



## Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of July 13, 2009

Report covers from June 20, 2009 to July 10, 2009

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

---

### A. Town Department Reports/Requests

#### (1) Town Building Committee Update

The Town Building Committee met on June 22, 2009 and made repeat site visits to Hamilton, Wenham, and Rockport public safety buildings on July 7, 2009 (since some members were not available for the first tours). The Rowley Library and the Byfield Fire Station will be toured in the future. The Committee continues to gather information about other existing buildings and to assess the various options for future Town buildings in Essex. Presently, the Committee is working on a memo to the Board asking for technical assistance funds for a professional to help assess various options. That memo should be finalized by the Committee on July 20, 2009 – in time for the Selectmen's meeting of July 27, 2009.

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

#### (2) Town Clerk Search Committee

The Town Clerk Search Committee will meet for the first time on July 14, 2009. The Committee will provide updates at each step of its charge so that the Selectmen may review and approve before successive steps are taken. The first order of business will be to develop a position description and minimum qualifications.

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

#### (3) Conomo Point Planning Update

(\*)

The Conomo Point Planning Committee met on June 30, 2009 and the Southern Conomo Point Subcommittee met on July 9, 2009. Presently, our consultant has provided the Subcommittee with a revised draft of the proposed Southern Conomo Point Zoning District By-law and is working with the Subcommittee and the full Conomo Point Planning Committee toward a Preliminary Subdivision Plan application.

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

#### (4) Town Planning Update

(\*)

The Chair of the Planning Board recently asked if the completion deadline for the Planning Board portion of the Town Planning contract could be extended by approximately one month. Consulting Planner Carolyn Britt presently has a

deadline of September 2, 2009 to complete work with respect to focus areas one and two but the Planning Board needs more time to consider Ms. Britt's work products before providing her with final guidance. The extension would be for time only – no additional cost. I spoke to Ms. Britt and she agrees that a no-cost extension is advisable. She recommends extending through the end of October and presently has 29 hours of time remaining to work with the Planning Board. The third focus area (grant writing) will be commenced after the deliverables for the first two focus areas have been finalized and submitted. Ms. Britt will be meeting with the Zoning Board of Appeals to discuss their desired topics for technical assistance on July 15, 2009.

***Recommendation:* Board discussion relative to a potential contract extension through the end of October, 2009.**

## **B. Computer Systems**

### (1) Replacement of UPS Equipment

The battery in the uninterruptible power supply (UPS) unit serving the Town Hall file server failed during the week of June 22, 2008. I replaced the battery with a spare that I had on hand and ordered a new replacement battery to replenish my stock. Also, over the Independence Day holiday weekend, another UPS (the actual unit) failed along with a network switch. I replaced both the switch and the UPS unit and have reordered necessary spare equipment.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary. Total time – 1 hour.

### (2) Virus Issue

The antivirus software on the Police Clerk's computer system issued virus warnings during the week of June 22, 2009. I investigated the matter and was able to work with the software to eliminate all threats.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary. Total time – 1 hour.

### (3) Assessors' Database Migration Process

I had informed the Board previously that the migration from our old Assessors' server to our new server had experienced a problem that our vendor was researching. Subsequently, our vendor studied the issue more closely and I worked with a technician during the week of July 6, 2009 to perform additional operations. However, the problem is still not solved. The Assessors will continue using the old server until the vendor can get their software running on the new Windows 2008 Server operating system platform.

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

(4) Firewall/Router Software Bug

I recently made a change in the report log section of our firewall/router's user interface and, due to a software bug, it actually caused Internet connectivity to be interrupted. I repeated the change to rule out a coincidence and it occurred again. I have reported the problem to our hardware vendor so that it can be studied for correction in future software releases. The unit is presently functioning normally.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary. Total time – 1 hour.

(5) Essex Fire and Police System Configuration and Maintenance

I configured user accounts and performed system maintenance on one fire and one police computer system during the week of July 6, 2009.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary. Total time – 1 hour.

