



Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of April 6, 2015

Report covers from March 21, 2015 to April 3, 2015

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

A. Town Department Reports/Requests

(1) Continued Development of Strategic Planning Committee (*)

At the last meeting, the Board continued to discuss (with the Town Planner present) 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 (potentially with technical assistance from MAPC). The group agreed that the LTPC's eventual delivery of their character-defining resources of the Town product will be an excellent precursor to the work of the SPC. Town Planner Matt Coogan has continued to develop a draft mission statement using the Board's guidance from the last meeting and a toolkit designed for this purpose that was available from MAPC.

Also, since the last meeting, we have learned that the Town's application for strategic planning assistance has been funded in the amount of \$15,000 by MAPC. This funding will greatly assist to organize the initial planning effort and to frame the basic mission and direction of the Committee. The Town Planner will be in attendance at the present meeting to discuss the formulation of the Committee and the recent grant funding in more detail. An initial meeting of the SPC could occur in late May or early June.

Recommendation: Further Board discussion the draft mission statement and the overall function of the SPC, with anticipation that the grant funding will provide a wealth of guidance and direction.

B. Computer Systems

(1) Site Visit by City of Melrose IT Personnel

IT professionals from the City of Melrose visited the Town on March 31, 2015 to review with users of our new remote Windows desktop system a variety of user performance issues (such as speed of computing, video quality, etc.). The Melrose staff visited both the Town Hall and the Water Filtration Plant and collected many comments and suggestions, in addition to observing actual performance. One major discovery in Town Hall was that a major network line that had recently been installed by others was not terminated correctly, translating to poor performance. In the Water Plant, the team recommended that some of the older switches and hubs be upgraded to improve performance there. Melrose personnel will begin to adjust settings on our new system in the coming weeks

and I will make the necessary equipment upgrades, after which time we will reassess the various performance issues.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary at this time. Total time – 3.5 hours.

(2) Configuration of Check Scanner for Use with New Platform

I worked with the Treasurer/Collector and the technical representative for a bank on March 26, 2015 to investigate a check scanner that was not functioning correctly on the new, virtual desktop platform. The issue involved our new operating system but the bank is recommending a change to all customers that will consequently make the device operable. The bank desires that all customers using their on-line services utilize a separate, stand-alone PC just for those transactions (regardless of the customer's basic user platform). As such, I have retrieved the Treasurer/Collector's old PC from storage and we will utilize a switching device to allow easy viewing of output on both platforms using a single mouse, keyboard, and monitor.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary. Total time – 3 hours.

(3) Printer Replacement and Configuration

Two of the new workstations at the Water Filtration Plant replaced PC's that were connected to printers using old, LPT cables. Fortunately, both printers also had a USB option. As such, I installed both printers using new USB cables and both users can now print directly at their desks (users were printing to other offices as a temporary measure). Also, the Town Clerk's printer failed due to a defective USB interface and I replaced the printer with another that I had on hand.

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

C. Personnel

(1) Safety Committee Meeting

I attended the subject meeting on March 26, 2015 as a member of the Committee. The meeting featured a visit from our insurer's Loss Control Representative, Mr. Kevin Perkins. The Committee discussed with Mr. Perkins the various grants and other loss control and safety measures that the Town is currently involved with. Mr. Perkins also updated the group concerning new injury reporting requirements for insurers relative to the Department of Industrial Accidents and the Department of Labor Standards.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Informal Department Heads Meeting

I hosted the subject meeting in my office on March 26, 2015, as I do from time to time. The meeting featured a discussion regarding the plans for the next phase of Town Hall / Library renovation work and the warrant for the upcoming Annual Town Meeting.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects

(1) Preliminary Cost Estimate for Next Phase of Town Hall / Library Work (*)

At the last meeting, I described to the Board the most likely layout for the various interior work elements of the next phase of Town Hall / Library renovation work. I indicated that the architect who is assisting our Project Manager with the cost estimation task was in the process of preparing the basic project program to be converted into preliminary figures. I discussed progress with the architect on March 30, 2015 and reviewed the firm's assessment on the building's heating system as well as suggestions from the Library for the future of the space on the first floor of Town Hall.

Presently, the architect has indicated that all of the work described in my previous report, along with design, project management, construction oversight, and any other costs incidental thereto, will be included the cost estimate that is presently being developed by a professional cost estimator. Further, our architect does not recommend that the Town Clerk's office or the Treasurer/Collector Department offices be moved from their current, first-floor locations. These offices are typically the most conveniently located offices in any town hall since most of the public traffic is related to business in these offices (among other reasons). I will provide the Board with more information as soon as it becomes available.

