



Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of Nov. 13, 2023

Report covers from October 24, 2023 to November 10, 2023

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

A. Town Department Reports/Requests

(1) Affordable Housing Trust Update (*)

Chairman Pereen also chairs the Essex Affordable Housing Trust. The Trust was to meet on October 26, 2023 but a quorum was not achieved. The meeting was to feature a discussion of the consideration by the upcoming Fall Town Meeting of the transfer of an additional \$100,000 from the Community Preservation Fund into the Trust (bringing the Trust's total to \$200,000). The Community Preservation Committee has already voted to support this second transfer of funds.

In addition, we have learned that the Town's application to the Massachusetts Housing Partnership's (MHP) Affordable Housing Trust Fund Intensive Technical Assistance Program was not successful. MHP has commented that they agree that the subject of our application, the development of a Housing Production Plan (HPP) is a critical next step for the Essex Trust. However, MHP does not have the expertise in-house to assist the Town with that endeavor. MHP recommended that the Town get in touch with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) to determine if MAPC has technical assistance funding available in the near future to start to make progress on an HPP. The Town Planner made that contact and technical assistance funding is not likely, given that Essex had received a great deal of technical assistance on other projects lately. Options include possibly spending a portion of the Trust's own funding on a HPP or applying for a different State grant program in the spring. The cost of developing a HPP is estimated to be \$80,000-\$100,000.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(2) Economic Development Committee Meeting Summary (*)

I attended the subject meeting on November 2, 2023 along with Chairman Pereen and Town Planner Menon. The meeting featured a discussion with respect to various Fall Town Meeting articles that are supported by the Committee and various Committee members committed to reading various motions. The Committee also agreed on the final format of an informational mailer that will be sent out with the next round of tax bills in later December.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

B. Computer Systems

(1) Replacement of Public Computer Kiosk in Town Hall

We have a public computer kiosk in Town Hall for public Internet access. The kiosk is particularly useful if an applicant for some type of permit that is only offered online needs access after discussing an application with one of our offices. The kiosk had been running on an older model Chromebox which can no longer accommodate the newest versions of Chrome (which our on-line permitting systems require in order to function properly). As such, I have replaced the Chromebox and the kiosk can again access our on-line permitting systems.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

C. Personnel

No items.

D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects

(1) Summer Camp and Youth/Adult Enrichment Services Contract Update

At the last meeting, the Board voted to award a five-year contract for summer camp and youth/adult enrichment programs to the YMCA of the North Shore. The YMCA will soon sign the contract and is ready to begin marketing the summer camp right away. The YMCA will then gear up to establish and promote a variety of youth and adult enrichment programs on a year-round basis.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Zoning Review Project Discussion Meeting

I attended the subject, virtual meeting along with Planning Board Chair Lisa O'Donnell, Planning Board Vice-Chair Simone Early, Town Planner Dana Menon, and personnel from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC). The meeting featured a discussion with respect to the Town's official status concerning Section 3A of Chapter 40A of the General Laws, which requires all communities with MBTA transit service within or near their borders to ensure a certain level of multi-family zoning is available. Since Essex is known as an "adjacent small town", our existing zoning very likely already complies with Section 3A. The Town Planner is working presently with MAPC to file the official application for final compliance status with the Commonwealth.

The group also discussed the overall plan with respect to the MAPC zoning review project, including the various topic areas that the Planning Board has highlighted as being most important to focus work on. While some initial proposals are being considered by the Fall Town Meeting on November 13, 2023, the Planning Board hopes to have additional proposals, including perhaps for

some specific zones, for the Annual Town Meeting in May of 2024. The next opportunity for public comment will be on December 6, 2023.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

E. Insurance

(1) Public Safety Building – Building Envelope Assessment Report (*)

Copeland Building Envelope Consultants has completed its assessment of various building envelope issues that have started to appear with respect to the new public safety facility on John Wise Avenue. Generally, Copeland looked at stain delamination on the cedar shingle portions of the building, miscellaneous Hardi-Plank grout issues, various board and batten siding issues, and PVC trim issues. Correcting all of these issues may carry a cost as high as \$330,000 with the replacement of the cedar shingles using a maintenance-free product accounting for approximately one third of that total cost.

Recommendation: **Initial Board discussion with respect to the report.**

F. Facilities

No items.

G. Fiscal/Budget

(1) List of Possible Departments/Organizations for Benefactor Donations (*)

At the last meeting, the Board asked that I pull together a list of Town departments and non-profit organizations within the Town that potential benefactors (such as BB Botanics) could choose to donate to. I have developed that list for the Board's review.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

H. Complaints

No items.

