



Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of March 22, 2010

Report covers from March 6, 2010 to March 19, 2010

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

A. Town Department Reports/Requests

(1) Second Annual Youth Triathlon

The Selectmen authorized the use of the Centennial Grove for the subject event on August 7, 2010. The Board of Health is organizing the event and will be holding it one day before the adult triathlon that is held in Gloucester.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(2) Building Inspector Weekly Report

I have explained to the Building Inspector the Board's desire for him to provide a brief report regarding permit activity and routing each week. He has begun to provide that report and I will ensure that the Board sees each new log.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(3) Essex Youth Commission Survey

(*)

Responses to the subject survey were due by March 15, 2010 and a total of 46 responses were received. I have provided the Board with summaries of the survey results.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(4) North Coastal MS4 General Permit

The Town has steadily kept pace with the EPA's Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) requirements since the inception of those rules. Presently, the EPA is getting ready to issue what will be known as the North Coastal MS4 General Permit, which will impose additional storm water management requirements on 84 communities in our region. A hearing on the matter was held on March 18, 2010 and the EPA is accepting written comments through the end of the month. Our Superintendent of Public Works is aware of the need to review and comment on the proposal and he will be submitting written comments after review by the Board of Public Works.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

B. Computer Systems

(1) Preparation for Accounting Server Migration

I have finalized the necessary server preparation tasks for our accounting software vendor to physically visit our site to migrate the software from our old server to our new server. We are presently awaiting a slot on our vendor's site work schedule.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary. Total time – 0.5+ hours.

(2) Cable I-Net Problem

The link between Town Hall and the Fire/Police network was intermittently breaking during the week of March 8, 2010. The issue was likely a result of the windstorm that affected many electronic and communications networks. After reviewing the status of our in-house equipment, I re-set the cable modem and contacted Comcast to monitor the system in the event maintenance or repairs were necessary. The problem appears to be fixed.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary. Total time – 0.5 hours.

(3) New Wastewater Clerk Computer System

As the Board may recall, I had ordered a new computer system for the Wastewater Clerk after an electrical surge during a recent storm damaged the old system beyond repair. The new system arrived during the week of March 8, 2010 and I configured it on the Water Filtration Plant network. I then migrated the Clerk's settings to the new system and returned to the Assistant Superintendent the older system that the Clerk had been using temporarily (the Assistant had been logging onto the network from another terminal temporarily). The Clerk's hard drive had been placed into the Assistant's computer system and I simply returned the Assistant's drive to that system and both systems are working well.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary. Total time – 2 hours.

(4) Conservation Agent Computer Access

New Conservation Agent Jim Hankin will be sharing a workstation with the Conservation Commission Clerk and needs access to the conservation database and other features. I set Mr. Hankin up on the network and configured his desktop to offer him the necessary features.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary. Total time – 0.5 hours.

(5) Replacement of Network Attached Storage Device

As the Board may recall, I had reported that I was able to recover the operation of a network attached storage device in Town Hall with the help of the vendor's technical support department. However, shortly thereafter, the device failed again

and the vendor decided to replace the unit under warranty with an upgrade to a more advanced unit. I have installed the replacement unit and it is working well.

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

(6) Library Patron Computer Virus Problem

The Librarian recently informed me of an apparent virus issue with the patron computer in the Library. I did find viruses in numerous locations and worked to clean the system. All viruses are purged and the system is working well.

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

(7) Board of Health Administrator Maintenance

I recently assisted the Board of Health Administrator with the installation of some additional fonts and the reinstallation of the pictometry program.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary. Total time 0.5 hours.

C. Personnel

(1) Implementation of Shellfish Constable Work Plan

The Board approved a standard work plan for the Shellfish Constable at the last meeting and I met with the Constable during the week of March 8, 2010 to go over what is expected of him under the plan. The Constable has begun to follow the plan.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary at this time.

(2) Ethics Commission Training Webinar

I participated in the subject webinar on March 9, 2010. The webinar was sponsored by our insurer and was led by the Ethics Commission's chief trainer. The presentation was very comprehensive and very informative.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(3) Safety Committee Meeting

I attended the subject meeting on March 10, 2010. The meeting featured a discussion regarding fire extinguisher use and safety and I indicated that I would contact our insurer to determine if any training videos existed on the topic. I did find a video that may be suitable and the Fire Chief will determine if it is something that we should offer.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(4) Town Clerk Discussion

(*)

At the last meeting, the Board agreed to review the present collection of applications for the position between meetings for further discussion at the present meeting.

Recommendation: **Board discussion relative to the review of additional applicants.**

D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects

(1) Work Hours for Upcoming Road Construction Season

At the last meeting, the Board asked that I express to the Resident Engineer for the Route 133 Reconstruction Project that a 6:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. workday is preferred over the 7:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. workday for the upcoming season. The Resident Engineer has indicated that such a decision would be up to the contractor but that Mass DOT would not oppose it. Even if the contractor does elect to begin work at 6:00 a.m., that schedule would not commence until it is light enough at 6:00 a.m. for operations to proceed safely.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(2) Martin and Main Intersection Pocket Park

(*)

As the Board may recall, the Long Term Planning Committee recommended the construction of a pocket park at the curve on Main Street by its intersection with Martin Street. Various stakeholders had met on site to review the possibilities associated with that intersection and agreed that the area should be grassed as opposed to being paved. Mass DOT has since agreed to change its work plan to install the necessary loam and seed.

