



Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of March 7, 2016

Report covers from February 20, 2016 to March 4, 2016

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

A. Town Department Reports/Requests

(1) Planning Board Hearing, Robbins Island Subdivision

I attended the subject public hearing on February 24, 2016 along with the Board, Town Counsel, and our Consulting Engineer from Horsley Witten. The hearing concerned the Definitive Subdivision Plan for the Robbins Island portion of the Central Conomo Point Zoning District. The hearing was well-attended and many residents of Robbins Island were present to provide input and make comments. At the hearing, our consultant and Town Counsel were both called upon to clarify certain aspects of the Plan and process and the Planning Board made one, minor recommendation concerning a final version: adjustment of a single property line to allow for off-street parking for a single parcel. The Board also assented to a comment asking for the slight realignment of the opposite end of that same property line to better accommodate how neighboring leaseholds have always been divided.

Presently, Horsley Witten has made the two changes to the plan and we have submitted the revision to the Planning Board. The Planning Board will take the matter back up on March 16, 2016 and will likely issue an approval of the Plan in early April.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(2) Northern Conomo Point Subcommittee Meeting (*)

Conomo Point Planning Committee Chairman Mark Lynch recently discussed with landscape architect James Heroux and me Mr. Heroux's scope of services for prioritization assistance to the Northern Conomo Point Subcommittee. The Subcommittee is working on recommending to the full Committee where the Town should begin its efforts to improve public waterfront access at Conomo Point. We determined that Mr. Heroux would provide me and Mr. Lynch with a draft scope of services that would not exceed the Selectmen's authorization of \$5,000. Once Mr. Heroux developed that document, Mr. Lynch and I made comments to arrive at a final arrangement. The Subcommittee met on March 3, 2016, with Mr. Heroux, to begin the prioritization process. I will have an update regarding that session by meeting time.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(3) Strategic Plan Development Wrap Up Conference Call (*)

Chairman O'Donnell, Town Planner Matt Coogan, MAPC consultant Mark Fine, and I participated in a conference call on March 2, 2016 relative to the status of the Essex Strategic Plan. Mr. Fine was involved to help develop the basic plan and to set it initially into motion. His involvement is now ending and it was useful to get his perspective regarding how we might begin to prioritize plan items, assign budget figures, and implement some plan aspects. During the call, we agreed that putting timelines and costs on the various capital items and putting timelines on the planning type items will be the best next step. It is possible that the Committee could have a handout ready for Town Meeting that could outline progress to date and how the Committee intends to incorporate public input to date. The Committee will be meeting once in March and once in April.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

B. Computer Systems

No items.

C. Personnel

(1) Essex Police Benevolent Association Collective Bargaining

As noted previously, the Management Team engaged the union in continued collective bargaining on February 11, 2016.

Recommendation: Board discussion in executive session, per the posted agenda.

(2) Request to Amend Personnel Rules & Regulations, Probationary Period (*)

The Chief of Police/Harbor Master has requested that the Selectmen, acting in their capacity as Personnel Board, consider amending the Town's Personnel Rules & Regulations regarding the new hire probationary period. Specifically, for all harbor, special police, and reserve police hires, the Chief would like to see the probationary period increase from six months to one year. All other non-union, non-contract personnel would remain at six months. His request was made since new hires in those specific categories often need much preparation and training time before they can actually work independently in the field. The additional six months would allow for a more realistic assessment of capabilities.

If the Board is interested in considering this amendment, a public hearing will be required as part of a future Board meeting.

Recommendation: **Board discussion relative to potentially amending the Personnel Rules & Regulations.**

(3) Safety Committee Meeting

The Safety Committee will hold a quarterly meeting on March 23, 2016. I have developed a draft agenda and have placed a copy in the Board's reading folder.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects

(1) Change Order for Project Manager Services, Town Hall/Library (*)

As was noted at the recent Special Town Meeting, the Town had originally contracted with NETCO, our Project Management firm for the Town Hall/Library renovation project, for a nine-month duration. When the Board decided to make the construction of a third-floor unfinished deck part of the base bid for the project, the project timeline had to be increased to one year. In recognition of that scope and time increase, NETCO has provided the Town with a proposal for just over \$40,000 for the necessary Project Management services.

