



Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of June 18, 2018

Report covers from June 2, 2018 to June 15, 2018

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

A. Town Department Reports/Requests

(1) Town Building Committee Meeting Summary (*)

The Town Building Committee met on June 13, 2018 to discuss how best resume the public safety building replacement matter, after the failure of the Village Restaurant property proposal in May. The Committee discussed the Board's desire to study a possible phased replacement of the existing building, along with the Board's desire to issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) to solicit other available properties. Four new members (appointed at the Board's last meeting) participated in the meeting. I was not able to attend the meeting due to a scheduling conflict but Chairman O'Donnell was in attendance and can offer a summary.

Recommendation: Board discussion relative to next steps with respect to the need for public safety building replacement.

B. Computer Systems

(1) Contract for Transition of Town Website to Drupal Platform (*)

As the Board may recall, funding was included in the fiscal year 2019 operating budget to transition the Town website from its present platform (which uses a back-end editing tool) to the Drupal platform (which allows for much more intuitive updating and a better look and feel). Our vendor, Virtual Town Hall and Schools, has provided us with a contract for the conversion, associated training, and continued hosting and support. No work will begin until after July 1, 2018.

Recommendation: Chairman's signature of the new contract.

(2) Fiber Optic Municipal Area Network (FMAN) Scheduling Update

We have learned from Comm-Tract, the contractor that is preparing to install the fiber optic lines that will link various Town buildings, that the project schedule has slipped into July (as opposed to the June timeframe that was originally proposed).

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

C. Personnel

(1) OSHA Implementation Webinar Summary

(*)

The Massachusetts Department of Labor Standards (DLS) offered a webinar on June 12, 2018 concerning how the Department will soon implement the enforcement of the Federal Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OHSA) standards. While DLS always had the ability to reference OSHA standards in the past, concerning municipalities, the agency generally focused on State standards on a complaint or incident-based basis. However, a change in State law now has DLS enforcing the Federal standards, along with a more concerted effort to inspect municipal workplaces and required improvements. DLS explained that incidence of worker injuries in both the MA State government and municipal government are much higher than the national average.

The webinar highlighted the reasons that DLS would generally visit a particular work site for, the hierarchy for addressing violations and requiring correction, helpful steps a town can take to prepare for the new program, assessment and correction grant opportunities, and the prospect of additional webinars and training for specific public work site/departments sectors.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects

(1) Contract for Promotion of Town Resources and Attractions

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As the Board may recall, I had solicited three quotations for the promotion of Town resources and attractions (Essex Merchants' Group, Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce, and North of Boston Visitors and Convention Bureau). Only the Essex Merchants' Group submitted a quotation (in the amount of \$23,500 – the extent of the available funding). The Merchants' Group has been the sole offeror concerning this promotional funding since its inception.

Recommendation: **Board vote to grant the promotion contract to the Essex Merchants' Group. The Group has already signed the Town's standard contract and the Board may now countersign it.**

(2) Request for Proposals Concerning Property for Public Safety Building

(*)

At the last meeting, the Board resolved to run the concept of the subject Request for Proposals (RFP) by the Town Building Committee (TBC). The TBC met on June 13, 2018 and has recommended some revisions for the Board's review.

Recommendation: **Board discussion and finalization of the RFP criteria.**

(3) Signature of Street Light Purchase Documents

(*)

At the last meeting, the Board agreed that Town Counsel-suggested changes to the street light purchase agreement documents supplied to the Town by National Grid should be pursued further with Grid prior to the Board's signature. However, the Board acknowledged that it was unlikely that Grid would change this standard language (which many other communities have signed and which our liaison at the company has stated he has never seen varied). The Board indicated that if real progress could not be demonstrated by the present meeting, documents should perhaps be signed in the standard format. Grid has not assented to any changes to date.

