



Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of July 21, 2014

Report covers from July 5, 2014 to July 18, 2014

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

A. Town Department Reports/Requests

(1) Potential Purchase of Police Department Motorcycle (*)

At the last meeting, the Chief of Police met with the Selectmen relative to his proposal to lease a single motorcycle for patrol activities during suitable times of the year. The Board asked that all of the costs associated with that potential endeavor be summarized at the present meeting so that the matter could be considered further and so that the Public Safety Committee could also review the matter and make a recommendation. The Finance Committee will also be interested in reviewing the proposal. I have worked with the Chief to itemize the various costs.

Recommendation: **Further Board discussion relative to this proposal.**

B. Computer Systems

No items.

C. Personnel

(1) Hiring and Work Plan of Part-Time Town Planner (*)

At the last meeting, the Board offered the new position of Part-Time Town Planner to Mr. Matthew Coogan. Mr. Coogan has since cleared the required drug and medical screen and is ready to begin work. He plans to offer one of his five hours per week during the business day (Tuesday mornings, 7:00 a.m. – 8:00 a.m.) and two additional hours when the Building Inspector holds his weekly office hours (Wednesday nights between 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.). Mr. Coogan can work the other two hours on a schedule that suits his needs or can use those hours to attend other meetings, etc.

The Board had begun a discussion of which projects the Planner should embark upon first, since hours are limited and projects need to be prioritized. The Board's recent discussion on this topic included the potential for the Planner to navigate the process required to apply for "Green Community" status. If this activity is to be his first assignment, he could also begin meeting with various department heads and board/committee chairs to categorize various goals and needs that he can eventually help to coordinate and address. Mr. Coogan will be at the present meeting to participate in the quarterly Town coordination session.

Recommendation: Board discussion of work assignments with Mr. Coogan at the present meeting.

D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects

(1) Downtown Boardwalk Update

(*)

I spoke with the new proprietor of the CK Pearl Restaurant during the week of July 7, 2014. He wanted to review the history of the project and the proposed plan to run the boardwalk behind the restaurant (which is actually owned by another party). As the Board may recall, the Town is expecting \$1.5M in State funding after the start of the new calendar year to complete design and permitting and then to construct the boardwalk (which will include a ramp and floats). Presently, I will be getting the proprietor together with our consulting engineer so he can understand the various elevations that are at play. We may also explore the possibility of making alterations to the restaurant premises to better coordinate the two uses and in exchange for the easements necessary to build the boardwalk.

Recommendation: Board discussion as necessary.

(2) Southern Avenue and Southern Conomo Point Paving Project

The Board executed the Notice to Proceed for the subject paving work at the last meeting. At the time of printing of this report, work in both areas was scheduled to begin at the end of the week of July 14, 2014, weather permitting (both on paving day and on days previous that could affect the ability of the contractor to get to our job as scheduled). Residents at Conomo Point were informed through the Conomo Point Association in advance about the work, including the likelihood that passage of vehicles on paving day (with the exception of emergency vehicles) would be severely limited or prohibited.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(3) Notice of Intent Update, 138 Conomo Point Road

At the last meeting, the Chairman and I described how the Conservation Commission had continued the hearing associated with the demolition of the structures at 138 Conomo Point Road until July 15, 2014. The continuance was made in part since the Commission wanted the Town's consultant to verify a particular issue concerning the Rivers Act with the DEP. Specifically, our consultant had warned that installing loam and seed on the entire site after the demolition might preclude the Town from proposing certain future property uses (as opposed to simply installing a gravel surface in the disturbed area, which would keep the site as "degraded" in the eyes of the DEP). Our consultant was able to verify his original assertion during the week of July 7, 2014 and he informed the Commission about that confirmation in writing. The Commission will take this matter up again in August.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

E. Insurance

See “Town Hall Structural Issue”, below.

F. Facilities

(1) Annual Elevator Inspection, Senior Center

Our elevator maintenance contractor and our fire alarm maintenance contractor were to meet the State Elevator Inspector at the Senior Center on July 8, 2014 for the annual State inspection. Unfortunately, the State inspector was ill and had to cancel on short notice. We will not be charged by the State or by the elevator company but we will have to pay for the standby time provided by our alarm company.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(2) Relocation of Files and Other Items to Town Hall Basement

A prison work team arrived on the morning of July 8, 2014 to assemble new shelving units that had been delivered to the basement previously. Once the shelving units had been set up, over the subsequent two days, the work team moved numerous file boxes and other items from the Town Hall balcony and stage areas to the basement. Another group of volunteers had already moved all of the Town’s holiday decorations and two large map cases from the balcony to the basement. Files that had already been sorted and re-boxed in plastic file boxes were placed directly on the new shelves. Files that still need to be worked through prior to re-boxing and archiving were sorted by department and stacked in peripheral basement locations for each department to steadily process. The renovation and waterproofing of the basement for use as a file archiving and general storage area has now translated into the removal of most items from both the stage and the balcony. We continue to organize the basement and sort the remaining other items over the coming weeks.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(3) Conversion of Town Hall Heating Systems to Natural Gas (*)

