



## **Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of July 25, 2022**

*Report covers from July 9, 2022 to July 22, 2022*

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

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### **A. Town Department Reports/Requests**

#### (1) Strategic Planning Committee Meeting Summary

The Strategic Planning Committee met on July 14, 2022. The meeting featured a discussion concerning internal input on the working draft of the updated Plan. The Committee will meet again on August 18, 2022 to go over the final working draft and will schedule a public forum thereafter.

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

### **B. Computer Systems**

#### (1) Replacement of Hard Drive, Virtual Server Host

One of the hard drives in the host box that runs the Town's several virtual servers failed on July 8, 2022. The host continued to function since it is set up for redundant failover but that will not be the case if another drive were to fail. I pulled the failed drive and provided the necessary information to our IT equipment vendor. A new drive arrived on July 13, 2022 and the system is again functioning with full redundancy capabilities. We will actually soon be migrating our virtual servers to the Danvers Datacenter for direct computing from that location over our fiber optic circuit (with Internet failover). This plan will allow us to avoid having to replace the host box in favor of a less-expensive tenancy at the datacenter.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

### **C. Personnel**

No items.

### **D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects**

#### (1) Route 133 Essex River Bridge Replacement Project Update

Traffic was diverted over the temporary bridge on July 12, 2022. Public safety departments conducted testing with the largest pieces of equipment to ensure that the equipment can make it through the tight curves at the bypass and to anticipate how the road will have to be cleared to let equipment through in an emergency. I also participated in a construction meeting on July 19, 2022. Signage for the truck detour was clarified shortly after traffic diversion from a limitation on the

number of axles to an outright ban on tractor trailers. Demolition of the old bridge is now underway.

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

(2) Old Fire/Police Station Site Restoration Update (\*)

The site work subcontractor for the subject project has completed all site work including hydroseeding. The viewing shed for the Town's antique fire pumper is set to arrive on July 25, 2022 and the project will be essentially complete. Our general contractor is working with National Grid to energize the new, underground electrical feed from Martin Street that will power both the viewing shed and the existing lights in the municipal parking lot. The general contractor is responsible for watering the new lawn on a consistent basis for 60 days. A local electrician will install both interior and exterior lighting and power outlets on the new building.

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

(3) Solid Waste/Recycling Cost Proposals from Contractors (\*)

At the last meeting, I had indicated that, of the seven solid waste/recycling contractors that we had contacted, only two (Innovative Waste Systems, LLC, and Casella) were interested in making cost proposals to the Town (for both curbside and transfer station options). We expect to have price ranges from Casella for both options at the present meeting and we will continue to communicate with other vendors.

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

## **E. Insurance**

No items.

## **F. Facilities**

(1) Training for Use of New Broadcast System in Town Hall Auditorium

Due to supply chain issues, the installation of the new broadcast system in the Town Hall Auditorium took months longer than originally anticipated. The system was recently completed and the installation contractor provided system training for 1623 Studios personnel on July 11, 2022. I attended the training so that I could be familiar with the system in the event that aspects of the system are being used without 1623 Studios present. Generally, the system will be used up to four times per month with 1623 Studios personnel operating it.

The system can be used for something as simple as public address speakers for in-person meetings in the auditorium to something as complex as a hybrid, interactive meeting with some people present in the auditorium and others joining

and participating virtually. The system will be able to present different camera angles and zoom scenarios and will broadcast meetings live to 1623 Studios' cable stations whether or not the meeting is interactive. At the last meeting, the Board agreed to utilize the system for a full, hybrid production at the present meeting.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

(2) Annual Town Hall Elevator Inspection and Test

The State Elevator Inspector performed an inspection and test of the Town Hall elevator on July 12, 2022. I had arranged in advance to also have our elevator, emergency generator, and fire alarm contractors all present for the test, as required by the State. The elevator passed inspection. The handicapped accessible lift to the second-floor conference room is inspected every two years, and this year was an off-year.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

(3) Soil Testing at Centennial Grove for Possible New Septic System(s) (\*)

I conducted soil testing at the Centennial Grove on July 19, 2022, assisted by a DPW backhoe and witnessed by the Board of Health Administrator. The testing was aimed at identifying an area that could be suitable for a future leaching facility to support public restrooms at the Grove, including possibly tying the Grove Cottage (which is presently served by an old cesspool) into the system. We tested only in areas that were outside of wetland/lake setbacks, as well as the Zone I of the Town's public water supply wells.