***Recommendation:* Possible Board signature of the documents with the understanding that counsel-recommended changes have not been assented to by Grid and the board is accepting certain risks in order to achieve the greater good (the path that many other communities have taken).**

E. Insurance

(1) Initial Hot Water Boiler Inspection, Town Hall/Library

An inspector from our insurer conducted an initial inspection of the new, high-efficiency gas hot water boiler serving the Town Hall/Library on June 5, 2018. He explained at the time that our HVAC subcontractor should have installed a flow valve (prevents firing if pumps are not working) as part of the initial system setup. The inspector, who is also authorized as a State inspector, has since contacted the State, which has provided us with a notice of violation. I have asked the subcontractor to return to the job site to install the part to meet code and he is presently discussing the matter with our inspector. We will also eventually pay the standard, \$50 fee to get an initial State certificate for the unit, which will be updated periodically as future inspections are made.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

F. Facilities

(1) Discussion Related to Route 133 Sewer Main, Causeway Area

(*)

Chairman O'Donnell, Superintendent of Public Works Goodwin, and I met on June 5, 2018 to discuss the series of sewer main breaks that we have experienced along the Essex causeway in the recent past. Two of the breaks occurred on the causeway itself and another break occurred on the approach to the causeway, in an upland area adjacent to the Village Restaurant. The MA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has been informed on each occasion.

After this most recent break, the Town has been asked by the DEP to review its system design and installation records with a third-party engineering firm in an effort to avoid future breaks if such a review identifies any recommended actions.

The Sewer Department is therefor already working with an engineering firm to identify a scope of services and to calculate the cost of the review project. In the new fiscal year, the Sewer Department will utilize maintenance funds to conduct the review and will seek to replenish those funds at the Fall Town Meeting.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(2) Future Use of Centennial Grove Cottage Area (*)

At the last meeting, the Board considered a preliminary request from the Pingree School to continue to use the subject area for its rowing program, on a long-term basis, along with a request from the Youth Commission to use the same area for youth programming. The Board determined that both groups should develop formal proposals for review at the present meeting. Any common goals can be identified and the Town can possibly move forward with the management of the Cottage area at low or no cost, while providing access or programs that residents could benefit from. It is also possible that the YMCA could help support access and programs that are ultimately offered.

Recommendation: **Board comparison of the proposals for the future use of the Cottage area.**

(3) Update Concerning Restoration of Two-Way Traffic on Causeway (*)

At the last meeting, the Board discussed how the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (DOT) was considering how to most rapidly reinforce the failing bridge over the Essex River in order to restore two-way traffic. The bridge has structural issues that required DOT to limit bridge crossing traffic to one lane, on an alternating basis. A scenario involving the reinforcement of six of the existing bridge beams exclusively from below (discussed with Senator Tarr and Representative Ferrante at the last meeting) was reviewed thoroughly by DOT. However, due to complex issues relative to the force of the water on that repair work, DOT has moved to the possibility of placing large I-beams on top of the bridge deck and tying those into a lower-profile reinforcement structure below.

Recommendation: **Continued Board discussion as necessary.**

(4) Downtown On-Street Parking & Wayfinding Recommendations Review (*)

At the last meeting, the Board agreed with the Economic Development Committee's (EDC) recent suggestion to begin to implement some of the on-street parking and wayfinding recommendations found in the 2016 Nelson/Nygaard parking study. At the present meeting, the Board will review those recommendations so that the scope of initial work can be generally determined. With that scope in hand, the EDC, the Town Planner, and myself can work with a traffic engineer to estimate the cost of overall design, production, and deployment of the recommendations in time for the Fall Town Meeting to consider funding.

The Town Planner looked at whether any State grants exist for this type of work but has not found any applicable programs to date.

***Recommendation:* Board discussion relative to the scope of work for future downtown, on-street parking designation and signage activities.**

G. Fiscal/Budget

(1) Informal School Budget Group Meeting Summary (*)

I attended the subject meeting along with Chairman O'Donnell and Finance Committee Chairman Dyer on June 15, 2018. The meeting featured a discussion relative to how the upcoming fall town meetings and elections in each community should be structured. The group agreed that the Manchester Town Meeting should occur on October 15, 2018 and that the Essex Town Meeting should occur on October 16, 2018 (as the Board has discussed previously). The Town of Manchester will not be seeking to add to the project and separately pay for space to be used for municipal purposes.

As to the ballot question, which could be written with or without the principal amount of the project, the deadline to add language to the State Election ballot is August 1, 2018. That deadline will be too soon for planning purposes to have final ballot language, especially if the principal amount is desired in the language. As such, special municipal elections will need to be held in each community on State Election Day, translating to voters needing to review and consider two separate ballots. The group agreed to bring these tentative ideas back to full boards and committees for discussion and feedback, before finalizing any plans. The District's bond counsel will begin to review questions concerning the general drafting of the language, the use of the principal project cost in the language, and whether the question must be exactly the same in both communities.

