



Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of June 1, 2020

Report covers from May 16, 2020 to May 29, 2020

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

A. Town Department Reports/Requests

No items.

B. Computer Systems

No items.

C. Personnel

(1) Annual Sign-off on Town Policies

Each year at this time, I produce a memo to all employees (including volunteer appointed and elected officials) requiring each person to review and sign-off relative to all existing Town personnel policies. That memo went out during the week of June 24, 2020 and responses are due by the end of July.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects

(1) Public Hearing for Route 133 Bridge Replacement Over Essex River (*)

Given the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, the State is not holding any in-person or even zoom-based public hearings for roadway projects. Instead, the State will post a pre-recorded presentation on-line and the public will have a chance to electronically register comments and questions. Presently, we are expecting that the presentation will go live sometime in mid to late-June. The State will publish notices in both the Gloucester Daily Times and the Manchester Cricket and I will provide more information when available.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(2) Public Safety Building Construction Project Update (*)

Chairman Pereen and I participated in construction meetings on May 21 and May 28, 2020. The steel frame of the building is steadily being erected and should be complete within the month of June. We will continue to work with National Grid concerning the setting of a new utility pole - down which the main power supply and all other utilities will extend (to underground conduits which will feed the building). We are also working with National Grid concerning feeding new service to the cemetery buildings at the rear of the site, using an existing pole with a new, underground conduit. Most of the underground duct bank work on the site

has been completed and most backfilling work is done. Our contractor would like to be able to place the binder coat for all paved areas before July 4. Also, our contractor has asked whether PVC sleeves for a future irrigation system should be installed before paving. These items were not part of the original plan but the contractor is willing to install the sleeves for the cost of materials only.

Recommendation: Board discussion as necessary, including whether the Board desires the PVC sleeves to be installed.

(3) Change Order: Replacement of Public Safety Building Oil/Water Separator (*)

The new public safety facility was designed with an oil/water separator on both levels of the building (one for the Fire Department and one for the Police Department). These devices are designed to catch vehicle wash water and to retain oil and grease so that these contaminants do not get out into the surrounding environment. Due to extensive bedrock on the lower level, it is much more cost effective to simply install an ejector pump on the lower level, which sends wash water to the oil/water separator on the upper level. Given that the Police Department will be washing vehicles relatively infrequently, in comparison with the Fire Department, the pump solution should serve the facility very well. The total cost of this change order item is \$14,237.

Recommendation: Board approval of the oil/water separator change order item as part of Change Order 4.

(4) Change Order: Public Safety Building Painting of Ceilings Credit (*)

Some small areas of ceiling in the new public safety building will feature a plastic material that does not need to be painted. As such, our Project Manager has worked to arrange a painting credit for those areas. The amount of the credit will be \$381.

Recommendation: Board approval of the painting change order credit item as part of Change Order 4.

(5) Change Order: Modifications to Public Safety Building Steel Plan (*)

We have learned that some additional steel is required at certain transition areas and was not specified in the original design. Our Project Manager has worked with our designer to determine which of the contractor's request for modifications are reasonable and the total cost of this change order item is \$12,287.

Recommendation: Board approval of the steel fabrication change order item as part of Change Order 4.

(6) Change Order: Deletion of Priming - Public Safety Building Unexposed Steel (*)

Certain structural steel components in the new public safety building will never be exposed to the elements and do not require to be primed with a protective coating.

Our Project Manager has determined that eliminating priming in these areas will result in a credit of \$1,221.

***Recommendation:* Board approval of the priming elimination change order credit item as part of Change Order 4.**

(7) Change Order: Public Safety Building Duct Bank Changes (*)

Due to the significant amount of ledge encountered on the public safety building property, certain underground duct banks required field modification, resulting in additional costs. The total cost for this change order item is \$6,432.

***Recommendation:* Board approval of the duct bank change order item as part of Change Order 4.**

(8) Update Concerning MassDOT Evaluation of Route 22 and Route 133 (*)

As the Board may recall, last fall, we made contact with MassDOT relative to conducting a speed study along the entire length of Route 22 in Essex, with an eye toward proper speed limits and possible new crosswalks. The Board also asked about traffic management and parking in the area of Farnham's Restaurant on Route 133. Recently, I contacted the Department for an update, especially in light of delays that may have been introduced by the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. I was told by the District 4 Highway Director that the Department should be able to supply me with an update by meeting time.

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

E. Insurance

No items.

F. Facilities

No items.

G. Fiscal/Budget

(1) Economic Development Plan Status

At the last meeting, the Board agreed that the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) and the Town Planner should work together to complete a first draft of an Economic Development Plan (EDP). The plan will contain a preface that provides guidance on how the business community might go about recovering from the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. The plan will also contain the standard recommendations for longer term action items that would have been recommended anyway, before COVID was a factor. Further, we are now beginning to work with MAPC to participate in a regional micro-business grant program. This program will hopefully provide grant money to local businesses

with five or fewer employees. MAPC and the Town Planner will release the draft EDP to the business community for comment prior to making the plan final.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

H. Complaints

None.

I. Meetings Attended

None.

J. Town Meeting, By-Laws, and Regulations

(1) Annual Town Meeting Location, Date, Time, Motions and Summary (*)

At the last meeting, the Board decided with the Moderator to move the Annual Town Meeting back to Saturday, June 13, 2020 at 10:00 a.m. at the Essex Elementary School Grounds (outdoors), after confirming that the Woodman's parking lot is not available and/or suitable. I discussed the possible use of the Woodman's parking lot with the company's management and we agreed that the school would be a better location. The parking lot would not be comfortable for participants on a hot day and we would have to bring in portable toilets. Also, people are accustomed to finding neighborhood parking to attend a Town Meeting at the school. As such, the location will be at the school and I am working with our sound technician and our chair rental vendor on logistics. The building will be opened at 7 a.m. that day for electrical power supply and for restroom use.

