



Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of October 24, 2022

Report covers from October 1, 2022 to October 21, 2022

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

A. Town Department Reports/Requests

(1) Conservation Commission Project Certificates of Compliance

The Conservation Commission considered the granting of certificates of compliance for both the public safety facility project and the Conomo Point seawall project on October 18, 2022. Chairman Pereen was present, along with our Project Manager for the public safety project and our engineer for the Conomo Point Seawall project. The Committee voted to issue both certificates.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Presentation of Apple Street Roadbed Elevation Project to Council on Aging

I visited the Essex Council on Aging at its meeting of October 4, 2022 to generally present the Town's goals for the design and permitting of the Apple Street Roadbed Elevation and Culvert Replacement Project. The Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) grant that has funded this work very specifically requires ongoing communication with the Town's senior population, as the main, climate-vulnerable population in Essex. At the meeting, Council members asked a variety of questions and reiterated support for the project.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(3) Essex Strategic Plan Revision Public Forum Summary (*)

The Essex Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) hosted an all-virtual public forum on October 6, 2022. The Selectmen were also in attendance. I offered part of the presentation, as did SPC Chairman Cameron. After the presentation, the public and SPC members had the opportunity to provide input and to ask questions. The forum was not well-attended, despite having been well-advertised and being conveniently virtual. The Town Planner took notes on input that came from various Committee members. The Committee will meet again on October 27, 2022 to begin incorporating this additional input and may have a final plan to recommend to the Board after that meeting or later, if a second meeting is necessary.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(4) Essex Economic Development Committee Meeting Summary (*)

I attended the subject meeting on October 13, 2022, along with Chairman Pereen. The meeting featured a discussion regarding various articles that the Committee has asked for and will support at the upcoming Fall Town Meeting. Subsequent

to the meeting, we learned that the Town Planner was successful in her application for technical assistance from the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) for advice and planning concerning downtown placemaking for Essex. As such, the Committee may wish to see that process through before seeking any immediate funding for any complex downtown improvements (such as the improvement of the former site of the Essex fire station). Various Committee members are prepared to be motion readers at the Fall Town Meeting for articles which the Committee has fostered.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

B. Computer Systems

(1) Commencement of Annual Town Network External Penetration Testing

Each year at this time, the Town hires a private consultant to use sophisticated tools to try and gain entry into the Town's computer network from the outside. The consultant also initiates test phishing (e-mails) and social engineering (phone calls to attempt to catch our network users off guard). I participated in a kickoff conference call with the consultant on October 13, 2022 and work will be completed in the near future.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

C. Personnel

No items.

D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects

(1) Route 133 Essex River Bridge Replacement Project Update

The contractor for the subject project set the main beams for the replacement bridge on the nights of October 4 and 5, 2022. Work is now focused on the pouring of the concrete bridge deck and associated sidewalks before any prohibitively-cold weather sets in, in turn allowing for winter work concerning the new utility crossings.

I attended a construction meeting on October 11, 2022 and concrete forming and rebar work for the bridge deck itself concluded with the pouring of the deck on October 19, 2022. Sidewalk concrete forming and rebar work is underway and the sidewalks should be poured before the end of October.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(2) Recommendation of Transfer Station Sticker Fee for Feb 1-June 30, 2023 (*)

At the last meeting, the Board authorized the Chairman to sign a six-month contract extension with Covanta for the transportation and disposal of municipal

solid waste at its Haverhill plant. The language of that contract was finalized shortly after the meeting and the Chairman has signed it. Since the prior arrangement with Covanta included the transportation of the solid waste to the plant by Covanta (via Commonwealth Waste Transport) in the below-market tipping fee, the Town's overall rate will increase sharply (due to a new, market-rate tipping fee which also no longer has transportation included within it).

Although the Covanta extension is for a full six months (January 1, 2023 – June 30, 2023), the expiring transfer station stickers are valid through January 31, 2023. I have worked with the Superintendent of Public works, his staff, and the Town Accountant to calculate the additional sticker fee revenue that will be necessary to fulfill the terms of the Covanta contract extension period and it appears that a suitable fee for the five months between February 1, 2023 and June 30, 2023 will be \$250 for a non-senior sticker and \$125 for a senior sticker. The Board of Public Works considered that recommended fee structure on October 17, 2022 and is in agreement.