Recommendation: **Board discussion relative to the heating plant and distribution systems and the final locations of the various Town Hall offices.**

(2) No Proposals for Purchase of 5 Beach Circle

Proposals were due in response to a Request for Proposals for the purchase of 5 Beach Circle on March 23, 2015. As discussed with the Board at the last meeting, no proposals were received. As such, additional discussion will be necessary in the future regarding this vacant property.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary at this time.

(3) Cost Proposal for Potential Legion Hall Renovations (*)

At the last meeting, the Board ranked the top three designers who had submitted proposals associated with repairs to the Legion Hall and had asked me to obtain a cost proposal for the first phase of work with the top-ranked proposer. As such, I

reached out to the Spencer & Vogt Group (the top-ranked proposer) and asked for a cost proposal for the work required to assess renovation needs and arrive at detailed cost estimate for eventual construction bidding purposes. The cost of this first phase could then be brought to the Community Preservation Committee for funding consideration. If funded, the work will later give the Committee an accurate sense of how much the actual construction will cost.

***Recommendation:* Board review and discussion relative to the first phase proposal and costs of potential future design work phases. No funding is available at this time but the proposal will help inform the Community Preservation Committee as part of its own vetting process.**

(4) Letter to Army Corps Highlighting Importance of Dredging (*)

At the last meeting, the Board agreed that a letter should be sent to the Army Corps of Engineers highlighting the critical economic development and public safety-driven need to dredge the Essex River (both at the mouth and along the River to the Harbor). I have finalized the letter, with appropriate attachments, and recommend that the letter be copied to both our State and our Federal legislative delegations.

***Recommendation:* Board vote to transmit the letter.**

(5) Production of Maps for Revision of Essex Open Space Plan

As the Board may recall, Mr. Steve Winslow, a City of Gloucester employee, is assisting the Town with the updating of our Open Space Plan, via an intermunicipal agreement. The Town approved \$7,000 in funding last year for this purpose and Mr. Winslow is now at the point where various maps need to be updated. We will utilize our existing Assessors' map contractor, CAI, to produce the maps using a portion of the project funds and a portion of our usual GIS line item. I have asked CAI to proceed.

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

E. Insurance

(1) Freeze-up Prevention Logs

As the Board may recall, as part of the MIIA Rewards Program, personnel from the Police Department and the Department of Public Works had been conducting freeze-up prevention checks in various buildings over the winter. Now that March has passed, the departments have turned the logs into me and I have submitted to our insurer for credit. Fortunately, we did not have any freeze-up issues over this past, severe winter season.

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

F. Facilities

(1) Town Hall / Library Gas Conversion Options

(*)

Since the last meeting, I have learned that our energy supplier will not soon be able to provide gas conversions for the two Town Hall / Library heating plants by billing the costs back on gas bills over time, as originally thought. This capability may be possible in time but additional State procurement requirements still need to be analyzed. As such, if the Board desires the conversion work to be completed in time for the next heating season, the only options are to include the work in the next part of the Town Hall / Library renovation work (specifying that it be done at the start of the project) or a separate capital appropriation. Both of those options are possible as part of the upcoming Annual Town Meeting. Recent information from our Project Manager's architect suggests that the work in the building will be disrupting the old steam distribution system in several places. Therefore, replacement of the two heating plants with a single, high-efficiency, gas-fired heating plant coupled to a new, forced hot water distribution system may be in order anyway.

Recommendation: Board discussion relative to the preferred option for the conversion work.

(2) 1 Robbins Island Road Demolition Update

(*)

Our asbestos assessment consultant provided the Town with a report detailing the presence of a significant amount of asbestos in the structure at 1 Robbins Island Road during the week of March 23, 2015. Our consultant estimates that the removal cost will be approximately \$15,000 and I have initiated the necessary procurement process to receive quotations for the work. The project will be advertised in the *Central Register* on April 8, 2015 and quotations are due no later than noon on April 22, 2015. I expect to have a contract for the removal process developed for the Board to consider at the meeting of April 27, 2015.

Recommendation: Board discussion as necessary.

(3) Replacement of Overhead Line Along Centennial Grove Road

For quite some time now, I and others have been working with National Grid to consider replacing the overhead line between Western Avenue and the Water Filtration Plant along Centennial Grove Road. The present line is old and has been spliced in many places, which makes it particularly weak and susceptible to outages from even small branches. The utility has completed a study of the matter and I am pleased to announce that the line will be replaced during the summer of 2016. This replacement will provide quite a benefit to area residents and will ensure more consistent power delivery to a critical Town facility.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary at this time.

