



## Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of March 24, 2008

Report covers from March 8, 2008 to March 21, 2008

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

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### A. Town Department Reports/Requests

(1) Essex County Triad Program MOU (\*)

The Chief of Police has forwarded to me a draft, proposed Memorandum of Understanding pertaining to the Triad Program. Triad is sponsored by the Essex County Sheriff's Office and its purpose is to develop and implement policies and programs to reduce criminal victimization, promote crime prevention and safety awareness, and serve the particular needs of the senior community and disabled residents. The group would meet monthly at the Senior Center and the Chief has indicated that the kickoff is scheduled for May 12, 2008 (which will include the signing of the MOU).

*Recommendation:* **Board review of the proposed MOU.**

### B. Computer Systems

(1) Installation of Conservation Commission Permit Tracking Database

As the Board may recall, the Conservation Commission retained the services of a software consultant to provide a customized permit tracking database for the Commission's work. The application has been under development for several months and was recently completed. On March 13, 2008, I assisted the software developer with the necessary network planning and access to install the database on the network server. The Conservation Commission Clerk has received training in the use of the new system and the Commission will begin tracking their business electronically right away.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

(2) Installation of Uninterruptible Power Supplies (UPS)

As noted previously, one of the Assessors Office computer systems experienced a battery fault on its UPS unit. The other system in that office did not have a UPS unit to begin with. As such, I ordered both a replacement battery and a new UPS. That equipment arrived during the week of March 10, 2008 and I have since installed it in the Assessors' Office.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

### (3) Mooring Permit Tracking Database

As reported in the past, I had developed for the Harbormaster's Office a custom database that will be used to manage the mooring permit waiting list. The Harbormaster's Clerk then reviewed all of the waiting list data that I had imported from the old system and the waiting list portion of the new application is working well. As planned, I was asked to create another aspect of the database to track active moorings. I created the necessary fields and screens for the Harbormaster's Office during the week of March 10, 2008 and imported the active data from the old program. The Clerk is presently verifying the imported data and will contact me when she needs assistance developing new forms and form letters.

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

### (4) Deputy Fire Chief Internet Access

The Deputy Fire Chief requested my assistance in setting up Internet access for him on the Fire Department computer system. I set up an account and provided access during the week of March 17, 2008.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

### (5) Burning Permit Form Revision

Emergency Center personnel informed me that the burning permits issued by that office were in need of revision since only the last four digits of the property owner's phone number appeared on the form (generated by a customized database application). The form had originally been set up to utilize home phone numbers that were all in Essex. However, increasingly, residents are using cellular phones that do not carry the Essex area code or exchange. Consequently, multiple permits were showing the same final four digits and the phone number is used as the permit number. I was able to open the form in the database and expand that field to show the entire number.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

## **C. Personnel**

### (1) Safety Committee Meeting

I attended the subject meeting on March 11, 2008. The meeting focused primarily on a water problem in the basement of the Fire Station. It is likely that a stone-lined drain will need to be installed outside the station to divert rain runoff. The Fire Chief will seek a quotation for the work and it could be considered for funding in the fall.

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

(2) Scope of Services for Centennial Grove Worker (\*)

At the last meeting, I commented to the Board that the Superintendent of Public Works was willing to consider allowing one of his summer laborers to work at the Centennial Grove a few hours per week to help maintain the area (using the Grove Revolving Fund). The Board asked that the Selectmen's Assistant and I pull together a list of potential duties for further discussion. We have developed that list and need further guidance relative to its finalization and the number of desired hours per week.

**Recommendation: Board discussion relative to the scope of services and hours of work. The rate of pay will be as high as \$14.16 per hour.**

(3) Chief of Police Successor Agreement (\*)

The Chief of Police will likely provide me with additional information relative to his next contract by meeting time.

