



Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of April 27, 2015

Report covers from April 4, 2015 to April 24, 2015

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

A. Town Department Reports/Requests

(1) Conomo Point Planning Committee Meeting

The Selectmen and I met jointly with the Conomo Point Planning Committee (CPPC) on April 8, 2015 to review a draft northern Conomo Point planning/design presentation by consulting landscape architect Jim Heroux. Our public affairs specialist, Ms. Regina Villa, was also in attendance. This working session was held in order to further develop Mr. Heroux's presentation in preparation for a public forum that was held on April 15, 2015 (see below). Those assembled were able to provide Mr. Heroux with some excellent feedback that translated to an easy-to-understand concept at the actual public forum.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Coastal Resiliency Enhancement Task Force

At the last meeting, the Board reviewed a request from the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) and the Ipswich River Watershed Association to put forth names of individuals who are willing to server on a new task force. The task force would factor into the implementation of a new coastal resiliency grant that will provide detailed analysis of strategies the Town can use in the future to meet the challenges of expected sea level rise and increasingly-strengthening storm events.

The Board asked that I reach out to all of the members of our local task force that had been formed by NWF to attempt to field at least five members (in addition to Selectman O'Donnell) to serve on the grant task force. By the April 14, 2015 deadline, we were able to offer a slate of seven names (Selectman O'Donnell, Kim Drake of the Planning Board/Community Preservation Committee, Eric Magers of the School District's Green Team, Liz Duff of MA Audubon, Ed Becker of Essex County Greenbelt, Peter Phippen of Eight Towns and the Great Marsh, and Peter Silva – Harbormaster and Chief of Police).

Recommendation: No further action is necessary at this time.

(3) Initial Meeting of the Essex Strategic Planning Committee

At the last meeting, the Board requested that I reach out to representatives of 10 other boards and committees and the Essex Merchants' Group to invite someone from each group to an initial meeting of the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC). The meeting will occur on June 8, 2015 in the Senior Center at 7:00 p.m. and each representative can learn more about the Committee's charge and focus to bring

back to their respective group. Thereafter, each group will recommend a permanent member and the Selectmen can make formal appointments. Presently, I understand that Bob Coviello will participate for the Town Building Committee but I have not heard from any others.

Also, Selectman O'Donnell will be speaking to the Chairman of the Long Term Planning Committee, who has been working on finalizing a report concerning the "Character-Defining Resources of Essex". The Selectmen would like the report to be available soon, which will give the new SPC a chance to use it as a jumping-off point for its work.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(4) Further Exploration of the Economic Development Self-Assessment Test

At the last meeting, the Board discussed how Gloucester and Rockport had recently worked with Northeastern University to be evaluated using the Economic Development Self-Assessment Test (EDSAT). The test evaluates how well a community is poised to promote economic development and provides insight into actions that could be taken to improve this environment. The Town Planner is researching the matter further and will determine if the cost varies by the size of the community. He will also collect examples of reports resulting from the EDSAT evaluation in other small communities. If Essex has interest, it is possible that funding for the test could be sought at the Fall Town Meeting in November.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(5) Public Safety Patrols, Chebacco Lake (*)

At the last meeting, the Board discussed the fact that only Essex provides public safety patrols on Chebacco Lake, even though about half of the lake is in Hamilton. I discussed this matter with the Chief and he indicated that potential exists for joint operations in the future. It may be worthwhile to eventually meet with the Hamilton Selectmen, along with both chiefs of police, to discuss the matter further.

Recommendation: **Board discussion relative to next steps in this area.**

(6) Town Building Committee Meeting

I attended the Town Building Committee on April 13, 2015 along with Selectman O'Donnell, who chairs the Committee. The main focus of discussion was relative to the next phase of Town Hall/Library renovation work that will be considered by the Town Meeting on May 4, 2015. I provided the Committee with the most updated cost estimate information available from our architect at the time and the group discussed research I had conducted about past studies since the previous meeting. Discussion was also held concerning a two-sided fact sheet to be handed

out at the Town Meeting. The Committee resolved to support the project at Town Meeting and will be prepared to make a statement.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(7) Green Communities Forum

Our Town Planner hosted a Green Communities forum on April 14, 2015 at the Essex Senior Center. The forum included presentations from State experts concerning both the Stretch Energy Code and the Green Communities Act. Adoption of the Stretch Energy Code by the Town Meeting is prerequisite to the Town applying for the Green Community designation. If this occurs at the Annual Town Meeting on May 4, 2015, it is likely that the Town can meet the other requirements in short order. Once the designation is made by the State, the Town will receive dedicated funding for energy conservation projects and can compete in the future for additional funding. Our Town Planner will be presenting the motion and fielding questions at Town Meeting and a fact sheet will be handed out to all attendees. A copy of the State presentation that was offered at the forum may be found in the Town News section of the Town's website at www.essexma.org.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(8) Renewal of Blanket Order of Conditions for DPW Operations

