



## Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of April 10, 2023

Report covers from March 25, 2023 to April 7, 2023

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

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### A. Town Department Reports/Requests

No items.

### B. Computer Systems

No items.

### C. Personnel

#### (1) Town Clerk Applicants

As the Board may recall, we had advertised for the expected Town Clerk vacancy that will occur in July due to the retirement of our current Town Clerk. We used the month of March to collect applications and we received a total of five. All five have the potential for being a good fit for the job and it would be useful to interview all of the candidates and then consider the matter further thereafter. To that end, Chairman Pereen has scheduled a special meeting of the Board to conduct the interviews on the morning of April 13, 2023.

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

#### (2) Town Custodian Hiring Update

After much searching via many available connections and networks, I am pleased to announce that the two, vacant Town Custodian positions will likely be filled (pending clearance of CORI checks and drug and medical screening of the applicants). It is likely that the two new employees will begin work during the week of April 10, 2023.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

### D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects

#### (1) Conomo Point Stone Pier Renovation Project Update

At the last meeting, the Board awarded the contract for the renovation of the two stone piers at Conomo Point to ERA Equipment, LLC of Ipswich, MA. Subsequently, ERA was given a Notice to Proceed and our engineering consultant held a pre-construction meeting at the project site on March 30, 2023. Work is expected to wrap up by the Town's stated deadline of May 19, 2023.

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

(2) Gregory Island Lots Sale Process Update

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At the last meeting, the Selectmen were waiting for the Board of Assessors to review the list of Gregory Island lots that will potentially be sold to ensure that all assessed values are current and accurate. The Assessors collaborated with the Building Inspector to rule out the lots as being buildable. Since none of the lots were deemed by the Building Inspector as being buildable (at least a general level of assessment), the Assessors have maintained the original values (finding that the vacant lots should not be increased in value, even in the current marketplace). Values are as follows:

Map	Lot	Assessed Value	Deed Describes Bounds
155	16	\$2,300	Yes
155	19	\$2,300	Yes
<b>155</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>\$2,100</b>	<b>No</b>
155	24	\$2,700	Yes
155	25	\$2,500	Yes
155	26	\$1,600	Yes
155	29	\$3,000	Yes
<b>155</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>\$2,200</b>	<b>No</b>
155	32	\$2,300	Yes
155	41	\$ 900	Yes
<b>155</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>\$1,300</b>	<b>No</b>
155	44	\$2,300	Yes

The Economic Development Committee had also commented recently that it may be a useful exercise to determine if a number of contiguous lots could be combined to meet zoning for a single, buildable lot. Even if that appears to be the case, the Town is not in a position to say with certainty that any particular property is truly buildable (especially when water and wastewater are considered). At the last meeting, the Board agreed with my suggestion that I visit the area to see whether an on-site wastewater treatment system even appears feasible. I visited the area on March 28, 2023 and it was very apparent that all of the lots in question are very shallow to bedrock. Under Title 5, for new construction, a lot would be required to have a sizeable leaching facility underlain by at least four feet of naturally occurring pervious material (conditions that are not present).

At this point, if the Board desires to move forward with offering the lots for sale, I would recommend that each sale include a deed restriction preventing any portion of the lot from being built upon (even for an accessory-type building) in the future, even if combined with an adjacent, buildable lot. Further, even though the various lots are of low assessed value, what someone may be willing to pay may be higher. The Board is free to set a “floor” price for each property and all legal costs could be put upon any interested buyer. The Board has already determined that no pre-sale survey work will be done and each buyer will be purchasing each parcel based on the description on the deed. Since three of the twelve parcels do not have property bounds described on the deed that we have been able to obtain,

and since getting back to such a deed may require extensive title work, it is possible that those three parcels should be left out of the sale process.

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

(3) Transfer Station Compactor Replacement Pre-bid Site Visit

The Superintendent of Public Works and I hosted the subject site visit on April 4, 2023. A total of three prospective vendors attended the site visit and a full tour of the existing facility was offered. The Superintendent also pointed out where up to two, smaller compactors to possibly be used for recycling would be placed if the Town elects one or both of the add-alternates discussed in the Invitation for Bids. Proposals are due on April 20, 2023 at 10:00 a.m. and the Board will consider awarding a contract to the successful bidder on April 24, 2023.

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

**E. Insurance**

(1) Monthly Pothole Log

I received the subject log from the DPW for the month of March during the week of April 3, 2023. The log is used to document any reported potholes during the month and actions taken to repair them. No potholes were reported during March.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

(2) Submission of Freeze-up Prevention Program Logs

Each winter, various Town personnel are assigned to verifying that each Town building has adequate heat, at least one time during a given weekend. The goal of the program is to prevent possible frozen pipes. I received the seasonal logs from the Chief of Police and the Superintendent of Public Works during the week of April 3, 2023 and I submitted the logs to our insurer for premium credit. No problems were detected with heating in any Town building over the past winter.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

**F. Facilities**

No items.

