



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

Report covers from February 21, 2015 to March 6, 2015

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

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### A. Town Department Reports/Requests

(1) Draft Report of the Essex Public Safety Committee (\*)

The Public Safety Committee has completed its draft report relative to the operation of the various public safety departments (fire, police, EMS) in Essex.

*Recommendation:* **Board discussion relative to the draft report.**

(2) Development of Strategic Planning Committee (\*)

The Board has discussed a transition from the Town's Long Term Planning Committee (LTPC) to a new, Strategic Planning Committee (SPC). The SPC could be comprised of members of various Town boards and committees and could be guided by the Town Planner and, potentially, State technical assistance. Presently, the Long Term Planning Committee is finishing up a project concerning the character-defining resources of the Town and the Town Planner is working to prepare the Town for the Green Community designation. I will have a coordination role in the transition and in the ongoing work of the SPC. At the last meeting, Selectman O'Donnell agreed to check in with the LTPC chairman to determine what the Committee's schedule is for completing their present body of work. With this information in mind, a schedule for transitioning to the new SPC can be developed.

*Recommendation:* **Further Board discussion relative to the timing of the transition and the makeup of the new SPC.**

### B. Computer Systems

(1) Continued Migration of Users to Virtual Desktop Environment

As reported previously, I suspended user migrations from the DPW office in order to test an alternative connection method versus the zero-client device method that is in place in Town Hall. Through the testing, it was evident that efficiency could be gained by using a device that can take advantage of the site's native Internet feed while still being able to hit the Melrose datacenter for virtual desktop and user-created data connectivity. I also learned that users in remote sites will need to upgrade to network-capable printers in order for print jobs to have a valid address on the network. I have ordered a new printer for our first user and we will run the alternative device for a period of time to ensure we understand any limitations and may then make the alternative device the standard for our remote sites (and possibly Town Hall as well).

*Recommendation:* I will update the Board as necessary. Total time – 4 hours.

### **C. Personnel**

(1) Open House Highlighting Elected and Appointed Positions (\*)

As discussed previously, the Board was interested in working with a local organization to offer an open house highlighting the various elected and appointed positions in the community. Participants could learn more about how the Town runs and could contribute new energy and new ideas. We have learned that the Essex PTO is willing to sponsor the event on Saturday, March 14, 2015 between noon and 2:00 p.m.

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

(2) Personnel Board Approval of FY16 Proposed Wage & Salary Scale (\*)

I have produced a draft of the proposed fiscal year 2016 Wage & Salary Scale, which sets wages for all non-contract, non-union compensation. The Board, Acting in its capacity as Personnel Board, can vote to recommend the Wage & Salary Scale to the Town Meeting.

*Recommendation:* **Board vote to recommend the fiscal year 2016 Wage & Salary Scale to Town Meeting as presented.**

(3) Safety Committee Meeting

The Town Safety Committee (not to be confused with the Public Safety Committee) will next meet on March 26, 2015. I have placed a draft agenda in the Board's reading folder.

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

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

(1) Town Hall Exterior Project Cost Estimation Update (\*)

I met with our Project Manager and the principal from his subcontracted architectural firm on February 23, 2015 to discuss the status of the cost estimation effort for the subject project. The Project Manager and his team are tasked with providing Town Meeting with an accurate cost figure for a defined scope of work that funding will be sought for. The desired exterior work will trigger certain elements like the installation of an elevator and a fire suppression system, which we figured from the outset. However, the work will also trigger other improvements and changes such as:

- Relocation of Treasurer/Collector's Office to allow an elevator shaft to be constructed in that space.

