



## Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of October 18, 2021

*Report covers from October 2, 2021 to October 15, 2021*

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

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### A. Town Department Reports/Requests

#### (1) Zoning Board of Appeals Decision Regarding Cell Tower Variance Requests

The Essex Zoning Board of Appeals met on October 4, 2021 to deliberate over several variance requests made by Tower North for a proposed cell tower adjacent to Eastern Avenue. The Board decided that the variances were, in fact, justified (using both local criteria and Federal criteria) and has worked with Town Counsel to develop a written decision.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

#### (2) Economic Development Committee Meeting Summary

I participated in the subject meeting on October 13, 2021 along with Town Planner Dana Menon. The meeting featured discussion of two ongoing grant programs (the Local Rapid Relief Grant Program and the Regional Pilot Project Program), which are both wrapping up. The Committee agreed that these two major initiatives, coupled with the Town's Economic Development Plan will help transition to implementation of various recommendations, hopefully by exploring grant opportunities. To that end, the Town Planner will be looking at a variety of grant programs and their associated timetables so that ground can be made on some of the areas of interest. The first attempt at grant funding will likely involve the placement of decorative lighting in the downtown area.

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

### B. Computer Systems

#### (1) Implementation of Annual Network Penetration and User Testing

Our network security consultant, INS, began its annual attempt to penetrate the Town's network from the outside, send test phishing e-mails, and make test social engineering phone calls starting during the week of October 11, 2021. Work is still ongoing at this time and I will bring back any findings to the Board.

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

#### (2) Regional IT Collaborative Meeting Summary

I participated in a meeting of the Regional IT Collaborative on October 7, 2021. The Collaborative is anchored by the Town of Danvers, which is offering various services via its municipal datacenter. Essex already relies on Danvers for file backup and disaster recovery and all of the participating communities will soon

partake in a FortiNet Security Fabric solution that Danvers will coordinate and maintain. The meeting featured discussion detailing the costs of the new Security Fabric and how Danvers is working to establish shared pricing on municipal permitting software. Both the Security Fabric and the software will be brought before the Fall Town Meeting for potential funding.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

(3) Provision of Wi-Fi Service to Water Filtration Plant

Increasingly, the Water Department has a need to offer Wi-Fi service to third-party technicians who are on-site to update and maintain computer systems and other electronic systems. As such, I have worked with our network technician to share out a Wi-Fi connection through our main Internet connection at Town Hall, over the Town's fiber optic system. The same arrangement is already in place at the Senior Center.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

(4) Vendor Discussion Relative to Proposed Permitting Software (\*)

I participated in a discussion relative to the OpenGov municipal permitting software application along with Chairman Pereen and Building Inspector Bill Sanborn on October 12, 2021. Representatives of the vendor explained how OpenGov can handle many different types of municipal permitting, which can be purchased and maintained separately. Essex is interested in the building permit and associated trades module (includes plumbing & gas and electrical permits, in addition to building permits) and costs involve initial setup, historic data migration (if desired), annual licensing, and optional add-ons (if desired – which require both one-time and recurring costs). Funding for getting the system started will be proposed to the Fall Town Meeting on November 15, 2021 and I have received a cost proposal from the vendor.

*Recommendation:* **Board discussion with respect to the pricing we have received.**

**C. Personnel**

No items.

**D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects**

(1) Route 133 Essex River Bridge Replacement Project Kickoff Meeting (\*)

I attended the subject meeting along with Chairman Pereen, Chief Francis, and Superintendent Galli on October 5, 2021. The project has been awarded to a MAS Building and Bridge, Inc. and actual construction will not commence until around January of 2022, when the temporary bypass bridge will be put in place.

Traffic will likely be routed over the temporary bridge by March of 2022 and construction of the new bridge will go well into 2023.

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

(2) Old Fire and Police Station Demolition Project Update (\*)

Chairman Pereen and I participated in project meetings on October 5 and October 12, 2021. Actual demolition of the old fire and police station at 24 Martin Street began on October 6, 2021 and proceeded through October 15, 2021. Debris from the demolition was still being loaded out of the site at the time of printing of this report. The contractor is now working to prepare the site for restoration and will be evaluating whether the underground portions of the former building have any asbestos-based waterproofing agents that will need to be abated.

