



## Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of March 8, 2021

*Report covers from February 20, 2021 to March 5, 2021*

*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 (\*)

I attended the subject, virtual meeting along with Town Planner Matt Coogan and Chairman Pereen on March 2, 2021. The meeting featured an update on various grants that the Town is participating in. Also, the Committee generally reviewed the data the Town collected from a second COVID-related business survey. Some members of the Committee will be helping the Planner to implement the COVID Rapid Recovery technical assistance grant that Essex and Manchester have been awarded. The members agreed that the Committee's focus should continue to be on COVID recovery.

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

### B. Computer Systems

#### (1) Discussion Regarding Expansion of Regional Municipal Fiber Optic Network

As the Board is aware, we are presently connected to the Town of Danvers municipal datacenter for real-time backup of our computing infrastructure over a municipally-owned fiber optic system. Most other communities which plan to use Danvers' resources in a similar fashion are not yet connected (Wenham is). We are hopeful that some communities may be able to connect to the North Shore Regional 911 Center in Middleton and that perhaps the Center could help with a fiber connection to the Danvers datacenter. That would allow all communities to get to Danvers and it would allow the Center to have redundant radio traffic loops out to the participating communities. Presently, the Danvers IT Director is speaking with the Regional 911 Center IT Director to see what might be possible.

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

#### (2) Expansion of Town Fiber Optic System to New Public Safety Building

Our fiber optic contractor connected the new public safety facility with the rest of the Town buildings, over the Town's fiber optic system on March 3, 2021. Regular computing needs will continue to be served up over the link from Town Hall (same arrangement as the existing building) and critical public safety systems will continue to be served up directly from the new facility, with its own Internet point of presence.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

(3) Installation of Fiber Optic Switch at New Public Safety Facility

I have begun to prepare the subject switch for the new public safety facility. The switch will allow the building to communicate with the rest of the Town network over the Town's fiber optic system. After switch installation, I will work with our high-level technician to complete the necessary traffic routing.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

**C. Personnel**

No items.

**D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects**

(1) Public Safety Building Construction Project Update (\*)

Chairman Pereen and I participated in construction meetings on February 22 and March 4, 2021. The project is only days away from substantial completion and all finishes are coming along very nicely. I arranged for fire alarm system and elevator phone monitoring during the week of February 22, 2021 so that the alarm and elevator contractors had phone numbers to program into system controllers. The Fire Chief, the Chief of Police, Chairman Pereen, and I walked the entire building on March 8, 2021 and we will provide a list of punch list items to our architect, who will perform his own site walk through later in the week.

Further, I have coordinated with our project team to soon deliver to the Building Inspector all necessary project documentation including an initial as-built plan of the site, professional affidavits, and individual sign-offs from other local inspectors. That effort should result in the issuance of a certificate of occupancy during the week of March 15 or March 22, 2021. Related to this process is the issuance and signature of a certificate of substantial completion, which signifies acceptance of the building by the Town. The certificate is necessary for the Town to move from its Builder's Risk insurance policy to normal coverage and it kicks off the building's one-year warranty period.

The major issue continues to be how the issue with the roof will be resolved. Our architectural firm has now produced a letter that stands behind its original roof design and our Project Manager is considering how a third-party review of the matter may be affordably obtained.

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

(2) Revision of Base Plans for Old Fire Station Demolition/Site Restoration (\*)

At the last meeting, the Board reviewed first drafts of the demolition and restoration plans for the old fire station site. The Board made certain comments that I passed along to our designer and revised plans sheets have been provided for further review.

*Recommendation:* **Further Board review of the plans.**

(3) Recommendations for Changes to Public Safety Facility Camera System (\*)

At the last meeting, the Board agreed that key personnel should tour the new public safety building with the designer of the closed-circuit camera system in order to arrive at final recommendations for improved system coverage. We were able to have that site visit on March 1, 2021 and the list of items of concern to the police department was not diminished by the visit. In fact, we feel that a camera should be added to the training room so that the bird's eye camera can be turned off during voting while a standard camera just records general room activity (if recommended by the MA Elections Division).

As such, a revised scope and drawing has been sent to our architect so that a formal request can be made of our contractor for pricing on the items needed. While the police department would like to move the cameras in the two jail cells, access to the cell ceilings would be costly at this stage. As such, the most versatile possible cameras will be installed in the cells and the department will need to assess adequacy when the system is up and running.