(4) Memorial Park Restrooms Open for Season

The public restrooms at Memorial Park opened for the season as of April 1, 2015 (8:30 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. daily) and will remain open on that schedule, seven days a week, through September 30, 2015 (when limited hours will take effect, as usual).

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(5) Field of Dreams Irrigation System Startup

Our irrigation system contractor will start up the Field of Dreams irrigation/sprinkler system for the season on April 15, 2015. I have noted to the contractor that our Superintendent of Public Works had observed a sprinkler head that needs to be straightened while the system was operating last season. Our contractor will correct that issue.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

G. Fiscal/Budget

(1) Development of Northern Conomo Point Plan and Essex Visual Budget(*)

I have been working with Conomo Point Planning Committee Chairman Mark Lynch and Regina Villa to review a preliminary draft of James Heroux's public forum presentation that he has been working on for the April 15, 2015 public forum to be held at the school at 7:30 p.m. that evening. A working session of the Conomo Point Planning Committee will be held at the Senior Center on April 8, 2015 at 7:30 p.m. to take this preliminary content and revise it for the public forum.

Also, I kicked off the development of the Essex visual budget on March 30, 2015 when personnel from our consultant, Involution, hosted a webinar describing how the model works and demonstrating how the individual budget components are populated into spreadsheets that drive the Java illustration. I am currently working with the Town Accountant to provide to Involution FY15 expense, revenue, and reserve figures to create the basic model. Involution hopes to have a final visual budget live no later than April 27, 2015 and the illustration will include breakdowns with and without tax revenue from northern Conomo Point. It will also include totals for taxes and rent derived from the northern area.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

H. Complaints

No items.

I. Meetings Attended

(1) Essex Merchants' Group Meeting

I attended the subject meeting on March 25, 2015 to speak about the upcoming Comcast cable contract renewal process. One of the Group's members, Mr. Barry O'Brien, is the Town's representative to the Cape Ann Regional Cable Advisory Committee and also spoke about how enhanced local broadcast capabilities could help promote Cape Ann. We covered the various elements of the renewal process and some elements that would be useful to obtain via the next contract, such as better facilities and enhanced grant offerings from Comcast.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary at this time.

(2) Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce State/Local Government Caucus

I attended the subject meeting in Manchester along with Selectman Coviello on March 27, 2015. The meeting featured presentations regarding ongoing initiatives and issues in each of the four Cape Ann communities along with a great opportunity to discuss local issues with the Cape Ann State legislative delegation.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

J. Final Judgment

(1) Revision of Board's Comprehensive Statement on Conomo Point (*)

At the last meeting, the Board reviewed a statement released in 2011 relative to the future of Conomo Point. Since the Town has now acted on a substantial portion of that statement, the Board began an update discussion and provided me with guidance to bring a revised statement to the present meeting.

Recommendation: **Board review, discussion, and finalization of the updated statement.**

K. Town Meeting, By-Laws, and Regulations

(1) Draft Town Meeting Motions (*)

I have developed a preliminary draft of the Annual Town Meeting motions for the Board's review and discussion. Particular discussion is in order relative to the ultimate source(s) of funding for the Town Hall / Library renovation work. An annotated copy of the warrant, which contains links to items referenced in the warrant, can be found on the homepage at www.essexma.org.

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

L. Legal Issues

(1) Appeals Court Consideration of Pratt and Walker Decisions

Attorneys Corbo and Blake presented oral arguments to the Appeals Court regarding the Pratt and Walker Conomo Point lawsuits on March 24, 2015. Some of the plaintiffs in the Pratt case and all plaintiffs in the Walker class action case appealed Judge Welch's decisions shortly after they were issued. The schedule on which the Appeals Court will make a decision is not known and could take quite some time.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

M. Grants

(1) Possible Reimbursement of Open Space Plan Update Costs (*)

The Massachusetts Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs (EAA) has announced a new grant program entitled "Conservation Assistance for Small Communities". The grant program will reimburse communities with populations less than 6,000 up to 80% of eligible costs for the updating of an expired Open Space and Recreation Plan. Mr. Steve Winslow, a City of Gloucester employee, is presently working for the Town as a consultant to complete the Town's update process (via an intermunicipal agreement). One condition of the grant program is that the Town must also apply for one of EEA's other land conservation grant programs. In speaking with Mr. Winslow, it appears that the improvement of Memorial Park via the development of a master plan may be a suitable project. I hope to have more information from EEA personnel by meeting time as to the viability of a Memorial Park planning application and regarding various other grant requirements.

Recommendation: **Board discussion relative to the grant program and authorization to proceed if the various requirements are deemed feasible.**

N. Emergency Planning

No items.

O. Other Items

(1) Town Administrator Leave

I was out of the office on leave all day on April 1, 2015.

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