***Recommendation:* Board approval of the change order for additional services, which will primarily be associated with on-site project oversight.**

(2) Change Order for Potential Incorporation of Safe in Renovation (*)

At the last meeting, the Board asked that I review with our architect and our project contractor the potential for incorporating a decoratively-painted antique safe owned by the Town (but no longer used by the Town) into the final plan for building renovation. At a project meeting on February 23, 2016, we discussed this topic with our architect, our Project Manager, and the contractor. Our architect did not recommend keeping the whole safe, due to space limitations and the need to potentially add structural support at the safe's final location. Instead, our architect is working with our contractor on a change order proposal to incorporate the front frame of the safe and its doors as well as just the doors into a wall in the renovated building.

Using elements of the decorative safe will require the disposal of the remainder of the safe and a similar, undecorated, whole safe, both of which contain asbestos. Also, it is possible that the area of the wall beneath the doors will need to be supported and that work involving dismantling the decorated safe will require controlled conditions (to prevent hazmat release). If the Board is not interested in incorporating parts of the safe in the new building, our contractor will take both safes out of the building, whole, at no cost to the Town. It is possible that we will have more information about this proposal by meeting time.

***Recommendation:* Board discussion relative to whether the work to display the front of decorative safe should be undertaken, versus allowing the project contractor to remove both safes from the building, at no cost. A vote**

regarding a proposed change order could be taken, if available by meeting time.

(3) Change Order for Asbestos Abatement, Town Hall/Library Project (*)

As the Board may recall, an asbestos survey had been conducted in Town Hall during the initial design process and only the glazing and sealant associated with windows contained asbestos. The recent February Special Town Meeting appropriated additional funding for the project associated with several items, including asbestos abatement. Our project contractor has developed a change order proposal for asbestos abatement during their window replacement and restoration efforts, in the amount of \$21,150 (plus an allowance for any glass damage). Our architect and our Project Manager have reviewed and recommended the proposal.

***Recommendation:* Board approval and signature of this asbestos abatement change order.**

(4) Future Change Order, Town Hall Third Floor Deck Height (*)

As the Board is aware, the Town Hall/Library renovation project will install a third-floor deck at the old balcony level to provide for a future, large meeting space above the second floor offices. That deck will provide a floor to the space above and a ceiling to the space below (which includes new ceilings for all existing offices and a new ceiling over the stage, where a conference room will be constructed).

Now that the contractor is on site and the architect is working with them regarding construction layout, it has become apparent that the elevation of the second floor varies from one end of the building to the other (higher toward the stage). Also, the stage itself varies in elevation from place to place. As such, if the third floor deck is installed to design elevation, the new conference room will have a ceiling that is too low. The way to correct for this discovery is by simply constructing the third floor deck higher than planned. This change in elevation will require the stairway leading up to the third floor to be increased by one step, with the decorative railing being raised to match. Our architect and contractor are presently working out the details for a future change order to account for this condition.

***Recommendation:* Board discussion relative to this matter and vote to approve the change in concept, so that related work may continue uninterrupted until the final change order is available.**

(5) Preparation for Auction of Contents of 153 Conomo Point Road

At the last meeting, the Board agreed that photos of the contents of 153 Conomo Point Road (which exclude the garage area) should be made available at the Town's website, along with a list of terms and conditions that interested parties

may review concerning an auction to be held on March 11, 2016. I have since made the photos and terms available and have publicized the auction (see www.essexma.org). The event will occur at the Essex Library, 245 Western Avenue, on March 11, 2016 at 8:30 a.m. Several boats are stored on the premises and these will be offered individually at a spring auction that the Chief of Police normally holds.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(6) Town Hall/Library Renovation Project Management Meetings