*Recommendation:* **Board authorization of the Chairman to sign any necessary paperwork for the camera system change order, when available.**

(4) Moving Services Contract for Public Safety Building (\*)

When I coordinated the move out of Town Hall and back in again after its renovation (about two years later), we utilized the services of a moving company on the State Contract (ABC Moving & Storage – an affiliate of Allied Van Lines). The service was excellent both times and the company is capable of moving anything that is not going to be moved by our own fire and police personnel. With respect to the Town Hall move, ABC was the only mover willing move whole file cabinets, without the need to unpack and repack. I provided the two chiefs with a contact for the mover and they are working on getting an estimate prepared.

*Recommendation:* **Board authorization of the Chairman to sign any necessary moving services contract when it becomes available.**

## **E. Insurance**

(1) Possible Switch to New Dental Plan (\*)

At the last meeting, I indicated to the Board that our health insurance provider (the Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association – MIIA) would grant the Town a 0.5% decrease on its health insurance renewal premium for FY22 if the Town agrees to switch from its current dental insurance (provided by Altus Dental) to MIIA's Blue Cross Blue Shield dental plan, with voluntary vision coverage. The MIIA plan has a richer suite of benefits than our current dental

plan and will cost about 15% less. Employees pay 100% of the cost of the dental premium and the same would be true for vision, if elected. In speaking with Town Counsel, we are free to move to the new provider if both labor unions are in agreement. As such, when we have all of the necessary information, I will work with both union stewards to have the plan reviewed.

***Recommendation:*** **Board authorization of the Chairman to cancel our old plan and sign for our new plan after union review, so long as both unions are in agreement.**

## **F. Facilities**

### (1) Structural Repairs Necessary for Folsom Pavilion (\*)

Each year, in order to certify the Centennial Grove facility for the summer camp that runs there, the Building Inspector makes an inspection of the various buildings. He has indicated this year that the Folsom Pavilion is in need of extensive structural work or it will need to be closed down and secured until that work can be accomplished. Town Building Committee Chairman and Planning Board member Lisa O'Donnell is a practicing structural engineer and she was able to join the Building Inspector on his inspection. It appears to her that the necessary work (which involves the pavilion's sills, floor support posts, footings, and roof) may not worth doing. It may be better from a cost perspective to demolish the structure and replace it eventually with a concrete pad and a simple roof on posts. It is also possible to board up the pavilion until it can be studied further.

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

### (2) Town Hall Door System Controller Repair

In early February, I ordered some additional door control fobs for the Town Hall electronic door system, since our original supply had been depleted. A new user was able to use a fob from the new batch for a few weeks but was later locked out. We had not changed any settings within our control software and I contacted the original installer of the system for assistance. After finding the issue in the software, the new batch of fobs is again functioning properly.

***Recommendation:*** No further action is necessary.

## **G. Fiscal/Budget**

### (1) School Budget Collaboration Group Meeting

I attended the subject meeting along with Selectman Bradford and Finance Committee Chairman Buttrick on March 5, 2021. The meeting featured a conversation around setting the agenda for a planned "all-boards" meeting to discuss the future of the school budget on March 11, 2021. That meeting will

include the boards of selectmen and finance committees from Essex and Manchester and the School Committee.

*Recommendation:* Discussion during the Finance Committee budget appointment at the present meeting.

## **H. Complaints**

No items.

## **I. Meetings Attended**

### (1) Discussion of Regional COVID-19 Vaccination Center (\*)

Senator Tarr hosted virtual meetings on February 24 and March 3, 2021 concerning a proposal to set up a regional COVID-19 vaccination center in Gloucester. The City of Gloucester and Addison Gilbert Hospital are the two possible anchors in our area and, given that the City is not presently in a position to assist in that way, the group agreed to pursue a regional site with the hospital as the anchor. If current rules about the number of required vaccinations per day and proximity to a State-run site (Danvers) change and the supply of vaccines improves, it may be possible to set up a Cape Ann site (possibly also involving Ipswich). All four Cape Ann communities agreed to send letters of interest to the hospital, so that the hospital can reach out through State channels to better understand our prospects. Chairman Pereen signed Essex's letter of interest, which is set up for Board ratification at the present meeting.