***Recommendation:* Board discussion as necessary.**

H. Complaints

No items.

I. Meetings Attended

(1) Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce Essex Division Meeting

I attended the subject meeting with Chairman O'Donnell, Police Chief Silva, and Superintendent of Public Works Goodwin on June 6, 2018. The meeting featured discussions relative to the Route 133 bridge issue and the continued search for a solution to the Town's public safety building replacement need. We also were able to update the group on other ongoing Town projects and initiatives.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Northeast Coastal Coalition (NECC) Meeting Summary (*)

Essex hosted the subject meeting in the Town Hall on June 15, 2018. The NECC had also met in Essex earlier this spring and is a group coordinated by Senator Tarr to bring a regional perspective to sediment management and dredging needs. I will have an update for the Board at the present meeting relative to the topics covered at the NECC meeting.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

J. Final Judgment

This category will be dropped from future reports, since the Final Judgment involving the elimination of pollution from septic systems to the coastal environment was completely fulfilled in 2017 and no further action has been required by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection.

K. Town Meeting, By-Laws, and Regulations

(1) Fall Town Meeting / Election Language Concerning Memorial School

See item G(1), above.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

L. Legal Issues

No items.

M. Grants

(1) Awarding of Two MVP Action Grants, Signature of Contracts (*)

The Town has been awarded two grants under the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Action Grant program. As the Board may recall, the first grant, for \$60,000, will study how large areas of salt marsh in three communities (Essex, Ipswich, and Newbury) recovers from a natural sediment deposition event over the past winter. The second grant, which was partially funded (\$15,000), will fund the initial stages of a feasibility study to determine if mussel reefs placed just seaward of degraded marsh banks and backfilled with suitable material sourced from the navigable channel will have a beneficial effect on horizontal marsh stability. The Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs will be working to provide contract documents and project kickoff sessions in the near future. Also, it will be necessary to enter into standard contracts with the

University of New Hampshire (sediment study) and Northeastern University/DeRosa Environmental (mussel reef study).

***Recommendation:* Board vote to authorize the Chairman to sign all necessary grant paperwork, including our contract with the State and contracts with our grant vendors, outside a meeting, once these documents become available.**

(2) Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Planning Grant Final Report

Our vendor for the subject planning grant, the Ipswich River Watershed Association, completed a final report for the subject, \$15,000 planning grant during the week of June 11, 2018. This grant helped the Town set various action item priorities concerning climate change and sea level rise and was instrumental in the successful awarding of the two MVP Action grants discussed above. I have submitted the final report to the State and the MVP planning grant is now closed out.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(3) Coastal Community Resilience Grant Final Report

Our vendor for the subject grant that was funded by the Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management (CZM), the National Wildlife Federation (NWF), will soon complete a final report for the subject, \$71,000 grant. This grant highlighted to the public the link between emergency planning and coastal resilience planning (on a regional basis), created a coastal hazards atlas and ongoing project compendium (on a regional basis), and provided climate change/sea level rise educational signage for installation in Essex. The final interactive event (a webinar) was offered by NWF on May 31, 2018. After the final report is filed with the State and all deliverables have been completed (posting of the educational signage is pending), NWF will provide a final invoice to the Town and I will file for full reimbursement from the State.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

N. Emergency Planning

(1) Regional Dispatch Center Monthly Meeting

I attended the subject meeting as the Chairman of the Finance Advisory Board and the Executive Board for the Regional Dispatch Center on June 7, 2018. The meeting featured a breakdown offered by the Center's Director concerning which types of services that the Center will offer in the future as "core services" (included in a community's basic assessment) and which services will incur extra charges. Generally, the towns involved in the Center have been making great progress concerning the use of common protocols and standards, which will allow the Center to offer more in the "core services" category. We will continue to

winnow down and categorize the list of possible services with an eye toward implementation in fiscal year 2020.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

O. Other Items

(1) Town Administrator Vacation Leave

I was out of the office, on vacation leave, on June 13 and 14, 2018.

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