



Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of June 21, 2016

Report covers from June 4, 2016 to June 17, 2016

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

A. Town Department Reports/Requests

(1) Strategic Planning Committee Meeting Recap (*)

I attended the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) meeting along with Chairman O'Donnell and Town Planner Matt Coogan on June 8, 2016. The meeting featured a discussion regarding the potential formation of an Economic Development Committee (EDC) with Ms. Maria DiStefano of the Massachusetts Office of Business Development. Ms. DiStefano assisted the SPC by generally describing the role of an EDC in a community and by describing functions such as brokering Tax Increment Financing (TIF) agreements and making assessments of the current local economy and recommendations for improvement (from a variety of viewpoints). Ms. DiStefano's description of the EDC concept was of great interest to the Committee. In fact, the Committee voted to recommend to the Board that the Town formulate a second Community Compact with the Baker Administration around economic development.

Also, the Committee reviewed the nine major goals that are part of the Essex Strategic Plan and agreed on work elements that are either already underway or can begin in the near term (via the Committee or others) to support each goal. Further, the Committee agreed that the top two goals to focus on are Goal 1 (Town Facilities), with an emphasis on the Public Safety Building, and Goal 3 (Strong Business Community), with a an emphasis on creating a charge for and the constituting an Economic Development Committee. The Town Planner and I will revise the Town's Strategic Plan to reflect these focal points and to inject the various ongoing activities into the discussion of each goal. If the Selectmen agree with the concept of an EDC, at its next meeting, the SPC could begin formulating an EDC charge and could begin working on the ideal makeup of the EDC based upon members' individual backgrounds.

Recommendation: Board discussion relative to moving ahead with an economic development Community Compact and with the formation of an Economic Development Committee.

(2) Open Space and Recreation Plan - Letter of Review, Updated ADA Policy(*)

As the Board may recall, with the assistance of Mr. Stephen Winslow of Gloucester, the Essex Open Space Committee successfully navigated the process of updating the Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP). The Draft Final document had been under review by the Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services (DCS) and several final comments were made that must be

satisfied before the State finally accepts the OSRP. Mr. Winslow and the Open Space Committee will handle the bulk of the comments directly. However, two comments involve this office: 1) a “Letter of Review” must be submitted by the Selectmen, and 2) an ADA section must be added to the OSRP (which includes reference to the Town’s ADA policy statement).

Regarding the Letter of Review, Mr. Winslow provided me with an example from another plan and I have been able to adapt the letter to suit the Board’s needs. Regarding the ADA section, by reviewing how this section was handled in Gloucester’s OSRP in 2010, I have been able to create that section for Essex and I have provided it to Mr. Winslow. The Board also needs to update the Town’s ADA compliance statement.

Recommendation: **Board approval and signature of the necessary Letter of Review and the Town’s updated ADA compliance statement.**

B. Computer Systems

(1) Implementation of Information/Technology Audit Recommendations

As the Board may recall, I had reached out to a technology consultant that provides guidance to the Town regarding I/T issues at no cost. The consultant has reviewed various recommendations from the I/T department of our financial auditor and has begun to assist me with guidance on implementation. Given that certain elements such as system penetration testing, I/T risk awareness training and testing, and review of internal control are commonly performed by a third-party vendor, I have chosen to start with these aspects. To that end, I contacted a recommended vendor which I will work with to develop a scope of services and cost proposal.

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

C. Personnel

(1) Town “Red Flags” Policy

Each year, employees who deal with water and sewer billing issues are required to read and acknowledge the Town’s “Red Flags” policy. This policy promotes safeguarding of account holders’ personal information and provides a process for notification if identity theft is ever suspected. I have provided the policy to applicable employees, who will read and acknowledge.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Distribution of Sexual Harassment and Discriminatory Harassment Policies

Each year, we are required to distribute paper copies of both of the subject policies. The Selectmen's Assistant has provided ample copies of each policy for the Treasurer to include with employee paychecks in the near future.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(3) Distribution of Master Policy Acknowledgement Form

Each year, an acknowledgement form is distributed to every Town employee and official regarding each person's review of certain Town policies. Employees and officials are directed to copies of the policies on the Town's website, for reference, and then return an acknowledgement form. The process for this year will be commenced in the near future.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects

(1) Contract for the Promotion of Town Resources (*)

As the Board may recall, I had requested quotations from three organizations to promote the various resources and attractions of the Town. Proposals were due on June 16, 2016 and a single proposal was received (from the Essex Merchants' Group). Work on a new contract may begin as of July 1, 2016.

