



Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of August 22, 2022

Report covers from August 6, 2022 to August 19, 2022

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

A. Town Department Reports/Requests

(1) Economic Development Committee Meeting Summary (*)

I participated in the subject meeting on August 11, 2022, along with Chairman Pereen. The meeting featured discussions regarding finalizing a Fall Town Meeting article for the potential sale of various small parcels on Gregory Island, several Fall Town Meeting articles associated with the downtown lighting project and near-term/future improvement of the aesthetics of public spaces, and a plan to improve the Centennial Grove to maximize future revenue generation.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(1) Strategic Planning Committee Meeting Summary (*)

I participated in the subject meeting on August 18, 2022, along with Chairman Pereen, who is a member of the Committee. The Committee is ready to bring the draft Strategic Plan to the general public for comment and input. A public forum that will be covered by 1623 Studios as a full hybrid meeting will occur on October 6, 2022 at 7:00 p.m. in the Town Hall auditorium (or via the Town's video conferencing platform). Final edits will be applied to the document by September 7, 2022, a small group will complete a final review by September 14 and the draft will be released to the public by September 19.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

B. Computer Systems

(1) Provision of Dual Monitor Capability for Conservation Office

The Conservation Commission Clerk recently requested a dual computer monitor capability for the Commission's computer terminal. I obtained the necessary device to provide that capability within our zero-client local area network and connected a second monitor that the Commission had separately purchased, on August 8, 2022.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

C. Personnel

No items.

D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects

(1) Ongoing Watering of Conomo Point Seawall Project Plantings

The landscaping subcontractor was contractually obligated to water the new plantings associated with the Conomo Point Seawall project through August 10, 2022. Given the extreme drought conditions this summer, I arranged to have the landscaper continue to water the plantings using funding that is still available within the project budget. Also, given that the new planting beds have proven to also support weeds, the landscaper will be likely be paid to install weed mats (not in the original scope) to avoid future problems.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Route 133 Essex River Bridge Replacement Project Update

I attended a construction meeting regarding the subject project on August 16, 2022. The general contractor for the project is finishing up repairs and modifications to the old bridge abutments and will soon turn attention to laying the structural components of the new bridge. The contractor's goal is to have the basic new bridge deck and its sidewalks completed by October of 2022 so that utility relocation work can continue over the winter.

With respect to detour signage, the one gap we have noticed is that trailer trucks that get off of Route 128 at the Route 133 exit in Gloucester have no signage to warn them of the inability to cross the Essex River until they get to Water Street in Essex. Consequently, while not proper, several drivers have continued over the temporary bridge anyway, since they have already driven all the way into Essex. At the meeting, DOT agreed to post signage at both the NB and the SB exit to 133 on 128 so that truck drivers can continue on 128 to take an alternate route.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

E. Insurance

No items.

F. Facilities

No items.

G. Fiscal/Budget

(1) Essex Police Department Staffing Update

As the Board is aware, the Essex Police Department has had difficulty attracting and retaining part-time patrol officers given the requirements for training under the new Police Reform Law. The Department has for some time now been filling many open shifts with a nearly full-time, non-union position that is in a Town

benefits status. Now that the Police Reform Law requires officers who have only completed the part-time police academy to attend the bridge academy to achieve equivalency to the full-time academy, the Department needs to convert this particular position to a full-time, union position. Chairman Preen and I met with Finance Committee Chairman Buttrick on August 10, 2022 to discuss the possible transition and the full Finance Committee supported the incremental funding to make the conversion on August 15, 2022. The Chief of Police is presently working to offer the position internally to all part-time officers, via a competitive process.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

H. Complaints

No items.

I. Meetings Attended

No items.

J. Town Meeting, By-Laws, and Regulations

(1) Review of Preliminary List of Topics for Fall Town Meeting (*)

The Board briefly reviewed a preliminary list of Town Meeting article topics at the last meeting. More detailed discussion is now required.

Recommendation: **Continued Board review of the preliminary list.**

K. Legal Issues

No items.

L. Grants

(1) Possible Future Construction Grant Funding, Apple Street (*)

I met virtually with personnel from the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) and MEMA's consultant (Atkins) on August 11, 2022. The meeting featured a discussion of the recently-awarded MVP grant for final design and permitting of the Apple Street Roadbed Elevation and Culvert Replacement Project. With that grant set to bring the project to a construction-ready status within the next two years, a review of possible Federal construction Funding, via MEMA is in order.

Presently, we have a chance to get the project on a Federal "waiting list" that could lock in future Federal funding at 90%. State and local funding could be sought to cover the remainder. Further, in order to remain eligible for future

90/10 construction funding, our Federal Hazard Mitigation Plan (which expires August 20, 2024) cannot be allowed to lapse. To that end, MEMA personnel recommended that the Town apply for a technical assistance grant to update the Plan now, ensuring that it will not lapse during the construction grant period. This technical assistance grant is also being offered at 90/10 and, as in the past, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) would be the hired facilitator.

***Recommendation:* Board authorization of the Chairman to sign a Letter of Intent with respect to technical assistance funding.**

(2) Alewife Brook Stream Study Final Report

(*)

The subject report pertaining to the possibility of managing the stream channel in the Alewife Brook to optimize fish migration and to possibly improve water quality in Chebacco Lake was delivered to the Town of July 27, 2022. Selectman Phippen and I, among others, reviewed the draft final version of the report and provided comments. The report was finalized and delivered to the Town on August 19, 2022.

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

M. Emergency Planning

No items.

N. Other Items

(1) Town Administrator Leave

I was out of the office, on leave, for a portion of the day on August 16, 2022.

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