Recently, I have learned that several stakeholders may wish to revisit the plan to potentially investigate a mountable curb with public parking spaces in that area as opposed to a vertical curb with either pavement or grass behind it. Mountable curbs have been approved elsewhere in the project area but not on similar curves near intersections. When asked informally about this type of change, the Resident Engineer commented that safety considerations would likely prevent it.

Recommendation: **Board discussion relative to the potential change, how to bring all necessary stakeholders together to discuss, and how to approach Mass DOT to determine if the new idea is possible/feasible from that agency's perspective.**

(3) Town Building Feasibility Study Finalists

The Town Building Committee met on March 15, 2010 and selected three finalists for interviews to be held on March 29, 2010. The top three proposals were of sufficiently higher quality than the others that the Committee was able to reach

consensus fairly quickly. After the interview process, the Committee will assign a final rank to each of the proposals and will engage the top-ranked firm relative to a final contract. The Selectmen will be asked to review and sign a contract only after Town Meeting has made an appropriation (the issue will likely be considered at a fall Town Meeting).

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

E. Insurance

(1) Retiree Representation on the Insurance Advisory Committee (*)

At the last meeting, the Board asked me to pull together a list of retirees who still live locally for potential appointment to the Insurance Advisory Committee (IAC). Many retirees still live in the general area and I provided the list to the Board in advance of the present meeting for discussion.

Recommendation: **Board discussion relative to solicitation of interest and appointment.**

F. Facilities

(1) Preliminary Wetlands Assessment, Cemetery Site

I walked the portion of the cemetery that is being considered for a future public safety building site on March 8, 2010 with a wetlands biologist. He did not see any issues that would outright prevent development of the site and indicated that certain buffer zones would need to be respected. I discussed this matter with the Board at the last meeting and the Board agreed that the wetlands should be flagged and located on a plot plan for further analysis. I commissioned that work at a total cost of \$1,550 and the work is almost complete.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(3) Assessment of Town Property Relative to Tree Pest Threats

At the last meeting, the Board asked that I discuss with an arborist the threats to trees on Town properties from various pests that are expected to be active this coming season. I made that contact and the arborist is presently summarizing what would be recommended for Town property.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(4) Historic Records Preservation

At the last meeting, the Board agreed that the remaining \$4,700 for historic records preservation should be spent on the efforts of two preservationists to continue the work that was started in the past. I have contacted the workers and

work will proceed until the funds are exhausted. Additional funding may be sought in the future to finish the project.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(5) Field of Dreams Improvements

The Board approved a final proposal from the Manchester Essex Little League at the last meeting for improvement of the Field of Dreams. The proposal included the following: a) the purchase of two, new, portable scoreboards, b) the installation of more modern, lightweight, removable fencing for the outfields, c) installation of a solar-powered lightning detection system, d) purchase of two, new sets of aluminum bleachers (with the old units to be moved to the second field), e) purchase of infield tarps, f) installation of a new batting cage, and g) additional protection against foul balls.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(6) Summer Program Physical Audit

At the last meeting, the Board determined that the Grove Cottage would not be used for the Summer Program and asked that a “rainy day” contingency plan be set up at the school. As such, the physical audit of the program will include both the Grove grounds and the school grounds.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(7) Deployment of “Big Belly” Solar Trash Compactors

As the Board may recall, the Town had used its Clean Energy Choice grant funding to purchase two “Big Belly” solar trash compactors for use in public areas. The units will soon be deployed (one at Memorial Park and one at the Centennial Grove) by the DPW. Deployment was delayed until now since we received the units so close to the wintertime. The DPW Superintendent will monitor how the units perform and we will report to the grantmaker by the end of September, 2010. With the Superintendent’s permission, I developed a web page that provides interested parties with additional information about the compactors. The specific link is as follows:

http://www.essexma.org/Pages/EssexMA_DPW/compactors

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(8) Municipal Lot Signage and Winter Stairs Maintenance (*)

As noted above, some of the local pastors are interested in the installation of parking signage on Route 133 directing churchgoers to the municipal lot since many churchgoers are parking at local businesses. There is also an interest in winter maintenance of the stairs from the lot up to the Village Restaurant

property. Presently, those stairs are closed in the winter since the DPW cannot commit to keep them safe from dangerous icing.

I discussed both issues with the Superintendent of Public Works and he can work with Mass DOT relative to the installation of signage. However, since the stairs do not get any direct sunlight and the Town does not have sufficient forces to commit to safety there, he strongly advises against opening the stairs during the winter. One pastor did ask about the potential for private parties to maintain the stairs. That is also not recommended since any gap in maintenance may accrue significant liability to the Town. Presently, the DPW posts horses and signs to clearly indicate that the stairs are closed, which significantly decreases the Town's level of risk.

