



## Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of May 17, 2021

*Report covers from May 1, 2021 to May 14, 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 meeting along with Town Planner Matt Coogan and Chairman Pereen on May 4, 2021. The meeting featured discussions with respect to both a COVID recovery planning grant and a COVID recovery implementation grant both aimed at helping businesses rebound from the ongoing COVID-19 crisis.

Both efforts are regionally-based and the implementation grant (known as the Regional Pilot Project Grant) is open to any Essex business, in any location, whether or not the business is a member of the Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce or the Essex Merchants' Group. A press release encouraging local businesses to become involved with the Regional Pilot Project by participating in an informative kick-off webinar will be soon made available for the Town to distribute via our website and social media feeds. Also, see item L1, below.

The planning grant (known as the Local Rapid Recovery Program) is also taking shape with assistance from consultant Dodson & Flinker. I participated in a steering committee meeting, along with the Town Planner, on May 11, 2021. Also, see item L2, below. Further, the Committee discussed its continuing support for the downtown mixed-use zoning bylaw proposal that was to go before Town Meeting on May 15, 2021. The Committee will meet again on June 8, 2021.

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

### B. Computer Systems

#### (1) Configuration of New Copier at New Public Safety Facility

The new public safety facility has a new copier for use by the police department. Department personnel also wish to be able to send print jobs to the copier and to use it as a scanner. I met at the facility with the copier vendor to work out the technical details relating to our specific local area network on May 7, 2021 (after some of my own preliminary work the previous day) and we were able to establish all necessary connectivity for the department (both scanning and printing).

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

(2) Configuration of Police PCs for Use with the New Facility's Network

While most of the computer systems in the old police and fire station are being retired (replaced with new systems that I have already put into operation at the new facility), two police PCs at the old station were relatively new and will continue to be in use in the new facility. As such, after the department moved the PCs to their new locations at the new facility, I configured each of them for use with the network at the new facility.

*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 attended a construction meeting on May 13, 2021. All paving is now completed on the grounds of the new building and landscaping is continuing to take shape. Building system trainings have been scheduled and our contractor is making progress on punch list items, including items that will be necessary for the permanent certificate of occupancy. Our Project Manager and our architect are continuing to study the roof shingle buckling issue and some detailed inspections of the roof will be occurring soon.

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

(2) Change Order: Public Safety Facility Occupancy Sign & Door Shutter (\*)

During the Certificate of Occupancy Inspection, the Building Inspector raised question about the egress plan for the apparatus bay. It was clarified that the apparatus bay is not intended as a space to hold gatherings and thus the occupancy load would be under 50. It was agreed that a sign would be posted to indicate this maximum occupancy. During a recent inspection, the DPH indicated that both cell doors should have shades, whereas only the first door was specified to have a shade in the original design. A magnetic overlay was an agreeable approach for the second cell door to achieve the intent. The total cost for these items was \$213.88.

*Recommendation:* **Board approval of these items as part of Change Order 15.**

(3) Change Order: Public Safety Facility Additional Training Room Exit Sign (\*)

An exit sign was not called for in the Contract Documents at the door leading from the Training Room to the Upper-Level Lobby area. Since this door is intended to provide one of the two means of egress from the training room, an additional exit sign was required to be added to the scope. The total cost for the exit sign work is \$1,093.38.

*Recommendation:* **Board approval of this item as part of Change Order 15.**

(4) Change Order: Public Safety Facility Kitchen Hood Ansul System Work (\*)

The contract documents had a scope gap for providing control wiring to the kitchen hood ansul system as it was neither owned by the electrical subcontractor or the automatic temperature control (ATC) subcontractor. Upon review and clarification, it was determined it should have been specified in the ATC scope and was completed on a time and materials basis as added scope. The cost of this extra work is \$2,519.25.

*Recommendation:* **Board approval of this work as part of Change Order 15.**

(5) Change Order: Public Safety Facility Add Sprinkler Heads to Canopies (\*)

During the Certificate of Occupancy inspection, the Building Inspector questioned why the fire sprinkler system was not extended to the canopy areas at the building entrances. Upon reviewing this further, the design team determined that because of the presence of flammable materials on the building exterior, sprinkler coverage should be extended to these areas. The total cost for this work is \$7,863.14.

*Recommendation:* **Board approval of this work as part of Change Order 15.**

(6) Updating of Plans for Demolition/Restoration of Old Fire Station Site (\*)

At the last meeting, the Board answered some questions that our designer had with respect to the further revision of the plans for the demolition of the old public safety building at 24 Martin Street and the subsequent restoration of the site. Our designer is working on final revisions to the plans in accordance with the answers to those questions and with comments that had been made by landscape architect Kim Drake.