Recommendation: **Board vote to award this year's contract to the Essex Merchants' Group.**

(2) Contract for Real Estate Agent Services, Southern Conomo Point Sales(*)

Bids for real estate agent services to represent and sell five remaining former leaseholds in the southern area of Conomo Point were due on June 21, 2016. I hosted a site visit that allowed for a tour of all five properties on June 9, 2016 and one agent attended. Approximately ten agents had picked up bid documents. The name and bid of the successful bidder will be available by meeting time (based upon the lowest offered commission).

Recommendation: **Board vote to enter into a contract with the lowest bidder for real estate agent services.**

(3) Town Hall/Library Renovation Project Update (*)

I attended the weekly project meeting on June 8, 2016. The project is still moving along well and the contractor is presently focusing on exterior masonry, interior wood framing, and window restoration and will soon begin the process of installing steel and concrete block to form the elevator shaft. Also, our architect confirmed that the decorated doors to one of the old safes will be able to be installed in the pedestrian lobby, where it will receive significantly more notice

than in the elevator lobby. Further, we have confirmed that the contractor will refinish all wood floors as part of the based bid. Work on the new water service that will serve the new sprinkler system will begin in early July.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(4) Installation of Gas Line to Serve New Town Hall/Library Boiler

I have been in touch with National Grid relative to the installation of a gas line between the main in the street and the building foundation. National Grid will install that line at no cost and our project contractor will make the interior connection as part of the base project bid. I have begun to complete initial paperwork with the utility and have forwarded to the utility information concerning the gas load for the building and the location of the connection. Presently, the utility is reviewing our needs and will soon work directly with our General Contractor to set a schedule for the gas line work.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(5) Change Order Regarding Town Hall/Library Fire Protection System (*)

At the last meeting, the Board agreed that the Town should investigate the potential of converting the “dry” fire sprinkler system that was designed for the third floor and belfry areas in Town Hall to a “wet” system for part of that space. When the system was originally designed, it had to be a dry system, since it was not known whether the Town would be electing a bid alternate that would provide more insulation in the third floor area. The belfry area will still be very cold and a dry system is required in that location, regardless.

We now have information on the scope and cost of moving to a wet system, which the Board may consider in a change order (a proposal has been prepared by our contractor and the cost is recommended by our architect and Project Manager). The total cost of this change, including additional design work, the required heater, the net additional materials and labor, and the general contractor’s markup is \$6,546. Also, while our General Contractor is requesting a three-week time extension to the overall project schedule, our architect and Project Manager will be recommending a shorter extension (recommendation will be available by meeting time).

Recommendation: **Board approval of the finances of this change order, with discussion regarding the appropriate length of extension time.**

(6) Review of Lighting Options for Essex Library (*)

When the Friends of the Essex Library assisted with the renovation of the Library at 30 Martin Street about two years ago, decorative “school house” style lighting was installed. As part of the assessment of the space that was conducted by a library specialist for this current phase of renovations, the Library’s specialized

architect recommended various “modern” style lighting upgrades to allow for additional light at the reading surface. In addition, the Selectmen recently asked our project architect (MKA) to recommend how the existing lighting system could be improved upon. Rather than just supplementing what exists, MKA recommended replacing all of the existing fixtures with new, brighter “brass tube” style fixtures.