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

(3) Conomo Point Seawall Replacement Project Pre-Bid Site Visit

I participated in the subject site visit out at Conomo Point, along with our engineering consultant, on October 7, 2021. Representatives of many prospective bidders attended the site visit and we generally walked the site and answered questions.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

(4) Award of Construction Contract for Conomo Point Seawall Replacement (\*)

Construction bids for the Conomo Point Seawall replacement project were opened on October 14, 2021. A total of seven bids were received and the apparent low bidder was ACK Marine & General Contracting of Quincy, with a bid price of \$1,951,000. Based on available grant and Town funding, that bid price will allow for the construction of the project, all engineering oversight during construction, and an approximately \$200,000 contingency.

*Recommendation:* **Board vote to award the construction contract to ACK Marine & General Contracting.**

(5) Eventual Move to New VOIP Telephone Provider

At the last meeting, the Board agreed that the Town should move to a new voice-over-IP (VOIP) telephone provider, NetTelOne. However, we still have one year of contract commitment left with our current provider (Mitel). As such, I will look to implement the carrier switch next fall.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary at this time.

(6) Request for Proposals for Water System Engineering Firm (\*)

As the Board is aware, the Town will be spending all of its discretionary American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding on improvements to the water system

(specifically on the upgrade and modernization of the Town's three public water supply wells). While the hiring of an engineering firm is exempt from competition under State law, Federal rules require that a competitive process be conducted for the use of Federal funding for engineering. As such, I have developed a Request for Proposals (RFP) and am working with Town Counsel on finalizing its content. Our present plan is to proceed through the procurement process during November and to make an engineering contract award by mid-December. The project will likely extend through June of 2023.

*Recommendation:* Board discussion as necessary.

## **E. Insurance**

### (1) Annual Insurance Review Meeting

I met with our representative from the Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association (MIIA) on October 13, 2021. Our representative meets with me each year to review the Town's lines of coverage and to capture any changes that might be grounds for adjustment. Our insurance profile remains virtually the same, since there were no major new needs encountered.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

## **F. Facilities**

### (1) Town Hall Roof Leak Test

As the Board may recall, we had engaged the services of a roofing consultant to help determine why Town Hall experiences leakage under a small section of roof above the main stairwell during certain rain/wind events. Our consultant ran a leak test on October 7, 2021, with assistance of the Fire Department's ladder truck. Testing was done very systematically and did not turn up any leaks with respect to any of roofing or sidewall components in the area of the leak. It is possible that rainwater is leaking in through the hole in the clock face where the clock drive shaft penetrates the face under certain wind conditions. Our consultant did not specifically test that area with a hose since he did not want to risk causing issues with the clock mechanism that a natural event is not affecting. As such, the next time that we observe this leak, I will specifically inspect the back side of the suspect clock face to determine if a stream of water can be detected.

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

### (2) Possible YMCA Renovation of Centennial Grove Cottage and Garage (\*)

As the Board is aware, the YMCA presently runs the Camp Dory summer camp for Essex youth at the Centennial Grove. It is possible that the YMCA may wish to expand programming at the Grove by offering pre-school and other programs at the Centennial Grove Cottage and its associated garage. The YMCA would

renovate and maintain both structures, which would also be used for the summer camp, and the Town would be able to continue to use both structures for events, etc. The idea is still only preliminary, since it would involve a future Town Meeting vote for a long-term lease and would require the YMCA to install a septic system, heating systems, and additional bathrooms, among other improvements.

*Recommendation:* **Preliminary Board discussion concerning this possible future arrangement.**

(3) Removal of Ramp, Float, and Stairs at Conomo Point Park

The ramp, float, and stairs at Conomo Point Park are removed each year at this time. As such, I contacted our marine contractor and the items will be removed for the season in the near future.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

(4) Winterization of Centennial Grove Cottage

The Water Department will soon turn off the summer water supply for the season and I have arranged with a plumbing contractor to drain the pipes and winterize the Centennial Grove Cottage.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

**G. Fiscal/Budget**

No items.

