



## Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of February 9, 2015

Report covers from January 24, 2015 to February 6, 2015

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

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### A. Town Department Reports/Requests

#### (1) Initial Bicentennial Committee Meeting

The Bicentennial Committee met for the first time on January 28, 2015. The Committee members got acquainted with each other and elected a Chair (Ms. Dawn Burnham). I later spoke with Ms. Burnham relative to various issues including funding, future procurement, and the Open Meeting Law. The Committee plans to try to meet on the last Wednesday of each month.

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

### B. Computer Systems

#### (1) Continued Migration of Users to Virtual Desktop Environment

To date, I have migrated 4 other, single-user workstations within the Assessors', Planning Board, Board of Health, and Town Accountant offices (for a total of ten workstations and thirteen users). Since I have now completed Town Hall migrations, I will move to the Water Filtration Plant (I ordered and received some additional zero-client devices for that building).

*Recommendation:* I will update the Board as necessary. Total time – 10 hours.

#### (2) Replacement of Board of Assessors' Counter Terminal

The counter terminal for use by patrons visiting the Board of Assessors' Office failed during the week of January 26, 2015 (power supply failed on a very old PC). Since the Assessors' Clerk's system had just come off line after the migration to the new virtual platform, I moved that PC into place as the new counter terminal. After discussing the software configuration necessary with the Assessors' database vendor, the counter module is again up and running.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary. Total time – 1 hour.

### C. Personnel

#### (1) Preparation for Hiring of Boat Ramp Attendant (\*)

The Board had asked me to bring up the topic of a summer boat ramp attendant at this time. In the past, that position failed to break even, due partially to cool summers and partially to the availability of day launching and parking at local marinas. Now that marinas are no longer offering those services, we have

observed a sharp increase in the use of the Town Landing for launching and Memorial Park for parking. These changes suggest that fees collected from non-residents by a boat ramp attendant will cover the attendant's wages plus other costs borne by the Town associated with the Town Landing. It is also possible that some non-residents will choose to launch elsewhere, thereby decreasing the congestion that can occur on a busy weekend. In the past, an Assistant Harbormaster has been in charge of the ramp and it is possible to work with the Chief of Police/Harbormaster to set up a similar situation for the coming season.

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

(2) Further Discussion Relative to Town Administrator's 2015 Goals (\*)

The Board asked that I bring back for discussion at this time my list of proposed, calendar year 2015 goals. I had provided five, specific goals back in December and have added a goal related to strategic planning as well.

*Recommendation:* **Board discussion and approval of my 2015 goals.**

(3) Additional Work Hours for Town Planner

At the last meeting, the Board supported the idea of the Town Planner to potentially increase his work hours from 5 per week to 8 per week in fiscal year 2016. The Board is very interested in asking the Planner to begin work relative to strategic planning for the Town, whether or not the Town receives the recently-applied-for technical assistance grant from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council.

Presently, I understand that, although MAPC will likely not fund the assistance using the District Local Technical Assistance Program, it is possible that the agency could tap other funding, with our Planner's time as a cost match. In any event, I introduced the desire to potentially increase the Planner's work hours to the Chairman of the Finance Committee during the week of January 26, 2015 and he commented that the Committee will give the request due consideration. However, in a year when budget increases may be severely limited, the extra hours may be difficult to approve.

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

(4) Open House Highlighting Appointed & Elected Positions (\*)

At the last meeting, the Board indicated that an open house should be offered prior to the deadline for returning papers for the Town's various elected offices so that residents can learn more about the importance of each position (along with the Town's many appointed positions). The open house could also serve to increase awareness about the need for others to get involved to provide fresh input. I have learned that the Essex Lions' Club is potentially interested in collaborating with the Town to offer such an event.

*Recommendation:* **Board discussion relative to the timing and format of this potential open house.**

#### **D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects**

(1) Spring Auctions for Conomo Point Properties (\*)

As the Board may recall, our fall 2014 auction for three southern Conomo Point properties resulted in the sale of one property and interest in another. Since that time, one additional property has come into the Town's full possession and control. Several other properties may follow suit pending eviction proceedings that should be concluded during February. Our auctioneer is on contract to conduct auctions over the next 18 months and it is possible to begin discussion with them concerning a spring auction.

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

(2) Draft Essex River Encroachment Elimination Plan

Our consulting engineer is working to complete work on the subject draft plan. The plan will review the various alternatives that the Town considered to eliminate encroachments in the Essex River and will highlight the chosen course of a sixty-foot realignment. It is likely that the draft plan will be ready for the Board to review at the next meeting, on February 23, 2015. If the Board is satisfied with the draft document at that time, I can work with our engineer to submit it to the Army Corps of Engineers for consideration.