I attended the subject meetings on February 23, 2016 and March 1, 2016, along with our Project Manager, our architect, and our project contractor. The meetings reviewed progress, which has mostly included limited demolition, to this point. The contractor will soon begin work on the construction of the new server room and on the preparation of the building for the installation of the elevator.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

E. Insurance

(1) Fiscal Year 2017 Health Insurance Increase

We have learned from our insurer that the health insurance increase to the Town for fiscal year 2017 is 5.5%. Our insurer's range of increases was 4.5% to 12.8%, with an average increase of 8.9%. The Town Accountant and the Finance Committee will include this figure in the budget that is presently under development.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Monthly Pothole Log

I obtained the pothole log for the month of February from the DPW during the week of February 29, 2016 and provided it to our insurer as part of the MIIA Rewards Program. No potholes were reported during February.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

F. Facilities

(1) Development of Plan for Monument Area of Memorial Park

At the last meeting, the Board met with representatives of the Board of Public Works, the Community Preservation Committee, and a local veterans' group. All assembled agreed that a recent survey of the monument area of the Memorial Park was a good start toward planning that area's future. All agreed also that Chairman O'Donnell and I would begin to determine if a local landscape architect would be willing to provide the necessary design services pro-bono or at a reduced rate.

Presently, I am working to set up a site visit with that architect to better understand how they might help the Town and what services the Town will likely also have to pay for using other firms.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(2) Structural Shoring and Handicapped Ramp, Folsom Pavilion

At the Fall Town Meeting, the Town appropriated \$20,000 for repairs to the Folsom Pavilion. As agreed to by the Selectmen and the Historical Commission at the last meeting, the approach will be to utilize those funds to install structural supports to make the structure safe and to install a wooden handicapped accessible ramp to replace a deteriorating concrete ramp. The Building Inspector will require the project to proceed using plans that have been stamped and signed by an architect or engineer. As such, I have made arrangements with an engineer to view the site and provide a cost proposal for design, permitting, and construction oversight/inspection services.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(3) Request for Qualifications, Preservation/Replacement of Folsom Pavilion (*)

After the Folsom Pavilion is shored up for the upcoming season, it will be necessary to design for the preservation of the existing structure or, perhaps, in-kind replication (replacement). To compare what each option might cost, it is possible that a designer could be hired to develop a set of plans and a cost estimate for each option. In order to understand the cost of these design services, a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) could be developed and responses to the RFQ, which would ultimately lead to a market-driven design cost estimate, could be received before the Annual Town Meeting.

Recommendation: **Board discussion relative to the development of a RFQ and with respect to a potential Town Meeting article to fund design services.**

(4) Removal of Several Boats from 153 Conomo Point Road, for Auction

In addition to the contents of the structure at 153 Conomo Point Road (which will be auctioned off as one lot on March 11, 2016), several boats are stored on the premises. I have made arrangements for the Chief of Police to eventually remove all of these boats so that they may be included as individual items in his spring auction.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

G. Fiscal/Budget

(1) School District Capital Planning Budget Meeting (*)

I attended the subject meeting along with Manchester and School District officials on February 26, 2016. The meeting was focused on understanding the various future debt obligations of the two towns so that this information could be considered along with the District's debt schedule. Ultimately, this type of coordination may be helpful in planning when future School District building projects should begin.

At the meeting, we learned that an advance refunding technique could result in a net savings (i.e. no additional loan term, with all issuance costs and other fees included) in annual debt repayment premiums of approximately \$100,000. Also, it is likely that feasibility study funding for the replacement of the Manchester Memorial School (which both towns would consider at respective 2016 annual town meetings) would begin to be drawn down in the final quarter of FY17. The funds would cover the cost of an owner's project manager and a consultant to actually conduct the study. The feasibility process would take approximately two years to complete and it is possible that town votes on the full amount of design and construction money could occur at the respective annual town meetings in 2019. The school would likely be move-in ready in 2021 or 2022.

***Recommendation:* Board discussion relative to the refunding proposal and the elementary school renovation/replacement timeline.**

H. Complaints

No items.

