



Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of June 2, 2008

Report covers from May 17, 2008 to May 30, 2008

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

A. Town Department Reports/Requests

(1) Long-Term Planning Committee Assistance (*)

As noted by Selectman Randall at the last meeting, the Long-Term Planning Committee is developing a survey that gives residents the opportunity to provide input relative to what they like and what could be improved in Essex. I will assist the Committee by putting their survey on the Town's website and by configuring a dedicated e-mail account that one of their members will check in order to keep track of survey responses. I informed the Committee's Chairman that the Selectmen would first like to review the draft survey once it has been pulled together along with a draft press release that the Committee is also working on. Chairman Dyer has indicated that draft press release will be available by meeting time. The survey is still in the works and will be sent to the Board in the future.

Recommendation: Board review and discussion regarding the draft press release if available by meeting time.

(2) Completion of Comprehensive Harbor Survey

As noted previously, the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) had requested that the Town complete the subject survey that will assist that agency with developing future dredging plans. The Harbormaster worked with his staff to complete the survey and I have forwarded it to DCR. Earlier, the Harbormaster had reviewed a Coastal Inventory and Assessment document and had found that document to be written accurately (a comment that I also had passed along to the State).

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

B. Computer Systems

(1) Fiscal Year 2008 Accounting Software Rollover

I assisted the Town Accountant with access to the Accounting Server so that she could prepare the server for the rollover from fiscal year 2008 to fiscal year 2009.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Police Officers' Computer System

The Chief of Police informed me that the officers' computer was working very slowly and was experiencing network connectivity problems. I investigated the

situation and found that the normal disk cleanup and defragmentation routines (which had been scheduled to run automatically) were not longer running properly. As such, I performed various disk maintenance and cleanup routines manually (left to process overnight) and returned the next day to complete other maintenance. The system is again working well and the automatic maintenance routines are running as schedule.

While I was working on the above issues, I was informed that the officers were not able to get into the incident reporting database. I reviewed that situation and discovered that additional permissions needed to be granted. After granting the appropriate permissions at the server, the officers were able to again log on.

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

(3) Potential Additional Police Department Terminal and Planning Board Laptop

The Chief of Police recently commented that officers are waiting for office computer terminal time since multiple officers often need computer access concurrently. I reviewed the existing computer hardware budgets and I may be able to purchase an additional system for the Department. I will consider that request in conjunction with a past request by the Planning Board to replace that department's older desktop system with a new laptop system that would enable the Clerk to take notes at meetings.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(4) Power Outage Issues

A power outage on the night of May 19, 2008 caused a drive in one of our main servers to go offline. I was able to review and correct that issue that same night. However, the next morning (June 20), employees in both buildings that rely on Town Hall for Internet service via the Cable I-Net reported connectivity problems. I reviewed that situation and even replaced the cable modem in Town Hall with a spare to rule out hardware failure.

I worked with Comcast technicians to pinpoint the problem and Comcast found and replaced a bad modem power supply after further testing. However, after the Comcast link was back up, another problem was revealed. Another Town Hall server used to relay data among Town buildings had suffered damage to its networking capabilities as a result of the cable modem issue. I tried a variety of fixes and then contacted an expert. He tried to go through some other scenarios over the phone to no avail. The following day (June 21), I tried some other hardware configurations and swapped out additional networking equipment. After coordinating again with Comcast, I was able to restore the system.

After considerable effort, all systems are again functioning normally!

Recommendation: No further action is necessary. Total time – 14 hours

(5) Desktop System Memory Upgrades

The Town's current generation of desktop computers was purchased in 2005 with 512 MB of memory per machine. Various software applications have been upgraded over time and system performance has slowed down considerably. As such, I am making preparations to upgrade the RAM in each system to 2.5 GB. Thus far, I have assessed and ordered the necessary RAM modules so that I may test the configuration in a single computer system. If that process goes well and performance improves, I will order the same hardware for the remainder of the machines.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary. Total time – 1 hour.

C. Personnel

(1) Recommendation for Board of Public Works Appointment

Pursuant to the Special Act that established the Board of Public Works, this year is the Moderator's year to recommend candidates to fill the expiring seat. The Moderator is presently working on that task.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(2) Preparation of Employee Health Insurance Responsibility Disclosures

As the Board may recall, employees meeting certain criteria were required by the State to file the subject disclosures (HIRDs) with the Town at the advent of the new Health Care Reform Law. The law also requires that the same employees file HIRDs annually within 30 days of any health insurance open enrollment period (which closes June 30, 2008 for Essex). As such, I have prepared the necessary forms and letters of explanation and the Treasurer/Collector has included them with the paychecks of appropriate employees.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(3) Youth Commission Position Descriptions and Evaluation Tools (*)

The Board began the review of a newly-proposed position description for the Youth Director along with a new performance evaluation tool at the last meeting. The Youth Commission will also be providing a newly-proposed position description for the Summer Program Director along with its own evaluation document. After the last meeting, I had informed the Chair of the Youth Commission that the Board would be providing additional comments after the present meeting.

