



Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of Sept. 14, 2020

Report covers from August 22, 2020 to September 11, 2020

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

NOTE: The September 14, 2020 meeting was held on September 10, 2020.

A. Town Department Reports/Requests

(1) Review of Opportunities for Intermunicipal Collaboration (*)

As the Board may recall, in the early winter of 2018, Essex and Manchester utilized grant funding to have the Collins Center at the University of Massachusetts complete an analysis of possible avenues for more collaboration and sharing of services between the two communities. The report looked at collaborative initiatives that were already in place in each community and was released in October of 2019. School Committee Member Annie Cameron, Finance Committee Chairman Ben Buttrick, Selectman Phippen, and I recently discussed the possibility of following up on the effort and report.

The following lists were generated by the study for Essex, including existing collaboration with Manchester, and with other communities:

Manchester and Essex

- Manchester Essex Regional School District
- Vocational Education (Essex North Shore Agricultural & Technical School District)
- North Shore Joint Purchasing Consortium for road salt/chemicals
- Formal Mutual Aid Agreements – Police and Fire
- Age and Dementia Friendly Community Initiative
- Senior Van Services
- Household Hazardous Waste Day
- Maintenance of streetlights by the Town of Ipswich (Beginning soon)
- Retirement System – Essex Regional Retirement District
- Fire Explorers
- Emergency Planning (Cape Ann Emergency Planning Team (Also includes Ipswich))
- Healthy Eating and Lifestyle (Cape Ann 'Mass in Motion')

Essex

- Shared sewer camera with Town of Rockport
- Water Interconnection with Gloucester and Hamilton
- Wastewater Treatment Agreement with the City of Gloucester
- Eastern Essex Veterans Services District (Essex, Hamilton, Georgetown, Ipswich, Newbury, Rowley, Wenham, West Newbury)
- Building Commissioner – Off hours use of the Gloucester Building Official

- Town Planner – Off hours use of a Newburyport City official
- Assessor – Elected official but also off hours use of a Danvers professional assessor.
- IT Services - Support and disaster recovery, provided by Town of Danvers.
- Shared patrol of Chebacco Lake with Hamilton officials.
- Emergency Dispatch – provided by North Shore Regional 911 Center.
- Greenhead Fly Control – Northeast Mosquito Management District

Three areas of near-term collaboration were identified in my report of April 22, 2019, as the study was unfolding, as follows:

The first area includes sharing an on-call utility contractor with Manchester for emergency water/sewer repairs and the Board of Public Works has been put directly in touch with the Manchester Department of Public Works Director to determine if they would like to collaborate.

The second area is a program to receive alternative on-bill energy credits (AOBCs). Manchester is already participating in one of these programs and considers it very successful. Manchester has offered to assist the Town with the application preparation, since Manchester has already done much of the legwork and vetting.

The third area of interest involves Manchester and Essex sharing a contract with Ipswich Light for maintenance and/or repair of town streetlights. The two towns will continue to work with Ipswich towards some type of formal agreement.

The first and third items above have already been executed and established. The second item, involving AOBC's, has been elusive. The first project the Town wanted to subscribe to (SunRaise) was not able to accept new subscriptions. We are presently working to be involved with a new project (through Quest Energy). It should also be mentioned that Essex now has an OSHA Coordinator as a peripheral duty of the Board of Health Administrator. Essex may be able to continue collaborating with Manchester around OSHA training and compliance and the two communities have already worked on two training grants together.

The Board eventually asked that we use the results of a study of 8 to 10 area communities that was going to be undertaken by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) in 2020 be used to gauge how we are doing with respect to costs for various services, as compared to others. Unfortunately, due to COVID, that study was put on hold right after the various communities submitted requested initial financial data.