**Recommendation: Board discussion in executive session.**

(4) Youth Commission Summer Program Wages

At the last meeting, the Selectmen and the Finance Committee recommended to the Personnel Board that Youth Commission summer program wage rates be increased in accordance with the Commission's request. That recommendation came after a review of comparable wages in other communities and the acknowledgement that the costs will be offset by user fees. I will provide the wage increase request to the Personnel Board for final consideration.

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

## **D. Procurement**

(1) Route 133 Reconstruction Project Construction Preferences

At the last meeting, the Board reviewed a request from the Project Manager of the subject project to express the Board's preferences relative to various project work tasks. Specifically, the Board decided to: a) allow night work for the installation of steel sheeting and pilings associated with the new seawall (with no other night work project elements), b) allow work in any season so long as only one lane of traffic would be closed at a given time (with no work allowed on weekends), and c) that a sidewalk on at least one side of the causeway will be open at all times during the sheeting/pilings/seawall work (and at all other times during the project). Earlier at the last meeting, the Board had already endorsed the concept of using some of the blocks from the old seawall as benches in the area known as "Woodman's Beach". I contacted the Project Manager on March 11, 2008 and made him aware of those specific decisions. He was pleased at the balance between public convenience and project duration that was achieved by the Board.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

## **E. Insurance**

### (1) Fiscal Year 2009 Health Insurance Meeting and Rates (\*)

A representative of our insurer visited me on March 12, 2008 to officially deliver the fiscal year 2009 health insurance rates to the Town. As noted in the past, MIIA-controlled rates will not be increased at all from fiscal year 2008 to fiscal year 2009. The representative did point out that there is a slight increase in the Managed Blue for Seniors plan premium since that plan is a straight passthrough from the provider and MIIA does not control it. The Treasurer has informed the Accountant of that small amount of money so it can be included in the budget.

*Recommendation:* **Board vote to accept the rates as quoted.**

### (2) Shannon Grant Insurance Question (\*)

At the last meeting, Chief Silva and Sergeant Francis discussed with the Board the benefits of participating in the Shannon Grant to allow Essex officers into other jurisdictions for various exercises. The Board asked that I confirm whether our insurer would view that type of participation in the same way that mutual aid insurance coverage works (our coverage for mutual aid calls follows us into the other jurisdiction). I contacted our insurer and learned that our policy covers these types of joint operations just like it covers mutual aid calls. In summary, additional risks may be involved as officers venture voluntarily into other jurisdictions but those risks are covered by our policy. The authority to enter into agreements such as the Shannon Grant MOU was conferred to the Board of Selectmen by the Annual Town Meeting of 2006 (Article 13) that adopted the provisions of Section 8G of Chapter 40 of the General Laws.

*Recommendation:* **Final Board consideration of the MOU.**

### (3) Proposal to Switch Dental Plan Providers (\*)

As the Board may recall, I had arranged for a representative of a new dental provider to be available in Town for all employees to ask questions about a proposed switch from the Guardian dental plan to Altus Dental. No employees visited the representative during those posted hours. In addition, all three unions were asked to transmit any concerns about the proposed switch in writing by March 12, 2008. No correspondence was received from any union or any other party. With the employee/union information stage completed with no comments, the Board may now consider the merits of the proposal to switch. Two specific plan designs have been proposed with the second, richer design only costing a small amount more than the base design.

*Recommendation:* **Board review of the proposals and potential vote to accept one of them in place of the current dental plan.**

(4) Steam and Forced Hot Water Boiler Inspections

An inspector from the Hartford Steam Boiler company visited Town buildings on March 13, 2008 to inspect our various hot water and steam boilers. He indicated that a fire extinguisher should be placed just outside of the boiler room in Town Hall. He had no other recommendations. We have since had the requested extinguisher installed in that location.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

**F. Facilities**

No items.

