



Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of Nov. 30, 2020

Report covers from November 14, 2020 to November 27, 2020

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

A. Town Department Reports/Requests

(1) Strategic Planning Committee Meeting Summary and Representation (*)

Town Planner Matt Coogan and I met virtually with members of the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) on November 23, 2020. Chairman Pereen was also present and, although we were one short of a quorum, the members present used the session as an overall status update. The Committee has had some new members appointed recently and, starting in 2021, it will be time to begin updating the Strategic Plan for the next five years. Chairman Pereen would like to represent the Board on the Committee in the future (replacing former Selectman Spinney) and a new Committee chairman will likely be chosen in January, when the Committee will meet again.

Recommendation: Board consideration of Chairman Pereen as the new Selectmen's representative to the SPC.

B. Computer Systems

(1) New Public Safety Building Security and Camera System Meeting

I participated in the subject meeting on November 17, 2020 to discuss the details of the security and camera systems that will be installed in the new public safety building. We verified that the security subcontractor will be supplying all desired, closed-circuit video monitoring and workstations, along with all wiring and back-end equipment. We also verified that the security subcontractor will be supplying key card access readers for several exterior doors and several interior doors. The camera system is stand-alone and does not require any cross-connection with the Town's local area network. Our contractor will pull together another meeting in the near future for the two chiefs to learn about the station alerting system and radio integration.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Regional IT Coordination Meeting

I participated in the subject virtual meeting on November 18, 2020. The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) is assisting area communities with the development of a regional computing model. The Town of Danvers is the anchor community and can provide services via its full-service IT team and its datacenter. Efforts to connect all participating communities to Danvers over municipal fiber are continuing well and the group is now focusing on a potential future IT vendor to offer various services through the collaborative.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary at this time.

(3) Annual Network Penetration Testing and e-mail Simulated Phishing Results

Our security contractor has concluded its work for this year, which consisted of trying to gain access to the Town's network from the outside and trying to entice e-mail users to click on unsafe content that could give rise to a security breach or file encryption. Our contractor was not able to gain access to our network and had no findings in that regard. With respect to simulated e-mail phishing, a small number of users did fall victim and I will be doing additional training with them to help improve outcomes.

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 regular construction meeting on November 19, 2020. Our project contractor is finishing up minor details on the exterior of the building and the focus of work has shifted to the building's interior. Wall boarding, ceiling work, interior painting, and, eventually, flooring, will become the major activities over the next few weeks.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(2) Change Order: Public Safety Building Barn Door Detail (*)

Additional blocking was determined to be required to properly attach the fixed, decorative barn doors on the west elevation of the training room resulting in additional labor cost of \$2,741.

Recommendation: **Board approval of this item as part of Change Order 9.**

(3) Change Order: Public Safety Building Air & Vapor Barrier at Soffit (*)

In working through constructability of the building soffit detail with the installing contractor, additional sheathing was determined to be needed to frame out the soffit and connect AVB, at a cost of \$3,919.

Recommendation: **Board approval of this item as part of Change Order 9.**

(4) Change Order: Public Safety Building Landscaping Revisions (*)

The Town met with the abutter to the south mid-project to review the actual grading and retaining wall as was agreed at the beginning of the project. The

abutter expressed concern about whether or not the height of the fence would be adequate and that the landscape screening along the base of the concrete wall may be sparse until the arborvitae shrubs reach maturity. In order to address concerns, it was agreed that the fence height would be increased to eight feet high and additional arborvitae would be installed to reduce the initial spacing, at a cost of \$4,279.

Recommendation: **Board approval of this item as part of Change Order 9.**

(5) Change Order: Public Safety Building Kitchen Hood Duct Changes (*)

Through the coordination process conflicts were identified between HVAC, Steel and roof systems requiring the kitchen hood exhaust to be shifted resulting in additional ductwork and insulation labor and material costs totaling \$4,862.

Recommendation: **Board approval of this item as part of Change Order 9.**

(6) Change Order: Public Safety Building Credit for Helmet Holder (*)

The Fire Chief requested that the helmet holder component of the gear grid lockers be omitted, resulting in a \$498 credit for the value of this accessory.

Recommendation: **Board approval of this item as part of Change Order 9.**

(7) Potential Construction Credit, Public Safety Bldg. Cedar Shingles Coating (*)

At the last construction meeting, our project contractor suggested that the Town could save money, without sacrificing longevity, if the cedar shingles that have been applied to the exterior of the new public safety building are left to weather naturally (as opposed to staining, which has been carried as a cost in the project contract).

Recommendation: **Board decision as to whether to leave the cedar shingles natural versus having stain applied per the contract.**

(8) Addition of Concrete Parking Slab to Public Safety Bldg. Project (*)

The Chief of Police has indicated that it would be helpful to install a concrete parking slab behind the new public safety facility to allow for the placement of a storage trailer as well as light towers and other items. Our project contractor has indicated that the cost would be minimal and we are reaching out to the Conservation Agent to be sure that the addition would be within the scope of our existing wetlands permit.