**G. Fiscal/Budget**

(1) School District Budget Collaboration Group Summary and Records Request (\*)

I attended the subject meeting along with Selectman Bradford on March 30, 2023. The meeting featured a discussion with respect to the Town's ongoing interest in obtaining raw class size data for all sections within the Manchester Essex Regional School District. Selectman Bradford reiterated that the Town is still

interested in obtaining the data and I discussed Chairman Pereen's ongoing interest as well. Selectman Bradford agreed that it may also be beneficial to schedule some public workshops in the future with respect to how class sizing is a product of sometimes complicated factors (a suggestion made by District personnel). Further, Selectman Bradford suggested that Chairman Pereen attend collaboration meetings in the future. Subsequent to the meeting, Chairman Pereen filed a public records request with the District for class size and teacher assignment and workload information.

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

## **H. Complaints**

No items.

## **I. Meetings Attended**

### (1) Massachusetts House of Representatives Ways & Means Committee Meeting

Our State Representative, Ann-Margaret Ferrante, who is the vice-chair for the subject Committee, coordinated a meeting of the Committee on March 31, 2023, in Gloucester. Selectman Phippen and I were in attendance. The Committee took testimony from various, high-level and cabinet-level officials of the executive branch with respect to the State's fiscal year 2024 budget that the Legislature is presently working to formulate. Senator Tarr was also present and sat with the Committee. The meeting touched upon a variety of important issues facing the State.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

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

### (1) Preliminary Annual Town Meeting Motions

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I have developed preliminary Annual Town Meeting motions for the Board's review.

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

### (2) Town Meeting Booklet and Handouts

The Town Accountant and I finished compiling the Town Meeting booklet that contains the warrant and the Finance Committee Report (among other items) and I brought the booklet to our printing contractor on April 7, 2023. Printed copies of the booklet will be available in the next couple of weeks and an [electronic version of the booklet](#) is already available at the Town website. Major handouts (which are also already at the Town website) will include a [summary](#) and the [full text](#) of the proposed zoning bylaw reorganization and the full text of the [proposed conservation bylaw](#).

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

## **K. Legal Issues**

No items.

## **L. Grants**

### (1) Apple Street Project Monthly Report

I assisted our engineering consultant with the completion of the subject report for the month of March, 2023 for the Apple Street Roadbed Elevation & Culvert Replacement Project during the week of March 27, 2023. Our consultant then submitted the report to the MVP grant program. The report featured a discussion of the recent Order of Conditions that has been issued by the Conservation Commission for the project.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

### (2) Hazard Mitigation Plan Update Assistance

As the Board may recall, the Town was awarded around \$20,000 through the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) to hire a consultant to assist with the updating of the Town's Hazard Mitigation Plan. MEMA held an informational webinar on March 28, 2023 for all participating communities to learn more about grant commencement and management. The Town will be issued a Notice to Proceed by MEMA very soon and I have followed the necessary Federal guidelines to procure a consultant, in the meantime. Proposals are due on April 20, 2023 and the Board will select the best proposal at its next meeting, on April 24, 2023.

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

### (3) Off-Season Event Grant, Final Budget Establishment Meeting

I met with personnel from Community Space Collaborative (CSC), the Town Planner, and the Chairman of the Economic Development Committee on March 30, 2023 to establish the final budget for the Town's off-season even known as "Spring into Essex: Essex in Bloom". CSC has met several times with the Event Working Group to understand what types of activities will occur and, by extension, what types of supplies, vendors, and equipment will be necessary. Of the \$51,000 provided by the grant, \$31,500 is available beyond what will be paid to CSC and we have now determined how all of that money will be allocated. I have already purchased outdoor portable tables and chairs via the grant and other purchases are in process. The event will occur during the weekend of May 19-21, 2023.

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

## **M. Emergency Planning**

### (1) Massachusetts Hazard Mitigation & Climate Adaptation Plan Workshop

I attended the subject workshop on April 4, 2023. Personnel from the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency's (MEMA) Emergency Management Group (ERG) presented an overview of the State Hazard Mitigation and Climate Adaptation Plan (SHMCAP) and collected feedback from the attendees (most were municipal government personnel and officials). Generally, the SHMCAP takes a very broad look at various climate change-related risk factors and attempts to make recommendations for actions necessary to deal with predicted hazards. Participants ranked both coastal and inland flooding as the highest risks associated with climate change.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

## **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.*