**G. Fiscal/Budget**

(1) Verizon Appellate Tax Board Case

The Appellate Tax Board has ruled as a result of a consolidated Verizon case that telecommunications companies are no longer exempt from pole and wire taxes (consistent with recent legislation on the topic). As such, the Department of Revenue has cautioned communities to reserve sufficient abatement overlays to cover any abatement requests that might arise from this new taxation. I have provided a copy of DOR's guidance to the Assessors, the Finance Committee, the Town Accountant, and the Selectmen and the Assessors are presently analyzing how the DOR's guidance will affect the fiscal year 2009 budget (if at all).

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

**H. Complaints**

No items.

**I. Meetings Attended**

(1) Manchester Essex Rotary Club Meeting

I attended the subject meeting on March 12, 2008 as the guest speaker. The club asks me to come to a meeting once a year to update the members on major issues in the Town. I provided a summary of some major topics and fielded questions.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

**J. Final Judgment**

(1) Quarterly Report

(\*)

I have prepared the Quarterly Report due April 1, 2008. As the Board may recall, the report no longer contains information regarding the public warning program or

the storm drain sampling program since those programs have been phased out with the approval of the DEP.

*Recommendation:* **Board vote to approve the submission of the report.**

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

### (1) Shellfish Regulations (\*)

At the last meeting, a representative of the Shellfish Advisory Commission indicated that the Commission was in complete agreement with the draft proposed changes to the Shellfish Regulations. As such, I have finalized the new version for the Board's final review and promulgation.

*Recommendation:* **Board vote to promulgate the revised regulations.**

### (2) Annual Town Meeting Warrant (\*)

The Board closed the Annual Town Meeting Warrant at the last meeting and approved a draft subject to Town Counsel review and final ordering of the articles. Town Counsel has reviewed the previous draft, has made minor changes, and has approved the document as to form.

*Recommendation:* **Final Board review of the warrant, Board vote to approve the warrant, Board vote to sign the warrant.**

### (3) Agricultural/Residential Overlay District By-law Forum

At the last meeting, a group that opposed the Agricultural/Residential Overlay District By-law that is presently on the Annual Town Meeting Warrant by petition expressed a desire to meet with the Selectmen for further discussion. Chairman Lynch and Selectman Randall discussed that request and asked that a forum that they will moderate be set up to allow the group and any other interested parties to discuss the issue. Selectman Jones cannot participate due to his residence within the district in question. The forum has been set up for Saturday, April 5, 2008 at the Essex Elementary School at 10:00 a.m.

*Recommendation:* Chairman Lynch and Selectman Randall will attend and moderate the forum.

## **L. Legal Issues**

### (1) Countersignature of Route 133 Legal Documents

At the last meeting, the Board approved Right of Entry and Land Damage Agreements for several properties adjacent to the Route 133 Reconstruction Project in preparation for construction. The signed documents were provided to the State and we are presently awaiting the countersigned copies for our records.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

(2) Ramsey Dog Banishment Case (\*)

I have additional information from Town Counsel relative to this case.

*Recommendation:* **Board discussion in executive session.**

(3) Gloucester Sewer Billing Dispute (\*)

I have spent considerable time recently working with Town Counsel and our experts to finalize a suit relative to the subject dispute. The suit has been filed in Salem Superior Court.

*Recommendation:* **Board discussion in executive session.**

## **M. Grants**

(1) Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan Grant (\*)

As the Board may recall, a past Town Meeting voted to put aside money for the Town's share of the subject plan that is to be written as a regional document by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC). Federal funds will pay for 75% of the plan and local funds will cover the remaining 25%. MAPC has requested that the Selectmen appoint two local officials to participate in the Regional Hazard Mitigation Community Planning Team. Recommended types of officials are public works, emergency management, planning, engineering, or building and five to six meetings over the next 15 months are expected.

*Recommendation:* **Board discussion relative to the two designated local officials.**

## **N. Emergency Planning**

No items.

## **O. Other Items**

(1) Town Administrator Vacation Leave

I was out of the office on vacation leave on March 19 and 20, 2008.

*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.*