



Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of November 2, 2020

Report covers from October 17, 2020 to October 30, 2020

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

A. Town Department Reports/Requests

(1) Economic Development Committee Meeting Summary (*)

The Economic Development Committee (EDC) met virtually with the Town Planner and me on October 20, 2020. Chairman Pereen was also in attendance. The main focus of the meeting was further review of the Town's draft Economic Development Plan (EDP) that the EDC, the Town Planner, and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) have been working on over the past year. The EDP has incorporated much public and business input, including ideas for an enhanced foreword concerning business management of and recovery from COVID financial decline. The Committee decided to release the EDP as a final plan and I posted it on the Town website after the Town Planner added a disclaimer explaining how rapidly COVID-related recommendations may evolve. In the coming weeks, the Planner will work on an updated COVID survey to help inform early implementation steps.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

B. Computer Systems

(1) End-user IT Equipment for New Public Safety Building

I have made arrangement using State Contract vendors to purchase a number full PCs, a number of zero-client workstations, and all associated peripherals for the new public safety building. I worked with the two chiefs to understand departmental needs before placing the various orders. Equipment will be shipped to the existing fire/police headquarters and stored until it is time to set it up in the new building. We had already purchased the necessary, back-end fiber switches, Wi-Fi transmitters, and audio-visual equipment, which is all being stored in Town Hall for the time being.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

C. Personnel

(1) Employee of the Year and Employee Service Awards Ceremony (*)

At the last meeting, the Board chose the Employee of the Year. I have ordered that award for a November ceremony, along with years of service awards for those in the Fire Department and other departments. These awards are usually presented at the Fall Town Meeting. However, due to COVID, the Fall Town

Meeting was much earlier this year. A separate ceremony will need to be planned and could occur at the Annual Town Meeting in May.

Recommendation: **Board discussion with respect to when the awards ceremony will be and what format it will take.**

(2) Open Meeting Law Training Seminar

At the Selectmen's request, Town Counsel offered a comprehensive seminar concerning the Open Meeting Law on October 27, 2020. The seminar featured a summary of how to properly navigate the law and apply its requirements to local committee, board, and commission work. The seminar was well attended and participants asked a variety of questions.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects

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

Chairman Preen and I attended project update meetings on October 22 and October 29, 2020. The project is really starting to take shape on the interior now, as most of the exterior work is done (or will be done by late November). The contractor is completing water leak testing on the windows and various exterior elements, such as brick veneer, trim, and other siding are moving right along. Gutters will be installed by the end of November. Wall boarding on the lower level is complete and the contractor is working on the ceiling grid system there. Framing is done on the upper level and boarding work is getting underway there. The apparatus bay will be the last interior space to be outfitted and finished.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(2) Change Order: Public Safety Building Lighting (*)

The exterior fixture type specified at a particular exit is a recessed type fixture. However, this will not work as the canopy at the exit does not have a ceiling. Instead, the design team has replaced the fixture with a wall mounted fixture resulting in an additional material cost.

Recommendation: **Board approval of this item as part of change order 8.**

(3) Change Order: Public Safety Building Cell Door Shutter (*)

Upon completing its review, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health requested that a sliding shutter be added to the window on the cell door 125A.

Recommendation: **Board approval of this item as part of change order 8.**

(4) Change Order: Public Safety Building Clothes Dryer Wiring (*)

The project plumbing scope did not include gas service or sufficient electrical service to the two clothes dryer locations. This omission was picked up in the coordination process and, at that time, it was determined that the least costly scope addition would be to provide appropriate electrical power to support electric dryers in these locations. This cost represents a minor credit for the change in equipment type (gas dryers to electric dryers) and the additional cost for the upgraded power service required.

Recommendation: **Board approval of this item as part of change order 8.**

(5) Public Safety Project Design Change Order (Geotechnical Work) (*)

Early in the subject project, the Board had agreed to allow for some additional geotechnical work. However, the designer did not submit a formal change order request until now. Sufficient funds exist in the Environmental Planning project line item to cover this \$7,000 expense and funds may simply be transferred without an increase to the overall project budget.

Recommendation: **Board vote to approve the change order for this past work.**

E. Insurance

No items.

F. Facilities

No items.

G. Fiscal/Budget

(1) School Budget Group Meeting Summary (*)

Selectman Phippen, Finance Committee Chairman Buttrick, and I attended the subject, virtual meeting on October 30, 2020, along with officials from Manchester and the Regional School District. The meeting featured discussions concerning how the two communities may be able to assign unallocated CARES Act funding to the District, to help defray a portion of the District's extraordinary COVID expenses; how the parties might go about including building equity language in a future revision to the Regional Agreement; and how the District plans to begin work on the replacement of the playground at the Essex Elementary School in March or April of 2021.

With respect to the CARES funding, the District will develop a package of costs that we will get pre-approved by the Department of Revenue before finally committing to reimbursement. The key to offering this funding to the District is that, if the Town cannot use it, the funding will need to be returned to the Federal Government. With respect to equity language for capital investment by each

town in buildings in the other town, the group is in agreement that some draft language should be brought forth. With respect to the playground at Essex Elementary, the District plans to order the necessary materials in December, for construction in March/April of 2021.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

H. Complaints

No items.

