



Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of April 27, 2009

Report covers from April 11, 2009 to April 24, 2009

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

A. Town Department Reports/Requests

(1) Conomo Point Subdivision Public Forum (*)

The firm that is working on the subdivision of land on Conomo Point south of Robbins Island Road (the Horsley Witten Group) will be presenting conceptual designs at a public forum on April 30, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. at the school. Municipal officials and the public alike will be able to view the conceptual plans, to hear about factors associated with each plan, and to ask questions. Selectman Lynch and I participated in a conference call with Horsley Witten employees on April 21, 2009 to review the consultant's outline for the forum's content.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

B. Computer Systems

(1) High-Speed Internet Connection

As noted previously, a high-speed Internet connection is necessary in order to take full advantage of our new disaster recovery server in Manchester, NH. I have placed an order for a business-class cable Internet connection and that should be installed during the week of April 27, 2009. The Town Technology Fund will be used to pay the monthly bills.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

C. Personnel

(1) Teamsters Collective Bargaining

The Teamsters collective bargaining session that had been scheduled for April 13, 2009 was canceled by the union due to their own scheduling conflict. The next meeting has been scheduled for May 11, 2009.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

D. Procurement

(1) Acquisition of School Phone System

At the last meeting, the Board agreed that the Town should acquire the phone system being offered by the District's main office at no cost. As such, I indicated to the District's Technology Officer that we would like to accept that system once

the office moves into the new school building. The Technology Officer has confirmed that the system will be transferred to the Town.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(2) Surplus School District Furniture

The move to the new school building will create some surplus office furniture that the School District is offering to each of the towns. I toured the existing building with Assistant Superintendent Judy Mulligan on April 23, 2009 along with other Essex department heads to view the District's offerings. A number of items were selected by various departments and will be retrieved after school has ended for the year.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(3) Placement of Sand on Old Town Beach

The Conservation Commission will likely grant permission for the Town to place sand above the high water line at the Old Town Beach off of Red Gate Road. As such, in accordance with the Board's guidance at the last meeting, we have processed a Reserve Fund Transfer request to obtain the funds necessary for a contractor to place that material once the approval has been granted.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

E. Insurance

(1) Annual Steam Boiler Inspections

Our insurer's boiler inspector visited both the Fire Station and the Town Hall on April 15, 2009. Both systems had recently been worked on and both passed the inspection.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

F. Facilities

(1) Use of Essex Elementary School for Essex Summer Program

I met with Essex Elementary School Principal Eric Gordon and his staff on April 15, 2009 to go over our needs with respect to the use of the school building this coming summer. We were able to work out protocols that will provide the summer program with some needed space and facilities without disrupting the school's summer maintenance routine or the moving of a portion of the building's contents to the new school in Manchester. I have reviewed the protocol with the Youth Director and I will be reducing it to writing for the benefit of all parties.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

G. Fiscal/Budget

(1) State Fiscal Proposals

Representative Ann-Margaret Ferrante's Office contacted me during the week of April 6, 2009 to indicate that the Representative would have an audience with House Revenue Committee Chairman Kaufman during the week of April 20, 2009. I was asked to forward the Selectmen's input regarding proposals that are pending at the State level that could provide revenue and flexibility to municipal budgeting. At the last meeting, the Board indicated that they wished for me to express their support of a proposal that would allow municipalities to set health plan design features outside of the collective bargaining process (State agencies already have this flexibility). As such, I passed that sentiment along to the Representative.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Bond Rating Call

The Regional School District is preparing to borrow \$5M in additional funding for the ongoing school construction project and a conference call was held with the Moody's bond rating agency on April 21, 2009. I participated in the call along with Town Accountant Roxanne Tieri. Officials from both communities and the District answered a variety of primarily budget-related questions and Moody's indicated that they did not expect that present bond rating of the District (Aa3) to change.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(3) Federal Stimulus Funding Update

(*)

Representative Ferrante commented to me recently that the Town's three stimulus proposals still have the potential to bear fruit. The Town Hall proposal carries the energy conservation elements and the bid-ready status that may make it attractive to the Governor's discretionary funding. The Fire and Police station proposal may be useful in securing some funding for Fire Station renovations. The water main proposal may be eligible within the context of the State Revolving Loan fund since Federal stimulus funds are being passed into that program.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

H. Complaints

No items.

I. Meetings Attended

(1) Alternative Energy Coordination Meeting

(*)

Chairman Randall and I met with Conservation Commission Member Stephan Gersh, Environmental Scientist Mike DeRosa, and Engineer Jonathan Markey on April 14, 2009 to review alternative energy project potential in Essex. The conversation focused on wind energy potential both as a benefit to private residents (if private groups form relative to private sites) and to the Town as a whole (potentially using the Town landfill site).