In addition, the boards of selectmen from the two communities reviewed the recommendations of the report on August 19, 2019 for future possible collaboration. The minutes of that meeting highlighted the following:

Review Recommendations were highlighted in 7 categories: General Government, Police, Fire, Dispatch, DPW, Inspections and Public Health. Additional sections focused on specific areas where the Towns could further expand joint efforts: Senior Citizen Services, Youth Services, Community Health Needs Assessment, Regional Energy, Dredging, Streetlight Maintenance and Regional Housing Partnerships...

...Following the comprehensive presentation and recommendations it was concluded the Towns would meet over the next few weeks to further discuss and review options additionally it will be critical to gauge support in the Towns.

Further, the Manchester Essex Regional School District administration suggested that the District could be involved in several key areas including:

Personnel Benefits Administration – This area is not so much a need in Essex, with its small number of employees, but more-so in Manchester.

Facilities Management – Essex could definitely benefit from the staff Facilities Manager at the District, especially for the initial diagnosis of matters giving rise to complaints or observed problems, and later, to help organize scopes of work and hire contractors. Manchester may also be able to provide this type of service, since Manchester now also has a Facilities Manager.

IT Network Administration – While the District does have a full IT department, Essex and several other communities, including Manchester, have coalesced around the Town of Danvers remote, by fiber, IT solutions.

School Resource Officer – The two communities worked together with the District to make this happen. A SRO was hired and is paid for mostly with District funds. Some hours not spent at the schools are paid for by Manchester, since the SRO is a Manchester officer. Presently, due to changing budgets and COVID-related policies at the District, the SRO position is expected to take on a different look over the coming year.

At this time, the three entities may wish to take stock of our progress and propose new initiatives, after reviewing progress to date. The three entities can begin by discussing these matters at the next small group collaboration meeting.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

B. Computer Systems

(1) Financially-Related IT Audit

As is the case each year, our Auditor performs an IT audit with respect to the Town's financially-related functions. This year, the firm provided three minor recommendations that I will execute over the coming year. The firm delivered no critical findings or defects.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Computer Network Testing and Employee Challenges

As is the case each year, I have arranged for vendor INS to conduct penetration testing on our Internet-facing router and to conduct e-mail Phishing and social engineering challenges to our employees. The penetration testing ensures that we do not have any known security weaknesses that would allow a hacker to breach our network from the outside. The phishing and social engineering challenges ensure that we continue to remind our employees about the danger of clicking on unfamiliar links or attachments and questioning unfamiliar phone calls with respect to our IT infrastructure. Testing will occur likely later this month or in October.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

C. Personnel

(1) Continued Review and Development of Harbormaster Workplan

At the last meeting, the Board decided it would be best to continue the development of a workplan and standard operating procedures for the Harbormaster Department in a small group consisting of myself, Chairman Preen, the Chief of Police, and the Harbormaster. As such, the group convened on September 2, 2020 and went over the present proposal and further input from the Harbormaster. The Workplan is moving along nicely and additional comments on a further review draft will be discussed in the coming week.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(2) Employee and Volunteer of the Year Awards

The call for nominations for Employee of the Year and Volunteer of the Year was released on August 31, 2020, with a nomination deadline of September 25, 2020. This year, since we may have the Fall Town Meeting early, there will probably not be time to collect nominations, make decisions, and get awards made up. As such, the ceremony for the awards may need to be at a later date.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects

(1) Public Safety Building Construction Project Update

(*)

Chairman Pereen and I attended construction project meetings on August 27, September 3, and September 10, 2020. The project continues to move along as per plan and the contractor is completing much of the building envelope work soon. The contractor is presently working on generator and mechanical pads, sheathing/framing/blocking, interior framing on both the lower and the upper levels with mechanical, electrical, and plumbing overhead rough-ins.

I met with the southern abutter on August 31, 2020, along with our construction contractor's foreman and our resident engineer from NV5 to discuss screening and plantings with the abutter. He prefers an eight-foot fence as opposed to the specified, six-foot fence and it is very apparent that the eight-foot fence would be much better from his vantage point, for privacy. Also, rather than just a few arborvitae plants along the sloped in front of the concrete retaining wall that is clearly visible from his property, it would be preferable to plant additional arborvitae, to obscure the wall more thoroughly.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

E. Insurance

No items.