***Recommendation:* Further Board discussion relative to the new documents (including the Summer Program Director documents if available by meeting time).**

(4) Police Officer Performance Evaluation Form

The Chief of Police provided me with a draft copy of a new performance evaluation form for police officers. The Chief will ask the union to review the document before it is put into use in the event that the union has questions or concerns in relation to the existing collective bargaining agreement.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

D. Procurement

(1) Route 133 Reconstruction Project Update

As the Board may recall, I attended Municipal TIP Input Day in Boston on May 1, 2008. At that time, I presented the status of the subject project and the Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) indicated that advertisement of the project this summer was likely. The MPO met on May 22, 2008 to discuss a draft amendment to the Federal Fiscal Year 2008 TIP element that would pull some projects out of that element and add others. Our project was not part of the amendment list. However, out of an abundance of caution, I sent a letter to the MPO in advance of the meeting reiterating the high state of readiness of our project. The MPO's actual voted amendment did not involve our project and our project is still programmed in the 2008 element. A final vote on the amendment will take place on June 26, 2008. Our MassHighway Project Manager will send a project update to the MPO staff and I will send another readiness letter to the MPO for inclusion in the members' June 26 meeting packages.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

E. Insurance

No items.

F. Facilities

(1) Building Study Group Update

Members of the study group toured various police department facilities on May 22, 2008. That tour provided a good sense of what a modern police facility should include. The group intends to get together again in mid June to further review the available options. Also, members of the Board of Library Trustees will be in attendance at the present meeting to inquire about the ongoing work of the study group.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(2) Town Hall Honor Roll

At the last meeting the Board suggested that I get in touch with a local craftsman to determine if he would be interested in assisting the Town with the restoration of the Honor Roll in front of Town Hall. I have made that contact and am awaiting his reply.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(3) Centennial Grove Cottage Water Connection

A plumbing contractor had winterized the Grove Cottage internal plumbing for us last fall. The EYC summer program is opening up the Cottage for the new season and it is necessary for the water service to be reconnected. The Selectmen's Assistant contacted a plumber complete the necessary seasonal startup work during the week of May 19, 2008.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(4) Assembly of New Picnic Tables, Centennial Grove

As the Board may recall, we had purchased new, plastic picnic tables last year at the end of the season. Those new tables require assembly and we had already discussed with the Superintendent of Public Works the prospect of utilizing one of his summer worker for a few hours per week at the Grove using Grove fund monies. A summer worker is available and will begin to work three hours per week at the Grove until all of the tables are assembled. After that, we will direct him to other small jobs as necessary during the season.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(5) Watering of New Town Hall Plantings

Ms. Robin Pydynkowski of the Essex Enhancement Committee visited my office to explain the importance of regular, deep watering of the new shrubs that have been planted in front of Town Hall. She explained that a soaker hose needed to be purchased so that each of the three new beds could be deeply watered once per week. I contacted the Town Hall Custodian and asked him to purchase a regular hose and a soaker hose for this purpose and a system employing a watering timer has been put in place. I assisted the Custodian with the layout of the hoses to avoid any hose being on the ground in a major foot traffic location where it would pose a trip and fall hazard.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(6) Placement of New Beach Sand at Centennial Grove

At the last meeting, the Board indicated that it would like to explore further the placement of some new sand above the high water line at the Centennial Grove beach. I have begun to investigate that activity by asking the Conservation Commission Clerk to add the topic to the Commission's June 3, 2008 agenda. As noted previously, the addition of sand to the beach was last performed in 1997 with the Commission at that time indicating that no Notice of Intent was necessary.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

G. Fiscal/Budget

(1) Preparation for Fiscal Year 2008 Audit

The Town Accountant provided us with various financial background information tables from last year's audit and asked for updates to provide to our Auditor for the upcoming, fiscal year 2008 audit. The Selectmen's Assistant and I updated the tables and provided the new information to the Town Accountant.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

H. Complaints

(1) Unlicensed Dog

The Animal Health Inspector and Dog Officer had brought the Board's attention to an unlicensed dog. The Board indicated that at the last meeting that the Dog Officer should contact the owner and require immediate licensure. In checking with the Dog Officer, I learned that such request had already been made and I have since learned from the Town Clerk that the dog has been licensed.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Aggressive Dog Incident

A mother and child passing by a Forest Street property with their dog were met by an aggressive Doberman Pinscher according to a complaint filed with the Selectmen's Office.

