



Town Administrator's Report **Board of Selectmen's Meeting of Nov. 28, 2022**

Report covers from November 12, 2022 to November 25, 2022

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

A. Town Department Reports/Requests

No items.

B. Computer Systems

(1) North Shore IT Collaborative Meeting Summary

The North Shore IT Collaborative, with the Town of Danvers IT Department in the lead role, continues to make progress toward deploying its regional security fabric. The next stage of deployment will require all users to utilize two-factor authentication when logging onto work computer equipment and when accessing e-mail remotely. Users are already required to use two-factor authentication when connecting to the Town's network via VPN. Presently, the Collaborative is still working to connect each member to the Danvers datacenter using dedicated fiber runs. Essex is already connected and we just concluded with the migration of the Town's virtual servers that were running on our own, end-of-life host box to the Danvers datacenter. The Town now computes remotely and our disaster recovery solution is also handled by Danvers. Soon, we will migrate the dedicated, physical server that runs the Town's assessment software (also at end of life) to Danvers as well.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

C. Personnel

No items.

D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects

(1) Procurement of Improvements to the Town Transfer Station (*)

Now that the Town Meeting has appropriated \$280,000 to improve the Town Transfer Station, it is necessary to review the recommendations of the Board of Public Works in this regard. While repairs to the compactor building and replacement of area fencing are not in question, the type of main trash compactor that is purchased to replace the existing, failing unit needs review.

If the Town chooses to stay with a solid waste hauling contractor that hauls full trailer units for disposal, the Town needs to replace the failing compactor with the same type of equipment. However, if the Town wants to move toward a more standardized type of compactor container (known as "breakaway"), then the

Town needs to find a different hauler (our current hauler is only equipped to haul full trailer units). Moving to a breakaway-style unit will provide the Town with a much higher degree of standardization that most haulers are equipped for but it will also require more hauls per week, given that breakaway containers are much smaller than trailer containers. The Board of Public Works has begun to discuss the two options but has not made any recommendation as of yet.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(2) Process for the Purchase of the 30 Apple Street Property (*)

Now that Town Meeting has authorized the Board to affect the purchase of the 30 Apple Street property and has appropriated \$1,150,000 in funding, I have begun to work with Town Counsel to complete all necessary requirements of the Chapter 61A process and move toward the actual transaction. Additional information should be available from Counsel by meeting time.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(3) Sale of Town-owned Vacant Lots in the Gregory Island Neighborhood (*)

Now that Town Meeting has authorized the Selectmen to sell several vacant, Town-owned lots in the Gregory Island neighborhood, the Board may turn its attention to the process to be used to offer the properties. While one option is a formal Request for Proposals, the Board may also simply send notice of the availability of the properties to Essex residents in that particular neighborhood (given that those residents are the people who will likely have the most interest in the properties). A general announcement could also be published in the newspaper so that others are aware of the chance to make offers. Any parcel over 2,500 square feet must also have notice of its potential sale published in the *Massachusetts Central Register*.

However, after the Town Meeting authorization occurred, a number of residents of the Gregory Island neighborhood have expressed that the lots are better off just being kept as vacant, Town-owned, open space. While the purchase and annexation of lots by adjacent owners may benefit some residents, others feel that what is now a limited amount of open space in the neighborhood may be used for other purposes that would not benefit the neighborhood or the environment.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

E. Insurance

(1) Annual Freeze-up Prevention Inspection Logs

Each year, the police department and the DPW enter all Town buildings at least once each weekend to verify that heating systems are working properly. These inspections help to keep us free of freeze-up damage and we also receive credit against our insurance premiums from our insurer. I have distributed this year's

forms to the two departments and inspections will be logged between December and March.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

F. Facilities

(1) Tables and Bench at Conomo Point

At the last meeting, the Board agreed that I should work with the four parties interested in donating a bench or table out at Conomo Point to determine which donor will undertake which donation. I made contact with the Conomo Point Association since the Association was likely willing to contribute a picnic table (the Association has the benefit of multiple contributors). I have confirmed that to be the case and I am awaiting technical and cost details with respect to a maintenance-free, composite table. After I have that information, I will contact the other three parties to determine which two will team up for a second table and which single party will donate the bench.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(2) Town Hall Clock Face Leak Update

The Fire Department brought the ladder truck over to Town Hall on November 18, 2022 to investigate options for externally sealing one of the four clock tower clock faces that is prone to leakage during certain wind and rain conditions (about every six to eight months). The Department determined that the clock face that leaks is not even safely reachable with the ladder truck. However, since all four faces are identical, the Department did have a chance to inspect another face in detail. The molding around the clock face is tight to the siding and there is no place to actually insert sealant. Even if sealant was put along the outer edge, it would be highly visible and unsightly. As such, DPW personnel applied sealant to the interior joints of the clock face on November 21, 2022 after gaining access to the rear of the clock face in the uppermost story of the bell tower.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(3) Provision of Cut Tree for Memory Tree Ceremony

I ordered a cut evergreen tree for delivery on November 28, 2022 to be placed in front of the Town Hall for the annual Memory Tree ceremony, which will be held December 1 this year. DPW personnel will erect and support the tree and lights will be applied in time for the ceremony.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

G. Fiscal/Budget

No items.

