



Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of June 21, 2021

Report covers from June 5, 2021 to June 18, 2021

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

A. Town Department Reports/Requests

No items.

B. Computer Systems

(1) Final Sweep of Electronics in Old Fire/Police Station

The Chief of Police and I walked through the old fire/police station and the old police administrative trailer at 24 Martin Street on June 7, 2021. We identified any remaining electronic devices or connections that needed to be saved, moved, canceled, or discarded and we have taken appropriate steps to execute our findings. Personnel from the North Shore Regional 911 Center will be moving to the new building and repurposing a camera and all of the fire station alerting equipment.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Planning for School District/Manchester Fiber Optic Connection

The Manchester Essex Regional School District is planning to connect its buildings in Manchester with the Essex Elementary School building in Essex, for improved connectivity and throughput. The project is also an opportunity for the Town of Manchester to make a connection to the Town of Danvers datacenter via municipally-owned fiber that already runs from Essex, through other communities, and into Danvers. I participated in a project planning call on June 8, 2021. Essex will not have any financial responsibility but will eventually host equipment (or at least a direct fiber splice-through) in the Essex Elementary School (managed by the District) and in Town Hall that will connect Manchester all the way through to Danvers. The project is expected to occur in the late summer or early fall and personnel from Manchester will be working further with personnel from Danvers on the exact nature of the system architecture.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

C. Personnel

No items.

D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects

(1) New Public Safety Facility Roof Update

(*)

At the last meeting, the Board agreed that Town Counsel should help me prepare letters of notice concerning the apparent problems with the new public safety facility roof to our general contractor and to our architect along with their associated surety/insurer. On behalf of the Board, I sent a letter to our contractor on June 17, 2021 to accompany the most recent pay requisition payment documenting why the Town did not pay out project retainage to the contractor in two specific work categories. Our contractor had not actually requested payout in those two categories after agreeing it was not yet appropriate in consultation with our project manager, but counsel recommended this documentation step. Counsel will also be assisting me to draft letters to our designer and its insurer and to the surety company for our contractor to begin the process of formally putting various parties on notice about the matter.

Town Counsel has recommended that the Town retain the services of a third-party roofing consultant to review the situation more thoroughly. While our designer has asserted that the problem with the roof should improve as the roof is exposed to higher temperatures, a photo taken June 13, 2021, just after some recent, very hot weather, shows the roof in severe disarray (that photo has however been criticized with respect to the sun lighting conditions present and shadows being cast when taken). The representative for the shingle manufacturer had mentioned on his recent site visit that hot weather will tend to worsen the shingle problem (which is opposite of the designer's assertion). Our project manager had received a very high quote from a roofing consulting firm (in excess of \$26,000). I have been able to locate a roofing consultant who will provide evaluative services for significantly less money (I will have a firmer figure by meeting time).

Further, a concerned resident who has followed this problem very closely has suggested that the Town should perhaps approach our designer with a different solution in mind – the installation of a metal roof over the existing roof (after stripping the shingles), since the nail board used on the project should be compatible with a metal roof. This is a suggestion that we could have vetted with the third-party consultant as the issue is studied.

Recommendation: Board approval of the hiring of a third-party consultant to study the matter more closely, to document both the problem and potential solutions (which could include consideration of a metal roof).

(2) Bid Package & Schedule for Old Fire/Police Station Demolition

(*)

At the last meeting, the Board agreed that I should finalize the bid package for the demolition of the old fire and police station with our architect and our project manager. To that end, I have provided our designer with the necessary prevailing wage rates for the project and we have discussed a bid package release date of June 30, 2021. Our designer does not yet have final plans and specifications but

all of the Town's input will be incorporated in those documents prior to bid release.