- The State Building Code no longer allows elevator shafts to be constructed in existing stairwells and the historic preservation restriction for the building would not allow the old Town Meeting Hall to be impacted. These circumstances demand that the shaft be located in the front corner of the existing entry hall.
- The Treasurer/Collector would move to the office currently occupied by her assistant, complete with the construction of a new wall, to create two office spaces where only one now exists.
- The elevator will have two doors (one for entry from within the Town Hall lobby and one from the Town Hall parking lot grade). The porte-cochere will be glassed in to allow for all-weather access to the elevator.
- Although the elevator will be capable of reaching the basement, the first floor, the second floor, and the balcony, the shaft will likely only initially extend to the second floor.
- On the second floor, the shaft will come up into the area that is now the ladies' room. As such, the ladies' room will be relocated to where the men's room now is and a new, small, men's room will be constructed in the second floor foyer.
- Relocation of the Board of Health Administrator's Office to allow for a new, code-compliant stairway to exit the second floor from the rear of the building.
  - The State Building Code will require this new, interior egress stairway for emergency evacuation of the second floor. The two, spiral stairways are not adequate and will not maintain code compliance now that additional funding is being spent on the building.
  - The stairway will be "one-way" only so that the Library and the Town offices can continue to have a separation for security purposes.
  - The old, metal emergency stairway currently on the front of the Town Hall will be removed, since it is no longer allowed by code.
  - A new office for the Board of Health Administrator will be constructed on the stage.
  - The Library will lose an alcove but the old Library front entry is no longer needed and could potentially be opened up to move the circulation desk into new space.
  - The new restroom will be located right next to the restroom that was just installed and will have to take over the computer room space.
- Construction of a second, handicapped accessible-restroom in the Library.
  - The phase one work on Town Hall only required the addition of one, handicapped-accessible restroom. This new project will trigger the need for a second restroom.

- The new restroom will be located right next to the restroom that was just installed and will have to take over the computer room space.
- Construction of a handicapped-accessible counter at the Town Clerk's office.
  - The design for the reconfiguration of the counter will also include a separate door entrance to the Town Clerk's office. This will be especially important since two other employees from the Treasurer/Collector's office will be working in the space that the Town Clerk presently crosses through to access her office.

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

(2) Sale of 5 Beach Circle Pre-Bid Conference

On March 4, 2015 I offered the subject conference for prospective bidders desiring to purchase 5 Beach Circle. No prospective bidders attended the conference. Questions from bidders are due by March 11 and bids are due by noon on March 23, 2015. The Board will potentially choose a successful bidder at the meeting later that evening (the Board's next meeting).

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

(3) Essex River Encroachment Elimination Plan Pre-Submittal Meeting (\*)

At the last meeting, the Board agreed that Selectman O'Donnell and I should meet with our consulting engineer and Mr. Ed O'Donnell (no relation) of the Army Corps of Engineers to discuss the Town's plan for encroachment elimination informally, prior to its formal submittal. Our consulting engineer arranged that meeting for March 3, 2015 and we all discussed the Town's analysis to date and the Town's preferred option.

Mr. O'Donnell commented that, although the Town's preferred option of a sixty-foot, realigned channel would get the various floats and structures out of the Federal Channel, it was likely that boats berthed at the slips would impact the channel (both permanent and transient berths). As such, it may behoove the Town to consider the forty-foot realignment for some areas of the channel, even though the process would require formal partial deauthorization action from Congress (any reduction in any area of the current layout will require such action). Submitting the sixty-foot plan would likely just result in comments from the Corps related to the boat encroachments and would amount to lost time and effort.

Mr. O'Donnell indicated that, should the Town select the forty-foot option (which may be sixty feet in some areas, fifty feet in others, and forty feet in the narrowest areas), the Corps could likely begin its preliminary survey and testing regimen. The Corps will want to see a good-faith effort from the Town relative to working

with Federal Legislators toward the necessary deauthorization plan, but the work of the Corps can commence on a parallel track to the legislative work.

Further, Mr. O'Donnell recommended that the Town begin work on a letter to the Corps that highlights the importance of the dredging effort the Town. This letter will key into topics such as commerce, public safety, and economic development. He also recommended that the Town continue to work with State agencies and legislators relative to the possibility of State funding, since Federal funding is so scarce in comparison to the staggering dredging needs along the US coast (which includes many major cities).

Finally, it is apparent that the Town will need to have additional work performed by our consulting engineer to assist us with the numerous issues and challenges that the dredging issue has presented us with. If the Board desires, I can ask our consultant for a new proposal that will cover various items going forward.