I. Meetings Attended

(1) Legislative Update Meeting with Congressman Moulton's Staff

I met with Morgan Bell, Congressman Moulton's District Representative, on March 2, 2016. We discussed how the Town desires to keep working closely with the Congressman regarding the passage of legislation that will re-define the boundaries of the Federal Channel within the Essex River. On that score, I am told that we should be hearing more in the near future.

Also, I explained how important it is to the Town to look ahead at any potential source of Essex River dredging funding, given the present public safety and economic impacts the River has on the Town during low tidal stages. Ms. Bell indicated that the Congressman will certainly help support funding, whether for traditional dredging or climate-change related thin layer deposition (should our study of that prospect play out well).

Further, I asked whether the office could look at funding to help area communities update each of their Hazard Mitigation Plans. MAPC helped on a regional basis a few years ago to get initial versions of the plans in place. The plans need to be updated every five years and Federal funding to MAPC to assist with the update process would be most helpful.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

J. Final Judgment

No items.

K. Town Meeting, By-Laws, and Regulations

(1) Further Review of Draft Annual Town Meeting Warrant (*)

I have revised the Draft Annual Town Meeting Warrant in accordance with the Board's guidance from the last meeting. I have also added for the Board's consideration draft articles that were requested by various departments, boards, or commissions.

Recommendation: **Further Board discussion, along with the Finance Committee, regarding the draft warrant.**

L. Legal Issues

No items.

M. Grants

(1) Community Compact Grant, Thin Layer Deposition

I submitted to the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) during the week of February 22, 2016 a scope of work and cost proposal that would allow the Town to study and, hopefully, pilot thin layer deposition (TLD) on Essex marshes. TLD is a process of building up the marsh elevation using sediment, which could be sourced from the Essex River – improving River channel navigability. Essex marshes are naturally sinking and are subject to sea level rise and therefore could be enhanced as green infrastructure to combat climate change. The \$200,000 proposal asks the State to fund \$175,000 for the study, preparation, and testing of TLD in pilot areas in Essex.

Presently, officials from the Department of Environmental Protection and from the Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management are working to pull together a meeting to discuss the Town's proposal further. While State officials are not now convinced that TLD should be used within relatively healthy salt

marshes, it is possible that research in areas that are presently degraded could bring more insight regarding the promise of this technique. I expect that State officials will invite Essex officials and other members of the project team in for further discussion in the near future.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(2) Coastal Community Resilience Grant Monthly Report

I obtained from our project team members a monthly report relative to the Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management grant related to coastal community resilience during the week of February 22, 2016. The report has been submitted to the State and it details how the project is moving closer to more focused community outreach and eventual recommendations for mitigation strategies.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(4) Great Marsh Coastal Resiliency Task Force Monthly Conference Call

I participated in the subject call on March 3, 2016. The Task Force is assisting with the steering of the Super Storm Sandy Grant that is being administered by the National Wildlife Federation. The call focused on a series of new maps and graphs developed by the United State Geological Survey (USGS) showing how sea level rise is expected to affect various regions and demographics in all six participating communities at present, by 2030, and by 2070.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary at this time.

N. Emergency Planning

No items.

O. Other Items

(1) Ipswich River Watershed Association Municipal Services Program

I met with representatives of the Ipswich River Watershed Association (IRWA) on March 3, 2016 to hear about this new program. IRWA is interested in partnering with municipalities to assist with certain matters where technical assistance may be helpful. For example, EPA's Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) regulations, State Water Management Act regulations (related to municipal wells), and State Road-Stream Crossing Regulations will all be requiring plans and submissions from communities in the near term. IRWA may, in some cases be able to assist with the acquisition of grant funding to accomplish necessary tasks and, in some cases, can provide free, technical assistance. IRWA plans to work closely with other non-governmental organizations working in our area, as well as with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, and others. As

needs arise, I plan to connect IRWA with various departments in Town that could benefit from assistance.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

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