As the Board may recall, in 2009, the Superintendent of Public Works and I worked with the Conservation Commission to arrive at an Order of Conditions governing the DPW's routine operations. The validity of that document expires this May (after having been renewed in 2012), and I made contact with the Commission to inquire about renewal. The Commission is permitted to renew the Order of Conditions for a third, three-year term and the matter will be taken up by the Commission on April 28, 2015. In 2018, the available renewals will have been exhausted and a new Notice of Intent will be required.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

B. Computer Systems

(1) Upgrade to Criminal Justice Information Systems (CJIS) Connection

For many years, Massachusetts police departments have been connecting to State criminal justice data over slow connections using old, frame-relay technology. Verizon is phasing out that old type of connection and the Department of Criminal Justice Information System (DCJIS) is now making preparations for communities to connect to its resources via high-speed Internet. DCJIS will allow a connection using a virtual private network (VPN) so long as the community provides a dedicated IP address. In Essex, we maintain a bank of five IP addresses in each

building and only two are presently being used for local area network communications at the police station.

I contacted personnel at DCJIS during the week of April 6, 2015 and explained the current configuration that we have in place. After providing the Department with some technical information on a dedicated form, the Department's contractor scheduled the necessary device upgrade for April 13, 2015. I was present to assist the contractor and the new connection is now operative.

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

(2) Purchase of Antivirus Protection Renewals

I purchased renewal subscriptions for 30 of our antivirus protection software seats during the week of April 6, 2015. Subscriptions for other seats are due in December. I have registered the renewals with our server.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary. Total time – ½ hour.

(3) Replacement of Older Model Hubs and Switches in Water Plant

The recent site visit by City of Melrose personnel who were troubleshooting performance issues with our new computer platform resulted in several recommendations, including the replacement of some older model hubs and switches in the Water Filtration Plant network. I replaced several old devices with new, gigabit-speed switches during the week of April 7, 2015. City of Melrose personnel will now continue to make adjustments to the system to improve performance.

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

(4) Performance Optimization Testing by City of Melrose

During the week of April 20, 2015, personnel from the City of Melrose endeavored to make several changes concerning our virtual desktop system that the City hosts. One major test component was using the City's own Internet feed to supply the Melrose server, as opposed to the original configuration, which uses an Internet feed in Essex to supply the Melrose server over a dedicated link. The original configuration adds considerable congestion and time to the equation. When offered during the test, it was readily evident to users that the Melrose Internet feed solution was far superior to the original configuration.

As such, over the coming months, Melrose will engineer a permanent solution for that feed (and we will use the original configuration in the meantime). Further, City personnel worked with the zero-client system that is in place to optimize its performance. Other improvements were evident from those changes. Once optimal performance is achieved on the new system on a permanent basis, I will

begin the process of testing the solution in the police department, which is our most complex environment.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary. Total time – 2 hours.

C. Personnel

(1) Essex Regional Retirement Board “Chief Executives” Meeting

Although not the Chief Executive Officer for the Town, I am considered the Chief Executive Officer for matters involving the Essex Regional Retirement Board (a function of how the ERRB’s enabling legislation was developed). I attended a meeting for CEO’s on April 9, 2015 in Ipswich to receive a general update concerning the Board and the District. This first of its kind meeting was quite beneficial and informative. The District’s Executive Director and the Board’s “First Member” both spoke and provided a great historical perspective and information concerning proposed legislation that will alleviate an unintended consequence involving the recent merger of the North Shore Tech and the Essex Aggie. Further, a speaker from the Pension Reserves Investment Management Board described how the District’s investments (the majority of which are managed by this State board) are being wisely handled.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects

(1) Northern Conomo Point Planning/Design Public Forum (*)

The Selectmen and I met jointly with the Conomo Point Planning Committee (CPPC) on April 15, 2015 at a public forum designed to educate the public about the overall plan for northern Conomo Point in advance of a Sense of the Meeting vote at the Annual Town Meeting (which will be held on May 4, 2015). Consulting landscape architect James Heroux provided a well-focused presentation against the backdrop of keeping all residential use in place via long-term leases. Mr. Heroux’s work involves four waterfront areas that could be improved substantially for public access and enjoyment. Although attendees had some specific questions that cannot be fully addressed at this conceptual design stage, the presentation was very well received and was placed on file with the Town Clerk and uploaded to the Town website the following morning.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(2) Proposals for Letter of Map Revision, Essex Coastal Flood Maps (*)

As the Board may recall, I had been asked to solicit three proposals from engineering firms regarding the method and cost associated with reviewing the recently-effective FEMA flood map panels for Essex. Since the panels are already in use, rather than an appeal, any changes would come in the form of a Letter of

Map Revision (LOMR). I had set a deadline of April 10, 2015 for the three firms to submit proposals and we did received proposals from all three (Ransom Engineering, GZA Geoenvironmental, and the Woods Hole Group. Technical approach and price varied widely among the proposals.

