



Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of Sept. 12, 2022

Report covers from August 20, 2022 to September 9, 2022

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

A. Town Department Reports/Requests

No items.

B. Computer Systems

(1) Cutover to New Voice Over IP (VOIP) Telephone System

As the Board may recall, Town Hall and the Senior Center been receiving VOIP telephone system services from MiTel (formerly ShoreTel) since 2016. In the interim, our various public safety departments initiated a VOIP system with NetTelOne, which is the company that the North Shore Regional 911 Center also uses. Since our VOIP system was in need of refresh, as discussed with the Board in the past, VOIP services in Town Hall and at the Senior Center have now been cutover to NetTelOne. Soon, when the public safety VOIP system is upgraded to the newest version, we will be able to have direct extension dialing to the Public Safety Building and to the North Shore 911 Regional Dispatch Center. A technician arrived on August 30, 2022 and the process went very smoothly. All users now have new phones issued by NetTelOne. All MiTel equipment (which was leased) was returned to MiTel with the help of NetTelOne. The same technician returned to Town Hall on August 31, 2022 to train users.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

C. Personnel

(1) Employee and Volunteer of the Year Award Nominations

I released the annual call for nominations for the employee of the year and the volunteer of the year during the week of August 29, 2022. Nominations are due by September 22, 2022 and the Board will consider nominations at their meeting of September 26, 2022.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(2) Safety Committee Meeting

The Safety Committee will next meet on September 29, 2022. I have placed a copy of the agenda in the Board's reading file.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects

(1) Route 133 Essex River Bridge Replacement Project Update (*)

I attended a construction meeting for the subject project on August 30, 2022. The meeting featured a discussion regarding the ongoing repairs to the existing abutments from the old bridge (which did not get demolished with the bridge itself). The project contractor has indicated that new drainage structure work will commence by mid-September and the main beams for the new bridge should be in place by early October. The beam placement work will occur at night, since it involves complex logistics that require frequent traffic stoppage.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(2) Solid Waste Contract Negotiations Update (*)

At the last meeting, the Selectmen and the Board of Public Works agreed that the Town should attempt to negotiate favorable terms with Casella for a solid waste and recycling services contract that will commence on January 1, 2023. To that end, Chairman Preen, Board of Public Works Chairman Rullo, the Superintendent of Public Works, the DPW Clerk, and I met with representatives of Casella on September 7, 2022. Casella agreed to take another look at some of their originally-quoted figures after we discussed a number of questions and asked for some additional pricing options. We may have new figures by meeting time.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(3) FEMA Procurement Webinar Series

I have enrolled in a series of webinars that discuss procurement at the Federal level when becoming involved in grants provided via the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). If the Apple Street final design and permitting project results in the Town seeking Federal funding for construction, the guidance will be very important moving forward. I participated in the first webinar on September 8, 2022 and will participate in two others in the coming weeks.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

E. Insurance

No items.

F. Facilities

(1) Minor Town Hall Elevator Repair

Recently, the Town Hall elevator was experiencing trouble when the door on the third floor was closing. The door either made an unusual sound when closing or stopped and re-opened when it was almost completely closed. A mechanic from

our elevator maintenance company visited the Town Hall on August 29, 2022 and addressed the problem. The elevator is again working properly.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Sealing of Pillars Supporting Town Hall Front Entrance Overhang

It has become evident that carpenter ants are moving in and out of cracks that have opened up on the face of several of the pillars that support the roof overhang across the driveway at the front entrance to Town Hall. Before that activity translates to any real damage, it will be important to exterminate the ants, properly seal the cracks, and repaint the pillars. We are presently awaiting a cost estimate from a painting contractor to complete this work.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

G. Fiscal/Budget

No items.

H. Complaints

No items.

I. Meetings Attended

(1) Old Essex Road Stream Crossing Site Visit

(*)

Personnel from the Ipswich River Watershed Association (IRWA), personnel and elected officials from the Town of Ipswich, Representative Jamie Belsito and several other Massachusetts legislators, Selectman Phippen, and I met at the stream crossing that passes beneath Old Essex Road on the Essex Ipswich line on September 9, 2022. As noted in a previous report, the Town of Ipswich does not consider the bridge over this tidal stream to be critical and has been thinking about removing the bridge and dead-ending the road on either side. Removing the bridge and “daylighting” the stream would go a long way to restoring portions of salt marsh inland of the bridge and with the overall drainage of the area. The project would need to be developed in concert with a plan to enlarge an upstream passage beneath Route 133 as well. Representative Belsito and her colleagues are potentially interested in funding these types of coastal resilience projects in the future.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

J. Town Meeting, By-Laws, and Regulations

(1) Continued Review of Possible Fall Town Meeting Article Topics (*)

I have revised the draft list of possible Fall Town Meeting article topics in accordance with the Board's guidance from the last meeting.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(2) Finalization of Rules Authorized by Section 3A of Chapter 40A (*)

I participated in a webinar hosted by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development (EOHED) and the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) on September 8, 2022, along with Chairman Preen. The webinar featured a summary of the final compliance guidelines associated with new Section 3A of Chapter 40A (the State Zoning Act) of the General Laws.

Fortunately, EOHED and DHCD saw fit after the public comment period for the draft guidelines to move away from a "one size fits all" approach and Essex, like many small communities, has been classified as an "Adjacent Small Town". Essex is adjacent to communities with MBTA stations or service but a high level of by-right multi-family zoning required in a certain area would not be appropriate here. The new status removes requirements that a new district would have to be of a specific size and would have to be located in a certain place. To that end, Essex may be able demonstrate that its present, single-district zoning arrangement can accommodate up to 83 total units of multi-family housing (and existing units may count – something that I am working on confirming).

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

K. Legal Issues

No items.

L. Grants

(1) Alewife Brook Stream Study Final Report (*)

The subject report pertaining to the possibility of managing the stream channel in the Alewife Brook to optimize fish migration and to possibly improve water quality in Chebacco Lake was delivered to the Town of July 27, 2022. Selectman Phippen and I, among others, reviewed the draft final version of the report and provided comments. The report was finalized and delivered to the Town on August 21, 2022. At the last meeting on August 22, 2022, since Selectman Phippen had not yet had a chance to review the report, more detailed discussion of the report's recommendations was reserved to the current meeting.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

M. Emergency Planning

No items.

N. Other Items

(1) Commencement of Smithsonian Institution Exhibit in Town Hall

Materials for the subject Smithsonian Institution Exhibit, known as “Crossroads” arrived at Town Hall on September 7, 2022. The exhibit will be set up in the third floor auditorium in Town Hall through late October. The Essex Shipbuilding Museum and Historical Society was instrumental in bringing the exhibit to Essex and offers the following explanation of the exhibit from its [website](#), which will also keep the public informed about various live presentations and talks that will occur while the exhibit is in Town:

“*Crossroads*” explores how rural American communities changed in the 20th century. The vast majority of the United States landscape remains rural with only 3.5% of the landmass considered urban. Since 1900, the percentage of Americans living in rural areas dropped from 60% to 17%.

“*Crossroads: Change in Rural America*” offers small towns a chance to look at their own paths to highlight the changes that affected their fortunes over the past century. The exhibition will prompt discussions about what happened when America’s rural population became a minority of the country’s population and the ripple effects that occurred.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Labor Day Holiday

The office was closed on September 5, 2022, in observance of the subject holiday.

(3) Town Administrator Leave

I was out of the office, on leave, for a portion of the day on August 22 and August 29, 2022 and all day on September 2, 2022.

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