We have been informed by National Grid that the connection between the street and Town Hall will require the Town to grant National Grid an easement. Since such grant constitutes an interest in property, a Town Meeting vote will be necessary. As such, if the next Town Meeting occurs in November, it may be too late to run the gas line in time for the upcoming season. However, it is possible that some pre-planning will allow the utility to be lined up for the job contingent upon the Town Meeting’s decision.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(4) Town Hall Structural Issue

(*)

During the week of July 7, 2014, a major crack formed in the plaster in the Treasurer/Collector's Office. I reported the matter to the Building Inspector right away and he reviewed it via a site visit with the structural engineer who is working on the current renovation project. Selectman O'Donnell and I were also present for the site visit. Although our consulting engineer did not observe cause for any imminent danger, out of an abundance of caution, he developed a sketch for the placement of shoring against the outer stone wall on the fire station end of the building. The Town addressed a similar concern in the past by inserting steel beams and columns but the bell tower section of the building may again be on the move.

Our existing building renovation contractor put the shoring in place at the beginning of the week of July 14, 2014, where it will remain until a more thorough survey of the issue can be completed. Our insurer has been notified about the matter and I expect that the Reserve Fund will need to be tapped to handle the engineering work and the temporary shoring activity.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

G. Fiscal/Budget

No items.

H. Complaints

No items.

I. Meetings Attended

No items.

J. Final Judgment

No items.

K. Town Meeting, By-Laws, and Regulations

(1) FEMA Flood Insurance Program – Map Evaluation

(*)

At the last meeting, a resident pointed out that other Massachusetts communities have been successful in hiring private engineers to refute the methods by which the most recent edition of the FEMA flood maps was produced. In fact, I hope to have information from the Town of Rockport by meeting time regarding the

process that town went through to appeal the mapping method. It is possible that private citizens will hire an engineer to review map methodology in Essex and the resident suggested that the Town consider funding the effort as well. The next opportunity for funding through a Town appropriation will be at the Fall Town Meeting in November. However, if the private group decides to go forward with private funding, the resident suggested that the Town agree to be the applicant. In a case where a municipality is the applicant, FEMA review fees are waived and all residents would benefit. Otherwise, each resident looking for a map change will be required to pay over \$5,000 to enter the process.

Recommendation: **Board discussion relative to how the Town might become involved in a review of the methods used to produce the Essex map panels.**

(2) Potential Non-Resident Boat Launching or Trailer Parking Fee (*)

Now that two marinas that formerly offered day launching for a fee have ceased that practice, use of the ramp at the Town Landing has peaked and competition for public parking space has increased. The Board has reserved the most convenient parking areas for residents but non-resident parking typically fills the gravel lot behind the Memorial Park tennis courts and has branched out onto neighborhood streets.

At the last meeting, the Board asked me to review how several area towns deal with launching congestion (i.e. fee to launch, fee to park, etc.). I have learned that the main launching ramp in Ipswich was improved by the State many years ago and operates as a “State” ramp, in a fashion identical to the major ramp in the City of Gloucester. At a State ramp, any Massachusetts resident can launch for a \$5 fee and no distinction can be made between residents and non-residents. In Rowley, only residents are allowed to use the Town ramp and parking area - for a fee. Non-residents in Rowley generally use a ramp at an adjacent large marina and competition is therefore not much of a factor. I am also anticipating having information about the situation in Newbury by meeting time.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

L. Legal Issues

No items.

M. Grants

(1) Hurricane Sandy Resiliency Funding – National Wildlife Federation

The National Wildlife Federation (NWF) has informed us that their application to the Hurricane Sandy Resiliency Grant program, that will be administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, has been funded in the amount of \$2.9M. The grant includes resiliency planning for the Town of Essex and aims to improve

the ability of a community's infrastructure to weather the impact of a major storm. Current planning techniques investigate both traditional or "gray" infrastructure such as seawalls and "green" infrastructure such as strategic plantings and vegetated berms. The program aims to maximize the restoration of the natural habitat to provide natural storm resiliency to the extent possible.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(2) Emergency Generator Grant Update

The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) confirmed during the week of July 7, 2014 that standard Massachusetts procurement procedures apply to procurement of materials and labor under the subject grant program. As such, I will soon place the order for the actual generator using a contractor on the State Contract. The services of an electrician to wire the equipment will be procured via a change order to the ongoing Town Hall/Library renovation project. I am presently awaiting a quotation for the necessary labor via the presentation of a change order proposal.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

N. Emergency Planning

No items.

O. Other Items

(1) Town Administrator Leave

I was out of the office on vacation leave from July 15-18, 2014.

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