H. Complaints

No items.

I. Meetings Attended

No items.

J. Town Meeting, By-Laws, and Regulations

No items.

K. Legal Issues

No items.

L. Grants

(1) Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Grant Monthly Report

I worked with our engineering consultant on the Apple Street Roadbed Elevation & Culvert Replacement Project during the week of November 21, 2022 to prepare the subject monthly report. The report highlighted the public forums that were offered in early November and provided MVP personnel with updates concerning specific tasks within the project scope of work.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) Preliminary Application

At the last meeting, the Board authorized the Chairman to sign the subject, preliminary grant application that will serve to keep the Town eligible for potential 90% Federal funding for the eventual construction of the Apple Street Roadbed Elevation & Culvert Replacement Project. I have worked with our engineering consultant to complete the application, and we are awaiting: a) the review of the application by our consultant's permitting subconsultant, and b) the provision of the necessary Cost Benefit Analysis (BCA) that meets the Federal funding threshold. Once we have these final two components, Chairman Pereen will sign the application and we will submit it in advance of the December 5, 2022 deadline.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(3) Off-Season Event Grant Scope of Work

At the last meeting, the Board agreed that the need to spend the entire \$51,000 grant award for an off-season event by June 30, 2023 might not allow the efficient use of the grant. The Town would like to use the grant funding to help defray the cost of the decorative lighting project, but that project will not be completed until

the late summer or fall of 2023. The Town Planner has since contacted a planning consultant, Civic Space Collaborative, to try and work into a scope that will maximize benefit to the lighting project while also meeting the intent and schedule of the grant. We have learned that Civic Space Collaborative will also be the firm that provides the Town will placemaking technical assistance via the recent, \$25,000 grant from the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). It may be possible to benefit from the synergy of Civic Space working on both projects.

Recommendation: Board discussion at the present meeting, in accordance with the posted agenda.

(4) Community Planning Grant Update (*)

At the last meeting, the Board agreed that the Planning Board should finalize the scope of services with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) for the \$90,000 Community Planning Grant that will eventually generate recommendations for changes to the Essex zoning bylaws. The Planning Board has completed its review and the final scope of services is being incorporated into a contract with MAPC. Chairman Preen will likely sign that contract during the week of November 28, 2022, once it is provided in its final form by MAPC.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(5) Potential Use of Remaining Seawall Grant Funds for Stone Piers (*)

As the Board is aware, the State has permitted the Town to keep the unspent balance of the Seawall Replacement Grant that was recently used to replace the Conomo Point Seawall. Given that the replacement project came in considerably under budget, between the unspent grant funds and the unspent Town match, approximately \$215,000 is available to possibly conduct some much-needed major maintenance on the two stone piers at Conomo Point. The piers are related to the seawall system but were not part of the original scope of the seawall replacement project. I have asked our engineering consultant (GZA Geoenvironmental) to provide the Town with a cost estimate for repair work and for a scope and cost of engineering services. I expect to have additional information by meeting time.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(6) Downtown Decorative Lighting Project Update (*)

Now that the Town Meeting has appropriated \$100,000 to match the \$160,000 DOT grant for decorative lighting along Main Street in downtown Essex, we are working to finalize the scope of services with engineering firm Stantec to develop final design plans for the work, assist with project bidding, and supervise construction. The Town also has a \$50,000 Legislative earmark to go toward the project, which will likely be consumed with engineering consultant design/supervision fees and with police details during construction. The non-

profit group “Light Up Essex” had indicated that the group may also be able to contribute funds to the project, but I have not heard back from the group as of the printing of this report.

Presently, we are working to obtain electronic drawings of the existing conduit system that MassDOT installed under the new Main Street sidewalks a number of years ago. While MassDOT does not have any such drawings, DOT’s engineering consultant for that past project might. We have made contact with that consultant and are hopeful that CAD drawings will become available. Otherwise, a significant amount of new survey work will be necessary.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(7) Potential Grant for Electric Vehicle Charging Stations (*)

As discussed in previous reports, the Town is exploring a grant through National Grid to install electric vehicle charging stations at the municipal parking lot. National Grid would provide funding for Weston & Sampson to install the system and the Town would own it outright. Given that the Department of Public Works does not have the staff to operate, administer, and maintain such a system, Weston & Sampson proposes a three-year contract during which the company would handle all operation, payments made by users, maintenance, and costs. The company would derive its income from the fees charged to users of the system and would assume all of the risk if the stations did not prove to be popular. The Town would derive a small amount of income from the stations, but most of the income would go to the company. Presently, we are awaiting a more detailed proposal from Weston & Sampson, which will include discussion regarding the likelihood of available grant funding covering the entire installation process.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

M. Emergency Planning

No items.

N. Other Items

(1) Thanksgiving Holiday

The office was closed on November 24 and 25, 2022, 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.