While it may be possible hold bids open for about three weeks and to expect project completion by around September 10, 2021 (in advance of some possible public events in the vicinity of the old station), it may not be wise to do so. Less bid open time usually translates to less bidders and tighter performance times usually translate to higher bid numbers. It may be preferable to still release the bid package on June 30 but to hold bidding open longer and to allow the project completion date to run into October. Even if the shorter timetable is selected, there is no guarantee that unforeseen circumstances would not delay the project and impact planned events anyway (rather than canceling the events and using the longer timetable). It is also possible to require just the interior work to be completed, hold the fall events, and then move on with demolition and site restoration. However, that approach will translate to more project carrying costs

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(3) Alewife Brook Stream Channel Clearing Permitting

As the Board is aware, a group of stakeholders including the Chebacco Lake Watershed Association and Seaside Sustainability had been pulled together by Senator Tarr to plan for improving water and environmental quality in Chebacco Lake and in Alewife Brook. Selectman Phippen is the Board's liaison to this collaboration and he had endorsed the group's recommendation to work on permitting for the regular clearing of the Alewife Brook stream channel as the first course of action. This regular work will keep the stream channel open for migratory fish and will help to flush Chebacco Lake and lessen siltation. The group has enlisted the assistance of the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries to help with permitting and I have signed on behalf of the Board a Request for Determination of Applicability (RDA) to the Essex Conservation Commission. The RDA process may allow the group to use manual means to regularly clear the stream channel without having to use a more complex permitting means – a Notice of Intent (NOI). Presently, we expect the Conservation Commission to act on the RDA on July 5, 2021.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

E. Insurance

No items.

F. Facilities

(1) Removal of Old Police Administrative Trailer from 24 Martin Street

The company that had loaned the police administrative trailer to the Town some years ago is willing to haul the trailer away now that it is no longer needed. Chief

Francis made arrangements with an electrician and a plumber to property disconnect the unit and its owner will be removing it in the near future.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Purchase of New Rain Gauge for Use at New Public Safety Facility

The Shellfish Constable reads an official rain gauge each day for purposes of possible shellfish flat closure. That gauge has been located at the old fire station at 24 Martin Street and the equipment is old and not suitable for relocation to the new facility. The Constable has recommended a new gauge with a wireless readout module. I have ordered that unit and the Constable can coordinate its installation at the new building with public safety officials.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(3) Disposal of Old Fire Station Generator (*)

The natural gas-fired generator that is presently in place at the old fire and police station at 24 Martin Street only has limited service life left. The generator and its automatic transfer switch need to be removed from the building/site prior to building demolition. The Department of Public Works has investigated what it would take to convert the unit to propane and put it in service at the DPW garage (which presently uses a portable generator, when necessary). However, the Superintendent is not interested the unit given that the cost will come close to just putting in new equipment and the old equipment will be prone to failure due to age. The maintenance contractor for the unit will be able to remove it (which involves internal rewiring to leave power the building for the demolition crew) and pay the Town about \$1,000.

Recommendation: **Board consideration of having the generator and its automatic transfer switch removed by the maintenance contractor.**

(4) Town Hall Auditorium Air Conditioning Drain Line Cleanout

Chairman Preen and I noticed water dripping from the Town Hall auditorium ceiling after turning off the air conditioning system after a recent public hearing. A plumbing contractor visited Town Hall the next day to investigate. The problem was a plugged drain line that caused condensate water to back up into and overflow from a non-watertight component. The drain line has been restored to its proper operation.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(5) Town Hall Hose Spigot Repair

The Department of Public Works reported that the hose spigot for Town Hall was leaking internally and had to be shut off from the inside to avoid wasting water that was spilling onto the ground outside the building. I contacted a plumbing

contractor about the matter and he will rebuild the spigot with some new internal parts.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(6) Town Hall Air Conditioning System Malfunction Correction

The air conditioning system in the Town Hall had been malfunctioning, requiring individual office occupants to power cycle each wall unit. We had a service technician from the company that originally installed the system out to review the matter during the week of June 7, 2021 and, at the time, the system was functioning well and did not present the technician with any error codes or other problems. The technician did a full evaluation of the system while he was on site and found no refrigerant pressure or mechanical problems.