(6) Comcast Cable Internet Outage

After troubleshooting a connection problem on July 8, 2009, I learned from Comcast that the company was experiencing trouble with their network. Since the outage was to last for some time, I was able to switch our Internet connectivity to our backup DSL connection which carried our traffic until the cable network was restored.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary. Total time – 1 hour.

**C. Personnel**

(1) Migration of Essex Regional Retirement Board (ERRB) Investments (\*)

At the last meeting, the Board voted to support the migration of the ERRB's investments to the State's Pension Reserve Investment Trust (PRIT). At that time, we were waiting for the ERRB to host a meeting regarding such a move and our Treasurer attended that meeting on June 29, 2009. At the meeting, ERRB officials indicated that they intend to engage the Segal Company to prepare an informational report relative to the investment transition process which will be made available this fall.

We have also had a chance to collaborate with other communities regarding the development of a consensus viewpoint. It does appear that most communities support the migration and I have a letter written by the Town of Boxford Board of Selectmen to ERRB that provides pertinent facts and figures for the Board's review. If the Board desires to also provide a letter to ERRB, comments regarding the timing of the transition process should be considered since we will be commencing the fiscal year 2011 budget development process in December. Also, Senator Tarr and Representative Hill have organized a meeting of the town administrators and mayors for July 23, 2009 to discuss the communities' concerns

regarding pension investments and pension system governance. I will attend that meeting and report back to the Board.

***Recommendation:* Board discussion relative to the content and timing of a potential letter to ERRB.**

(2) Human Resources General Audit

Our insurer has provided us with access to an on-line tool known as HR Sentry for several years now. HR Sentry recently introduced an on-line audit program for human resources functions within an organization. I have been steadily reviewing the various modules and ensuring that our policies contain all necessary elements. I will coordinate the review with other necessary employees (particularly the Treasurer) as necessary.

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

(3) Teamsters Contract

(\*)

I have additional information for the Board.

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

## **D. Procurement**

(1) Affirmative Marketing Quarterly Report

I completed and submitted the subject report in my capacity as the Town's Affirmative Marketing Construction Officer (AMCO). The report documents any required woman or minority-owned business activity on State-funded projects. We had no such activity over the last quarter.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

(2) Surplus Office Furniture

The DPW picked up for our office several surplus file cabinets from the Manchester Essex Regional High School during the week of June 29, 2009. It does not appear at this time that any surplus computer systems will be available.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

(3) Proposed Donation of Phone System

In researching what would be necessary to make a phone system to be donated to the Town from the School District operational in Town Hall, I learned that the system in question would not meet our needs. Town Hall has more physical lines than the system can accommodate which would make apportioning the monthly billing very difficult. In addition, some departments would have to be consolidated under one phone line and both outgoing and incoming capacity

would therefore be limited. At the last meeting, the Board decided not to accept the system and I informed the District thereafter.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

(4) Energy Services Company (ESCO) Regional RFQ

At the last meeting, I explained to the Board that the towns of Hamilton and Wenham had collaborated to contract with an ESCo to analyze their municipal buildings and to potentially upgrade infrastructure to be paid for using savings from lower energy costs (with the risk completely on the ESCo). The Board agreed that Essex should explore this same concept with other surrounding communities and, potentially, join with Hamilton and Wenham in the future.

I contacted the administrators from Topsfield, Ipswich, and Manchester along with the Assistant Superintendent from the Regional School District. Thus far, the District and the Town of Ipswich have opted not to participate. I will continue to work with the towns of Manchester and Topsfield toward a potential joint RFQ. I will also be meeting with ESCo industry representatives to learn more about their programs and services.