***Recommendation:* Board discussion relative to the multi-faceted issues presented by the necessary dredging, including a discussion relative to a further appropriation for technical support from our consulting engineer.**

(4) FEMA Flood Map Appeal Study (\*)

Town Planner Matt Coogan reached out to both the Town of Manchester and the City of Gloucester regarding the potential for conducting a regional appeal of the latest coastal FEMA flood maps. He also discussed with the consultant that the other two communities are likely going to use whether this coordination would bring any appreciable economy of scale. He determined that any savings would be minimal and that the extra coordination and uncertain timing associated with a regional effort will not be offset by the limited savings.

***Recommendation:* Board discussion relative to reaching out to several engineering firms for proposals for Essex's own appeal.**

(5) Downtown Boardwalk Planning Update (\*)

At the request of the Board, I contacted the proprietor of the restaurant that will most benefit from the proposed downtown boardwalk. I explained that dining tables cannot be permitted as part of the project's original Chapter 91 license application but could potentially be added later. I explained that the project will benefit all businesses in the area should the property owner agree to the necessary easement for the structure. Presently, the proprietor is involved in discussions with the property owner as to the advantages of the project.

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

## **E. Insurance**

### (1) MIIA Rewards Credit for Clearance of Municipal Building Roofs

Our insurer recently announced that program credit (a future reduction of property insurance premiums) will be offered to communities which can document the removal of snow and ice from vulnerable roofs. In Essex, both the Water Filtration Plant and the DPW Barn roofs were identified as vulnerable and a professional crew cleared both roofs on February 21, 2015. I have provided our insurer with this information so that we will be afforded the credit.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

## **F. Facilities**

### (1) 1 Robbins Island Road Demolition Update

Our asbestos consultant visited the subject property on February 25, 2015 to survey the structure for the presence of asbestos in the various building materials. The samples taken during the survey process are presently out for testing and our consultant will develop a full report suitable for a contractor to quote on the removal job. Eventually, our consultant will provide us with a proposal to monitor any necessary asbestos removal and to clear the structure prior to demolition.

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

### (2) Street Light Conversion Analysis

At the last meeting, the Board agreed that it will be worthwhile to ask our energy supplier to undertake an analysis of potential savings if the Town was to take ownership of all existing street lights and then convert them to efficient, LED fixtures. Our supplier asked that we provide them with twelve months of street lighting account billing data and the Selectmen's Assistant completed that task during the week of February 23, 2015. Also as discussed with the Board, I signed a letter of intent with our energy supplier's consultant that authorizes them to proceed with their analysis.

Presently, the consultant is running the analysis and our supplier eventually plans to provide us with: a comprehensive package that includes: a complete audit of Essex's approximately 118 streetlights; a demonstration, in the Essex municipal parking lot, or via a visit to Ipswich, or another setup to compare existing lights to LED options (to facilitate replacement selection process); an operation & maintenance (O&M) plan; a comparison of new fixtures with network management capability and understanding of potential applications to fixtures with no network capability; and an investment analysis, including payback schedule.

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

## **G. Fiscal/Budget**

### (1) North Shore Greenhead Fly Control Program

At the last meeting, the Board and the Finance Committee agreed that the Town should join the subject program, which is a subsidiary of the Northeast Mosquito Control and Wetlands Management District. I contacted the program and learned that the services will be billed in the fall, after the boxes have been removed from the marsh (as opposed to a Cherry Sheet assessment, which is how the mosquito control district is funded). The program will deploy/retrieve and fully maintain 40 greenhead boxes in key areas around the community at a cost of about \$3,600 per year. I have informed the Town Accountant and the Conservation Agent about our new participation in the program. I will sign a letter of commitment on behalf of the Board once the District provides it (likely in mid-March).

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

### (2) Development of “Visual Budget” for the Town (\*)

I recently spoke with personnel from Involution, the company that recently assisted the City of Arlington develop a “visual budget”. This system allows a resident to understand visually and in great detail where each of their tax dollars goes. In Essex, the firm could develop the standard, visual budget and perhaps add a module specific to future Conomo Point revenue levels. Involution indicated that our proposed budget of \$3,000 would be sufficient to accomplish that goal.