The new Green Communities Act has significantly opened avenues for green energy generation and incentives and it works at the individual parcel level, the neighborhood self-managed level, and the neighborhood third party-managed level. A new concept known as Neighborhood Net Metering allows for financial credit back to all participants for energy generated with a given wind turbine. Private residents may wish to participate on some level in this type of program and that type of initiative would proceed privately if interest exists.

With respect to the Town government taking advantage of alternative energy, a suitable, Town-owned site would have to be located (potentially, the Town landfill site) and a turbine (600kW) would have to be permitted and installed at a cost of about \$2M. Approximately \$500,000 of that cost could be offset with a grant from the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative and the remainder would be financed by zero-interest bonds (also via MTC). During the first 15 years of operation, most of the money saved would be used to pay off the loans and the service life of a turbine is about 20 years. As such, real positive income would not be realized until after that first turbine replacement is paid for. Alternative energy producers can also sell renewable energy credits (RECs) to augment the income stream.

Mr. Markey has put together a basic cost analysis that the group can review further. The analysis looks at life cycle costs and an eventual income stream to produce the Town government's roughly 1M kWh annual electricity demand. This type of project is definitely an investment for future generations as opposed to something that will bear financial fruit right away. The Town of Hamilton is presently working to permit and construct such a project and, if the Town ever decided to go forward, that project could be used as a model.

Recommendation: **Preliminary Board discussion relative to this topic.**

(2) Seaport Bond Bill Funding Meeting

(*)

Representative Ann-Margaret Ferrante and Seaport Bond Council Executive Director Louis Elisa met with me on April 24, 2009 to discuss potential Seaport Bond Bill funding for the Essex waterfront. We were actually able to walk the area in question and Mr. Elisa was able to lay out a recommended plan of action.

The Seaport Bond Council is able to help communities with these types of projects. However, in order to apply for funding for step 1 (a feasibility study), we will need to have a more well-developed application. Typically, communities seek assistance from colleges or universities where students are studying design and economic development. Students, guided by professors, are often able to assist with the development of applications in hope that they can participate in the actual feasibility and/or design aspects if those items are actually funded.

I will be able to work with Representative Ferrante to identify programs at colleges like Salem State that could be helpful with application development. An application will provide views of the proposed improvements along with an explanation of how waterfront access would be improved; how the project will provide economic development; how the project is synergistic with past and planned downtown economic development projects like the Route 133 Project, the municipal parking facility project, the public restrooms project, etc.; photos and maps that visually tie these elements together; and a credible cost estimate relative to funding the actual feasibility study. If we are able to pull the application together, we will be one step closer to having feasibility funding considered by the Council.

Recommendation: **Board discussion relative to the next step.**

J. Final Judgment

No items.

K. Town Meeting, By-Laws, and Regulations

(1) Updated Draft Town Meeting Motions (*)

I have worked further with the Town Accountant to arrive at funding sources and amounts associated with each monetary article on the Annual Town Meeting Warrant. I have included these figures in an updated draft of the motions and that draft has been reviewed by Town Counsel. Also, I met with both the Moderator and the Deputy Moderator on April 23, 2009 to run through the various Town Meeting articles.

Recommendation: **Further Board discussion relative to the updated draft motions.**

L. Legal Issues

No items.

M. Grants

No items.

N. Emergency Planning

(1) Emergency Dispensing Site (EDS) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

The Board of Health Administrator had presented me with a draft MOU between various North Shore communities and Northeast Hospital Corporation (NHC) relative to NHC's ability to set up and run an EDS for medicine during a major communicable disease outbreak. At the last meeting, I informed the Board that any review of the document by Town Counsel would involve a waiver process since several communities are represented by our firm. I also indicated that those communities could agree to have the firm perform one review with the cost split among us.

Also, the Administrator had provided me with a draft MOU that was designed to be used to secure preferred access to critical supply vendors during a public health emergency. Since that type of MOU is one-on-one between the Town of Essex and each vendor, the multiple representation issue present with the NHC MOU is not a factor with this other document.

The Board asked that I learn from the Board of Health Administrator where this group of communities fits into the State, regional, and sub-regional emergency planning hierarchy and whether the documents in question have been reviewed at higher levels.

Essex Board of Health Administrator Elaine Wozny and Gloucester Health Director Jack Vondras will likely be able to attend a Selectmen's meeting in the future to better explain the various public health initiatives and their interrelation with other public health and overall emergency planning initiatives. At a minimum, they will provide a written summary for the Board's review.

Recommendation: Board discussion of these issues at a future meeting with Ms. Wozny and Mr. Vondras if possible.

(2) Executive Emergency Planning Seminar

I attended the subject seminar on April 17, 2009 in Gloucester along with the Chief of Police. Executive level public safety and administrative personnel from each of the four Cape Ann communities were present to participate in the NIMS course known as ICS-402 (Incident Command System Overview for Executives and Senior Officials). The course highlighted how the incident command system works and how senior level officials can complement its use as opposed to hindering that system.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

O. Other Items

(1) Patriots' Day Holiday

The office was close on April 20, 2009 in observance of the subject holiday.

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