



## Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of June 20, 2011

Report covers from June 4, 2011 to June 17, 2011

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

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### A. Town Department Reports/Requests

#### (1) Island Road House Numbering

Residents approached the Board at the last meeting to obtain an official house number for their house on Island Road. The Board referred the matter to the Chief of Police, who the Board has delegated responsibility for numbering assignments (since the number has to be correctly recognized by the 911 system). The Chief has since begun to investigate the matter and the Department has been in contact with the property owners to work toward resolution.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary at this time.

#### (2) Production of Shellfish Flat Closure Signs with Red Tide Designation

At the last meeting, the Board asked if a set of signs could be produced for flat closures that bear the usual notice plus a "Red Tide" notice. The present red tide closure is marked with standard signs which bear hand-written red tide designations. We will be ordering weather-proof paper and we will produce the signs for future use thereafter.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

#### (3) Conomo Point Planning Committee Future Focus (\*)

Selectman Coviello indicated at the last meeting that she would discuss the CPPC's future focus with CPPC Chairman Lynch, with emphasis on the need for a future landscape architect Request for Proposals.

*Recommendation:* **Board discussion as necessary.**

#### (4) Preliminary Subdivision Plan Review

The Board met with the Planning Board on June 15, 2011 to discuss the Preliminary Subdivision Plan that had just been submitted by our consultant. The Planning Board waived the usual filing fees (except for future actual expenses) and will take the matter up again on July 6, 2011 with the Town's Consultant present. The Planning Board's review should be complete and comments should be rendered by mid to late-July.

*Recommendation:* I will update the Board as necessary.

## B. Computer Systems

### (1) Library Computer Connection Problem

The Librarian reported a problem with the library patrons' computer during the week of May 30, 2011. I investigated the matter and found that the network cable connector had become brittle and was no longer connecting properly. I replaced the connector and the system is working well.

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

### (2) Remote Datacenter Analysis

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At the last meeting, I provided the Board with a summary of our presently-outsourced IT functions versus those that are in-house. Generally, about \$9,000 of annual cost items could be moved to a datacenter run by the City of Melrose, at some cost. I have communicated with the IT officer for the City and he is optimistic about what Melrose can offer. He is presently working on verifying his costs and may provide more information by meeting time. At this point, it appears that a small-scale test of various services might be in order, with the ability to revert to our present setup, if needed.

*Recommendation:* **Board discussion as necessary.**

## C. Personnel

### (1) Selection of Deputy Shellfish Constable

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At the last meeting, the Board received a total of four applications for the subject position (my former report referenced only three due to a typographical error). The Board desired to consider the applicants further at the present meeting and, possibly, to set up interviews.

*Recommendation:* **Board discussion relative to interviews as necessary.**

### (3) Approval of Senior Van Paid Driver Position Description

At the last meeting, the Board, acting in its capacity as the Personnel Board, voted to approve the subject position description, subject to comments that I had made on the Council on Aging's first draft. I notified the Council about the changes and I will be provided with a digital copy of the document, so that I can finalize the changes.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

## D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects

### (1) 20<sup>th</sup> Biweekly Update, Route 133 Reconstruction Project

I issued the subject update on June 6, 2011 to the members of the Chamber's Route 133 Task Force. Presently, the crew plans to finish up all work on the Gloucester side of the bridge by the 4<sup>th</sup> of July holiday. Work on the Essex Center side of the bridge will not commence for the foreseeable future. The latest information from the project coordinators indicates that pavement milling will occur on June 17 and, perhaps, a portion of June 20, 2011 and that final paving from Water Street to the bridge will occur on June 23 and 24, 2011.

*Recommendation:* I will update the Board as necessary.