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

(5) Disposition of Causeway Seawall Stones

(\*)

I have investigated the reuse of the subject stones further. Presently, the contract calls for the stones to be reused as benches at Woodman's Beach and for facing for the new seawall. No specific quantities are given and the contractor must take care to limit the amount of damage to the stones. It is possible that the Town could acquire a quantity of stones (particularly the capstones) in excess of what is needed at Woodman's Beach and a landowner with a vacant parcel abutting the causeway has indicated that additional stones could be placed on that parcel for future use by the Town. I am presently working to discuss this topic with the Project Manager for the construction contractor and may have additional information by meeting time.

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

## **E. Insurance**

(1) Management Training Focus Group

Our insurer is beginning to plan various training courses it will offer as part of the MIA Rewards Program during fiscal year 2010. I have been invited to participate in a focus group exercise relative to management training courses that are being considered. I will provide input from the perspective of a small community.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

## F. Facilities

### (1) Facility Self-Inspection Forms

I completed the subject forms as part of the MIIA Rewards Program during the week of July 6, 2009. I noted recent fire alarm and ventilation repairs at the Senior Center.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

### (2) Town Hall Clock

(\*)

As noted previously, the Town Hall clock had not been running well and, despite a period of continuous operation after we tried various remedies, the clock has again begun to stop sporadically. A historic clock specialist has assessed the operation of the clock at no charge will soon provide recommendations along with a written estimate for services.

*Recommendation:* **Board discussion if information is available by meeting time.**

### (3) Placement of Sand at Clammers' Beach

The Conservation Commission granted permission at their meeting of July 7, 2009 for the placement of sand at Clammers' Beach. Several guidelines relative to the material to be used and its placement were provided and I have passed those along to the Essex Enhancement Committee. The Enhancement Committee will determine if the sand placement will be one of its projects for this season and, if so, we will work together to ensure that the project is conducted within the Commission's guidelines.

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

### (4) Senior Center Fire Alarm System

Our fire alarm contractor performed the annual inspection of the Senior Center fire alarm system during the week of July 6, 2009 and found a problem with the horn and strobe system on the first floor of the building. The contractor will need to return to the site to fully correct the problem. I will ensure that the issue is remedied in a timely fashion.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

### (5) Route 133 Reconstruction Project Business Signage

(\*)

Chairman Jones recently asked me to look into the possibility of the provision of special business signage from the State with regard to the subject project. Businesses would likely benefit from signage that assured motorists that the downtown Essex business district is open and accessible during the construction

project. According to the Resident Engineer for the project, no such signage is included within the contract. However, he recommended that the Town determine the message that is desired – perhaps “Downtown Business District Open During Construction” – and the proposed signage locations – perhaps Eastern Avenue inbound near Water Street, Southern Avenue inbound, and John Wise Avenue inbound near the Main Street junction. Subsequently, the Town could request the additional signage by writing to the District Highway Director.

*Recommendation:* **Board discussion relative to this potential request and its coordination with the business community.**

## **G. Fiscal/Budget**

### (1) School Building Assistance Funding Update (\*)

At the last meeting, the Board asked that I check with Senator Tarr’s Office relative to the status of the School Building Assistance award that was made to the Manchester Essex Regional School District. The District has received \$10M thus far and is waiting for approximately \$9M in additional payments. According to the Senator’s Office, the Massachusetts School Building Assistance Bureau is working on a new project funding agreement before any additional funds may be disbursed.

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

## **H. Complaints**

### (1) Dog Complaint

We received a complaint about two dogs allegedly jumping in front of a skateboarder, causing the individual to fall. The incident is presently under review by the Dog Officer.

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

## **I. Meetings Attended**

No items.

## **J. Final Judgment**

No items.

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

No items.

## L. Legal Issues

### (1) Submittal and Approval of Conomo Point Subdivision (\*)

At the last meeting, the Board asked that I confer with Town Counsel as to whether the Conomo Point Commissioners have the authority to make application for a new subdivision on Conomo Point south of Robbins Island Road without further approval of that action by Town Meeting. It does appear that such authority exists. However, it will be necessary to take any necessary zoning by-law changes to Town Meeting if the subdivision is to be applied for under standards defined in a new zoning district.

