



## Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of October 19, 2020

*Report covers from September 26, 2020 to October 16, 2020*

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

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### A. Town Department Reports/Requests

No items.

### B. Computer Systems

No items.

### C. Personnel

No items.

### D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects

#### (1) Quarterly Affirmative Marketing Report

I filed the subject report for the quarter ending September 30, 2020 with the State during the week of September 28, 2020, in my capacity as the Town's Affirmative Marketing Construction Officer (AMCO). The report is intended to document the utilization of women and minority-owned businesses on State-funded construction projects. No such utilization occurred over the past quarter.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

#### (2) Development of Bid Documents for Public Safety Building Furnishings (\*)

In a fashion similar to the process followed for the furnishing of the renovated Town Hall and Library, we intend to allow for the provision of new or "like-new" furnishings for the new public safety building. Like-new means that anything provided is restored to the state it would have been in when new and often allows for much better pricing than new, possible higher quality, and with a better ability to customize for our specific applications and spaces. The two chiefs are on board with that plan and we expect to release the Invitation to Bid during the month of November, 2020. Some specialty items, such as storage racks and beds, will likely be procured separately, using a State Contract vendor.

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

#### (3) Review of 75% Design Plans, Replacement of Essex River Bridge (\*)

As the Board may recall, the Town reviewed the 25% design plan for the Essex River Bridge on Route 133 some months ago. Mass DOT has now advanced the drawings to the 75% stage and has asked the Town for another review. Given that

the Town had its questions answered at the 25% design stage, there probably will not be much more to comment or to ask about. In any case, various department heads and former Selectman Lisa O'Donnell (a practicing structural engineer) now have the opportunity to review the plans at this new stage.

*Recommendation:* Board discussion as necessary.

(4) Public Safety Building Construction Project Update (\*)

Chairman Pereen and I participated in weekly construction project meetings on October 1, 8, and 15, 2020. The project has now achieved a tight building envelope and siding and other details with respect to the exterior should be completed within the next two months. The interior of the building is being completed starting with the lower level, moving to the upper level, and finally, the apparatus bay. The lower level is advancing well and the contractor is looking forward to getting wallboard started on the upper level soon. The project is still on track for a late-February or early March completion date. Final paving will not occur until April and only the necessary egress sidewalks will be installed this fall (others will be installed with final paving). As such, the two departments will likely elect to delay moving in until after the paving has been completed.

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

## **E. Insurance**

(1) Quarterly Facility Self-Inspections

I completed facility self-inspection forms for the Town Hall and the Senior Center during the week of October 5, 2020. The forms are aimed at identifying any safety hazards on an ongoing basis, in order to avoid accidents and injuries. I had no findings in Town Hall and we will continue to work on replacing the flooring in the Senior Center (funding has been obtained), since loose floor tiles are starting to cause tripping hazards.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

(2) Annual Insurance Coverage Review

I met virtually with our insurance representative from the Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association (MIIA) on October 7, 2020 to go over the various lines of insurance coverage for the Town. As usual, we discussed limits and specific coverages and our program is well in order.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

## **F. Facilities**

### (1) Winterization of the Centennial Grove

The Department of Public Works has shut off the season water to the Grove and has blown out those lines. The DPW has also removed the docks from the water. Our plumbing contractor has winterized the cottage by blowing out lines in that building and adding antifreeze to drain traps. The Selectmen's Assistant will have the portable toilets removed and our irrigation contractor will soon winterize the sprinkler system at the Field of Dreams.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

## **G. Fiscal/Budget**

### (1) Review of Actual First Quarter Revenue Versus Forecasted

Now that the first quarter of fiscal year 2021 has closed out, the Town Accountant has been able to produce a report concerning actual revenues versus revenues forecasted during the budgeting process. She will present her report at the present meeting, during the department head and board/committee quarterly meeting segment.

*Recommendation:* Board discussion of the actual revenue picture with the Town Accountant at the present meeting.

### (2) Application for Second Round of CARES Act Funding (\*)

As the Board may recall, the Town had been awarded over \$334,000 in CARES Act funding late in fiscal year 2020 to assist with new costs associated with managing the COVID-19 crisis. CARES covers just 25% of most expenses, since most expenses are eligible for 75% funding through FEMA. As such, in fiscal year 2020, we spent a total of only \$17,618 in CARES funding (including some items that were not FEMA-eligible) and left unspent \$23,520, leaving about \$293,000 that could be additionally requested for fiscal year 2021.

The Town Accountant recently tallied all needs and departmental requests for CARES funding through this coming December 30 and it appears that municipal needs through that date will total about \$105,000 (including some large, one-time, CARES-only items, such as equipment). We will hold a number of \$130,000 to allow for any contingencies and some recurring charges. It is also possible to allow the Manchester Essex Regional School District to draw on the remaining funds (around \$160,000), on a reimbursable basis. As such, we have determined that the Town should apply to the Department of Revenue for the entire \$293,000 remainder in fiscal year 2021.

Since it is possible to spend in a pattern that is different than the budget proposed in our application (provided all costs are eligible), the District could be allowed to initially submit reimbursements on say half of the fiscal year 2021 funding (about

\$80,000), with the ability to submit more requests toward the end of December. That plan ensures that the Town does not give up all of the excess funding before we know about: a) any surprise costs, b) the possibility that the spending period is lengthened beyond December 30, 2020, or c) whether the total FEMA reimbursement is less than expected.