Recommendation: **Board decision on whether to pursue the additional of the slab, via change order.**

E. Insurance

No items.

F. Facilities

(1) Research Concerning Possible Purchase of Railroad Property (*)

At the last meeting, the Board asked me to look back into a possible property acquisition that was considered in 2011. Pan Am Systems (the holding company for many former Boston & Maine Railroad properties) still owns a long, thin piece of land that was part of the old railroad bed and the Town considered purchasing it back then. The Town decided not to move forward in 2011, however, since other portions of the railroad bed are privately owned and the portion in question would be isolated. The matter may have turned out differently if the Town had purchased the Lahey building for Town offices since the Lahey property also had a significant portion of the old railbed included on it. The Board wishes to explore a way to possibly have the property offered to abutters, to be added to their properties (as opposed to using the parcel for a rail trail, which the abutters are not in favor of).

I made contact with a representative of Pan Am Systems and she indicated that the parcel in question is for sale. The company will not settle for any less than the assessed value, which is set at \$40,000. While the Town could purchase the property (would require a Town Meeting vote) and then offer it for sale (also requiring a Town Meeting vote), there is not a way for the Town to directly offer the property to the abutters after a Town purchase. Instead, the abutters would be better served to band together and negotiate directly with Pan Am Systems.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

G. Fiscal/Budget

(1) School Budget Collaboration Group Meeting Summary (*)

Selectman Bradford, Finance Committee Chairman Buttrick, and I participated in the subject virtual meeting on November 20, 2020, along with Manchester and Regional School District personnel and officials. The District presented its present plan of school operations and began to explore with the group the prospect of providing student COVID testing on a regular basis. With respect to the Essex Elementary playground project, we are pleased to report that the project is moving forward and that the equipment has already been ordered. The new playground will be constructed this spring.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

H. Complaints

No items.

I. Meetings Attended

(1) Meeting with MassDevelopment Representative

Rob Anderson is the new representative for MassDevelopment for our area and he and I met virtually on November 17, 2020. MassDevelopment's chief mission is to help communities realize additional economic development opportunities, commonly from new development. I explained how the Essex Economic Development Committee (EDC) had just completed its first version of the Essex Economic Development Plan and Mr. Anderson plans to review the Plan and to participate in the next EDC meeting.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Local Officials Meeting with Congressman Moulton

I participated in the subject virtual meeting with Congressman Moulton on November 18, 2020. The Congressman focused on updating the group concerning Federal COVID relief. Unfortunately, although Congress is discussing the idea of extending the deadline for the use of Federal aid beyond December 30, 2020, word on whether that will actually occur is still likely far off. Those on the call explained how beneficial an extension would be and how it is very frustrating not be able to adequately map out a strategy in each community based on the lack of information.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

J. Town Meeting, By-Laws, and Regulations

(1) Draft Annual Town Meeting Topic List

(*)

At the last meeting, the Board briefly discussed the subject list. I have provided a slightly revised version for additional board discussion.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

K. Legal Issues

No items.

L. Grants

(1) Coastal Resilience Grant Program Administrative Meeting

I participated in the subject virtual meeting on November 18, 2020. The meeting was provided by the Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management (CZM) to explain procedures associated with grant reimbursement. Presently, the Town has an open Coastal Resilience Grant with CZM involving further design of the elevation of the roadbed at the Southern Avenue end of Apple Street.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Coastal Resilience Grant Program Monthly Report

I completed the subject report for the Apple Street roadbed elevation project design work with our project contractor during the week of November 23, 2020. Wetlands delineation and site survey work have been completed and I have uploaded associated work products to CZM.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(3) Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) Grant Update

As the Board is aware, I had been working on an application to the subject grant program toward our efforts to elevate a section of Apple Street up out of the coastal surge zone. After discussion with personnel at the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) and their consultants, much technical effort will be necessary to prepare the Benefit Cost Analysis (BCA) component of the application for it to be able to meet the required thresholds. As such MEMA recommends that we wait an additional round before applying. MEMA will assist with BCA development in the meantime and we will have more information from the other grants we are working on presently by then, which will make for a more competitive application.

Recommendation: I will bring this grant back to the Board next funding cycle.

(4) EPA Building Blocks Grant Program Regional Application (*)

The Cape Ann Climate Coalition has put together a grant application to the EPA Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities grant program, which provides technical assistance around planning for and recovering from natural disasters. At the request of the Manchester Town Administrator, I provided a letter of support, since we learned about the effort between Board meetings and the application deadline was in advance of the present meeting.

Recommendation: **Board vote to ratify the letter of support that I have already provided to the applicant.**

(5) MIIA Risk Management Grant

We have been awarded \$6,788 in funding from our insurer for the purchase of electrostatic disinfection spraying equipment and accessories. The grant will cover a unit for the Town Hall/Library, the Fire/Police Station, the DPW, and the Senior Center. I will purchase the equipment and our insurer will pay the bill directly upon its receipt.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

M. Emergency Planning

No items.

N. Other Items

(1) Thanksgiving Holiday

The office was closed on November 26 and 27, 2020, 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.*