Town Counsel advised that, under recent COVID-related legislation, the Town Moderator needed to officially make this decision after consultation with the Board of Health and the Board of Selectmen and then to publicize notice of the change around Town, at the official warrant posting locations, and at the Town's website (which has all been completed). Further, the Chief of Police has written the required letter to the Office of the Attorney General attesting to the nature of the public health emergency and the decision to provide an outdoor venue more conducive to maintaining public health and safety. Draft Town Meeting motions have not been changed since the Board's last meeting (except that the Council on Aging motion reader cannot make the new date) and we are basically prepared for June 13. If June 13 presents inclement weather, the Moderator will adjourn the meeting to Saturday, June 20.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(2) Status of Retail and Cultivation Marijuana Host Community Agreements (*)

At the last meeting, the Board agreed to wait until after the Community Outreach Meeting hosted by BB Botanics on May 21, 2020 to finalize the draft of the retail

marijuana host community agreement (HCA) that will define operations at the proposed retail site at 242 John Wise Avenue. The Board also agreed that I should contact Town Counsel on some lingering questions and then prepare a final document for negotiations with BB Botanics along with Chairman Pereen and other Town officials. The Community Outreach Meeting did not turn up any additional items that were not already covered in the draft HCA that the Host Community Agreement Advisory Committee (HCAAC) had already recommended. I also squared away the questions with Town Counsel. We are working to set up the first negotiation session with BBB Botanics after they have had a chance to review the Committee's first draft of the retail HCA.

Further, the HCAAC finalized its draft of a cultivation HCA for the same site on May 28, 2020. As per the Board's wishes, that document has been provided to various Town departments for review. After the HCAAC incorporates any feedback from Town departments, the Board will review the draft document again and then send it off to Town Counsel for review. Eventually, the document will be introduced into the ongoing negotiation process. We are working to expedite the cultivation HCA review process as much as possible.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

K. Legal Issues

No items.

L. Grants

(1) Sediment Transport Grant Monthly Report

Personnel from Boston University developed and submitted on the Town's behalf the monthly report for the month of May with respect to the ongoing sediment transport modeling grant. This grant is funded through the MVP Action Grant program and will provide the Town with important information about how sand slowly drifts southward along Crane Beach and throughout Essex Bay. The Town recently got an extension on this project through the end of the calendar year since BU's sediment laboratories have been closed for months now, due to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. Samples will be analyzed and data will be fed into the modeling effort as soon as the COVID situation allows.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

M. Emergency Planning

(1) COVID-19 Response Update

(*)

As the State plan to reopen the Commonwealth moves along, several issues around opening or revising rules with respect to public recreational areas and with respect to Town operations need to be addressed. Presently, the boat launching

ramp at Town Landing is closed to all non-residents, including those non-residents with commercial or subsistence fishing and shellfishing licenses. Provisions for non-resident shellfish harvesters working on Town-issued or City of Gloucester-issued licenses have already been made at Conomo Point. While the situation at the Point may not be ideal for some people, keeping them free of the downtown ramp at the Town Landing is an important way to help residents use the area safely. As such, I don't presently recommend any change in the current policies.

We have had inquiries from residents with respect to the reopening of the Centennial Grove and from the Manchester Essex Little League with respect to the use of the Field of Dreams and Memorial Park. Centennial Grove is a residents-only facility already, but cannot be opened until the Board of Health puts a reopening policy in place. The little league may be able to have some games but State policy on that matter is not entirely clear. The league should probably put together its own proposal (we have shared all existing guidance with them) for the Board of Health to consider. The Board of Health Administrator will participate in tonight's meeting in order to help address these matters.

Soon, resident commercial clammers will no longer be able to park rigs on Front Beach (which is only allowed during the off-season). This will put more pressure on the parking area near Clammers' Beach. In order to allow for some additional parking for residents coming to the Point to walk and possibly enjoy the beaches (when a policy is in place for that), the small parking lot adjacent to the Essex River on Conomo Point Road should be opened up to non-clammer residents of Essex from all areas except for Conomo Point (since Conomo Point residents have parking on their own properties). Overflow clammer parking may need to co-mingle with the mooring holder parking that is presently reserved at the Conomo Lane lot.

Cleaning of all Town buildings has continued to be a challenge. Our Town Hall Custodian has been advised to stay clear of his job until further notice, due to his being in a high risk group. That just leaves one other custodian. For a short time, School District custodians who were not allowed to clean in the school buildings were helping with cleaning at the police and fire station (they have since returned to the schools). The school custodians are provided by a contracted vendor and I have made contact with that vendor to determine whether they are willing to take on Town custodial duties as well. Additionally, we are increasingly getting requests for the use of the Memorial Park restrooms, which would also require diligent cleaning. Presently, we have not deployed any portable toilets at the Grove or Conomo Point, since these would also require daily cleaning.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

N. Other Items

(1) Memorial Day Holiday

The office was closed on May 25, 2020, in observance of the subject holiday.

(2) Town Administrator Vacation Leave

I was out of the office on leave on May 21 and 22, 2020 and for part of the day on May 20 and 28, 2020.

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