**H. Complaints**

No items.

**I. Meetings Attended**

(1) FEMA Consultation Coordination Officer (CCO) Meeting Summary

The FEMA CCO hosted a remote meeting on October 5, 2021 to review with personnel and officials from Essex County cities and towns a variety of changes to the FEMA flood maps. Changes resulted from a recent analysis of flooding potential in various river basins in our area. Personnel from the United States Geological Survey (USGS), FEMA, and the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) participated in the meeting.

I have reviewed the proposed map changes for Essex and there do not appear to be any substantial changes (primarily since the Essex River was not specifically studied). In fact, all changes in Essex appear to be reductions in some flood areas, as opposed to any increases. FEMA's work will culminate in a requirement for

all cities and towns to adopt new local floodplain bylaws that also reference the new designations and effective dates for any flood map panels that are changing. It is likely that the bylaw change for Essex will be considered by the Town Meeting in May of 2022.

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

(2) Chebacco Lake Coalition Meeting

(\*)

I attended the subject, remote meeting on October 13, 2021. The Coalition was organized by Senator Tarr and periodically brings together a diverse group of stakeholders to discuss environmental improvements for Chebacco Lake and its surrounding watershed. The group is still focusing on clearing out the stream channel for the Alewife Brook to provide better flushing for the lake and better passage for the annual alewife fish run. To that end, I will be working with the group to identify an appropriate engineering firm to complete permitting for stream clearing in the more complex, upper reach of Alewife Brook. A total of \$30,000 exists for that effort (between Town and State funding that has already been put aside).

The group will continue to monitor the threat from toxic, blue-green algae (cyanobacteria) and is working to expand its size and reach by possibly partnering with the PIE-Rivers Partnership, which is a subsidiary of the Ipswich River Watershed Association (IRWA). IRWA is also working presently to apply for a State grant that could allow the Coalition to have the benefit of a paid project manager for a period of time.

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

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

I participated in the subject meeting along with Chairman Preen, Police Chief Francis, and Fire Chief Reader on October 13, 2021. The meeting featured a discussion with respect to the upcoming Route 133 Essex River Bridge replacement project and personnel from the bridge contractor and the MassDOT were on hand for the discussion. I also provided Chamber members with updates on ongoing Town projects and initiatives, including a wrap-up on the Local Rapid Relief Program Grant that will soon release its final report.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

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

(1) Final Fall Town Meeting Warrant

I revised the Fall Town Meeting warrant in accordance with the Board's guidance from the last meeting and it is ready for signature.

*Recommendation:* Board signature of the Fall Town Meeting warrant per the posted agenda.

## **K. Legal Issues**

### (1) Quarterly Review of Executive Session Minutes

Each quarter, I review with the Chairman whether any matters discussed in executive session should be released. No such matters were identified this quarter.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

## **L. Grants**

### (1) Application for ARPA Travel, Tourism, and Outdoor Recreation Grant (\*)

At the last meeting, the Board agreed that the Town should pursue Federal American Rescue Plan Act competitive funding for the installation of decorative lighting the downtown area. As such, I researched the ARPA Travel, Tourism, and Outdoor Recreation Grant (offered through the United States Economic Development Administration – EDA) and contacted the EDA representative for our region. The regional representative referred me to a local contact at the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) and that individual has commented that, while the improved streetscape may entice more visitors to visit Essex businesses, the project's tie to COVID recovery is not strong enough to be competitive for the Federal funding. MAPC will research some opportunities for lighting installation within several State grants that would have a better chance of funding that work.

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

## **M. Emergency Planning**

No items.

## **N. Other Items**

### (1) Town Administrator Leave

I was out of the office, on leave, for a portion of the day on October 6, 2021 and all day on October 8, 2021.

### (2) Columbus Day Holiday

The office was closed in observance of the subject holiday on October 11, 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.*