The following week, the problems recurred. We did have a major power outage over the weekend and the service company indicated that this is what probably caused the recurrence. The service company provided me with detailed instructions on how to reset the entire system (which took about an hour) and those procedures did work. I have recorded the procedures to streamline the reset time necessary after future power outages and to allow someone else to follow the procedures if I am not available. Our service company is looking into whether something could be added to the system to automatically reset communication properly after any type of power interruption. While the building has an emergency generator, there is always a momentary power loss while we are automatically switching to or coming off of generator power.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

G. Fiscal/Budget

(1) Use of Remaining CARES Act Funding

(*)

As the Board may recall, before the deadline for the use of Federal CARES Act funding was extended through December 31, 2021 (with an effective date of October 29, 2021 unless expenses are pre-approved beyond that date). At the time, the Town was unsure about the amount of funding that would be necessary to assist with continuing COVID-19 management and eventual vaccinations. Presently, the Town still has about \$230,000 remaining from the original CARES allocation and we are unable to identify any further eligible needs. The Board had discussed in the past possibly using remaining funding to reimburse the Manchester Essex Regional School District for COVID-related expenses that the District has been unable to cover from any other external funding source. It appears that the Board should again consider this possibility given that any unused CARES funding will have to be returned to the Federal Government.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(2) School District Budget Collaboration Meeting Summary

(*)

Selectman Bradford, Finance Committee Chairman Buttrick and I attended the subject meeting on June 18, 2021. The meeting featured a planning discussion relative to how the three entities will approach both the next budget cycle and how to address sustainable budgets over the long term. The usual budget collaboration group will continue to meet regularly, with the next meeting planned for early August. A smaller working group involving the School District's finance director and the chairs of the two town finance committees will meet in June to begin to frame what that group's goal is and to report back to the collaboration group. The small working group will generally consider the operating budget apportionment process and how it could possibly be better explained and managed over the long term. Further, all agreed that School District officials should meet in each town with finance committees and selectmen in September and October to allow all parties to have a better grasp of the overall process and the major factors that drive the budget.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

H. Complaints

No items.

I. Meetings Attended

(1) Greater Cape Ann Community Collaborative Steering Committee Meeting

I attended the subject meeting virtually on June 8, 2021. The Collaborative is working to continuously offer COVID-19 vaccination clinics in our area (Rockport, Ipswich, and Topsfield). Clinics in those three locations will continue to the extent possible for the foreseeable future. The group is coordinating the transition to the computerized vaccination scheduling system known as "Color" and the clinics should prove to be valuable if there is a future need for booster shots. The Board of Health Administrator will continue to interface with the Collaborative at regular, remote meetings and Essex may conduct its own "pop-up" clinics in the coming weeks (any necessary funding will come from the Town's remaining CARES funding and/or remaining Metropolitan Area Planning Council public health grant funding).

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce Essex Division Meeting

Chairman Pereen and I attended the subject meeting on June 15, 2021. We updated the membership concerning various ongoing Town projects and initiatives. The meeting featured a discussion with respect to how the Town can best help Essex businesses and included items such as: two major COVID recovery grant programs we are cooperating on; whether the State would extend

temporary outdoor dining alcohol service; and the importance of outdoor entertainment licensing.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

J. Town Meeting, By-Laws, and Regulations

No items.

K. Legal Issues

No items.

L. Grants

(1) Regional Public Health Collaborative Planning Meeting

As the Board is aware, five local communities have joined together, with the Town of Hamilton as the lead, to collaborate concerning the delivery of certain public health services. The work will be funded by a grant for the next three years and will cover a full-time public health nurse and a ¾-time public health social worker. These employees will be deployed as necessary in the participating communities to help tackle public health issues in the area. The Hamilton Town Administrator explained how the collaborative will first seek to advertise for the positions and will quickly offer a Memorandum of Understanding (MOA) for Chairman Pereen to sign. It is possible that these services could continue after the three-year grant period and that would require funding from each of the participating communities. An Intermunicipal Agreement is another task that the group will work to develop within the first year of the arrangement.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Engineering Services Contract for Conomo Point Seawall Replacement (*)

The Chairman signed the Seawall Replacement Grant contract with the State at the last meeting, for just over \$1.7M. While we are waiting for the State to countersign the contract, it will be useful to also amend our existing contract with our engineering contractor, GZA Geoenvironmental. The amendment will be in an amount that does not exceed the allotment for engineering services that we identified in the grant application. GZA did all of the design and permitting work for the Town and the firm was instrumental with respect to the technical portion of our grant application.

Recommendation: **Board vote to authorize the Chairman to sign the engineering services contract amendment once it becomes available.**

M. Emergency Planning

No items.

N. Other Items

(1) Town Administrator Leave

I was out of the office on vacation leave from June 9 through June 14, 2021.

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