Recommendation: **Board discussion relative to this matter.**

G. Fiscal/Budget

(1) Lockup Agreement

At the last meeting, the Board agreed that the Chief of Police should work with the Town of Manchester to see if the cost of our Lockup Agreement with that community could be reduced in some fashion. The Chief will discuss the matter with Manchester officials and will report back.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

H. Complaints

No items.

I. Meetings Attended

(1) Small Business Loan Meeting

I represented the Board at a meeting on March 9, 2010 that included Senator Tarr, Representative Ferrante, various representatives from State and Federal business development agencies, and various representatives from the Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce and the Essex Merchants' Group. The purpose of the meeting was to explore the potential for zero-percent or low-interest loans for Essex small businesses in the Essex causeway area to enable financial viability during the Route 133 Reconstruction Project. A more general meeting regarding this topic was held in February.

The group learned that the recent Federal recovery package included a loan program known as "ARC" or "America's Recovery Capital". ARC provides up to \$35,000 to small businesses that are viable but struggling and the business' interest rate is zero percent (the Federal Government pays the actual interest to the

participating lender). At this point, business leaders will direct interested businesses to the ARC loan program. Additional loan programs may be available in the future if more assistance is needed and our legislators will continue to investigate the possibility of a program that could be tailored specifically to Essex. A follow-up meeting may occur in the future to discuss progress associated with loan programs and to discuss possible marketing strategies and assistance.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(2) Route 133 Reconstruction Task Force Meeting (*)

I attended the subject meeting along with the other members of the Task Force in the office of the Resident Engineer for the project on March 18, 2010. The Resident Engineer indicated that Mass DOT is presently working to finalize two change orders for: a) a change in the method of roadbed reconstruction (pulverization) in the amount of \$150,000, and b) a change from temporary to permanent steel sheeting with respect to the seawall reconstruction in the amount of \$100,000. Until those two items are finalized, the contractor cannot move forward. We may see limited work by the contractor to finish up drainage, waterline, and conduit work on an intermittent basis.

It is possible that seawall work, once it begins, will include a third shift that will begin at 11:00 p.m. in order to concentrate some of the work off of peak hours. Mass DOT is still working on the roadbed elevation issue in the vicinity of Perkins Marine and the Fortune Palace Restaurant since adjustments to the present plans must be made in order to prevent future flooding from the landward side of the causeway. I will continue to work with Mass DOT to get the necessary changes approved and implemented and the Task Force has scheduled a site visit with Mass DOT officials on March 23, 2010.

Further, Task Force Member Perkins suggested that the Town should consider purchasing and setting approximately 30 wooden pilings along the new seawall before the final rip-rap erosion protection elements are installed (just after the completion of the new seawall). This is recommended since it will be very difficult to get permission and very costly to install the pilings after that point if the Town's new boardwalk proposal is funded in the future. The installation of the pilings will likely cost \$40,000 - \$50,000.

Recommendation: **Board discussion relative to the roadbed elevation issue and the piling installation issue.**

J. Final Judgment

(1) Quarterly Report (*)

I have produced the subject report due to the Department of Environmental Protection by April 1, 2010.

Recommendation: **Board vote to submit the report.**

K. Town Meeting, By-Laws, and Regulations

(1) Annual Town Meeting Warrant (*)

I have developed a final draft of the Annual Town Meeting Warrant pursuant to the Board's guidance at the last meeting. I discussed with Planning Board Co-Chair Kim Drake the concern over including the lengthy zoning by-law reformatting text in the warrant. Ms. Drake indicated that the Planning Board agrees that the text does not need to appear in the warrant but would like to discuss further with the Selectmen the prospect of having a separate, printed handout at Town Meeting that would provide the entire text. Presently, the entire text is on file with the Town Clerk and is available on the Town's home page.

Recommendation: **Board discussion relative to the zoning by-law handout and Board vote to include the articles in the warrant as presented, to close the warrant, and to sign the warrant.**

(2) Town Annual Report

The Selectmen's Assistant has compiled the camera-ready copy of the subject report and has provided that to our printer for production. The report will likely be available in early April.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

L. Legal Issues

No items.

M. Grants

No items.

N. Emergency Planning

(1) Pre-Disaster Hazard Mitigation Plan

As the Board may recall, we had been working with MAPC to develop the subject plan. The plan is a prerequisite to apply for numerous Federal grant programs that are aimed at eliminating hazards that would become evident in a disaster before a disaster strikes. MAPC has recently renewed its effort in this area and I met on March 12, 2010 with an MAPC representative, the Chief of Police, the Fire Chief, the Board of Health Administrator, and the Public Health Nurse to review our past planning. MAPC will forward a final draft of the plan to the Town for review and

comment and will then proceed through a review process at both the MEMA and FEMA levels.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

O. Other Items

(1) Town Administrator Leave Use

I was out of the office on leave for a portion of the day on March 11, 2010.

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