Neither plan was carried in the base bid, so either one would have to proceed by change order. Options for lighting presently include:

1. Leave the existing lighting just as it is (which is not bright enough).
2. Increase the brightness of the existing lighting by changing out the bulbs.
3. Get price quotes from our contractor on both the “modern” and the “brass tube” style lighting upgrades to better understand the project’s ability to afford a change in this area. It is possible that work could be held off until the very end of the project to ensure that funds are available. For the “modern” system, quotes for the exact plan versus perhaps hanging modern fixtures just in the existing school house lighting locations may be necessary for cost comparison purposes.
4. Replace the lighting in the future, using existing wiring points, after the current project is completed, using our own, competitive lighting bid process. This work could be accomplished at night, so as not to interrupt Library hours.

It is important to note that some areas in the Town Hall portion of the building were specified with the school house style lighting, since the Library already had that style. If the Library lighting style changes, the lighting style in the Town Hall could be revised to match or could stay as specified (since the Town Hall components will generally not be observable from the Library).

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(7) Contract for Northern Conomo Point Design and Permitting Services (*)

At the last meeting, the Board reviewed a revised draft of a proposal from Copley-Wolff Design Group that included a scope of services and a cost breakdown for the design, permitting, and construction oversight associated with waterfront public access improvements in northern Conomo Point. The Board indicated that the proposal should be further revised to reflect a project completion date of Memorial Day, 2017, along with other comments. Also, the Board indicated that a contract for the site survey work should be prepared for signature at the present meeting, even if the remainder of the contract was not ready. However, we have been able to work out a final version of the contract, which includes all elements. Copley-Wolff will also take care to develop separate design packages for the two sites involved, in the event that the Department of Public Works is able to conduct the work associated with the parking lot site. The Conomo Point Planning

Committee will not be meeting to comment regarding the design services proposal but will be involved during the input phase of the design.

Recommendation: **Board approval of the contract with Copley-Wolff.**

(8) Contract for Cloud-Based Voice Over IP (VOIP) Phone Service (*)

At the last meeting, the Board agreed that the Town should enter into a one-year contract for VOIP phone service using ShoreTel as a provider, under the auspices of the State Contract. The system will replace copper lines and will provide better service, many more features, and disaster recovery capabilities at a lower price. I contacted the vendor and we will know by meeting time whether we are able to get the same pricing for a one-year contract.

Next, I turned to how the system will be set up in our temporary quarters. I have ordered the necessary Power Over Ethernet (POE) switch that will connect the individual phones with the Internet. This equipment will simply be brought over to Town Hall, when we are ready to move back into the building. Also, each phone will require its own, temporary network cable in the temporary facility since phone traffic will not be passing over the Town's internal computer network. To that end, I will simply purchase and run individual cables from each phone back to the switch (cables will be visible and run along walls and ceilings).

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(9) Quarterly Woman/Minority Owned Business Utilization Reports

I have produced and will soon file the subject reports for the quarter ending June 30, 2016 in my capacity as the Town's Affirmative Marketing Construction Officer (AMCO). The reports are intended to document the Town's use of woman and minority-owned contractors on State-funding construction projects. No such utilization occurred over the last quarter.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

E. Insurance

No items.

F. Facilities

(1) Potential Conversion of Southern Av. Parcels to Passive Recreational Use(*)

As the Board is aware, the Annual Town Meeting appropriated funds for the demolition of a garage at 5 Southern Avenue. On June 6, 2016, Selectman Coviello and I had met with personnel from the Essex County Greenbelt about the potential to partner with that organization to acquire the parcel, finalize environmental cleanup, and create a passive recreational area and parking. The

idea would essentially be to apply for environmental grants that would assist with the property's conversion while insulating the Town from any future liability. Without any obligation or cost to the Town, Greenbelt agreed to conduct a review of existing environmental data with their own consultant. That review will help to determine what we do know about the site and what gaps remain.

At the last meeting, the Board agreed, after hearing about potential liabilities from the Conservation Commission during the first stage of the demolition preparation process, that any action should be delayed. The Board also agreed that the Town should take advantage of Greenbelt's offer to review existing data and determine what gaps are present. Thereafter, the Board may consider the use of funds for the demolition of the garage to test the contents of the building and to assess the status of the underground storage tank beneath the building.

