



Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of August 23, 2021

Report covers from August 7, 2021 to August 20, 2021

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

A. Town Department Reports/Requests

(1) Strategic Planning Committee Summary

I attended the subject meeting on August 10, 2021 along with Chairman Pereen (who is a member of the Committee). The Committee is in the process of working through ten distinct planning goal themes to add detail to each theme. About half of the planning goal areas have been addressed and the Committee will meet again on September 20, 2021. Eventually, a rough draft of the revised Essex Strategic Plan will be developed and the Committee can then refine the document and seek public input.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

B. Computer Systems

(1) Expansion of Security System Controls at New Public Safety Facility

The security system for the new public safety facility was delivered with three, dedicated computer terminals. However, there is need to allow access for other employees in other offices. Also, the system was not performing well and required some adjustments. As such, on August 17, 2021, the original system vendor addressed the problems and I assisted the vendor with offering the security interface to authorized users over the Town's network.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Annual IT Audit

As is the case each year, the firm which conducts the Town's annual financial audit also reviews the Town's IT infrastructure and related policies. Our auditor takes this extra step since any weakness in IT has the potential to affect the Town adversely from a financial perspective. I met virtually with our auditor on August 18, 2021 and subsequently provided a variety of policies and other documentation to assist the auditor in the IT review.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

C. Personnel

No items.

D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects

(1) Old Police/Fire Station Demolition Project Update (*)

The Town's demolition contractor that will demolish the old police/fire station at 24 Martin Street will soon mobilize for the project. Chairman Pereen and I participated in the project kickoff meeting with our Project Manager and our architect on August 16, 2021. Our contractor is working on project submittals for our architect presently and will make the necessary notification to the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection for the asbestos abatement work. We are working together to get natural gas, telephone, and cable connections to the existing building terminated by the utilities (all three have been contacted) and we will follow with electric and water service disconnections after the asbestos abatement work has been completed. Generally, asbestos abatement will commence shortly after Labor Day, with actual building demolition commencing in late-September. Site restoration should be complete by mid to late-October.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(2) HAZMAT Abatement Monitoring / Air Quality Sampling Contract (*)

During the demolition of the old police/fire station at 24 Martin Street, it is necessary for the Town to have its own, third-party specialist to monitor asbestos abatement activities and sample air quality as the demolition contractor conducts its abatement work. The specialist can be retained via an amendment to our project designer's contract, as a subconsultant. The cost of the monitoring and sampling work has been set not to exceed \$9,500 and will hopefully be less.

Recommendation: **Board approval of Amendment 16 to the Town's contract with Johnson Roberts Associates.**

(3) Final Change Order, Public Safety Facility Construction Project (*)

Our construction contractor has developed a final change order request with respect to the newly-completed public safety facility at 11 John Wise Avenue. The change order involves the relocation of one electronic door access device and the reversal of swing for one door. The total cost of the work is \$1,681.02.

Recommendation: **Board approval of the final public safety facility construction project change order.**

(4) New Public Safety Facility Roof Defect Update (*)

Our roofing consultant has now completed his review of the problems that have been noted with the roofing shingles on the new public safety facility at 11 John Wise Avenue. As the Board may recall, the consultant has made two site visits, with the second visit including multiple "test cuts" into the roof to understand the situation with all roofing layers and materials. The report is available for the Board's review.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(5) Conomo Point Seawall Replacement Project Bidding Schedule

I have worked with our consulting engineering firm, GZA Geoenvironmental, to establish the bidding schedule for the Conomo Point seawall replacement project. Advertising will commence and bid documents will be available on September 22, 2021. A pre-bid meeting will be offered on site on October 7, 2021 and bids will be due on October 14, 2021. We hope to have the successful bidder start the project on or about November 1, 2021, with the project wrapping up in the spring of 2022.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(6) Water System Upgrade Project Status Report

The Board of Public Works has officially asked our consulting engineering firm (EA Engineering) to develop a formal proposal for the use and management of the Town's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. The Town will receive just over \$1M in ARPA funding and will spend all of it on water system upgrades (including the cost of managing the Federal funds and a final audit). Although the water system has needs involving the supply wells, the filtration plant, and the distribution system, we have been advised to address the supply wells with the ARPA funds. Well work will not score as highly on a future State Revolving Loan Fund (SRF) application as the other categories will, but is fully eligible for ARPA funding.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

E. Insurance

No items.

F. Facilities

(1) Vandalism at Centennial Grove Cottage

The Essex Police Department reported that rocks were thrown through a window at the Centennial Grove Cottage during the week of August 9, 2021. The YMCA has boarded up that window.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Town Hall HVAC System Return to Service

After much delay, the Town Hall HVAC system has been returned to service. Our HVAC contractor had been working directly with the manufacturer to diagnose a problem that was not allowing one of our three condensing units to start. The process involved delays associated with getting circuit boards and

related parts due to COVID shortages. During the week of August 9, 2021, our contractor returned to the site with new parts and also was able to confirm that the compressor for that condensing unit had totally failed. Prior to this time, it was difficult to distinguish one problem from another without confirmation of good electronics. Our contractor was able to get our air conditioning system to function using two of the three units running in a special mode and we have locked out several interior units so that the load may be handled properly. A new compressor will not be available until at least October (again, due to a COVID-related parts shortage).