We first looked in a location that was lower than both the picnic grounds and the Grove Cottage, with the thought that gravity flow to a leaching facility could be achieved from both directions. However, most of the test holes were too shallow to bedrock to support new construction. The picnic grounds area is generally all bedrock right to the surface and no testing was done there. With respect to a new public restroom facility, since the Grove is seasonal, it may be best to consider installing a holding tank, which is an option for municipally-owned, seasonal facilities.

We also looked in an area adjacent to the Grove Cottage to better understand whether that area could at least support a new septic system to replace the cesspool that presently serves the cottage. We found ample soil depth and quality in that area for the replacement.

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

(4) Field of Dreams Irrigation Well

The Superintendent of Public Works recently informed me that the irrigation system at the Field of Dreams at the Centennial Grove did not appear to be working. Our irrigation contractor visited the site and determined that the well itself is not producing water (well is dry, well screen is silted up, or well pump needs to be replaced). Our irrigation contractor contacted our well contractor and we are on a list for further investigation but the lead time is several weeks.

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

**G. Fiscal/Budget**

No items.

**H. Complaints**

No items.

**I. Meetings Attended**

No items.

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

No items.

**K. Legal Issues**

No items.

**L. Grants**

(1) Wrap-up of Alewife Brook Stream Channel Clearing Study (\*)

I participated in two meetings hosted by Interfluve, the environmental engineering contractor responsible for studying how best to approach a future Alewife Brook stream channel clearing effort in the upper reaches of the brook. On July 18, 2022, Interfluve reviewed the raw study data with a small group. Even though part of the study was aimed at determining whether stream channel clearing in the vicinity of the Town's public water supply wells would adversely affect the wells, the study actually established the opposite. The water withdrawal from the Town wells actually contributes in some way to the drying up of the Alewife Brook in its upper reaches during summer conditions (beyond the obvious low-flow drivers, which are less rainfall - especially in a drought year like the present year; summer temperatures driving more evaporation; and full evapotranspiration from trees with leaves on).

Lack of water in the Alewife Brook during the warmer months may actually obstruct the ability of river herring (both adults and juveniles) from leaving the brook to reach the ocean in the late summer/fall. While the actual channel pathway becomes much more diffuse in the most upper reach of Alewife Brook, Interfluve did not see any present physical barriers to either the spring fish run when adults migrate to the lake to spawn or the summer/fall return to the ocean. The lack of water in the brook is the chief problem and selective stream clearing (including the work that has traditionally been done near the Pond Street bridge) has very little bearing on successful fish passage – a point concurred with by the DMF fisheries biologist on our team. While a stream clearing construction project could provide temporary relief to low water conditions during the summer and early fall, committing to the necessary maintenance required after project completion is likely not sustainable.

We are hopeful that new funding recently secured via Senator Tarr will be instrumental in accomplishing next steps that Interfluve recommends. The firm's full report should be available by early in the week of July 25, 2022.

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

(2) Award of Design/Permitting Grant: Apple St. Roadbed Elevation/Culvert (\*)  
The Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Program has announced the award of just of \$222,000 to the Town for final design work and all necessary permitting associated with the proposal to elevate a short section of Apple Street on the Southern Avenue end and to replace a culvert there. Work will occur during fiscal year 2023 and a portion of fiscal year 2024. Hopefully, the Town will be able to secure both State and Federal grants for the actual construction work.

*Recommendation:* **Board authorization of the Chairman to sign all necessary grant paperwork when it becomes available.**

## **M. Emergency Planning**

No items.

## **N. Other Items**

### (1) Town Administrator Leave

I was out of the office, on leave from July 13 through July 15, 2022.

*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.*