### (2) Reconfiguration of Causeway Planting Strips

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At the Board's meeting of June 8, 2011, the Board discussed the possibility of reconfiguring the planting strips that were designed at the back of the curb on the causeway to put them at the back of the sidewalk instead. The curb-side planters had not yet been cut into the poured concrete and an additional area to the rear of the sidewalk had been poured for pedestrian travel around the planters. Selectman O'Donnell and I met with MassDOT employees after the Selectmen's meeting and Selectman O'Donnell visited the site with the Assistant Resident Engineer. Selectman O'Donnell has provided MassDOT with a suggested revised design layout and others are working on the specification of individual plants requested by the various abutters.

*Recommendation:* **Board discussion as necessary.**

### (3) Removal of Old Utility Poles

When the National Grid contractor came through the Route 133 Reconstruction Project zone, the contractor was able to move all old poles out of the new roadway, except for two. Most old poles were simply cut and affixed to the new poles to allow other utilities time to move their wires and, eventually, to remove the old pole pieces. However, in two cases, the new pole was either too far away from the old pole to cut and attach the old pole to the new one or some other technical problem prevented that practice. Both of those poles are actually in the roadway and paving operations planned for the weeks of June 13 and June 20 require final action. I contacted National Grid and the utility is working to expedite the removal of those two poles with the other utilities.

As for the removal of the old pole sections that were attached to the new poles, both Verizon and Comcast are aware of the need for this work. However, these utilities do not presently have sufficient space to operate since the MassDOT project is in full swing. Verizon actually plans to run a new phone cable on the new poles and to remove the existing phone cables thereafter. As such, work

cannot be completed on a piecemeal basis. The Town has removed an old fire alarm cable as part of the pole removal process (see item F4, below).

*Recommendation:* I will update the Board as necessary.

(4) Paglia Park Design Notice of Intent (\*)

On a preliminary basis, it is the Board's understanding that the construction of a boardwalk at the Paglia Park site may pose permitting challenges. I have reached out to the Chairman of the Conservation Commission to discuss the matter as requested by the Board and I may have additional information by meeting time.

*Recommendation:* **Board discussion relative to whether our consultant should proceed with the boardwalk plan versus some other design, depending upon the information that is available by meeting time.**

(5) Release of Conomo Point Bridge Lease Appraisal RFP

The subject RFP was released as planned on June 13, 2011. The RFP was advertised in the local paper, at the Town Hall, in the Goods and Services Bulletin, and via direct communication with appraisers via a list suggested by our consultant. A site walk for prospective appraisers will occur on June 22, 2011 and proposals are due on July 6, 2011.

*Recommendation:* I will update the Board as necessary.

## **E. Insurance**

(1) Employee Health Insurance Responsibility Disclosure Forms

Each year, the Town is required to provide to certain employee groups Employee Health Insurance Responsibility Disclosure (HIRD) forms. One group of employees works from 64 to 79 hours per month and is eligible to have the Town withhold funds from earnings to directly pay for their own health insurance policy (they are not eligible for the Town's plan). The other group works 80 hours plus per month but has elected not to enroll in the Town's group health insurance plan, even though they are eligible. These annual reminder forms provide employees with a chance to make changes. I provided all necessary forms to the Treasurer for distribution with paychecks.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

## **F. Facilities**

(1) Town Hall Clock Operation

The contractor who had been working to automate the winding of the Town Hall clock has completed that work. The clock is again functioning and chiming on the hour. The system is now designed to not require weekly winding and the only need to visit the clock tower will be to correct the time or to address any future

malfunction. As the Board may recall, half of the cost of this project was defrayed by a grant from our insurer, which has an interest in reducing risks (like the climb up to and the conditions in the tower). I will work with an electrician to eventually run an indicator light to the second floor that will illuminate if the system ever shuts down due to the triggering of various safety switches. I will also ask the electrician to evaluate the power supply, which may be in need of upgrade.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

(2) Second Walkthrough, Lahey Medical Building (\*)

At the last meeting, the Board asked that Selectman O'Donnell, Finance Committee Chairman Soulard, and I walk through the Lahey Medical Building again. The building is for sale and a larger group conducted a walkthrough back in May. Ms. Sherri Davis of the Finance Committee (and soon to be a member of the Town Building Committee) also joined us. We conducted this second visit on June 10, 2011 and the matter is in need of further discussion by the Selectmen and, likely, by the Town Building Committee. Also, our Town Building Feasibility Study consultant has provided the Board with an update and a timeframe for a next meeting with Town officials.

