



Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of May 5, 2008

Report covers from April 26, 2008 to May 2, 2008

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

A. Town Department Reports/Requests

(1) Youth Commission Program and Budget Planning (*)

At the last meeting, the Board reviewed a response from the Youth Commission relative to the Board's questions on the status of the Commission's program and budget planning. The response indicated that a further update would be available after the Commission's meeting of May 1, 2008. The Commission has indicated that additional information will be provided by meeting time. Among the topics included in the update is the status of a revised position description for the Youth Director.

Recommendation: **Board discussion relative to the additional information.**

B. Computer Systems

(1) Library Computer System

As noted in the past, I had developed a specification and quote on a new computer system for the Library to be purchased with grant funds. The Librarian reviewed the quote with staff from the Merrimac Valley Library Consortium and indicated that it was sufficient for her purposes. She asked for one change with respect to the speaker system and I was able to order the computer for her with that option.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(2) DPW Computer Printer

The Wastewater Clerk indicated to me that she was having trouble with a printer installed on one of the DPW computers. As such, I investigated the issue and determined that the printer settings in a billing application needed to be pointed to the correct printer driver. The printer is working well.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(3) Emergency Center Printer

As noted previously, the printer serving the Emergency Center had experienced a serious problem and was in need of replacement. The Chief of Police subsequently purchased a new printer and I began the process of setting it up. However, an additional cable that was not included with the printer is necessary and I will make the printer operational once that arrives.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(4) Mooring Database Report

As the Board is aware, I have been developing a comprehensive mooring waiting list and active mooring database for the Harbormaster. Recently, the Clerk of that department was required to provide a report to the Assessors' Office and I was able to develop a custom query and report to fulfill that requirement. I will likely assist with the development of additional reports and form letters as the needs of the Harbormaster dictate.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

C. Personnel

(1) Chief of Police Successor Agreement

The Chief of Police will be in attendance at the present meeting to discuss the renewal of his employment contract.

Recommendation: Board discussion in executive session.

D. Procurement

(1) Municipal TIP Input Day

I attended the subject forum in Boston on May 1, 2008. TIP Input Day is a forum designed by the Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to gather information about projects that are pending on the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). I have attended on behalf of the Town for many years and our project (the Route 133 Reconstruction Project) is finally at a point where it should go from pending to an actual, funded project. At TIP Day, I updated the members of the MPO regarding our project and MassHighway Project Manager Steve McGlaughlin was present to impart the Department's support for the project. At the end of our session, members of the MPO indicated that the project will definitely remain in the FY08 TIP element since it is ready to go and is highly likely to be advertised in or before August, 2008.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(2) Marine Cleat Donation, Route 133 Reconstruction Project (*)

At the last meeting, the Board considered an offer from a local business owner relative to his proposed donation of two marine cleats to be potentially affixed to the new seawall on Route 133. We discussed the offer with members of the Essex Enhancement Committee the following morning at a Chamber of Commerce meeting and they did not object to the idea. However, I subsequently discussed the offer with the Project Manager for the Route 133 Reconstruction Project and

he indicated that the cleats would have to be incorporated into the actual project design plans and, at this late stage, might cause project delays.

Recommendation: **Declination of the offer at this time due to the potential for project delays.**

E. Insurance

(1) MIIA Rewards Program Summary

I have begun to summarize all of the programs and trainings that Town employees participated in as part of the MIIA Rewards Program in FY08. I am presently analyzing a training summary from our insurer and employees will be attending additional trainings in May and June. Once I have all of the data, I will submit to our insurer a completed summary that documents the various percentages of credit that are due to the Town in the form of FY09 premium reductions.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(2) Extension of Health Insurance Coverage for Dependents (*)

Although not required to by law, our health insurance provider has offered an extension for coverage of dependents through the earlier of a dependent's 26th birthday or two years following a dependent's loss of dependent status pursuant to Federal tax rules. If the Town wishes to incorporate this coverage into its plan, it must do so by June 1, 2008 and our insurer has pointed out that the increased coverage, although not causing a direct premium increase, may result in increased future claims (since more people are covered for more years).

Recommendation: **Board discussion relative to this offering and potential discussion with Town Counsel before making a decision.**

F. Facilities

(1) Additional Town Archives Review

Kurt Wilhelm of the Historical Commission has introduced a program offered by the New England Historic Genealogical Society (NEHGS) to the Town. The program, known as the New England Town and Family Manuscript Preservation Project, aims to make historic manuscripts more accessible to the public and genealogists. An endowment fund offers record description, cataloging, repair, acid-free housing, microfilming, and digital imaging of select subsets of Town records.

Services provided by NEHGS would augment the Town's present level of effort that involves records storage improvements being implemented by graduate student Anne Bevan in concert with the Town Clerk. Regarding that ongoing

effort, the Selectmen's Assistant has recently ordered some additional supplies requested by that pair using funds remaining in the Town's \$5,000 appropriation.