I. Meetings Attended

(1) Massachusetts Health Officers Association Annual Meeting & Trade Show

I attended the subject conference on Cape Cod on October 25 and 26, 2023. The conference provides an excellent networking opportunity with respect to public health issues and allows me to meet continuing education requirements for my Registered Sanitarian, approved System Inspector, and approved Soil Evaluator certifications.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

J. Town Meeting, By-Laws, and Regulations

(1) Fall Town Meeting Motions

(*)

I have prepared motions for the Fall Town Meeting for the Board's review – to be utilized at the Fall Town Meeting later this evening.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(2) Planning Board Public Hearing for Proposed Zoning Bylaw Changes

I attended the subject public hearing along with Chairman Pereen and Selectman Phippen on November 8, 2023. A public hearing is required prior to the discussion of proposed zoning bylaw changes at any town meeting. The Planning Board Chairman summarized each of the four zoning bylaw proposals and those in attendance had an opportunity to ask detailed questions.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

K. Legal Issues

No items.

L. Grants

(1) Shared Streets and Spaces Street Lighting Grant Extension

As the Board is aware, the Town is under contract with Pine Ridge Technologies, Inc. (PRT) for the subsurface preparation work necessary to install decorative streetlights in a portion of the downtown area. We have had difficulty in obtaining the bolts that need to be embedded into what will be custom-cast concrete light pole anchors and this delay has the project coming up against cold weather. In addition to trying to avoid pouring the new sidewalk sections in cold weather, we know that the light poles themselves will not be available for installation until the spring. As such, it will be much better to just put the subsurface preparation work off until the spring and complete all of the work at once (PRT is willing to sign a no-cost, time-only change order for the subsurface work contract that puts the work completion deadline out to April 30, 2024). This option is particularly important since it will not leave light pole anchors with exposed bolts in place over the winter (a tripping hazard and a hazard for the sidewalk plow).

MA DOT, which is the grant awarding authority, approved a six-month extension for the project (through June 30, 2024) after I filed a request for extension in recognition of the issues discussed above. Our hope is that the Fall Town Meeting will approve the necessary funding to complete the project (i.e. all of the work beyond the already-contracted subsurface work) and that we can go ahead

and order the light poles for delivery over the winter. A change order with PRT or a State Contract quote from PRT for light assembly, placement, and wiring is an option that may be considered for the spring. It is also still possible that another municipal light department will be interested in quoting that work.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

M. Emergency Planning

(1) Northeastern Massachusetts Law Enforcement Council Membership

I attended a meeting hosted by the Rockport Police Department on October 23, 2023 where personnel from the Northeastern Massachusetts Law Enforcement Council (NEMLEC) presented the organization's offerings to me and the Rockport and Manchester town administrators (along with the police chiefs from all three communities). NEMLEC has been in existence since the late 1960's and operates by charging an identical annual fee of \$5,500 from each member community, at a minimum. The Chief of Police may be approaching the Board in the near future to discuss possible membership further.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(2) Hazard Mitigation Plan Update Public Survey

At the last meeting, Martin Pillsbury from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) presented the status of the Town's Hazard Mitigation Plan update project and began to take public input on the project. He noted that MAPC has developed an on-line public survey as part of the project and asked that the Town assist with the publication and promotion of the survey address. The survey is available at <http://www.mapc.ma/EsssexSurvey> and we have promoted it on both of the Town's Facebook pages, the Essex News and Notices private Facebook page, our subscribed Town News e-mail list, and at the Town website. The survey will remain open through December 15, 2023 and will help the planning team formulate the final content of the plan as the project continues. I have also shared the survey link with the Manchester Essex Regional School District in the event that the District would like to encourage high school students to participate.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(3) North Shore Regional 911 Center Executive Advisory Board Meeting

I attended the subject meeting on November 6, 2023 along with Chief Francis, in my capacity as Chairman of the subject board. The meeting featured a discussion about allowing the Town of North Reading to join the Center. Frank Pozniak of the State 911 Department was in attendance and he indicated that the addition of North Reading would not change the no-cost nature of being a member of the Center. The Center's Director commented that North Reading will be cut over only when both that town and the Center are ready. For example, if the Center

has difficulty recruiting the necessary number of additional dispatchers, North Reading will need to wait until that situation has been rectified. The Board voted to allow North Reading to join the Center in accordance with the Onboarding Project Plan that spells out all of the details and conditions necessary for North Reading to eventually go live. As the Board may recall, back in March, the Town of Manchester joined the Center. As such, with North Reading, the Center will be covering a total of seven communities.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

N. Other Items

(1) Greater Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce Essex Division Meeting

All three Board members attended the subject meeting on October 25, 2023. Chairman Pereen provided Chamber members with an update on Town projects and initiatives.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Town Green Webinar/Field Trip: Losing the High Marsh

Selectman Phippen led a field trip on October 27, 2023 to assist Town Green to illustrate the expected problem of losing the high marsh vegetation with the advancement of sea level rise. Current predictions have the high marsh vegetation transitioning to low marsh vegetation and low marsh vegetation transitioning to unvegetated tidal flats in future years. Since the high marsh has very little room to migrate into current upland areas (which are mostly already developed), this cascade of transitions may adversely affect the ability of the Great Marsh to buffer future coastal storms. Town Green is an organization based in Gloucester that is trying to bring attention to the effects of sea level rise and climate change on Cape Ann.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(3) Veterans' Day Holiday

The office was closed on November 10, 2023, in observance of the subject holiday.

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