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

(3) Potential Use of Additional Consultants for Conomo Point Planning (\*)

At the last meeting, the Board expressed a desire to explore the use of a public affairs consultant to help produce a well-focused message regarding the future of Conomo Point in advance of the Annual Town Meeting. Landscape Architect Jim Heroux of Copley-Wolff is presently working on the phased design of future waterfront access amenities and it will be beneficial to be able to articulate his work product to the public upon its completion. In addition, the Board expressed interest in the use of a financial visualization firm to potentially provide intuitive graphics relative to how Conomo Point factors into the overall Town budget now and in the future.

Relative to the public affairs consultant, I made contact with Regina Villa Associates. The firm has had much experience in focusing public issues for the benefit of constituents and worked on the high school building project in the past. The firm's principal, Regina Villa, will attend tonight's meeting to discuss possible services with the Selectmen and the Conomo Point Planning Committee.

Relative to the financial visualization consultant, I made contact with Involution Studios. This firm specializes in making complex financial concepts understandable to the general public using graphical representations. The firm's representative indicated that the firm will work with the Town at any level and can provide a level of services that would be possible if the Town determines the budget it has in mind.

Further, I have contacted the Chairman of the Finance Committee to determine if he is able to update the Conomo Point financial model that he developed some years ago, before any properties had been sold. He will be able to work with us in the future, once we have a better idea of where the model will fit in to the overall effort.

I have spoken to Mr. Heroux about the use of these other consulting resources and he will work to anticipate how the other consultants may interface with him to help articulate the thrust of his ultimate work product. We have asked Mr. Heroux to have a final product ready for public review in early April, 2015, approximately one month in advance of the Annual Town Meeting.

***Recommendation:* Board discussion with the Planning Committee relative to the potential use and cost of these other consulting resources.**

(4) Potential Regional Effort to Appeal FEMA Flood Maps (\*)

As the Board may recall, we had been hopeful that an anticipated study by the Army Corps of Engineers would have some general bearing on the recently-updated FEMA flood maps. The new maps have placed many new coastal areas into flood zones and have elevated the flood zone for others. The Town Meeting approved \$25,000 in funding back in November of 2014 to have a consultant study our area to appeal the maps in certain areas. Several consultants are well-versed in this process and it is my understanding that other Cape Ann communities are also interested in appealing the maps. As such, it would be beneficial for me to reach out to the three other communities to determine the level of interest in a regional study, along with preferences for an engineering firm. It is possible that the Town of Rockport will not be interested, since Rockport has already conducted work in this area.

***Recommendation:* Board discussion relative to reaching out to the other Cape Ann communities.**

(5) Release of Request for Proposals for Sale of 5 Beach Circle (\*)

Now that a legal matter has been settled with an abutter to 5 Beach Circle, I am prepared to advertise and release a Request for Proposals for the sale of the property as early as February 18, 2015. Solicitations for the sale of real property must remain open for at least 30 days. As such, proposals could be due during the

business day on March 23, 2015. The Board will be meeting later that night and could conduct a review of the proposals at that time.

*Recommendation:* **Board vote to advertise and release the RFP as of February 18, 2015.**

#### **E. Insurance**

No items.

#### **F. Facilities**

##### (1) Town Hall Basement Organization

We have worked with students needing community service hours in the months since prisoners erected new shelving and brought numerous items into the dry basement for storage. One major issue involved the transport of miscellaneous file boxes and other items that the prisoners were not able to get to and the subsequent organization of those items. In addition, since continuing construction in the building continued to bring dust to the basement, students have swept the floor and have dusted storage boxes. Most recently, we purchased several more shelving units for use along the far basement wall. This area was not available to us in the past since construction equipment and tools occupied it. Additional work will include the return of the various holiday items to the areas along the east wall once the structural work is completed and the sorting of a large number of rolled plans that are stored in tubes.

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

##### (2) Proposed Community Preservation Funding for 28 Main Street (\*)

As the Board is aware, the Essex Historical Society and Shipbuilding Museum leases the Town's building at 28 Main Street. The Society is interested in performing some repairs on the building and would like the Town to consider using Community Preservation Act funding for the work. The first step toward making any repairs or renovations would involve the hiring of an architect using the Designer Selection Law so that work elements can be properly designed and cost estimated. It is possible to develop a Request for Qualifications for design services (with a caveat that such work would be subject to funding) so that the Society would have a design cost figure to bring to the Community Preservation Committee as a funding request. If funded, a design can be developed and the Society could perhaps approach the Committee in a subsequent round of funding for construction money.

*Recommendation:* **Board discussion relative to the potential release of a RFQ.**

(3) Temporary Repair of Broken Window

A pane of glass fell from a small window high up in the Town Hall during the recent blizzard. The Selectman's Assistant and I covered the problem with foam insulation and the whole window will be replaced when the next phase of building renovation occurs.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

(4) Exploration of Gas Conversion Project with Constellation Energy

A subcontractor of Constellation Energy visited the Town Hall and the Fire and Police Headquarters on January 29, 2015 to review the prospect of converting the heating systems in both buildings to natural gas. The subcontractor will estimate the cost and Constellation will determine if the project can be contracted as a sole-source procurement and then billed back to the Town over time on the gas bill (in a fashion similar to our recent lighting replacement project). Otherwise, the conversions will have to occur as part of the proposed next phase of Town Hall renovation work or as a stand-alone bid.

