



## Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of June 20, 2022

Report covers from June 4, 2022 to June 17, 2022

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

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### A. Town Department Reports/Requests

#### (1) Strategic Plan Internal Review (\*)

After the last Strategic Planning Committee meeting, the Town Planner and I met with the Committee's Chairman to conduct final editing on the working draft of the revised Essex Strategic Plan (on June 6, 2022). After the document was updated, the Town Planner sent it around to various boards, committees, and personnel for internal review – with a Committee member assigned to coordinate that review with each entity. On July 14, 2022, the Committee will meet again to go over all of the internal input and will schedule a public forum on the document to collect general public input before finalizing the revision. I am working with the Selectmen and the Shellfish Constable regarding review of certain goals. I am also working with the former chairman of the Cape Ann Emergency Planning Team to see if the Team might be rejuvenated in the near future (Team stopped meeting as a result of COVID in the past).

**Recommendation:** Board discussion concerning the present working draft, with particular emphasis on goals 6, 7, 9, and 10.

### B. Computer Systems

#### (1) North Shore IT Collaborative Regional Security Fabric

The Collaborative is presently working to interconnect all of its member communities via municipally-owned fiber optic cable and recent State grants are helping to close some of the remaining gaps. Also, the Town of Danvers IT Department, which anchors the Collaborative, is preparing to roll out the new, regional security fabric using the Fortinet platform. Essex will see its new firewall/router device installed during the week of June 20, 2022. A short Internet outage will occur at the time of the cutover and all users will be informed in advance. The cutover to the new platform replaces two Cisco routers that are at end of life, making the cutover's timing ideal.

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

### C. Personnel

#### (1) AFSCME Collective Bargaining

The management bargaining team engaged the union in continued collective bargaining on June 16, 2022.

*Recommendation:* Board discussion in executive session in accordance with the posted agenda.

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

##### (1) Army Corps of Engineers Feedback on Beneficial Dredge Spoil Re-use (\*)

At the last meeting, the Board reviewed the protocol necessary to obtain easements over private property for the possible beneficial re-use of dredge spoils within the Essex River system. Concerns were raised with respect to permitting, costs, and possibly slowing down or jeopardizing the already-approved and fully-funded base plan for traditional dredging.

I contacted the Corps as requested by the Board and I have learned that: a) the team at the Corps that is generating both the cost estimate for the base plan and for beneficial re-use has still not completed even the base plan estimate in its final form. A rough estimate for just doing the shoreline stabilization work associated with beneficial re-use (and not even any ditch infilling) suggests that the Town would have to pay at least \$700,000 in order to implement the beneficial re-use option. The Corps would potentially be interested in completing just part of the beneficial re-use work (such as only the bank stabilization). However, presently, the Corps is not confident that State regulators would even allow this to occur. Also, based on the Corps' present understanding of the regulatory environment, it is not likely that permits for bank stabilization or ditch infilling will be granted (or any permission that is granted will come with substantive delays). Further, the Corps will NOT attempt to secure environmental permits without the Town first obtaining all necessary property interests. Finally, it is likely that the time necessary for the Town to secure property rights and for the Corps to secure permits will delay the project to the point that even the base plan might not have sufficient funding due to cost escalation. While the Corps would seek additional funding on the Town's behalf to proceed with maintenance dredging, the River would continue to stay in its shallow state for substantially longer.

*Recommendation:* **Abandonment of the beneficial re-use option in favor of the fully-funded and more expedient traditional maintenance dredging option.**

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

I attended a construction meeting on June 7, 2022, along with personnel from the general contractor for the project and Mass DOT. Underground utility work was still ongoing at the time. The contractor is confident that traffic will be diverted over the temporary bridge by mid-July. Even though traffic diversion is several months behind schedule, the project is only one to two weeks behind schedule overall.

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

(3) Conomo Pt. Seawall Replacement Project Final Contract Price & Closeout (\*)

The project is now completed and the final pay requisition is being developed by the contractor. I participated in construction meetings on June 7 and 15, 2022, along with Selectman Phippen. Presently, the contractor is compiling backup data regarding cost increases that it feels are warranted due to unexpected site conditions. The contractor is also calculating cost underruns based on the fact that substantially less concrete was actually placed than what had been contained in the engineer's estimate. The two factors (request for additional money and costs underruns) will form the basis for the final contract price. Our engineering team will be reviewing the contractor's requests and calculations very soon and I will likely have more information by meeting time. Once the matter has been settled, I will work during July to compile all necessary records to apply to the State for the final portion of project reimbursement.

**Recommendation:** Board discussion with respect to final project price and closeout.

(4) MAPC Final Report, Essex Zoning Diagnostic

The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) has completed its final report from phase 1 of its analysis of the Town's current zoning bylaws. The report ([found here](#)) describes the "zoning diagnostic" process undertaken by MAPC and provides recommendations for future work. As the Board may recall, MAPC developed for the Town's recent submission a grant application to the Community Planning and Zoning grant program. If that grant is awarded, MAPC will conduct phase 2 of its work, which will involve actual recommendations for revisions to the Essex zoning bylaws for consideration by the Fall Town Meeting in 2023.

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

**E. Insurance**

No items.

**F. Facilities**

(1) Town Hall Clock Tower Bell Minor Repair

I was informed during the week of June 13, 2022 that the bell in the Town Hall clock tower was no longer ringing on the hour. The Town Planner had already discovered that the pin securing the cable to the bell striker had become dislodged. After I reconnected the mechanism, the bell again functioned properly.

**Recommendation:** No further action is 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) Shared Streets and Spaces Grant

The Town Planner's application to the subject grant program was awarded recently, at just over \$160,000. The grant will cover the design and construction of decorative lighting in the downtown area and is intended to improve the aesthetics to be more inviting for both residents and visitors alike. While some of the costs associated with the project are not eligible for funding by the grant, a \$50,000 potential legislative earmark is making its way through the Massachusetts Legislature and, if granted, would fund the ineligible costs.

*Recommendation:* Board approval of the grant contract in accordance with the posted agenda.

## **M. Emergency Planning**

No items.

## **N. Other Items**

### (1) Town Administrator Leave

I was out of the office, on leave, from June 8 through June 14, 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.*