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

### (2) Chebacco Lake Coalition Meeting Summary

Selectman Phippen and I participated in the subject coalition meeting on February 26, 2021. The Coalition is being coordinated by the Chebacco Lake and Watershed Association, with assistance from Senator Tarr. At the meeting, the group assembled agreed that working with the Division of Marine Fisheries to file a Notice of Intent with the Essex Conservation Commission by May of this year is a good first goal. Future meetings will seek to grow and solidify the coalition's membership and to work in tandem on watershed and regional issues.

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

### (3) Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce Essex Division Meeting Summary (\*)

I attended the subject, virtual meeting along with Chairman Pereen and Selectman Phippen on March 2, 2021. The meeting featured a discussion relative to recovering from COVID-19 and I described recent efforts that the Town had taken to be helpful in that capacity. I also provided an outline concerning the expected schedule for the Essex River Bridge replacement project, which will kick off next March. Further, I presented updates on other ongoing Town projects

and initiatives. The business community presented some ideas as to what might be helpful from the Town moving forward. I have added to the Economic Development Committee web page a link to the State's reopening information center and the Town Clerk has highlighted our Economic Development Committee webpage in her Facebook feed.

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

(4) Virtual COVID Meeting with Congressman Moulton's Staff

I participated in the subject meeting on March 1, 2021. Congressman Moulton's staff reached out to town managers/administrators and mayors in his district to review Federal efforts to assist with COVID-19 recovery. Generally, the staff covered what is expected to be in the next Federal COVID aid package, which, at the time, had not yet been approved by the Senate. Further, there was discussion regarding the overall vaccine rollout in the area, including how the Governor's recent decision to close down smaller clinics affected various communities. The Congressman plans to reach out to the Governor to ask if that decision has room for modification in the future.

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

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

(1) Review of Annual Town Meeting and Annual Election Warrants (\*)

At the last meeting, the Board agreed that the Annual Town Meeting should be held on Saturday, May 15, outdoors, at the Essex Elementary School property. Moving the Annual Town Meeting from May 3 to May 15 requires that a separate Annual Town Election warrant be signed. I have prepared final drafts of both documents for the Board's final review. While it is now evident that special State Legislation will be passed allowing for changes to municipal election dates, it does not appear that Essex has a reason to make a change (the upcoming election is relatively simple, with no ballot questions). Further, given that final paving and landscape grading at the new public safety facility will not be completed before the May 10, 2021 Annual Town Election date, the Town Clerk prefers to hold the election at the old facility, for one final time. High curbs and uneven transitions could make the new site dangerous and not properly handicapped accessible. We are still anticipating asking the Board to sign the warrants on March 22, 2021.

*Recommendation:* **Board review of the warrant documents, and confirmation of the election date.**

## **K. Legal Issues**

No items.

## **L. Grants**

### (1) Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) Grant Update

As the Board may recall, our project was not far enough along last December to apply for Federal BRIC funding that might fund the bulk of construction associated with our Apple Street roadbed elevation project. We are hopeful that personnel at the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) will be able to help us demonstrate that the project meets the required Federal Benefit Cost Analysis (BCA) threshold. To that end, I spoke with MEMA officials on February 24, 2021 and have learned that they intend to assist the Town further as the year progresses. Specifically, MEMA personnel and their consultants will look at the latest sea level rise and storm surge prediction models to see if that data can be used to help make our cost-benefit case.

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

### (2) Coastal Resilience Grant Monthly Report

I filed the monthly report with the Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management (CZM) pertaining to the Apple Street road bed elevation project during the week of February 22, 2021. The CZM Coastal Resilience grant funded a feasibility study on elevating the second of two low spots along the Southern Avenue end of Apple Street to get up out of the coastal storm surge zone. The Feasibility Study has been completed and our engineering contractor has developed a PowerPoint presentation for public education about the work. CZM personnel are presently reviewing the project's deliverables and our contractor will make any recommended revisions to work products once we have comments. I will meet virtually with CZM personnel on March 10, 2021 to learn more.

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

### (3) Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Grant Monthly Report

Personnel from Boston University (BU) filed the subject report with the State during the week of February 22, 2021. The project is looking at sediment transport along Crane Beach and into/throughout Essex Bay. Presently, BU scientists are working on modeling various different storm scenarios based on the field data collected over the course of the project used to calibrate their model.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

## **M. Emergency Planning**

No items.

## **N. Other Items**

No items.

*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.*