*Recommendation:* **Board review and approval of the revised plans, if available by meeting time.**

(7) Third-Party Ambulance Billing Agreement Renewal (\*)

Our third-party ambulance billing contract is considered on an annual basis. Our present vendor, Comstar, has provided excellent service and has developed a successor agreement for fiscal year 2022. The Fire Chief concurs with this course of action.

*Recommendation:* **Signature of the successor agreement with Comstar for fiscal year 2022 (effective July 1, 2021).**

## **E. Insurance**

### (1) Replacement of Harbormaster Shed

The insurer for the driver whose car accidentally rolled, unattended, into the Harbormaster shed in April approved the complete cost of debris haul-away and shed replacement during the week of May 3, 2021. An order has been placed for a new shed and we expect delivery before the end of May.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

## **F. Facilities**

### (1) Possible Assistance with the Utilization of American Rescue Plan Act Funds (\*)

Personnel from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) met virtually with area town administrators on May 5, 2021. The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) includes funding for municipal needs and will allow for a wide range of activities. Management and reporting associated with this new Federal funding is expected to be arduous and it may be advantageous to spend some of the funding on management/reporting assistance. While MAPC is not presently set up to provide this type of support, the organization will consider hiring staff or contractors to offer it. In Essex, with respect to the previous CARES Act funding, we have used our own consultant in this fashion. We may be able to continue to do that or this possible new avenue with MAPC may be preferable, if offered.

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

### (2) Renewal of Bathing Beach Permits

Every two years, the Board of Health requires the operators of all public bathing beaches to renew the permit for each beach. The Board of Selectmen operate three public bathing beaches: Clammers' Beach and Front Beach at Conomo Point, and the Chebacco Lake beach at Centennial Grove. The Board's three permits expired at the end of last season and I have renewed them with the Board of Health for the coming two seasons, which kick off this coming Memorial Day.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

### (3) Replacement of Point of Use Water Heater

Our Town Hall Custodian noticed a leak under the point of use water heater in the Town Hall second floor ladies' room. After that report, we had the matter reviewed by a plumber and he determined that the unit itself was leaking and needed replacement. A new unit was installed on May 5, 2021.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

(4) Specification of Equipment for Live Coverage of Meetings by 1623 Studios

At the last meeting, the Board expressed a desire to explore further the possible outfitting of the third-floor auditorium at Town Hall to allow for live broadcast of meetings over local cable TV channels by 1623 studios. The equipment would also allow 1623 studios to produce interactive meetings for remote participants, to show meetings live on local cable channels, to incorporate a separate feed from any computerized presentation that was part of a meeting, and would replace the in-house public address system with more modern equipment. 1623 Studios personnel and an audio/video vendor on the State Contract visited Town Hall on May 13, 2021 to get a sense of our available spaces and much favored the third-floor auditorium over the Selectmen's conference room (due to the need for ample space). I expect to have a quote with respect to the cost of such an undertaking by the Board's next meeting.

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

(5) Demolition of Folsom Pavilion

The Folsom Pavilion was demolished on May 6, 2021. The Board has committed to putting an article for the design of a replacement pavilion before the Fall Town Meeting in November.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

**G. Fiscal/Budget**

No items.

**H. Complaints**

No items.

**I. Meetings Attended**

(1) State-Wide Mosquito Control Opt-out Listening Session

I attended the subject virtual meeting on May 3, 2021. The meeting covered the process for opting out of State-mandated, aerial spraying should an emergency be declared. Many municipal officials voiced concern over the very late notification of cities and towns with respect to the opt-out process and its quick deadline. Others indicated that the aerial spraying being proposed by the State was perhaps not even a very effective tool given the possible side effects on the environment and possibly on public health. Later that evening, the Selectmen decided not to pursue an opt-out request this year, particularly since the Board of Health had not recommended that course of action.

While it is not likely that State-mandated spraying will occur in our area (based on past history), if the need did arise, the Town would not be prepared adequately

to deal with the emergency on its own. One idea that was discussed by the Board was the possible creation of a fund that will allow the Town to put aside money for extraordinary mosquito control measures on its own terms (as opposed to the aerial spraying the State would undertake). Having such a fund may allow the Town to more confidently opt out of State emergency spraying in future years.

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

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

No items.

## **K. Legal Issues**

### (1) Renewal of Long-term Lease for Essex Elementary School (\*)

At the last meeting, the Board was satisfied with last year's review of whether or not to include new equity language in the Regional Agreement with respect to capital improvements in Manchester. The long-term leases for all School District buildings expired previous to the present fiscal year and the year was used to review whether any action should be taken. Given that none of the three entities see a need to change the Regional Agreement due to lack of precedent in other regional agreements in the State and due to significant depreciation of the equity value over time, the Board desires to move ahead with another twenty-year lease to the District for the Essex Elementary School. Special Counsel has developed for the Board's review the necessary document to resume the long-term lease arrangement.