Recommendation: **Board discussion relative to a potential choice for the Essex review.**

(3) Discussion Regarding Legion Hall Renovation Cost Estimate Proposal

At the last meeting, the Board reviewed cost proposal from the Spencer & Vogt Group relative to services necessary to arrive at a credible construction estimate for certain renovations to the Legion Hall building. The \$31,000 proposal was submitted to the Community Preservation Committee for funding consideration and the Committee decided that it cannot be funded at this time, given the many competing needs and the relatively small amount of available funds. At the suggestion of the Board, I asked the Historical Society and Shipbuilding Museum whether the organization has ever considered its own capital campaign for the necessary design and construction work. According to Society President Lee Spence, no such campaign has been considered and could be an option in the future.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(4) Auction for Four Conomo Point Properties

Our contracted auctioneer conducted auctions for four, Southern Conomo Point properties on April 16, 2015 at noon at the Essex Senior Center. The properties were open for viewing earlier that morning. None of the properties were sold at the auction.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary at this time.

(5) Discussion Regarding Federal Channel Boundary Changes (*)

I organized a conference call among Mr. Ed O'Donnell of the Army Corps of Engineers and personnel from Congressman Seth Moulton's office on April 16, 2015. The call focused on the need for the Town to deauthorize portions of the Federal Channel in the Essex River by narrowing the channel boundaries to avoid encroachments in some areas. The Congressman's staff had already researched the process and had provided examples from other areas. Shortly after the call, our consulting engineer indicated that he will produce a final draft of the proposed channel changes that will include all points of narrowing (a concept not included in the first draft). During the call I referenced those forthcoming plans and was encouraged to forward them to both the Congressman's office and Mr. O'Donnell, when complete.

If the Board is in agreement with the concept of the revised plans, I can submit them to the Congressman and to Mr. O'Donnell, when available. Upon receipt (if not beforehand), the Congressman's office will formally request legislative drafting assistance from Mr. O'Donnell's office. Mr. O'Donnell's office will also review the plans and will determine whether the Corps is in agreement with the new configuration. In any event, as the long process toward an act of the Federal legislature is unfolding, Mr. O'Donnell's office will likely initiate survey and testing work using the Corps' annual operating budget. Even if Federal funding for the actual dredging work is never received, the survey and testing work that the Corps is willing to undertake can cost in the hundreds of thousands of dollars and is needed regardless of which entity eventually completes the dredging or where the funding comes from.

***Recommendation:* Board vote to submit the revised Federal channel plans with the narrowed sections to the Army Corps and to the Congressman's Office for initial review.**

(6) Request for Proposals for Lease of Legion Hall (*)

As the Board is aware, the Legion Hall building at 28 Main Street is owned by the Town and has been continuously leased out to a private tenant (presently the Essex Historical Society and Shipbuilding Museum) for the storage and display of Essex historical artifacts. The Annual Town Meeting on May 4, 2015 will be considering renewing this leasing arrangement for an additional ten years and a Request for Proposals will be necessary to solicit interested lessees should the article pass. As such, I have modified the RFP that was used in 2005 to solicit proposals and I am ready to advertise it at the appropriate time.

***Recommendation:* Board authorization to solicit proposals from interested parties for the same purposes noted in the Town Meeting article and in the past RFP, once we know the result of the Town Meeting vote.**

(7) Contract for Asbestos Removal at 1 Robbins Island Road (*)

Quotations for the removal of all asbestos from 1 Robbins Island Road prior to its demolition were due on April 22, 2015. We received a total of four quotations, with the lowest responsive and responsible offeror being the Aulson Company of Methuen, with a price of \$2,900. The Aulson Company is a licensed asbestos abatement contractor and I have worked out a contract for services for the Board's countersignature. Once the contract is underway, the contractor will provide the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) with a pre-abatement notice and I will provide the DEP with a pre-demolition notice.

***Recommendation:* Board vote to award the asbestos removal contract to the Aulson Company.**

E. Insurance

(1) Monthly Pothole Log

I obtained the pothole log for the month of March from the DPW and provided it to our insurer as part of the MIIA Rewards Program. No potholes were reported during the month of March. I will resume the reporting process in November.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Meeting with Occupational Health Provider

I met with a representative of our occupational health services provider (Quadrant Health Strategies) on April 22, 2015. Our provider primarily assists us with pre-employment drug and medical testing but also offers fitness for duty and return to work services. Our representative reviewed our present protocols and reviewed other offerings.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

