



Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of June 1, 2009

Report covers from May 16, 2009 to May 29, 2009

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

A. Town Department Reports/Requests

(1) Summer Program Administrative Audit

Mr. Russell Harnish discussed his preliminary audit findings relative to the administrative aspects of the Essex Summer Program with the Youth Director and me on May 20, 2009. At that time, he commented that most critical administrative aspects are already in place. However, he indicated that some policies could be improved and made more comprehensive. He provided us with examples of policies and the Youth Director will begin to modify our existing policies and documents to incorporate the new information. Mr. Harnish will review the revised documents thereafter and will render final comments. Next season Mr. Harnish will audit the physical aspects of our program.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(2) Town Building Committee Update

The Town Building Committee met on May 26, 2009 and continues to study the various possible permutations for future Town buildings. The Committee has toured our existing Town Hall and our existing Police and Fire Headquarters to get an appreciation for the issues at hand. A matrix of possible future building locations and scenarios is being developed and, eventually, the Committee will produce a comprehensive report. On June 8 and July 13, 2009, the Committee will tour new police, fire, and library facilities in Hamilton, Wenham, Rockport, Rowley, and Byfield. Regular business meetings are scheduled for June 22 and July 20, 2009.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

B. Computer Systems

(1) Installation of New Assessors' Server

A new server arrived during the week of May 25, 2009 to replace the aging Assessors' server. I have set up and joined the new server to the Town Hall network and I will be working in the near future to install the Assessors' database software (Vision) on the new machine with the assistance of the software vendor (I have requested an appointment). Once the software has been successfully installed, we will transfer the actual data and will re-point the various client computers to the new machine.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary. Total time – 3 hours.

C. Personnel

(1) Personnel Board Meeting

The Personnel Board is presently down to just one member. As such, the Selectmen will need to serve as the Personnel Board until at least one new member may be appointed. I have placed a draft agenda in the Selectmen's reading folder for action at the Selectmen's meeting of June 15, 2009.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(2) Safety Committee Meeting

The next Safety Committee meeting will be held on June 17, 2009. I have placed a draft agenda in the Selectmen's reading folder.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(3) Employee Health Insurance Responsibility Disclosures (HIRD)

Each year at this time, the Health Care Reform Law requires the Town to send HIRD disclosures to certain employees. Employees who are eligible to participate in the Town's subsidized health insurance program but have declined to participate use the form to affirm that fact. Certain other employees who are not eligible to participate in the subsidized program use the form to indicate whether they declined to utilize the Town's cafeteria plan to withhold premiums to be paid directly to their own insurer. I developed the necessary forms and provided them the Treasurer for inclusion with employee paychecks to applicable employees. Each employee must complete the form and return it to me for our records.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(4) Town Clerk Search Committee

(*)

At the last meeting, the Board agreed that the appointed Town Clerk who will succeed our present Clerk upon her retirement should be vetted and recommended by a search committee. I asked other communities that had recently moved from an elected to an appointed clerk about the processes that had been used. I found that some vetting was done directly by the hiring authority and committees comprised of employees and others who were familiar with clerk duties were used in other cases. It is possible that present registrars, the present Deputy Town Clerk, and the Treasurer/Collector could be appointed to form an effective committee.

Recommendation: **Further Board discussion relative to committee formation.**

D. Procurement

(1) Comstar Billing Agreement

(*)

Each year at this time the Selectmen consider signing a successor agreement with our third party ambulance billing vendor, Comstar. We have received excellent service from the vendor over the past year and I recommend continuing with Comstar.

Recommendation: **Board signature of the Comstar successor billing agreement.**

E. Insurance

(1) MIIA Rewards Program Year-End Wrap-Up

Each year at this time I provide to our insurer a summary of all of the loss control activities the Town has participated in as part of the MIIA Rewards Program over the past year. I completed a program summary form and provided it to our insurer with a cover letter and the necessary attachments.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

F. Facilities

(1) Items Related to State Elevator Inspection

Although the Senior Center elevator itself passed the State elevator inspection back in March, I have been informed that the State will be requiring aspects of the connection between the building's fire alarm system and the elevator to be improved. Also, the State noted that a mechanical fan at the top of the elevator shaft was no longer operative. I have made the necessary contacts to have the elevator company, our fire alarm company, and our electrician on site on June 2, 2009 to perform the necessary work.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

G. Fiscal/Budget

No items.

H. Complaints

(1) Appeal of Dog Banishment

(*)

The owner of two dogs that were recently banished from the Town has appealed the banishment to the District Court.

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

I. Meetings Attended

(1) Massachusetts Municipal Management Association Spring Conference

I attended the subject conference in Lenox on May 28 and 29, 2009. The conference focused this year on relationship-building within local government and included labor law and health insurance reform segments.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

J. Final Judgment

No items.

K. Town Meeting, By-Laws, and Regulations

(1) Modification of Shellfish Regulations

At the last meeting, the Board voted to modify the Shellfish Regulations by increasing the commercial harvesting limit to 250 pounds of clams per tide with no grace allowance and no special rules for post-closure harvesting. I made the changes to the text of the regulations and the Selectmen's Assistant has followed the necessary posting and filing procedure. The revised regulations will be effective on June 1, 2009 and the Shellfish Constable has been made aware of that date. The Essex flats are presently under a red tide closure.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

L. Legal Issues

(1) Renewal of Prisoner Lockup Agreement

Every five years, the towns of Essex and Manchester have renewed an agreement that allows Essex prisoners to be locked up in Manchester for a fee and the present Agreement expires on June 30, 2009. At the last meeting, the Board agreed that the Chief of Police should review the terms of the agreement with Manchester. The Chief is presently working to set up a discussion with Manchester officials.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(2) Right of First Refusal on Chapter Land

At the last meeting, Mr. Charles Storey visited the Board to indicate that a piece of land (Map 22, Lot 6C) that is presently held by his family in Chapter 61A (agricultural) status may be offered for sale in the near future. Pursuant to the law, the Town will have a right of first refusal to purchase the land for the price indicated in a *bona fide* purchase and sales agreement. The process begins with a certified letter from the seller to the Selectmen indicating that they intend to sell

the property. Other certified letters will need to be sent to other Town departments. I reviewed these requirements with Mr. Andrew Storey as requested by the Board and we are presently awaiting the referenced letter and purchase and sales agreement.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(3) Gloucester Sewer Billing Dispute (*)

The City's proposal to shift the combined sewer overflow project cost from rates to the Gloucester tax base was rejected by the City Council on April 19, 2009.

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

M. Grants

(1) Seaport Bond Bill Feasibility Study Grant Application

As indicated to the Board at the last meeting, I met with Co-Directors Lorri Krebs, Ph.D. and Bill Hamilton, Ph.D. of Salem State College's Center for Economic Development and Sustainability (CEDS) on May 18, 2009 to discuss Seaport Bond Bill feasibility study funding. The directors indicated that they are very interested in pursuing an application for a feasibility study as an in-kind service and, if funded, would be available to actually conduct the study. They have made contact with Seaport Bond Council staff to discuss timelines and application format. I have provided the directors with a history of other infrastructure grants in Essex as well as what to expect from the Route 133 Reconstruction Project. A draft application should be available for the Board to review in the near future.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

N. Emergency Planning

No items.

O. Other Items

(1) Town Administrator Vacation Leave

I was out of the office on vacation leave on May 22, 2009.

(2) Memorial Day Holiday

The office was closed on May 25, 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.