex history that will be displayed in Essex Town Hall Auditorium in the fall. The exhibit is large and will arrive in cases that need to be offloaded from trucks. Mr. Spinney has volunteered the necessary equipment to accomplish that task and cases will be stored in the Town Hall basement until the time nears for setting the exhibit up. The exhibit will be open on both weekdays and weekends and a docent will be in the auditorium at all times that the exhibit is open for viewing. The meeting confirmed that all logistical concerns being considered to this point in the planning process are well covered.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary at this time.

G. Fiscal/Budget

No items.

H. Complaints

No items.

I. Meetings Attended

No items.

J. Town Meeting, By-Laws, and Regulations

No items.

K. Legal Issues

No items.

L. Grants

(1) US Department of Agriculture Water System Improvement Grant

In the past, we had researched the prospect of receiving Federal grant funding from the USDA with respect to water or sewer system improvements. Given that the median household income in Essex was higher than the threshold for grant funding, we had been offered low-interest loans, but not grants. Recently, I discussed the matter again with a representative of the USDA and learned that Essex may now be eligible. However, a complete application that includes information USDA needs to compare with Federal guidelines must be made. As such, I requested an account on the USDA on-line application portal and we are presently awaiting clearance to begin the application process. I will work with our consulting engineer on the technical details and our focus at this point will be

to see if any grant funding is available for the upcoming Water Filtration Plant renovation work.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(2) Site Visit to Consider Future Green Communities Grant

The Town Planner and I toured the Town Hall with personnel from Energy Conservation, Inc. and Air Barrier Solutions on May 17, 2022. It is possible that the Town could apply for Green Communities grant funding for some “retro-commissioning” of building systems that would lead to enhanced energy efficiency. Specifically, the work would involve instituting true communication between the Town Hall high-efficiency gas heating system and the electric split HVAC system and improving the ease of management of both systems. There may also be some added efficiency associated with improving minor elements of building insulation and door weatherstripping. These experts will review the cost of any recommended improvements versus the expected energy savings and will also help to ascertain whether the work is eligible under the Green Communities Grant, other grants, or utility incentives.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

M. Emergency Planning

(1) Review of Emergency Services Coordination Among Town Depts. (*)

Chairman Preen and I met with the Fire Chief, Police Chief, Council on Aging Director, Board of Health Administrator, and Council on Aging Member Denton on May 19, 2022. The meeting was called to review a concept advanced by the Strategic Planning Committee inquiring about communication between Town emergency service departments and with sensitive populations, chiefly senior citizens. At the meeting, it was agreed that the systems that are already in place are adequate to serve the Town’s residents. While some good ideas about possible additional internal communication were discussed, all agreed that there is not a need to include anything in the Strategic Plan about this issue.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

N. Other Items

(1) Town Administrator Leave

I was out of the office, on leave, for a portion of the day on May 5, 2022.

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