Recommendation: No further action is necessary at this time.

G. Fiscal/Budget

No items.

H. Complaints

No items.

I. Meetings Attended

(1) ClamFest Planning Meeting

I attended the subject meeting involving the Essex Division of the Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce on September 16, 2021. The Chamber was considering holding the event at the Essex Elementary School grounds this year since the usual area in Memorial Park may be impacted by the project that will demolish the old fire and police station at 24 Martin Street. In addition to potential issues with finding a suitable venue, the Chamber has learned that many establishments that would normally participate are not able to this year since staffing in the hospitality sector is still in short supply. Another unknown is whether COVID will again be a factor of concern this fall. As such, the Chamber has decided to cancel the event again this year and will bring it back in full swing in 2022.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

J. Town Meeting, By-Laws, and Regulations

(1) Further Review of Draft Fall Town Meeting Topics List (*)

I have revised the draft list of possible Fall Town Meeting topics in accordance with the Board's guidance from the last meeting. I intend to have a draft of the Fall Town Meeting warrant for the Board's review at its first September meeting. The warrant should be signed at the Board's meeting of October 18, 2021 (Fall Town Meeting is November 15, 2021).

Recommendation: Board finalization of the various possible topics in preparation for a draft warrant.

K. Legal Issues

No items.

L. Grants

(1) Exploration of DEP or EPA Brownfields Funding, Allen Properties (*)

The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) recently conducted a Preliminary Assessment of environmental issues that may be present on the Southern Avenue properties that are presently owned by the Estate of William Allen. Now that this record has been compiled, it is possible that the Town could fare better with respect to State (via MassDevelopment) or Federal (via the US Environmental Protection Agency – EPA) grants known as “brownfield grants” that could eventually pay to remediate the site for public use. As the Board may recall, the properties are currently in arrears for property taxes and are on a path for the Town to take ownership through the tax title process and possibly auction off.

According to the DEP brownfields coordinator in the northeast regional office, the Town would have to gain written continuous access to the site from the estate and would have to engage the services of a Licensed Site Professional (LSP) to develop a scope of services that would be used in any grant application. If a grant application is successful, the site could possibly be fully remediated and then repurposed if/when the Town obtains ownership. Ramifications of moving toward Town-controlled remediation with respect to future contaminated site liability would have to be reviewed with Town Counsel. The present plan to obtain ownership and immediately auction the property off keeps the Town insulated from any such liability.

Recommendation: Board discussion relative to whether to explore brownfields grants opportunities.

(2) Community Compact Cabinet Grant Application, Zoning Review (*)

At the last meeting, the Board agreed that Essex should seek a Community Compact Cabinet grant (also known as a “best practices” grant) from the Baker Administration with respect to the first steps toward comprehensively reviewing the Essex zoning bylaws. The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) had put together a scope of services that the Board was in general agreement with and subsequently provided a cost for those services (\$45,140). If the application is successful, the work will be conducted between October of 2021 and March of 2022. I used the scope of work provided by MAPC to develop and submit the necessary grant application to the State, with the approval of Chairman Preen.

Recommendation: Board vote to officially ratify the Town's application submission.

(3) Possible Grant Application for Cable Studio Installation at Town Hall (*)

As the Board may recall, 1623 Studios, which is the local cable access provider on Cape Ann, had encouraged the Town to install equipment in Town Hall that would allow public meetings to be broadcast over local cable channels and to possibly facilitate interactive meetings over video conferencing software. Given that operating the equipment would take a third party and that 1623 Studios can only commit to two meetings per month in the Town, the Board was not interested in using Town funds for this project. However, it may be possible to apply for the equipment via the State's IT grant program and 1623 Studios personnel have offered to help develop and submit the application.

Recommendation: Board discussion relative to a possible IT grant application, facilitated by 1623 Studios.

(4) Regional IT Grant Status Summary

As the Board may recall, we have been working with other communities to take advantage of centralized IT services via the Town of Danvers municipal datacenter. Representatives of participating communities met remotely on August 19, 2021 to review what Danvers is prepared to offer via a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) among the partners. At this point, the group is working on possible group purchases for new VOIP phone system service, municipal permitting cloud-based software, and a cloud-based antivirus and network threat protection system capable of more effectively dealing with ransomware threats. Danvers would also like to support enhanced cyber security for all participants. A future step will be to replace the Town's present firewall system (Cisco) with a new system (Fortinet) that would be managed and supported by Danvers. These types of items could be funded at the Fall Town Meeting and/or programmed in to the fiscal year 2023 operating budget.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

M. Emergency Planning

No items.

N. Other Items

(1) Town Administrator Leave

I was out of the office, on vacation leave, for portions of four days during the week of August 9, 2021 and all day on August 20, 2021.

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