*Recommendation:* **Board discussion relative to next steps, including a discussion of the ongoing Town Building Feasibility Study.**

(3) Water Service to Serve Paglia Park

At the last meeting, the Board discussed a proposal to potentially install a water service to Paglia Park for plant watering, etc. I reviewed the possibilities with the Superintendent of Public Works (including a new service at the curb and a service from the adjacent bridge or adjacent lot). The Superintendent indicated that the waterline is on opposite side of the road from the park and that the features that have already been constructed along Route 133 by MassDOT would make the installation of a waterline for the park infeasible at this time.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

(4) Removal of Old Fire Alarm Cable

The Fire Chief coordinated the activities of a contractor on June 6, 2011 to complete the removal of an old fire alarm cable that ran between the station and the former Hardy's Hatchery. All wires must be moved from the old poles to new poles as a result of the Route 133 Reconstruction Project. Since the alarm wire was technically the Town's wire and since the wire was no longer needed, the Town was required to remove the wire. Verizon and Comcast are now working to schedule the moving of their wires to the new poles as well.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

## G. Fiscal/Budget

### (1) Failure of Proposition 2 ½ Overrides (\*)

Voters at the Special Town Election of June 15, 2011 voted down both an operations override and a capital exclusion override. Voters at the Annual Town Meeting had approved these appropriations back on May 3. The Town's operating budget is already set up to revert to a contingency budget that was approved without the override funding. The School District budget requires further discussion.

*Recommendation:* **Board discussion as necessary.**

## H. Complaints

No items.

## I. Meetings Attended

### (1) Summit Regarding the Re-Promotion of Essex (\*)

I attended the subject summit that had been organized by Representative Ann-Margaret Ferrante on June 16, 2011 along with Selectman Coviello. Representative Linda Dorenca Forry, Chairman of the Committee on Community Development and Small Business; Representative Sarah Peake, Chairman of the Joint Committee on Tourism, Art, and Cultural Development; Mr. Barry Pett of Senator Tarr's Office; District 4 Highway Director Patricia Leavenworth, P.E.; and many members of the business community were also in attendance to discuss strategies to re-promote the Town of Essex's businesses after the Route 133 Reconstruction Project has been completed.

As a precursor to the re-promotion discussion, the group discussed a variety of items that might help improve traffic throughput and recognition of businesses during the balance of the construction project. These included:

- general signage from distant points
- business-specific signage in the actual construction area
- the possibility of night work
- focusing work to utilize the detour during the peak of summer, for better traffic flow
- proactive planning measures made by the contractor to make the project more "business-friendly"
  - may include additional effort in designing safety barrel deployments for weekends
  - may include ramps or bridges for business access when sidewalk excavations, forms, or curing concrete are present

Regarding signage, a subset of Chamber of Commerce members will develop suggestions that will flow from them, to me, to the Selectmen, to the Representative's Office, and out to the District Director. Regarding night work, the Representative asked if the Board is still supportive of that effort given that we are approaching a mostly-residential zone. Regarding the detour, MassDOT will determine if they can direct the contractor to maximize traffic throughput by working on defined road segments during the peak season. Regarding contractor measures, MassDOT will work with the contractor to raise the level of business awareness and sensitivity.

The group was also interested in any programs such as loans, tax breaks, or grants that could offer financial assistance during this difficult economic time, as exasperated by the construction project. Representative Ferrante will set up a separate meeting in the near future during with Mr. Andre Porter, a State small business assistance expert, will address the group to offer some suggestions.

