



Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of July 2, 2018

Report covers from June 16, 2018 to June 29, 2018

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

A. Town Department Reports/Requests

(1) Strategic Planning Committee Meeting Summary (*)

The Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) met jointly with the Economic Development Committee (EDC) and the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) on June 20, 2018 to discuss the issue of affordable housing in Essex. I was in attendance. Representatives from Harborlight Community Partners were on hand to present what that organization is doing in our area to promote more affordable housing and to suggest some possible strategies for Essex. Generally, smaller projects require more local dollars than larger projects. However, as was proposed this past winter (before the seller moved in a different direction), it is possible to start small, with a project such as the paid designation of existing apartment units as having to permanently meet affordable rent standards.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(2) Property Acquisition RFP & Project Manager RFQ, Town Building Cmte. (*)

The Town Building Committee met on June 27, 2018 to recommend final content for a Request for Proposals (RFP) seeking parties that wish to offer private property for sale to the Town for a new fire station. The Committee also reviewed a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for the selection of a Project Manager that could assist with the public safety building feasibility and design process as early as this August. Also discussed was the potential timing of a Special Town Meeting in August and the Fall Town Meeting (which will be held on October 16, 2018 this year), with respect to how requests for funding various professionals should be sequenced.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(3) DOT Involvement in Downtown Parking Signage/Striping Initiative

As the Board may recall, the Economic Development Committee had recommended moving forward with some of the recommendations for parking signage and striping that came out of the downtown parking study that was completed not too long ago. The Board supports possible Town Meeting funding (perhaps in August or in October) for a detailed signage and striping plan (maybe authored by the same engineering firm). On another front, I have made contact with MassDOT and the agency is presently reviewing our high-level plan, with an eye toward how they would grant permission for these improvements and whether the Department could even help in some way with implementation.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

B. Computer Systems

(1) Replacement of Police and Fire Phone System

At the last meeting, the Board approved a 33B transfer of funds to pay for the installation of a new, cloud-based VOIP telephone system for the police and fire departments. The present system is premises-based and is beginning to fail. The new VOIP system will provide seamless connectivity with the Regional Dispatch Center and will eliminate the need for a business caller to have to negotiate both the Dispatch Center phone menu, and then, the fire/police phone menu. Our new State Contract vendor, Net Tel One, has worked directly with the Chief of Police to develop the necessary implementation plan and we expect that the service will go live shortly after the start of the new fiscal year, with monthly service billing commencing at that time. We are presently working out the final plan for system programming and porting of phone numbers from our previous provider.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(2) Repair of Portion of Server Room Cooling System

In phase 1 of the Town Hall renovation process (back in 2014), we constructed a new server room with redundant cooling units. That system has operated without incident to date. However, during the week of June 18, 2018, one of the two units failed. The system worked as intended, since I was alerted to the problem via a humidity alarm that showed a slight elevation on humidity and since the server room continued to be cooled by the still-operative unit. I contacted a local service contractor and the failed unit was returned to service by repairing a leaking refrigerant suction line fitting and recharging the system.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(3) Fiber Optic Municipal Area Network Project Update

We have received word from our fiber optic contractor, Comm-Tract, that the company will begin the installation of fiber optic lines to interconnect various Town buildings during the week of July 23, 2018. As the Board may recall, funding from the recently-renewed cable television contract with Comcast will pay for the project and we will eventually be able to communicate among the various Town buildings without the need for costly Internet service at each location.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

C. Personnel

(1) Distribution of Sexual and Discriminatory Harassment Policies

Paper copies of the subject policies were included with employee paychecks recently. The Sexual Harassment policy must be distributed in hard copy by law. Employees separately acknowledge the receipt of all Town policies via a process that was initiated in late May.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Distribution of Red Flags Policy

Paper copies of the Town's Red Flags Policy were distributed to those involved with utility billing in the Town recently. The policy is intended to encourage employees to report any suspected fraud activity associated with people or organizations inquiring about utility billing information. All applicable employees will return a policy acknowledgement form.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(3) Safety Committee Meeting

I attended the subject meeting on June 28, 2018 as a member of the Committee. The meeting featured a visit from the Town's new Loss Control Representative from our insurer (the Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association), Mr. Edward Dorgan. The meeting featured discussions on upcoming safety goals, including the fact that the State Department of Labor Standards will soon expect cities and towns to adhere to Federal OSHA workplace safety and health standards. All agreed that the Town should consider establishing at least a half-time position to coordinate all of the necessary protocol development, training, documentation, and compliance work.

Recommendation: I plan to recommend a new position when the Board discusses Town Meeting article topics for future Town Meetings.

(4) Informal Department Heads Meeting

I hosted the subject meeting as I do from time to time on June 21, 2018. The meeting featured a discussion relative to the fiscal year end process and updates from various departments.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects

(1) Quarterly Affirmative Marketing Program (AMP) Report

I filed the subject report with the State during the week of June 25, 2018 in my capacity as the Town's Affirmative Marketing Construction Officer (AMCO).