**Recommendation:** Board consideration of the spending plan and potential approval of the application to the Department of Revenue that is due by October 30, 2020.

(3) School Budget Group Meeting Summary

(\*)

Chairman Preen and I participated in a school district budget group meeting along with staff and officials from the Town of Manchester and the Regional School District on October 9, 2020. The meeting featured a discussion regarding the District's plan to begin reopening live classes from grades K-5. Presently, the District expects to offer classes for grades K-2 starting on October 20, 2020 and to add classes for grades 3-5 on October 27, 2020. Secondary grades will not return to school for the foreseeable future.

With respect to the prospect of possibly amending the regional school agreement to add in equity in school buildings funded by both towns, the District has requested, due to so many other issues going on presently, that the matter be put off. As the Board may recall, the three entities entered into just a one-year lease extension on the various school buildings to allow for talks to proceed on regional agreement changes. It is quite possible to enter into a second, one-year lease extension agreement next June, at which point the District will likely be ready to engage in equity discussion with the two towns.

**Recommendation:** Board discussion as necessary.

## **H. Complaints**

No items.

## **I. Meetings Attended**

(1) Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce Essex Division Meeting

I attended the subject meeting virtually on October 8, 2020. The meeting featured updates from Town officials on various projects and initiatives, including the recent call for microenterprise grant applications. The Chamber would like to see the funding for the promotion of the Town's attractions and resources be reinstated in the spring, if at all possible.

**Recommendation:** No further action is necessary.

(2) Massachusetts Health Officers' Association (MHOA) Annual Conference

Each year at this time, I attend the subject conference on Cape Cod. The conference keeps me abreast of developments in public health and provides me with continuing education credits for my Registered Sanitarian, Soil Evaluator, and Septic System Inspector licenses. This year, due to COVID, the conference is being held virtually, over a three-week period (October 14, 21, and 28). I will attend all sessions.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

(3) SAPHE Act Training

On October 7, 2020, I attended a virtual seminar relative to the existing SAPHE (State Action for Public Health Excellence) Act, which is already in place, and SAPHE 2.0 (Statewide Accelerated Public Health for Every Community) Act, which is a bill pending before the State Legislature. The Board of Health Administrator also attended. The existing act encouraged better training, more intermunicipal collaboration, and alignment with national standards for local public health departments in the state. However, implementation of the original act has not really borne much fruit, especially due to lack of funding. The new proposal focuses on establishing minimum public health standards for every community, better intermunicipal collaboration and service sharing, a uniform data collection and reporting system at the State Department of Public Health, and an infusion of sustainable funding at the State level to make it all work. If the new act passes, it will open up some great opportunities for improvement in systemic shortfall areas that have come to light during the COVID pandemic.

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

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

(1) Fall Town Meeting Review & Draft Item List for Annual Town Meeting (\*)

With the Fall Town Meeting behind us, the Board has a chance to discuss the votes taken and to look forward to crafting a warrant for next spring.

***Recommendation:* Board discussion relative to any action items stemming from the recent Fall Town Meeting and a brief review of some potential article topics for the Annual Town Meeting in May of 2021.**

**K. Legal Issues**

(1) Quarterly Review of Executive Session Minutes

Chairman Preen has reviewed the Board's list of unreleased executive session minutes and did not find any minutes that were suitable for release at this time.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

## L. Grants

### (1) Commencement of BRIC Grant Application

As reported previously, FEMA has revamped its hazard mitigation grant program and it is now referred to as BRIC (Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities). We hope to take advantage of this Federal program to make progress toward actual implementation of the need to elevate the Southern Avenue end of Apple Street to keep the roadbed from flooding during tidal surge events. I have thus far submitted a Statement of Interest through the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) and have discussed the proposed project with our MEMA representative. We expect to be invited to begin inputting our on-line application by around October 23, 2020.

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

### (2) Cape Ann Climate Change Research

As noted previously, the Office for Urbanization in the Harvard Graduate School of Design has embarked upon an in-depth analysis of climate change effects across Cape Ann, in a regional context. Researchers have provided their proposal for the work over the next year or so and it will focus in three major areas: mitigation (carbon neutralization), resilience (ability to absorb coming changes), and adaptation (measures to be taken to deal with anticipated consequences). We expect to be involved in the project as it begins to ramp up in the coming weeks.

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

## M. Emergency Planning

No items.

## N. Other Items

### (1) Planning for Possible Halloween and Christmas Activities (\*)

Considering the ongoing COVID crisis, Halloween trick or treating at the end of October and Santa's arrival in December may need to look different this year. In addition to determining whether there are acceptable formats for these events, we no longer have a Youth Director to help coordinate things, especially with respect to Christmas. Volunteers may be needed, possibly including members of the Youth Commission, as in many past years. The Board of Health and the Selectmen discussed Halloween at a special meeting on October 15, 2020 and that discussion, plus the Christmas discussion, may be updated at the present meeting. With respect to Halloween, the Board of Health has authorized its administrator to post official guidance, which will include a warning that traditional trick-or-treating is not recommended. The guidance will also suggest some lower risk activities.

*Recommendation:* **Board discussion relative to these holiday activities.**

(2) Town Administrator Leave

I was out of the office for a planned medical procedure all week during the week of September 28, 2020 (working limited hours on some days).

(3) Columbus Day Holiday

The office was closed on October 12, 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.*