



## Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of July 27, 2020

Report covers from July 11, 2020 to July 24, 2020

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

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### A. Town Department Reports/Requests

#### (1) Economic Development Committee Meeting Summary (\*)

The Economic Development Committee (EDC) met on July 15, 2020 to begin its review of the draft Economic Development Plan (EDP) that has been compiled for the Town by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) and Town Planner Matt Coogan. The Board may recall that MAPC hosted a business roundtable and a community open house and conducted an economic development survey as background preparation for the Plan. The EDC's consensus was that more effort needs to be put into the COVID-19 foreword that was added to the plan (the COVID crisis began between the initial drafting process and the release of the present document).

While the first draft of the foreword provided some good information and basic strategies for businesses, it is apparent that COVID may have a much more long-lasting effect than originally anticipated. EDC members plan to provide written input that the Town Planner and MAPC will use to revise the document, with particular attention to the foreword. Thereafter, the EDC will meet again to finalize the COVID section and the review the longer-term recommendations in the EDP.

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

### B. Computer Systems

No items.

### C. Personnel

No items.

### D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects

#### (2) Public Safety Facility Construction Project Update (\*)

Chairman Pereen and I attended the weekly construction meetings of July 16 and 23, 2020. The project continues to move along well and the contractor will complete the apparatus bay floor pour by July 31, 2020. Utility work between the building and the street (the on-property components, not yet tied in) are moving along well and general site work is as complete as possible until heavy vehicles are no longer on site. Work on the jail and sally port is underway, which is

mostly masonry trade work. Effort continues on metal stud exterior framing and interior framing will begin soon. Supplies to clad the roofing decks with finished roofing materials are on site and that work will begin soon. The slab on grade for the apparatus bay is in final preparation and will be completed soon.

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

#### **E. Insurance**

No items.

#### **F. Facilities**

##### (1) Changes to Line Striping on Route 133 Adjacent to Farnham's

During the week of July 13, 2020, MA DOT completed work with respect to re-striping roadway lines on Route 133, adjacent to Farnham's restaurant, as had been requested by the Board. The shoulder opposite Farnham's is now much wider and it has enabled the "no parking" signs that were in a narrower area, approaching the bend in the road, to be taken down, providing additional, legal parking. The MA DOT is now considering if a crew will come out to black out the remnants of the old no parking hash marks. Parking is now allowed approaching the bend in the road up to the speed limit 30 sign. The change in the shoulder caused the travel lanes to be narrowed, which should be instrumental in calming traffic and bringing actual speeds down through that area. In the fall, the Town, DOT, and Farnham's will consider whether speed board signs are necessary and may split the cost.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary at this time.

#### **G. Fiscal/Budget**

##### (1) Fiscal Year 2021 Financial Austerity Memo

At the last meeting, the Board approved a memo to all departments asking for feedback on how each department planned to keep costs down in fiscal year 2021, in light of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. The memo also indicated that the Selectmen may, with warning, institute spending freezes in certain areas should revenue plunge. The Finance Committee met the following evening and endorsed the memo, which was jointly issued on July 15, 2020. All responses will be in by the end of the month, for discussion by the Board at its August 10, 2020 meeting.

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

#### **H. Complaints**

None.

## **I. Meetings Attended**

None.

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

### (1) Continued Discussion Regarding Promulgation of Local Marijuana Licensing Regulations (\*)

At the last meeting, the Board began to look at some suggested templates that Town Counsel had provided concerning how local marijuana licensing regulations may be structured. The Board brought up topics such as hours of operation, prohibiting the sale of other products, traffic management, and other items. Several members of the public had already provided direct input and additional input has arrived since the last meeting. It may be possible to choose a template and work with Town Counsel to balance what will be covered in the Host Community Agreement versus what the new regulations will cover.

***Recommendation:* Additional Board discussion relative to the promulgation of these new regulations.**

### (2) Continued Discussion of Possible Article Topics for Fall Town Meeting (\*)

At the last meeting, the Board reviewed the Fall Town Meeting draft article list in detail and made some decisions relative to the priorities of various items. I have revised the list in accordance with the Board's guidance.

***Recommendation:* Further Board discussion relative to these draft topics.**

## **K. Legal Issues**

### (1) Negotiation of Marijuana Retail & Cultivation Host Community Agreements (\*)

The Town negotiation team for the negotiation of Host Community Agreements for the cultivation and retail sale of marijuana on the same site, by BB Botanics, had its first negotiation session with BB Botanics on July 16, 2020. The group had previously worked to develop initial drafts of the documents, with Town Counsel, and was able to provide updated drafts to BB Botanics after the company completed an initial review and provided comments back to the Town. At this first negotiation session, BB Botanics accepted the majority of the content in each document and has provided feedback in areas where complete agreement could not be attained.

***Recommendation:* Board discussion relative to BB Botanics' recent comments, with the possibility of the Board's qualified or full agreement at the present meeting.**

## L. Grants

### (1) MAPC Climate Resilience Grant Webinar and Possible Application (\*)

As the Board is aware, the Town has been working on a plan to design a roadbed elevation plan on the Southern Avenue end of Apple Street, where two low dips in Apple Street are prone to flooding in major coastal surge events. When this occurs, the causeway on Route 133 is already flooded and transportation between the two halves of the Town needs to occur via Route 128. To date, the Town has completed part one of the design of the first road dip, which will include a culvert replacement, via a Division of Ecological Restoration (DER) grant. The Town is waiting to hear about a second round of potential DER funding, to finish the design and permitting for the first dip, and a first round of funding through the Office of Coastal Zone Management (CZM), for preliminary design on the second dip. Further, Senator Tarr has requested an earmark in the State Transportation Bond Bill to support this effort.

The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) offered a webinar on July 22, 2020 that both I participated in. MAPC funding could be combined with the CZM funding to perhaps get the second dip to full design and permitted this year. Then, next year, the Town can apply for grant funding for the construction of the whole project, perhaps via the MassWorks grant program or other programs. It appears that the MAPC program is well-suited to our purpose and I received confirmation during the webinar that our project is eligible.

***Recommendation: Board discussion and possible authorization of the MAPC grant application, in conjunction with our engineering contractor for the project (TEC). A letter of authorization to make me the Grant Manager is available for the Chairman's signature.***

### (2) Award of CDBG Business Microenterprise Grant (\*)

As the Board may recall, back in May, the Board approved an application for a regional grant program that will provide micro-grants to local businesses with five or fewer employees to help recover from the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. The Board voted:

“A motion was made, seconded, and unanimously voted to approve the Town's participation in a regional CDBG grant being coordinated by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council for possible microbusiness (5 or less employees) COVID-19 recovery grants.”

Our application, which was coordinated regionally by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), the Town of Ashland, and the MassGrowth Capital Corporation (MGCC), has been funded in the amount of \$70,125 and MGCC is developing an on-line platform that applicants can utilize to apply for individual micro-grants [while we hope that the funds can be disbursed as grants, we are not entirely sure yet if loans will have to be offered instead]. Our original application

for \$100,000 was reduced due to available funding and 15% of the reduced figure has been taken off of the top for overhead to our partners.

***Recommendation:*** Board authorization of the Chairman to sign any necessary paperwork regarding this grant, when it becomes available.

**M. Emergency Planning**

None.

**N. Other Items**

(1) Town Administrator Leave

I was out of the office on leave for a portion of the day on July 23, 2020.

*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.*