***Recommendation:* Board discussion with respect to recommending a sticker fee for the last five months of fiscal year 2023 to the Fall Town Meeting.**

(3) Quarterly Affirmative Marketing Report

I filed the subject report during the week of October 3, 2022, in my capacity as the Town's Affirmative Marketing Construction Officer (AMCO). The report is intended to document usage of any woman or minority-owned businesses on State-funded construction projects. No such utilization occurred during the past quarter.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

E. Insurance

(1) Annual Review of Town Insurance Coverage

I met with our insurance representative from MIIA (the Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association) on October 13, 2022, for our annual review of coverage. This review allows the Town to take stock of coverage and to ensure that no appreciable gaps in coverage exist. After the meeting, our representative provided me with information concerning new IT standards that MIIA will expect the Town to meet as of July 1, 2023. Fortunately, our partnership with the Town of Danvers will have those requirements fully met. Further, we will soon receive an application for a separate insurance policy for the Police Department drone, since drones are not covered under the Town's general policy. The Chief will complete that application and we will get the coverage in place.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Quarterly Building Self-Inspection Checklists

I completed the subject checklists for the Town Hall and the Senior Center during the week of October 2, 2022. The lists are intended to call attention to any safety hazards that should be attended to. No imminent hazards were noted but I did call attention to the work we have scheduled for the upgrading of the elevator controls in both buildings to meet new fire codes. Other buildings are inspected by other departments and all findings are reviewed at quarterly Safety Committee meetings.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

F. Facilities

(1) Field of Dreams Irrigation System Seasonal Shutdown

The irrigation system for the Field of Dreams baseball fields at the Centennial Grove was properly winterized by our irrigation contractor on October 21, 2022. The system was not operative for the majority of the past season due to an issue with the irrigation well that feeds it. Our well contractor has investigated the problem and it was likely insufficient flow, due to the prolonged drought. However, it could also mean that the well screen needs to be cleaned and removed. Our well contractor will review the situation again in the spring and will take any necessary action at that time.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Removal of Conomo Point Park Float, Gangway, and Water Access Stairs

Our marine contractor has removed the float, gangway, and water access stairs for the season from the small park at Conomo Point. The contractor will have a welding repair completed on the gangway during the off season.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(3) Centennial Grove Seasonal Shutdown

We have begun to winterize the Centennial Grove by taking the usual, seasonal actions. The water to the Cottage has been turned off and our plumbing contractor has blown out the interior waterlines. The float at the beach and the fishing dock adjacent to the beach have been taken out of the water for the season. The Selectmen's Assistant will soon have all portable toilets removed.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(4) Replacement of Town Hall Emergency Lighting System Batteries

On October 6, 2022, Town Hall personnel could detect a faint electrical odor in the second floor hallway but could not determine the source. The Essex Fire Department stopped by with a heat sensing device and was able to determine that the source was a battery module for the building's emergency lighting system

mounted on the wall. One of the two batteries in the module had reached end of life and was giving off the odor. Both batteries were immediately removed and our electrical contractor has replaced them with new batteries.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(5) Town Elevator Upgrade Work Commencement

The Board had authorized a Reserve Fund Transfer Request at the last meeting for funding necessary to retrofit/upgrade both the Town Hall elevator and the Senior Center elevator to comply with recent changes in the State fire code. The Finance Committee met on October 11, 2022 and voted to approve the transfer. Subsequently, I contacted our elevator contractor and authorized the work. I am told that parts for one elevator have a five-week lead time and parts for the other elevator have 12-week lead time. Once parts do arrive, our contractor will work each job into their schedule within one to two weeks. We are hopeful that a portion of this work will be reimbursed to the Town under a grant from our insurer that we have applied for.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(6) Folsom Pavilion Replacement Project Update

(*)

The volunteer coordinator for the subject project, Dan Mayer, met at the Centennial Grove with Chairman Preen, Economic Development Committee Chairman Harris, local architect Peter Levasseur, and myself on October 21, 2022. Mr. Mayer has donated the services of his company to conduct clearing of hazard trees and overgrown underbrush. The work will help provide more useable space in the existing parking lots and in the picnic grove and attention will soon be turned to planning for footings for the new pavilion.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(7) Town Hall Bell Tower Leak