I. Meetings Attended

(1) Cape Ann Caucus

I attended the subject, virtual meeting along with Selectman Pereen and Chief Francis. The Caucus brings together officials from the four Cape Ann communities, our State legislators, and area business leaders to review current affairs. The Caucus focused this time on each community's management of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, with specific updates from each community. We also heard from each Cape Ann school superintendent and legislators Senator Bruce Tarr, Representative Ann-Margaret Ferrante, and Representative Brad Hill. Discussion was held concerning the major financial relief package that has recently been announced by the Governor.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Introduction to the MassHire Program

On October 26, 2020, Maria DiStefano of the Massachusetts Office of Business Development (MOBD) offered a brief program introducing municipal officials to the MassHire program, which is administered in our area by the North Shore Career Center in Salem. Chairman Pereen and I participated in this virtual session, which included participants from all four Cape Ann communities, along with some other area communities. We also learned about the North Shore Workforce Board, which is the parent organization for the Career Center. From its website:

The North Shore Workforce Board (NSWB) is composed of knowledgeable and influential business and community leaders who are appointed by the Mayor of Salem on behalf of the nineteen communities that make up the North Shore region. Our career center in Salem, MA acts as a resource of both business leaders and job seekers.

The board serves as the oversight and policy-making body for federally funded employment and training services in the region. The board also has the broader role of addressing critical labor market issues and developing strategic partnerships with local leaders in

economic development, the K-12 and higher education system, government agencies, chambers of commerce, community-based, and labor organizations.

The communities on the line discussed COVID-related business community needs and may collaborate on grants in the future. We learned that efforts are starting to focus on those laid off from primarily the food service and retail sectors, due to COVID and how many who were training for new careers have had that process interrupted. The Career Center and the Workforce Board are well known resources to chambers of commerce and both hope to assist with the COVID recovery in the coming months and years.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

J. Town Meeting, By-Laws, and Regulations

(1) Continued Discussion of Possible Annual Town Meeting Topics (*)

I have revised the list of possible Annual Town Meeting topics in accordance with the Board's guidance from the last meeting.

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

K. Legal Issues

No items.

L. Grants

(1) Status of Regional Municipal IT Grant Program

As the Board may recall, Essex has been participating with other area communities to explore expanding how the Town of Danvers might offer a broader suite of IT services. Essex has for years been working with Danvers to have a secondary live instance of our computer infrastructure hosted at the Danvers datacenter and area communities are steadily building out a dedicated fiber path to Danvers over exclusively municipally-owned fiber. In fact, Essex has now connected to Danvers over this new circuit, obviating the need to send backup data over a secure VPN using the Internet.

The grant steering group met on October 29, 2020 and we are working on a draft of a new Intermunicipal Agreement with Danvers, among the participating communities. We are also working to release a Request for Proposals for IT vendors who may one day serve as a technical help desk and major project implementation provider for the group, at negotiated rates. Further, Danvers personnel would be paid a small amount by each community for coordination of the collaborative.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(2) Sediment Transport Grant Monthly Report

Personnel from Boston University provided the State with the monthly report for October during the week of October 26, 2020. This Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) grant is focusing on identifying the routes of sediment transport along Castle Neck Island (Crane Beach) and throughout the Essex Bay. We hope that the work will inform future efforts to possibly place sediment in various parts of the system, to both assist with the maintenance of navigation channels and with increasing the resilience of the system to climate change and sea level rise.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(3) Small Business Grants for Businesses with 6 to 50 Employees

The State has announced additional grant opportunities for small businesses. Like the program we have participated in for micro-businesses, these new grants are being administered by Mass Growth Capital Corporation. Applications are due November 12, 2020 and information on qualifications and guidelines may be found here, for businesses to apply directly:

<https://www.empoweringsmallbusiness.org/covid-19-response/covid-19-grants-massachusetts-small-businesses>

These funds were appropriated through the Commonwealth's Supplemental Budget for Fiscal Year 2021 (FY21) as well as the CARES Act of 2020 and are divided into two programs. Grant funding is intended to help businesses adversely impacted by the pandemic. Preference will be given to small businesses whose owners are women, minorities, veterans, members of other underrepresented groups, who are focused on serving the Gateway Cities of Massachusetts, and those most negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Preference will also be given to applicants that have not been able to receive aid from other federal programs related to COVID-19. The link above also provides information about micro-enterprise grants for businesses with five or fewer employees.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(4) COVID Economic Recovery Planning Grant

(*)

The State will soon make available grant funding for regions or individual communities to develop plans for economic recovery from the COVID-19 crisis. On a recent call with legislators, we were encouraged to consider a regional proposal with the other three Cape Ann communities, when the funding is released.

Recommendation: **Board discussion relative to a possible regional proposal.**

M. Emergency Planning

No items.

N. Other Items

No items.

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