Mr. Wilhelm and members of the NEHGS visited Town Hall on April 30, 2008 to review the Town's existing archives and record collection and the group met briefly with me in my office. NEHGS appears to be very interested in devoting some additional resources to the Town's preservation effort and Ms. Bevan will be able to assist with implementation.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(2) Town Hall Grounds Landscaping

(*)

At the last meeting, the Board reviewed an offer from the Essex Enhancement Committee to provide the labor necessary for some Town Hall grounds landscaping if the Town could provide plantings and other necessary materials. The Board determined that the Enhancement Committee should be asked to provide a cost estimate and they have since provided that information. The Enhancement Committee would like to complete the work in advance of a planned Fox News feature on Essex that will be filmed on May 23. The

Committee's proposal has been broken down into three components: the above-referenced landscaping (approximately \$1,315 for plants); pruning of existing trees/plants (\$600 for tree company labor and \$150 for mulch); and planting around the Town Events sign, if desired (approximately \$465 for plants). The total comes to just over the available funds and can be adjusted downward depending on the size of plants selected and whether all three components are chosen.

Recommendation: **Final Board review of the Committee's landscaping suggestions and selection of options based on available funds. If the Board decides that the Town events sign will remain in its present location, a portion of the sign plants may be available via donation.**

(3) Town Events Sign

(*)

At the last meeting, a member of a group that desires to see the new Town Events sign moved from the Town Hall property to some other location in Town suggested that the Board of Public Works was amenable to placing the sign at the transfer station and using its staff to change the sign messages. The Board asked that I follow up with the Superintendent of Public Works relative to that discussion. Upon doing so, I learned from the Superintendent that the Board of Public Works has not discussed the sign to date as a group and that no such arrangement has been offered to date.

Recommendation: **Final Board discussion relative to the placement of the sign.**

G. Fiscal/Budget

No items.

H. Complaints

(1) Air Quality Complaint

As the Board may recall, an abutter to the Allen property on Southern Avenue attended your last meeting and indicated that an air quality problem was being caused by what appeared to be a stove used for heating purposes. The abutter noted that he would formally complain to the Board of Health about that issue and would copy the Selectmen's office in light of the ongoing, court-mandated cleanup of that property. I relayed this information to the Board of Health Administrator and we are presently awaiting the complaint from the abutter.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

I. Meetings Attended

(1) Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce Essex Division Meeting

I attended the subject meeting along with Chairman Lynch and Selectman Randall on April 29, 2008. The meeting featured addresses the two candidates for Selectman and general discussion relative to ongoing Town projects and initiatives. We also spoke to members of the Essex Enhancement Committee regarding marine cleats and Town Hall landscaping (see items D2 and F2).

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

J. Final Judgment

No items.

K. Town Meeting, By-Laws, and Regulations

(1) Proposal Relative to Line-Item Autonomy for Town Budgets

At a recent Chamber of Commerce event, I asked Senator Tarr and Representative Verga why municipal funds cannot be moved among various accounts similar to the freedom that school districts enjoy (known as line-item autonomy). Municipalities have traditionally not been able to transfer funds between departments and only recently have been allowed to make limited transfers in the last two months of the fiscal year. Senator Tarr indicated that he was willing to bring that issue forward in the upcoming legislative session and he asked that I draft some proposed language. As such, I took the existing law, suggested appropriate changes to it, and submitted it to the Senator's Office for review.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(2) Final Town Meeting Motions

(*)

I have developed final drafts of Town Meeting motions based upon the Board's past guidance and input from various departments. I will distribute the motions to various parties at the Town Meeting.

Recommendation: **Final review of motions by the Board.**

L. Legal Issues

No items.

M. Grants

(1) Dredging Inventory and Questionnaire

Mr. Kevin Mooney of the Division of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) contacted me during the week of April 21, 2008 to ask about two past information requests associated with dredging needs in Essex. I contacted the Harbormaster and confirmed that the Town had already responded to one request (an inventory and assessment report that we had no comments on) and that he is still working on the other request (a Comprehensive Harbor Survey Questionnaire). The Harbormaster hopes to provide DCR with the Harbor Questionnaire in the near future.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

N. Emergency Planning

(1) Potential Use of School for Local Emergency Relocation Site

As I have reported previously, I had made contact with the Superintendent of the Manchester Essex Regional School District to inquire about the potential for using a small amount of space at Essex Elementary School. The space would serve as a local Emergency Relocation Site (ERS) for Town staff in the event of an emergency once a portion of the student population is moved to the new school building in the spring of 2009. Our far-site ERS will be located in Manchester, NH but operating from that location is a plan of last resort and the school will offer a local option in a less drastic emergency. The Superintendent has considered the request and will be meeting with me during the week of May 5, 2008 to discuss further.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

O. Other Items

No items.

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