(*)

As reported in the past, when we get a strong storm with heavy rain and wind coming from the direction of the Memorial Park ball field, we have seen from time to time a water leak at the third-floor stair landing in Town Hall. The last time this occurred (many months ago), we had an expert roofing consultant check and water test all of the flashing and roofing surfaces in that area, to no avail. The leak condition reoccurred on October 14, 2022 and, this time, I was able to inspect the clock tower during the leak. Water was not getting in through the penetration in the clock face for the drive rod for the clock hands, as we had previously postulated. Instead, it was clear to see that water was leaking in around the clock face itself (on the clockworks level) and running down inside the wall on the next level down (the bell level). From the bell level, the water makes its way to the point of the interior leak (the third-floor stair landing).

In discussing the situation with our expert, he has recommended that the clock face be removed and reinstalled with the proper application of a self-sealing, vapor barrier membrane. There is a remote possibility that the clock face could be sealed from the inside of the clock tower and that should be ruled out before a more extensive approach is used, which will involve the use of an expensive lift and several experienced construction personnel.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

G. Fiscal/Budget

(1) Board Input Regarding School Budget Development Guidelines (*)

I attended a meeting with Selectman Bradford and Finance Committee Chairman Buttrick on October 13, 2022. The meeting featured a discussion regarding the Town's perspective on general guidelines for the development of the Manchester Essex Regional School District annual budget. The following day, the three of us were part of a School Budget Collaborative Group meeting where the same topic was discussed. The group also discussed major budget drivers for the upcoming fiscal year 2024 budget development season including out of district placement, health insurance and utility increases, and continuing declining enrollment of Manchester pupils and increasing enrollment of Essex pupils.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

H. Complaints

No items.

I. Meetings Attended

(1) Great Marsh Coalition Symposium Planning

Selectman Phippen and I participated in the subject meeting help plan one of the featured presentations about the Town's proposed Apple Street Roadbed Elevation and Culvert Replacement Project on October 14, 2022. This year's symposium will feature a few local projects that are in the advanced stages of planning or implementation. Selectman Phippen will deliver the Essex presentation during the symposium on November 3, 2022.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Greater Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce Caucus

I attended the subject event on October 21, 2022 along with the Chief of Police. The caucus occurs quarterly and is intended to bring together government leaders from Cape Ann and Ipswich along with State legislators and business leaders to review important issues and initiatives. The meeting featured updates from the five communities and area legislators.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

J. Town Meeting, By-Laws, and Regulations

(1) Preliminary Review of Draft Fall Town Meeting Motions (*)

The Board will consider the approval and signature of the Fall Town Meeting warrant at the present meeting, in accordance with the posted agenda. Given that the next, regularly-scheduled Board meeting is the same night as the Fall Town Meeting, it would be useful to begin to review draft motions now.

Recommendation: **Board review and discussion with respect to the draft Fall Town Meeting motions.**

K. Legal Issues

(1) Quarterly Review of Executive Session Minutes

The Chairman reviewed the Board's executive session minutes that have not been released to date and did not identify any minutes that are ready for release.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

L. Grants

(1) Massachusetts Downtown Initiative Technical Assistance Grant (*)

The Town Planner had applied for the subject grant in the spring, with a request for technical assistance to help the Town develop a placemaking plan for downtown Essex. The Town has now been awarded \$25,000 in technical assistance by the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to unify a sense of place in Essex by coordinating how downtown public spaces in the Town complement each other. One major area that the grant will help to focus a theme and overall design for is the former site of the Essex fire station at 24 Main Street.

Recommendation: **Authorization of the Chairman to execute all necessary grant paperwork.**

M. Emergency Planning

No items.

N. Other Items

(1) Columbus Day Holiday

The office was closed on October 10, 2022, in observance of the subject holiday.

(2) Town Administrator Leave

I was out of the office, on leave, for a portion of October 12, 2022 and I worked remotely for portions of the day from October 17-20, 2022, while visiting family out of State.

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