***Recommendation:* Board review of the lease resumption document drafted by Special Counsel.**

### (2) Memorandum of Understanding for Shared IT Services (\*)

As the Board is aware, a group of six area communities has been working with the Town of Danvers to increase the suite of Information Technology services that Danvers is able to offer on a regional basis. Essex is already directly connected to the Danvers datacenter over municipal fiber and the other communities are in the process of connecting. While Essex has been receiving file backup and disaster recovery services from Danvers for some time now, it may be advantageous to participate in other services such as regional software applications, regional VOIP phone services, regional IT help desk services, etc.

This larger, regional relationship will kick off on July 1, 2021 with each participating community contributing about \$4,000 toward Danvers IT staff's technical assistance and coordination of regional programs. All participating communities need to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) outlining the scope of services and the costs and rules for participation. Also see item L3, below.

*Recommendation:* **Board signature of the regional IT services MOU.**

## **L. Grants**

### (1) Regional Pilot COVID Recovery Grant Program Update (\*)

I attended a Steering Committee meeting for the subject regional grant program on May 5, 2021, along with Chairman Pereen and Town Planner Matt Coogan. The meeting featured an update from grant coordinator Anne Williams, who is employed by the Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce. Generally, work in three specific areas is being done by three distinct sub-groups of municipal and business personnel/officials from across Cape Ann. The grant will provide a promotional marketing campaign for our region, an on-line marketplace for individual businesses using the BlueDot platform, and a business resource center that will provide useful tools and training for recovering businesses. One of the next steps the Town will be involved in will be to help get the word out to Essex businesses about a kick-off webinar that businesses can attend to learn more about all three focus areas.

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

### (2) Local Rapid Recovery Program Grant Update (\*)

Personnel from Dodson & Flinker have been assisting Essex and Manchester with technical assistance aimed at helping local businesses recover from the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. On May 11, 2021, Dodson & Flinker led a working session of Essex and Manchester personnel and officials, along with business leaders, in order to prepare for an upcoming public forum that is planned for May 25, 2021. I participated in the meeting, along with Town Planner Matt Coogan. Generally, our consultant has recommended that both communities look at infrastructure needs and the regulatory environment, since the Regional Pilot Grant (see item L1, above), will focus more on direct business assistance and support.

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

### (3) Regional IT Coordination Grant Update

Personnel from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) have been helping to coordinate shared IT services among several area communities using the Town of Danvers datacenter as a hub. The group met virtually on May 13, 2021 to discuss progress and all agreed that the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for service delivery from Danvers was ready for signature by the various communities (also see item K2, above). The grant coordination group is presently also working on associating with a preferred IT services provider, via a bid process that will culminate by the end of this fiscal year.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

(4) Regional Public Health Shared Services Exploration Grant (\*)

The Town of Hamilton has been awarded \$200,000 per year, for the next three years, as the lead community in a shared public health services exploration grant. Essex, Hamilton, Wenham, and Manchester will participate in the grant to help strengthen the local public health system in our region. Essentially, the grant will allow the sharing of a full-time regional public health nurse coordinator and a ¾-time regional public health social worker, with Hamilton in the lead and employing these new staff resources. The contract will actually be signed between the State and the Town of Hamilton, so there will likely not be grant contract paperwork for the Board to sign. However, the Town of Hamilton will want to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the various communities and the Board may need to assent to a review of the MOU by Town Counsel, since the firm represents all four communities.

**Recommendation: Board vote to authorize the Chairman to sign any necessary paperwork related to this grant, when available.**

**M. Emergency Planning**

(1) Continued Discussion Concerning Regional COVID Vaccination Program (\*)

As the Board may recall, we had been participating in talks concerning a regional vaccination program that Senator Tarr had been coordinating. A group of area communities, including Essex, had supported an application to the Department of Public Health to permit a program in our area. While initial discussions involved the likely administration of the clinics by a private pharmacy, we have learned that the pharmacy will no longer be able to assist in that way (due to recent changes in State policy).

Instead, the group, which now consists of Essex, Manchester, Gloucester, Rockport, Hamilton, Wenham, Ipswich, Topsfield, Boxford, and Middleton, will marshal trained volunteers, and some paid staff, to offer clinics in Gloucester, Ipswich, and Topsfield. We do not yet know the exact nature of the volunteer and/or financial commitment Essex would have to make. Presently, the Health Director from Hamilton is working with the State to revise the group's proposal so that we may obtain approval. Any funding that is necessary would be paid out of either the Town's remaining CARES funds or new Federal funds expected under ARPA. This regional approach may become very important if COVID booster shots are recommended later this year.

**Recommendation: Board discussion as necessary.**

**N. Other Items**

(1) Town Administrator Leave

I was out of the office, on leave, for a portion of the day on May 4, 2021.

*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.*