***Recommendation:* Board discussion relative to the use of Involution for the visualization of our Conomo Point planning effort, pending the potential approval of a line-item transfer by the Finance Committee.**

### (3) Verification of Regional School District Apportionment Figures

The Regional School District prepared to release the operating and capital apportionment figures for FY16 during the week of March 2, 2015. As part of that process, I reviewed the final draft figures using my own apportionment model and found that the figures generated from that model corresponded with the District’s figures. I communicated this correspondence to the District’s Business Manager as a useful double-check prior to release.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

### (4) Department of Revenue Financial Review

As the Board may recall, the Town requested back in November, 2014 that the Department of Revenue conduct a Financial Review for Essex. I have been contacted by the program manager for that program and we have been informed

that the review will take place during the month of March. We are presently awaiting communication from the agent who will conduct the review.

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

## **H. Complaints**

None.

## **I. Meetings Attended**

### (1) Regional Dispatch Center Finance Advisory Board Meeting (\*)

I attended the subject meeting as chairman of the Board on March 3, 2015. The meeting featured a public hearing relative to the fiscal year 2016 operating budget for the Center and a discussion relative to the Cherry Sheet assessment amount that should be tendered on behalf of the City of Beverly for fiscal year 2015 (and in the future). The City has withdrawn from the Center and is asserting that the Center does not have any rights to its Cherry Sheet money, even though the section of the Intermunicipal Agreement governing withdrawals specifically requires payment for two years. The next meeting of the Board is scheduled for March 20, 2015.

*Recommendation:* **General Board discussion relative to the City of Beverly's recent assertion.**

## **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 pursuant to the Board's guidance at the last meeting. A final version of the warrant will come before the Board for signature at the next meeting, on March 23, 2015.

*Recommendation:* **Additional Board review and discussion regarding the draft warrant.**

### (2) Public Forum Regarding Green Communities and Stretch Energy Code

Town Planner Matt Coogan is working to develop a public forum in April (likely April 14) to provide residents with more information about the Green Community designation that the Town is considering seeking and about the Stretch Energy Code, which is a precursor to becoming a Green Community. State officials will attend the forum and make informative presentations. The Planner will also invite

Next Step Living to the forum so that participants can learn more about energy saving measures that are available to them at no cost.

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

(3) Annual Town Report

The Selectmen's Assistant has concluded the compilation of the various departmental reports to produce the Annual Town Report for 2014. The document is presently out for printing.

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

**L. Legal Issues**

(1) Maher et al. Eviction Case Update

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As the Board may recall, all but two of the remaining defendants in the Conomo Point eviction case covering multiple properties had relinquished occupancy/possession of the properties they formerly leased. With concurrence from Town Counsel, I recently changed the locks at 7 Cogswell Road and 153 Conomo Point Road and, as the Board may recall, a new tenant occupies the property at 40 Robbins Island Road as a result of a settlement.

On February 25, 2015, Judge Welch ruled that defendant Leah Maher must quit the premises at 13 Town Farm Road but has not yet ruled regarding the question of ownership of the dwelling, which may require a trial. During the same session, Judge Welch ruled to dismiss any claims that had been asserted by Ms. Kimberly Ross Smith concerning two properties of the former Foley estate. One other former tenant, Mr. Paul Touher, passed away during the pendency of the case and that portion of the proceedings has been stayed for the time being.

*Recommendation:* **Board discussion as necessary, in regular and/or executive session.**

## **M. Grants**

### (1) Final Site Visit for Generator Grant

Personnel from the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) and from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) visited Town Hall on March 4, 2015 to inspect the fully-operational backup power generator. The site visit was a chance for these personnel to inspect the final installation and to document the various project elements for the record. I had already submitted the necessary paperwork for full reimbursement of eligible costs and that payment will be released soon, now that the final status of the project has been documented.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

## **N. Emergency Planning**

No items.

## **O. Other Items**

### (1) Town Administrator Leave

I was out of the office on vacation leave on March 6, 2015.

*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.*