F. Facilities

(1) Startup and Repair of Field of Dreams Irrigation System

Our irrigation contractor started up the Field of Dreams sprinkler system for the season on April 15, 2015. One of the sprinkler heads required a repair and the system is working well.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Renewal of Bathing Beach Permits

As the Board is aware, the Town operates three bathing beaches under the Selectmen's authority (Centennial Grove Beach on Chebacco Lake and Clammers' and Front Beaches at Conomo Point). The Board of Health requires that the beaches have valid permits, which run for two years at a time. The present permits are set to expire at the end of May, 2015 and I therefore made renewal applications on the Board's behalf. The Board of Health issued the actual permits on April 23, 2015.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(3) Seasonal Startup of Centennial Grove Cottage

The Department of Public Works turned on the water to the Centennial Grove Cottage during the week of April 20, 2015. Thereafter, I contacted our plumbing contractor and he has turned on the internal plumbing system for the season.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

G. Fiscal/Budget

(1) Completion of “Essex Visual Budget” Website

As the Board may recall, we had contracted with VisGov to create for Essex a tool that is helpful in visualizing the Town’s operating budget. This tool was first created for use in Arlington and several other communities have since contracted for the service. The resulting website allows a taxpayer to enter the amount of their annual tax bill so they can view an intuitive, visual representation of where their tax dollars go. For Essex, the firm also created an option that shows how much more tax a taxpayer would owe if the various properties in the northern section of Conomo Point were no longer leased. The direct URL to the website is www.EssexVisualBudget.com or a user can follow a link from the Town’s homepage at www.essexma.org. I reviewed final preparations with VisGov on April 22, 2015 and the new site went live on April 27, 2015. The site will be updated with each passing fiscal year.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

H. Complaints

No items.

I. Meetings Attended

(1) Regional Dispatch Center Monthly Meeting

I attended the Finance Advisory Board meeting associated with the Essex Regional Emergency Communications Center as Chairman of the board April 17, 2015. The meeting featured updates from the Center’s Assistant Director as new Director Mr. Shad Ahmed has only recently begun work and was involved in training at meeting time. Mr. Ahmed plans to focus on improving the Center’s level of service and consistency of protocols and has met with various key staff members to assemble a comprehensive list of items to address and improve.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

J. Final Judgment

No items.

K. Town Meeting, By-Laws, and Regulations

(1) Town Meeting Booklet

The booklet that contains the warrant and the Finance Committee’s budget recommendation for the upcoming Annual Town Meeting was completed and sent to our printing contractor during the week of April 6, 2015. The booklet was

completed and made available to the public during the week of April 13, 2015. The Annual Town Meeting will occur on May 4, 2015 at 7:30 p.m. at the Essex Elementary School.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Draft Annual Town Meeting Motions (*)

I have revised the draft motions per the Board's guidance from the last meeting.

Recommendation: **Further review of the draft Annual Town Meeting motions.**

L. Legal Issues

(1) Quarterly Review of Executive Session Minutes

The Chairman reviewed the Board's executive session minutes during the week of April 13, 2015. He found no minutes that are ready for release.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

M. Grants

No items.

N. Emergency Planning

(1) FEMA Risk Mapping, Assessment, and Planning (Risk MAP) Program Mtg.

I attended the subject meeting on April 14, 2015 at the Hamilton/Wenham Public Library. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is presently working with local communities in our area to develop a better understanding concerning the largest future flooding risks, primarily associated with rivers and streams. The Risk MAP Program is currently in the "Discovery" phase, meaning that FEMA is collecting information on known risks from local jurisdictions as it determines which areas will be studied most closely.

FEMA asked that a survey be completed on line, which I have done. However, it is not likely that specific flood risk features in Essex will be studied in a detailed way. That said, what *will* occur is that all non-coastal portions of the current FEMA flood panels will be re-delineated using much better topographic information than what was available in the past. Even though the panels were re-issued in digital format in 2012, that exercise only transferred the information from the early 90's that relied upon topographic and other survey data from the 70's to a digital map. As such, the 2012 panels contain no better information than the old, paper maps. The Risk MAP Program will actually be updating the maps with modern information within a few years and is likely to demonstrate that some

properties that have been in flood zones for decades never really should have been. As for coastal portions of the panels, as the Board is aware, that information *was* actually updated in 2014 (albeit too ambitiously, using improper assumptions and methods, translating to appeals and changes – which Essex is in the process of undertaking).

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(2) Revision of Town Continuity of Operations Plan

Now that we have taken steps to have our computer infrastructure hosted by the City of Melrose and by various vendors of our proprietary software, the Town's Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) needs to be updated to reflect the new situation. I have begun a review of the existing document and hope to have a revised draft for review by the various Town departments in June or July. After the revised document has been reviewed and all changes have been made, it will be brought to the Board for signature, formally updating the existing plan.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

O. Other Items

(1) Patriots' Day Holiday

The office was closed on April 20, 2015 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.