



Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of March 25, 2024

Report covers from March 9, 2024 to 22, 2024

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

A. Town Department Reports/Requests

No items.

B. Computer Systems

(1) Planning for Security Cameras at Centennial Grove

(*)

Now that the two fiber optic spurs from the Water Plant to the Centennial Grove are in place and terminated, it is necessary to consider the purchase of a camera system that will send video images back to the Police Department for live viewing and recording. I already have all of the necessary switchgear to get the signal from the Grove and into the Town's network but a camera vendor will need to specify an array of cameras and prepare the Police Department's existing video management system to accommodate the feed from the Grove. To that end, I visited the Grove on March 21, 2024 with a representative of the vendor that installed and maintains the cameras and recording system at the public safety facility. He is producing a proposal for a system that will provide views on every side of every major building, including infrared capabilities for night video, plus overall views of both the cottage area and the picnic grove area.

I also spoke to the Police Department about the status of the existing video recording system at the station and the system is in need of an upgrade whether Grove cameras are added or not. One option would be to simply reflash the existing server with new software that is easier to use and that has less software-related disconnect issues than what was delivered when the building was new. Another option would be to replace the server outright, with new software on it, since the server is going to reach end of life in a year or so. As such, I am also getting proposal on those options, which could be funded within the same Town Meeting article, all using the Town Technology Fund. The key consideration is working to not make an already troublesome system worse by adding more traffic and content to it without some type of upgrade.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

C. Personnel

(1) Safety Committee Meeting Summary

I participated in the subject meeting on March 21, 2024 as a member of the Committee. The meeting featured a discussion regarding ongoing safety-related training and equipment needs, along with preliminary discussion on what the

annual Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association (MIIA) grant might possibly fund in the realm of workplace safety later this year.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects

(1) Downtown Decorative Lighting Project Update

(*)

Unfortunately, when our lighting contractor attempted to install light pole bases for our downtown decorative lighting project on Route 133 beginning on March 11, 2024, the contractor encountered many utility conflicts. In some cases, a gas main or a telephone duct bank was blocking the intended base installation location and in other cases the concrete base would not have the required clearance from other subsurface structures. While some bases could have potentially been installed without issue, the aesthetic of skipping multiple locations and having an inconsistent layout would have been worse than not doing the project at all.

Materials such as light poles and lanterns had to be custom-ordered months ago due to very long lead times and the materials are not returnable for credit. I have discussed this matter with the manager of the DOT Shared Streets Grant and I am waiting to see if the DOT is willing to allow the Town to utilize the grant funding to take delivery of the custom materials for possible use somewhere else in the Town in the future. If this becomes the case, in conjunction with returning spools of wire for credit and a possible refund of engineering fees by our engineering contractor, the Town will only owe the lighting installation contractor for the custom concrete light pole bases and a limited amount of work performed to date.

In an effort to understand whether the lights could be installed on the other side of the road (seaward side), I hosted a conference call involving our engineer and our contractor on March 21, 2024. The seaward side of the causeway was originally avoided from a design perspective since there are many areas where the curb is “mountable” to allow vehicles to access parking at abutting establishments and the sidewalk on that side is backed by much longer sections of hardscaped walls that might not allow the Town’s sidewalk plow to pass by off of the back of the sidewalk. The group discussing the matter included Chairman Preen, Superintendent Galli, and Board of Public Works Member Ellis. Generally, the active water main on the seaward side is likely going to conflict with pole base locations and there exists an abandoned water main consisting of concrete-asbestos pipe that will also likely present a conflict. Even if the abandoned main is the only actual conflict, cutting it for pole base installation would introduce significant costs, especially since that material needs to be handled as hazardous waste, once disturbed.

In summary, it does not appear that lighting installation is feasible on either side of the project area. Also, given that the Town already purchased decorative ship plaques for embedding into the sidewalk, we should explore the use of our current

contractor to demolish 23 sections of sidewalk (each of which was already saw-cut for base installation work) and repour each one, embedding a plaque during the process.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(2) Specifications for Repairs to the Public Safety Facility

As the Board is aware, the Town had retained the services of Copeland Building Envelope Consultants to specify necessary repairs to the public safety facility including the installation of some replacement siding, the replacement of the roof, and the fastening and cleanup of miscellaneous siding and trim issues. Copeland provided a comprehensive set of specifications during the week of March 18, 2024 and the Board will take up that scope at its next meeting, on April 8, 2024. In the meantime, Chairman Preen and I will participate in a remote meeting (on March 28, 2024) with personnel from Copeland to go over the specified work and to prepare for the Board's own review on April 8. If individual Board members have any questions or comments prior to the March 28 meeting with Copeland, those should be provided to me for discussion. After the specifications are fully finalized by the Board, I will work with Copeland to set a bidding and work schedule.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

E. Insurance

No items.

F. Facilities

(1) Paglia Pocket Park Grass Reseeding

When the bridge contractor for the Mass DOT restored the small pocket park known as Paglia Park on the east side of the Essex River Bridge at the end of 2023, the grass did not take well. As such, before the Town returns various items to the park, I inquired as to whether the contractor will be making another seeding attempt. I have learned that the bridge contractor is presently coordinating another round of seeding with the landscaping subcontractor.

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

(1) Annual Town Meeting Warrant

I revised the Annual Town Meeting warrant in accordance with the Board's guidance from the last meeting and the Planning Board has finalized several articles relating to further amendment of the Town's zoning bylaws.

Recommendation: Board approval of the warrant as per the posted meeting agenda.

K. Legal Issues

(1) Abutter's Request to Cut Tree Purported to be on Town Property

At the last meeting, the Board assented to the cutting of a large pine tree by an abutter to Town property under several conditions: that the tree is not declared to be in an area that would need prior permitting by the Conservation Commission, that the abutter demonstrate that the tree is actually on Town property, that the abutter pays for all associated costs, and that the abutter signs a full waiver and release before any work is done.

I was able to review the location of the tree with the Conservation Agent in the field on March 12, 2024 and the Conservation Commission has given consent to removing the tree without further permitting, so long as a long stump is left in place. I explained this to the abutter on March 13, 2024, along with outlining the Board's other conditions, and he declined to take any further action since he cannot currently afford to have the tree removed.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary at this time.

(2) Conomo Point Boat Storage License for Essex Bay Sailing Club (*)

At the last meeting, the Board reviewed a second draft of a license for the Essex Bay Sailing Club to store sailboats at the Town's property at 103 Conomo Point Road during the off-season. The Board asked that I incorporate some information provided by the club into a final draft of the license, which I have done.

Recommendation: **Board vote to issue the license.**

L. Grants

(1) Hazard Mitigation Plan Update Team Meeting

I participated in the subject meeting in Town Hall on March 14, 2024, along with other Town personnel and personnel from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), which is assisting the Town with the update process. The team is finishing up its work with respect to final priorities for the next five-year period and a public meeting highlighting the plan update process to date will be held at the present meeting. I will be submitting to the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) a quarterly report concerning this grant-funded update process by the deadline of April 1, 2024.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary at this time.

M. Emergency Planning

No items.

N. Other Items

(1) Town Administrator Leave

I was out of the office, on leave, all day on March 15, 18, and 19, 2024.

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