Recommendation: The Board will conduct an official hearing relative to the incident at the present meeting.

I. Meetings Attended

(1) Massachusetts Municipal Management Association Spring Conference

I attended the subject conference in Lenox on May 29 and May 30, 2008. The conference offered a variety of useful professional development sessions including a session on fostering teamwork within the organization.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

J. Final Judgment

(1) Quarterly Report

I have begun to compile the Quarterly Report due July 1, 2008. I will present the report for the Board's approval at the Board's meeting of June 16, 2008. All mandatory sewer connections have been made with the exception of two properties in the contract 3 area and four properties in the contract 4 area. All of those six properties are vacant and sewer connections will be required prior to the Board of Health allowing any occupancy.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

K. Town Meeting, By-Laws, and Regulations

(1) Town Planning Forum

As discussed at the last meeting, the Selectmen may host a Town Planning Forum in the near future. Selectman Lynch will update the Board on the development of that forum to date.

Recommendation: Further Board discussion relative to a potential forum.

L. Legal Issues

(1) Signature of Revised Conservation Restriction

(*)

As the Board may recall, both the Board and the Conservation Commission had signed a conservation restriction on a 10-acre parcel owned by Mr. Peter VanWyck. The signed restriction has been under review by the Secretary of Environmental Affairs and the Secretary's Office is requiring a variety of changes to the document before accepting it. As such, Mr. VanWyck's Counsel has asked both the Selectmen and the Conservation Commission to sign the revised draft.

Recommendation: **Board signature of the revised draft. The Conservation Commission will consider signature of the draft on June 3, 2008.**

(2) Review of Proposed Board of Health MOUs

(*)

The Board of Health Administrator has requested access to Town Counsel for a review of two proposed agreements. The first memorandum of understanding (MOU) relates to the potential use of the Essex Elementary School as a dispensing site for vaccines and medicine in the event of a communicable disease outbreak or a bioterrorism event. The second MOU relates to establishing relationships with emergency supply vendors to be able to receive priority service for those supplies during a local or regional disaster. Our legal budget for fiscal year 2008 cannot accommodate this request but the Administrator has indicated that she may have emergency planning funding that could pay for the review.

Recommendation: Board discussion relative to both the policy and financial aspects of the requested review and final products.

M. Grants

(1) Clean Energy Choice Grant

(*)

In the past, the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative (MTC) had informed the Town that we were eligible for the subject grant. Whenever a local ratepayer elects to support renewable energy sources, MTC matches those rate premiums as part of the National Grid GreenUp Program. I had asked a former superintendent on behalf of the Board if the School District would be interested in purchasing clean energy educational materials but the District did not take advantage of the funding to date.

Other possible uses of the grant funding include solar panels, solar-powered trash compactors, teacher training, and community outreach events. The level of funding is now at \$5,137. Interestingly, MTC now reports that, once the grant funding level reaches \$15,000, it is possible that the grant funds, coupled with Commonwealth Solar rebates, can cover 100% of the cost of a small photovoltaic installation. That type of installation would allow a portion of a Town building's electric power needs to be offset by solar energy.

Recommendation: Board discussion relative to the use of the funding (which may include simply allowing it to accumulate further).

N. Emergency Planning

No items.

O. Other Items

(1) Essex River Day

As the Board discussed at the last meeting, the subject event will be held on June 21, 2008 and will feature Essex River tours and boat traffic. As requested by the

Board, I asked the Superintendent of Public Works about the use of Memorial Park for a cookout, softball, and an evening bonfire. The Superintendent approved the use of the field and I relayed his preferences for event setup to Selectman Lynch. I have also worked to coordinate the donation of wood for the fire from a local mill (Markham Lumber) and the Superintendent will indicate where that wood should be placed at an appropriate time. We have consulted the Town of Rockport relative to tips they may have for building and managing the bonfire since Rockport has a large bonfire each Independence Day.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Town Administrator Vacation Leave

I was out of the office on vacation leave on May 23, 2008.

(3) Memorial Day Holiday

The office was closed on May 26, 2008 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.