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

(5) 1 Robbins Island Road Demolition Update

Our asbestos consultant provided me with a contract for the identification of all asbestos containing material at 1 Robbins Island Road during the week of February 2, 2015. That effort will cost \$1,880 and will provide us with a specification that we can use to hire a removal contractor. I authorized our consultant to proceed as soon as his schedule will allow.

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

**G. Fiscal/Budget**

(1) Public Hearing for Proposed FY16 Regional School District Budget (\*)

The boards of selectmen and the finance committees from Essex and Manchester met jointly with the Regional School Committee and various town and school personnel February 3, 2015 at the subject public hearing. Much discussion was held concerning the District's proposal for a relatively large increase to correct for a spike in enrollment in recent years. The District has been using reserves to bridge the enrollment gap while keeping town assessment increases low but will not be able to take a similar approach this year.

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

**H. Complaints**

No items.

## I. Meetings Attended

### (1) Possible Meeting with Interim Gloucester Mayor Sefatia Romeo Theken(\*)

Selectman Coviello and I propose to meet with Gloucester's Interim Mayor in the near future to review the collaborative efforts of the two communities to date and to potentially discover other opportunities. Presently, the Town and the City collaborate regarding wastewater disposal (Wastewater Intermunicipal Agreement), emergency preparedness and response (Cape Ann Emergency Planning Team), cable television contract renewal (Cape Ann Regional Cable Advisory Committee), and healthy living (Mass in Motion – Cape Ann grant). We are also benefitting from an agreement with the Gloucester Community Development Department to have one of the City's expert assist us with the update of the Town's Open Space Plan. Most recently, we have collaborated on a pending grant application regarding substance abuse prevention (Department of Public Health). Further, many officials from both communities actively participate in events planned by the Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce. Looking ahead, it may be beneficial to take a regional approach to the appeal of the recently-updated FEMA flood maps by sharing a common consultant.

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

## J. Final Judgment

No items.

## K. Town Meeting, By-Laws, and Regulations

### (1) Compilation of Annual Town Report

Submissions for the 2014 Annual Town Report were due to the Selectmen's Assistant as of February 2, 2015. She is presently compiling the various submissions into a single document and will work to get the package off to our printing contractor in the near future.

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

### (2) Potential Collective Purchasing of Residential Power (\*)

At the recent Massachusetts Municipal Association Annual Meeting, I spoke with a consulting firm that specializes in brokering bulk power purchasing by a municipality to benefit individual households. The ability to undertake this process requires the Town to vote to do so, pursuant to Chapter 164 of the General Laws. As such, the topic is something that could be considered at the Annual Town Meeting in May. If the Board is interested in learning more about this potential offering, the consultant is willing to attend a Board meeting to explain the process and its conditions in more detail.

**Recommendation: Board discussion relative to potentially asking the consultant to make a presentation at the next meeting.**

(3) Revised List of Potential Annual Town Meeting Topics (\*)

I have revised the subject draft list per the Board's guidance at the last meeting. After a review of the various possible topics, I will bring to the next meeting the first draft of the actual warrant.

**Recommendation: Further Board review and discussion as necessary.**

(4) No Need for Zoning Bylaw Relative to Green Communities (\*)

In addition to the vote regarding the potential adoption of the Stretch Energy Code in May, our Town Planner was looking into whether we needed a zoning bylaw change to be eligible for the Green Community Designation. The Planner has determined in concert with Town Counsel and the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources that a zoning bylaw amendment will not be necessary. One way to qualify is to demonstrate with a letter from Town Counsel that energy research and development facilities are allowed as of right. Our bylaws do allow this now, since industrial land use is allowed by right so long as certain dimensional criteria are met.

**Recommendation: Board discussion as necessary.**

## **L. Legal Issues**

(1) Final Closeout of Southern Avenue Contaminated Soil Matter

As the Board may recall, a gas line contractor had encountered contaminated soil in a new gas line trench beneath Southern Avenue in the fall. Since this is Town property, the Town hired its own Licensed Site Professional (LSP) to review the matter. The utility was required to dispose of the material that was encountered as part of a Utility-Related Abatement Measure (URAM) and the Town's LSP filed paperwork and communicated with the DEP after taking some samples. Our LSP is presently indicating that a Limited Removal Action (LRA) report will be necessary to properly close out this matter. This final closeout work will cost \$1,500 and the Superintendent of Public Works will cover the cost from his highway budget.

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

## **M. Grants**

No items.

**N. Emergency Planning**

No items.

**O. Other Items**

No items.

*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.*