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

## M. Grants

### (1) Firefighting Equipment Grant (\*)

The Fire Department produced a grant application for firefighting equipment (\$2,500) and needed the Chairman to sign the appropriate paperwork between meetings.

*Recommendation:* **Board vote to ratify the Chairman's action.**

### (2) Safe Routes to School Assessment Report

The State's contractor for the subject program has indicated that they will soon provide our office with a graphic depicting some preliminary recommendations that will likely appear in the draft Assessment Report. The report will discuss physical improvements (such as additional sidewalks) that may be implemented to improve pedestrian access to the school. Once received, I will review the draft graphic along with the Superintendent of Public Works and the Chief of Police and will provide comments back to the contractor. The Town's comments will be sent to the Executive Office of Transportation for review and an updated draft will be presented to the Town and the School District for joint review after about 2-3 months. A final report will eventually be generated and that report may be used to compete for available funding to actually implement the report's recommendations.

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

### (3) Rivers and Harbors Grant Program (\*)

Finance Committee Member Mark McKenna provided me with information relative to the subject program. He had spoken with Program Manager Kevin Mooney of the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) about the need for dredging in the Essex River and Mr. Mooney sent a program application to him. The Town had in the past provided DCR with two completed surveys that were to be used as a basis for future dredging efforts and I have placed a call to

Mr. Mooney to learn how this program potentially dovetails with those past efforts.

*Recommendation:* **Board discussion if I have additional information by meeting time.**

(4) 911 Emergency Center Support Grant (\*)

The Chief of Police has presented for approval paperwork regarding the subject grant. The grant program is being offered by the Department of Public Safety and the Chief is applying for funds to defray the costs of regular dispatch shifts along with the purchase of a new LEAPS computer system with a more modern, drop-down menu system.

*Recommendation:* **Board signature of the necessary grant paperwork.**

(5) Potential Senior Mini-Bus Acquisition (\*)

Essex Council on Aging Chairman Robert Cameron has indicated that it may be possible to acquire a new senior mini-bus with partial State funding associated with a grant to be secured by the Seniorcare organization. The cost of the new mini-bus is approximately \$58,000 and a local match of approximately \$14,000 is required. The van would remain property of Seniorcare for five years or 100,000 miles and would then become property of the Town. However, the Town would be responsible to operate, maintain, and insure the vehicle even while owned by Seniorcare. No special driver's license would be required but the Town does not presently have an appropriation for the local match and it is not possible to enter into a lease-purchase agreement for the local match portion since the Town will not own the vehicle (even though the vehicle is new).

*Recommendation:* **Board discussion relative to this topic.**

## **N. Emergency Planning**

(1) Cape Ann Emergency Planning Team Meeting

I attended the subject meeting on June 22, 2009 in Manchester along with other Essex employees. The meeting featured a status report relative to the H1N1 virus and how it is possible that the virus could manifest itself in a second wave this coming fall.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

(2) Further Development of the Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)

I have continued to develop the subject Plan. The Essex Elementary School emergency relocation site's availability had been dependent on the moving of the 6<sup>th</sup> grade class to the new High School/Middle School and that process is now underway. Presently, it is necessary to make both Emergency Relocation Sites

fully operational so that the plan may be finalized for review by each of the Town departments. I will be working to procure the necessary additional equipment and to physically set up the near-site center in the coming weeks – after the space at the school becomes available.

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

## **O. Other Items**

### (1) Final Comments Regarding FEMA Flood Map Changes

As the Board may recall, I had reviewed the draft changes to the FEMA flood maps and information study for Essex. I had provided FEMA with suggested changes and had reached out to all departments as to whether any additional changes were recommended. I did not receive any additional comments by the submission deadline.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

### (2) Town Administrator Vacation Leave

I was out of the office on vacation leave for the entire week of June 29, 2009.

### (3) Independence Day Holiday

The office was closed on July 3, 2009 in observance of the subject holiday.

*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.*