Presently, it is my understanding that the private party that had offered to purchase the property for residential development purposes is not willing to increase his offer to a point that would cover both the Receiver's legal fees and all taxes now due.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(2) Repairs to Stone Pier at Conomo Point

At the last meeting, the Board agreed that the Town should hire a mason to patch the surface of the large stone pier at Conomo Point and to fill any major voids in the structure. That work was completed during the week of June 13, 2016.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

G. Fiscal/Budget

No items.

H. Complaints

No items.

I. Meetings Attended

No items.

J. Final Judgment

(1) DEP Consent Decree Quarterly Report

(*)

I have produced the Quarterly Report to the DEP for the quarter ending June 30, 2016. The report features a discussion of the recent votes at the Annual Town Meeting.

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

K. Town Meeting, By-Laws, and Regulations

(1) New No Parking Zone at Town Landing

At the last meeting, the Board determined that the area along the museum side of the Town Landing between Route 133 and the corner of the museum property should be a permanent no parking zone. Congestion at the Town Landing is exacerbated by vehicles parked in the lane that is meant to provide exit from the property. As such, I worked with the Superintendent of Public Works to have signs created. Once received and posted, the signs will clearly indicate that the penalty for violation is a \$100 fine or towing. The Board will decide at the present meeting whether to post the signs immediately or only after voluntary parking cessation fails.

Recommendation: The Board will discuss this matter under the “Other Business” category on the agenda.

L. Legal Issues

No items.

M. Grants

(1) Quarterly Seaport Advisory Grant Report

I have produced and will soon file the subject report for the quarter ending June 30, 2016 relative to the Downtown Boardwalk Feasibility Study. As the Board is aware, the project is on hold until construction funding is released via a future Transportation Bond Bill.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Massachusetts Downtown Initiative Parking Study Grant Update (*)

The Steering Committee for the subject grant met on June 13, 2016 to review the planned scope and schedule for the subject grant. An initial meeting some months ago had provided the raw materials for the scope that is now being implemented. After the Steering Committee meeting (for the balance of the day), our consultant and the Town Planner conducted interviews of a diverse group of stakeholders with respect to parking in our downtown area. I walked the downtown area with one of our consultants and the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Planning Board later in the day to point out various points of interest and to answer our

consultant's questions. This initial effort was very useful and serves to set the stage for a public "open house" that is planned for June 28, 2016 (5-7 p.m. at the Senior Center) and, later, actual parking field survey work at the height of summer.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(3) Green Crab Harvesting Grant

I have processed the second round of invoices from the two green crab harvesters who have elected to participate in the program. The Town participated in this grant program in the past and this present round of funding expires on June 30, 2016. I expect that the harvesters will provide invoices at least one more time prior to that date and we have worked out a protocol to get all required paperwork and reimbursement requests submitted within the State's deadline. Subsequently, I will work with the Division of Marine Fisheries to complete any necessary post-grant paperwork (such as catch reports).

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(4) Army Corps of Engineers Beneficial Use Dredging Study Funding (*)

The Engineering and Planning Division of the New England District of the US Army Corps of Engineers has reached out to the Town to offer to assess the potential for a future Essex River dredging project. To date, the Corps has conducted a detailed bathymetry survey of the Essex River and is presently conducting sediment sampling and testing in the River. Since it is possible that future dredge spoils could benefit the marsh by elevating the marsh platform to both restore the marsh and to mitigate against sea level rise, the Corps is potentially willing to perform a Beneficial Use Study regarding such a project.

Under Section 204 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1992, the Corps has the ability to assess whether an ecologically-beneficial proposed use (like thin layer deposition –TLD – of spoils on the marsh) would present an overall cost benefit when compared to traditional disposal of sediment either on land or at sea. To that end, if the Board is interested, I have prepared a formal letter of interest that would serve to get the assessment process started. The Corps would want to review several potential sites for TLD and we could coordinate any work with what area scientists are presently testing with respect to sea level rise mitigation strategies. Like the Corps' work to date, funding for the study would come from the Corps' operational funds for our area.

Recommendation: **Board signature of the letter of interest.**

N. Emergency Planning

No items.

O. Other Items

(1) Town Administrator Leave

I was out of the office on vacation leave on June 14, 15, and 20, 2016.

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