The report documents the use of any woman or minority-owned businesses on State-funded construction projects. No such utilization occurred over the last quarter.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Purchase of Street Lights in Public Areas from National Grid

At the last meeting, in the interest of moving the process forward, the Board agreed that the Chairman should sign all applicable documents for the purchase of all National Grid-owned street lights in public areas, in the format mandated by Grid. I reviewed the documents with our National Grid liaison after the meeting and determined which aspects were applicable to our situation. Thereafter, Chairman O'Donnell signed in the necessary areas and the paperwork has been picked up by Grid for processing. It may take several months for the transaction to be completed and it will free up the Town to apply for Green Community funding to convert the lights to LED lamps in the spring. In the interim, the Town is responsible for any maintenance that is required on the old lights.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

E. Insurance

No items.

F. Facilities

(1) Quarterly Facility Self Inspection Checklists

I completed the subject checklists for the Town Hall and the Senior Center during the week of June 25, 2018. The reports are aimed at recognizing and eliminating safety hazards in Town buildings. I found no new hazards to report this quarter. Other departments will conduct inspections in other buildings and all of the checklists are discussed at quarterly Safety Committee meetings.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

G. Fiscal/Budget

No items.

H. Complaints

No items.

I. Meetings Attended

No items.

J. Town Meeting, By-Laws, and Regulations

(1) Discussion of Options Relative to Recreational Marijuana Regulation (*)

At the last meeting, the Board asked that a discussion be held relative to the options for further regulating recreational marijuana facilities within the Town. The Town presently has a moratorium in place through December 31, 2018 and could: a) just let the moratorium expire (allowing the industry in Town, in accordance with State regulations); b) seek to further regulate the industry through a bylaw; or c) seek a permanent ban, involving a Town Meeting vote and a future referendum at the ballot box.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(2) Potential Special or Fall Town Meeting Dates and Article Topics (*)

At the last meeting, the Board began discussion relative to how the next group of options for the replacement of the public safety building should proceed. Funding for an Owner's Project Manager (OPM) and perhaps geotechnical and environmental soil engineering could be sought at a summer Special Town Meeting (perhaps in August). The Fall Town Meeting will take place on October 16 this year, in order to prepare for the Manchester Memorial School debt exclusion vote in early November. I have begun to prepare a list of potential article topics and it would be useful for the Board to determine which topics should be placed on which warrant, since it is likely that two town meetings will be held.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

K. Legal Issues

No items.

L. Grants

(1) Hazard Mitigation Plan Revision Grant Quarterly Report

I filed the subject report with the State during the week of June 18, 2018. The grant is assisting the Town with the revision of our Hazard Mitigation Plan, which is necessary to compete for Federal funding concerning projects intended to proactively avoid infrastructural damage when natural disasters strike. We have received an extension of time on the grant, since our grant vendor (the Metropolitan Area Planning Council) has determined that it will take longer for

our revised plan to make it through the State and Federal review process than originally anticipated.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(2) Downtown Boardwalk Feasibility Study Quarterly Report

I filed the subject report with the State during the week of June 25, 2018. As the Board may recall, past work with respect to this grant (offered through the Seaport Economic Council) did determine that a boardwalk along the Essex River in the causeway area is feasible. The Legislature authorized borrowing for the project a few years ago but the Governor has not to date included the project in any actual borrowing plans.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary at this time.

(3) Dam and Seawall Repair Program Grant Application

Per the Board's earlier authorization, Chairman O'Donnell signed an application to the State Dam and Seawall Repair Grant Program during the week of June 18, 2018. Our application focuses on creating a repair and replacement design plan for the entire Conomo Point Seawall system, and benefits from technical assistance from GZA GeoEnvironmental (the firm that will conduct the design work, should the grant be funded). Despite emergency repairs made by the Department of Public Works after the several winter nor'easters, the seawall system needs more intensive study and repair. I submitted the application in advance of the deadline and we should know more about funding status in the coming weeks.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

M. Emergency Planning

(1) Assumption of Regional Dispatch Center by State 911 Department (*)

I attended the subject meeting as the Board's Chairman on June 26, 2018. Sheriff Coppinger was present, along with representatives from the State 911 Department. We learned at the meeting that the State 911 Department would like to take over the operation of the existing Center (keeping the present municipal advisory board system and management team in place), including covering ALL costs of operating the Center. The Town has already benefitted from participating (former \$300,000 budget for running our own dispatch reduced to an approximately \$56,000 annual Cherry Sheet assessment). This development would actually cover the \$56,000 as well. Through fiscal year 2019, the Town will have saved over \$1.5M on dispatch services. Starting in fiscal year 2020, the Town will begin to actually save at an even higher rate (likely over \$350,000 per year).

Recommendation: **Board discussion and support of this new development.**

(2) Reimbursement for Costs Associated with March 2-3 Nor'Easter

The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) has announced that the Federal Government has granted disaster aid for the nor'easter that occurred back on March 2 and 3, 2018. Soon, we will be asked to account for various costs that were incurred, and I will help coordinate the response from various departments. I will be sure to include the costs incurred to make the Conomo Point Seawall system safe after being damaged.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

N. Other Items

(1) Town Administrator Vacation Leave

I was out of the office, on vacation leave, on June 22 and June 25, 2018.

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