F. Facilities

(1) Additional Disinfection of Town Hall

A new Essex resident whose company specializes in COVID disinfection offered a complementary disinfection of the Town Hall, using two technologies. First, he offered to disinfect the entire building using electrostatic application of a botanical disinfection agent. The second application offered was the spraying of a surface barrier that carries continuing disinfection qualities for 90 days. Both applications were carried out on September 3, 2020. Electrostatic disinfection is already in use weekly at the Fire/Police Headquarters and in all fire/police vehicles.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

G. Fiscal/Budget

(1) Annual Risk Assessment and Monitoring Plan Review Meeting

Each September, department heads gather to review the Town's Risk Assessment and Monitoring Plan. Since Town operations and services can change from time to time, this meeting is intended to ensure that the Plan keeps in step. The Plan is intended to raise awareness about areas where financial fraud could be committed

and includes detailed breakdowns concerning areas to be vigilant in with respect to each major Town department. This year, the meeting will be held on September 24, 2020.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

H. Complaints

No items.

I. Meetings Attended

No items.

J. Town Meeting, By-Laws, and Regulations

(1) Additional Proposed Changes to Town Landing Use Regulations (*)

At the last meeting, the Board tackled the question of whether commercial use of the Town Landing boat ramp is allowed. The Board decided that it should not be allowed and reviewed other suggested changes to the Town Landing regulations. I have developed a revised draft of the regulations for the Board's approval at the present meeting.

Recommendation: **Board approval of the revised Town Landing regulations.**

(2) Amendment of Town of Essex Clamming Regulations for Mess Permits (*)

At the last meeting, the Board asked that I draw up a potential change to the Essex Clamming regulations that would stop the issuance of annual family use (mess) permits for clamming. This halt in issuance could also form the basis for the number of annual permits issued next year. The Town will still need to continue issuing one-day mess permits. In a related matter discussed in Section J(1), above, only those with an annual mess permit will be allowed to launch at Town Landing.

Recommendation: **Board review and approval of the changes to the Essex Clamming regulations, with an effective date of September 21, 2020.**

(3) Finalization of Adult Use Marijuana Regulations (*)

At the last meeting, the Board agreed with some of the public comments that had been received relative to the promulgation of the subject regulations and disagreed with others. The Board also selected a preferred application form from several examples that Town Counsel had provided. I have revised the documents accordingly, for the Board's review.

Recommendation: Board review and possible approval of the proposed regulations and application form, contingent on the approval of the new, enabling Town bylaw by the Office of the Attorney General.

(4) Continued Review of Fall Town Meeting Topics and Draft Warrant

At the last meeting, the Board provided guidance on the addition of two new warrant topics and was to review items not currently included on the draft warrant for the present meeting. An additional potential warrant article has been raised in the meantime. As noted on the meeting agenda, the Board may consider changing the date of the Fall Town Meeting to October 3, 2020, outdoors, on the school grounds with a rain date of October 10, 2020.

Recommendation: Additional Board review and discussion relative to the Fall Town Meeting warrant and the date of the meeting, all as shown separately on the Selectmen's meeting agenda.

K. Legal Issues

No items.

L. Grants

(1) Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Grant Result, Mosquito Ditch Research
Unfortunately, the grant application prepared by Boston University personnel regarding the potential benefit of filling mosquito ditches (possibly with material dredged from the navigable channel) was not funded for this round. BU personnel will determine whether they wish to reapply in the spring, possibly after getting feedback from the grantmaker with respect to the application.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary at this time.

M. Emergency Planning

No items.

N. Other Items

(1) Labor Day Holiday

The office was closed on September 7, 2020, in observance of the subject holiday.

(2) Town Administrator Leave

I was out of the office, on leave, for a portion of the day on August 26 and September 3, 2020 and all day on September 4, 2020.

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