



Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of August 21, 2023

Report covers from August 5, 2023 to August 18, 2023

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

A. Town Department Reports/Requests

No items.

B. Computer Systems

(1) Computer Configuration – Board of Assessors

The Board of Assessors Office has utilized a desktop PC for some time now and that system has reached end of life. Now that we have a remotely-hosted Assessors' software server as part of our tenancy with the Town of Danvers, the office can switch over to the use of a zero-client system (like the Assessors' Clerk uses) to access the software. I have decommissioned the old PC and a zero-client system is now in its place. All necessary folders and files were copied over to the new system.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

C. Personnel

No items.

D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects

(1) Continued Review of RFP for Summer Camp and Enrichment Services (*)

At the last meeting, the Board established that future years of summer camp at the Centennial Grove will only include an eight-week payment option. In addition, the Board asked me to review various summer camp program rates in the area to better understand any fee limitations that should be placed in the Request for Proposals (RFP) for a summer camp and enrichment program contractor for the next five years. Generally, most camp options in our area are already higher than fees charged for Camp Dory at the Centennial Grove and the draft RFP will actually require the fee to decrease from what is being charged in this summer of 2023 season. The current fee for an Essex resident for 8 weeks of full day summer camp is \$2,200 and the RFP presently anticipates setting a cap of \$2,000.

Recommendation: **Further Board review of the draft RFP.**

E. Insurance

No items.

F. Facilities

(1) Town Hall Elevator Diagnostics

Recently, after a power blip in our area, I had to reboot the Town Hall elevator by throwing the service disconnect since the elevator would not respond to service requests (thinking that the problem was related to the power blip). However, this unresponsiveness happened repeatedly thereafter without any reason to suspect a power grid issue. While the elevator returns to service with a reboot each time, we do not want to risk having someone get stuck inside. As such, I contacted our service contractor during the week of August 14, 2023 and a technician could not find anything immediately problematic. The technician will be back with a special tool that can read the error logs within the system and hopefully will be able to find the cause and eliminate this sporadic issue.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Removal of Bats from Town Hall

A bat was found in the ladies' room on the second floor of Town Hall on August 14, 2023. The Animal Control Officer (ACO) was called and she removed the bat. A second bat was found in the Library on August 16, 2023. I assisted to corral the bat in a smaller space until the ACO could arrive. The ACO called in a wildlife specialist to take the second bat and to tour the upper reaches of Town Hall with us to ensure that no other bats were present and how they might be getting in. On the bell level of Town Hall, it was easy to notice that a gap had opened up in a small section of screening around a fresh air louver and this is likely the path of entry. From that level, a bat could make its way down a chase and into the occupied portion of Town Hall. The Superintendent of Public Works repaired the break in the screen and we are hopeful that the issue is solved.

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) Continued Review of Possible Fall Town Meeting Article Topics (*)

I have revised the list of possible Fall Town Meeting topics in accordance with the Board's guidance from the last meeting. I would like to develop a preliminary version of the warrant for the Board's next meeting. As such, it would be beneficial to that process for the Board to begin to make some preliminary decisions.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(2) Draft Mobile Vendors Policy Review (*)

The Board began review of the subject policy at a previous meeting and has since been awaiting input from the Economic Development Committee and the Essex Merchants' Group. That input is available for review.

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

K. Legal Issues

No items.

L. Grants

(1) Downtown Lighting Project Update (*)

Our engineering consultant completed the 75% design plans for the downtown decorative lighting project at the end of the week of July 31, 2023. I walked the entire project zone with the Chairman of the Economic Development Committee (Jodi Harris) and we were able to confirm the proposed locations for the 23 lights (all on the landward side of the causeway) that were included in the original project cost estimate. Other light locations on the seaward side of the causeway and Martin/Main Street are also possible but these will need to be addressed as "add-alternates" in the bid documents since we may only have enough funding for the base package of 23 lights. Chairman Pereen, Chairman Harris, and the Town Planner helped to prioritize the list of possible add-alternate lights and we provided this feedback to our consultant during the week of August 7, 2023. Presently, I am awaiting a revised set of plans so that we can verify the final layout and move on to finalization of the bid package and a bid schedule. The bid package will only include all of the underground work and replacement of affected portions of the concrete sidewalk. All wire pulling and aboveground work will be accomplished thereafter, by the Ipswich Municipal Light Department.

Also, the Economic Development Committee has proposed that the Town purchase a total of 25 brass sidewalk plaques (to accommodate the base package and up to two add-alternates), with a final cost that is slightly higher than what the

Board approved at the last meeting. Before an order for the plaques is approved, it will be useful to discuss the timing of the sidewalk work that will be attendant to the underground preparations for the lights. We want to be certain that the lead time for the plaques is not such that sidewalk work (procured by competitive bid) is far enough out to allow for the placement of the plaques.

***Recommendation:* Board discussion of the lighting project, with particular attention to the timing of sidewalk work versus plaque lead time.**

(2) Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Grant Check-in

Our engineering consultant for the subject project and I participated in a virtual meeting with our MVP grant coordinator on August 16, 2023. With the Apple Street Roadbed Elevation and Culvert Replacement project design and permitting presently on hold, the MVP coordinator for our region reached out to understand the Town's plans moving into the fall. Generally, since neither the MA DEP superseding order of conditions process nor the MEPA review process will continue until after the Town potentially acquires the necessary easements for the project, the Town is in a waiting mode until the Fall Town Meeting in November.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(3) Hazard Mitigation Plan Update Documents Review

The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) is assisting the Town with the update of the Town's Hazard Mitigation Plan via grant funding. The planning team has had one meeting so far and a second meeting is planned for September 18, 2023. At that second meeting, team members will provide any final feedback on three worksheets that were updated as a result of the first meeting and will begin the review and discussion of two new documents. All documents were distributed by MAPC during the week of August 14, 2023 and I have provided comments to MAPC in advance of the next meeting. Other team members have been encouraged to do the same.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

M. Emergency Planning

(1) Community Wildfire Protection Plan Meeting Summary

At the Board's meeting of July 24, 2023, the Board agreed that Essex should join the other three Cape Ann communities in the development of a Regional Wildfire Protection Plan. I participated in a meeting involving all four communities on August 17, 2023 and we agreed that it was time to reach out to the various non-profit land conservation agencies in our area, hopefully to have them share in the cost of the study. I am making contact with the Essex County Greenbelt and others are making contact with the Manchester Essex Conservation Trust and the Trustees.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

N. Other Items

(1) Town Administrator Leave

I was out of the office, on leave, from August 10 through August 15, 2023.

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