Regarding actual re-promotion ideas, the group discussed items such as:

- Promotion of the "new" downtown on the Massachusetts Office of Tourism website
- Making the "new" Essex a priority on the Massachusetts Office of Tourism travel writers' agenda
- The engagement of a public relations firm (something that is unlikely since it would cost at least \$30,000)
- A well-publicized ribbon cutting ceremony at an opportune time
- Active outreach from the MassDOT media office that highlights the completed project and its benefits
- Coordination with the North of Boston Convention and Visitor Bureau
- Coordination with large, Boston convention centers relative to programs which highlight area attractions

A follow-up meeting regarding the re-promotion effort is being planned by Representative Ferrante.

***Recommendation:* Board discussion relative to the various issues, including whether night work should be considered for the upcoming construction zone.**

## **J. Final Judgment**

### (1) Quarterly Report

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I have produced the Quarterly Report for the quarter ending June 30, 2011. The report features the actions taken by the Annual Town Meeting on May 2, 2011.

***Recommendation:* Board approval to transmit the report.**

## **K. Town Meeting, By-Laws, and Regulations**

### (1) Amendment of Special Legislation

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The Selectmen have reached out to both of our legislators regarding the prospect of amending the recent Special Legislation that allows clemency to Chapter 30B for Conomo Point bridge leases. Senator Tarr and Representative Ferrante recommended that Town Counsel provide them with a letter explaining how the original Town Meeting vote authorizing the Selectmen to petition the legislature is still valid. Counsel is presently completing that task and the two legislators will advance the issue further thereafter.

*Recommendation:* **Board discussion as necessary.**

### (2) Opposition Letter Regarding Demolition Delay Bylaw

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The Office of the Attorney General (AG) provided to Town Counsel a copy of an opposition letter regarding the recently-passed Demolition Delay Bylaw. The AG is presently reviewing the bylaw as submitted by the Town Clerk, as required by the General Laws. The AG has asked Town Counsel whether they desired to respond to the opposition letter as part of the overall review process.

*Recommendation:* **Board discussion relative to requesting review and a response from Counsel to the AG.**

## **L. Legal Issues**

### (1) License to Repair Stone Piers at Conomo Point

At the last meeting, the Board approved a new license for review by the Conomo Point Association to allow the Association to make repairs to either or both of the stone piers at Conomo Point (one pier was damaged in a winter storm). The Board voted to sign the license outside of a meeting should it be accepted by the Association. We are presently awaiting the Association's review and reply.

*Recommendation:* I will update the Board as necessary.

### (2) Review of Draft Conomo Point Bridge Lease

The Board released the Draft Conomo Point Bridge Lease as an appendix to the Conomo Point Bridge Lease Appraisal RFP during the week of June 13, 2011. This release did not constitute an offer to any group or individual and referenced the draft, tentative nature of the document. The Chairman and I will be meeting with leaseholder representatives for further informal discussions during the week of June 20, 2011.

*Recommendation:* I will update the Board as necessary.

(3) Notice of Intent for the Annual Clearing of Alewife Brook

At the last meeting, the Board approved a proposal from a wetlands scientist to write and apply for a Notice of Intent for the ongoing management of the Alewife Brook. The NOI will address annual clearing for the alewife fish run and stream channel management issues for the best hydraulic throughput and management of abutting structures.

*Recommendation:* I will update the Board as necessary.

**M. Grants**

No items.

**N. Emergency Planning**

(1) Cape Ann Emergency Planning Team Monthly Meeting

I attended the subject meeting along with the Fire Chief and the Public Health Nurse on June 9, 2011. The meeting featured updates from various workgroups and the release of a public information flyer about emergency planning. The next meeting will be held via teleconference on July 7, 2011.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

**O. Other Items**

(1) Town Administrator Leave

I was out of the office on vacation leave all day on June 9 and on June 14, 2011.

*This report is available at [www.essexma.org](http://www.essexma.org) on the morning after any regularly scheduled Essex Board of Selectmen's Meeting.*