



## Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of August 8, 2011

Report covers from July 23, 2011 to August 5, 2011

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

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### A. Town Department Reports/Requests

#### (1) Conomo Point Planning Committee Meeting (\*)

The Selectmen attended the subject meeting on July 28, 2011. The goal of the meeting was to review a scope of services for a designer to assist with the future planning and layout of northern Conomo Point. I had indicated to the Board that procurement for such a project would fall neither under Chapter 30B (since engineering and general designer services are exempt) nor the Designer Selection Law (since buildings are not involved).

*Recommendation:* **Board follow-up discussion as necessary.**

### B. Computer Systems

#### (1) Melrose Datacenter Proposal (\*)

As the Board is aware, I have been working with the IT Officer for the City of Melrose regarding a potential move to remote file and application hosting and backup using the City's datacenter. The City forwarded to me a copy of a draft intermunicipal agreement (IMA) and a draft cost proposal. I have reviewed the IMA and have some suggestions for changes in advance of having the document reviewed by Town Counsel. I have also compared the projected costs of the new center to our existing, in-house costs and a real savings is apparent. Further, I agreed with the IT Officer to collaborate on a document that will serve as an overall plan for step-wise migration to the center and the associated costs for each phase or service. That document has been through two iterations at this point.

One major consideration regarding moving toward primarily offsite IT is the robustness of the Town's Internet connection(s). If all user files and applications are to eventually exist offsite, the connection to those resources must be extremely reliable. To that end, the City is willing to locate a local area network aggregation or "fat pipe" device in Essex. The device allows the simultaneous connection of several different Internet sources such as cable, DSL, T-1, and even cell-based connectivity and has a value of approximately \$12,000. Having access to several connections managed by the device will help ensure that downtime is minimized or eliminated (especially if a cell-based connection is included to account for disasters involving the loss of utility poles and wires).

*Recommendation:* **Board review of the recent documents and discussion relative to next steps.**

(2) Accounting Software Update

Our BudgetSense Accounting Software vendor released an updated version of the application during the week of July 25, 2011. I installed the update and performed all necessary associated database maintenance procedures.

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

(3) Antivirus Software Update

Our antivirus software vendor released a comprehensive program update during the week of August 1, 2011. I updated our master server with the new program and proceeded to then update each of the client computers using a remote installation tool. The update is working well on all systems.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary. Total time – 4 hours.

(4) Server Backup Software Update

Our file backup software vendor released a comprehensive program update in the recent past. I had been waiting for a newer version of that update since bugs were known to exist in the first release. I updated the software on all five of the Town's servers.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary. Total time – 3 hours.

**C. Personnel**

(1) Informal Staff Meeting

I hosted the subject meeting as I do from time to time in my office on July 28, 2011. The various department heads provided updates on their initiatives and the meeting featured a discussion regarding the need for new water and sewer billing software that provides additional backup and detail for analysis and use by the Town Accountant. The Wastewater Clerk is coordinating a site visit to the Town of Rowley to view the system in use in that community.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

(2) Future Use of Volunteer Van Drivers

I recently contacted all six of the Town's approved volunteer Senior Van drivers to determine: a) which of them were still actively providing that service, and b) which of them planned to continue once the paid van driver(s) are hired. A need will still exist for volunteer drivers on off days and hours. Of the six approved drivers, only two responded that they still actively drive the van. Both of those active drivers plan on continuing as volunteers as needed even after a paid employee is hired. I will work with both individuals this fall to ensure that all required certifications are kept up to date.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

#### **D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects**

##### (1) Route 133 Reconstruction Task Force Monthly Meeting

I attended the subject meeting on July 27, 2011 along with Selectman O'Donnell and the members of the Chamber of Commerce's Route 133 Task Force. At the meeting, the Resident Engineer updated the group on progress and on expected future work and scheduling. The group also discussed a variety of other topics including signage requested by residents along the roadway; minor sidewalk resurfacing beyond the formal project zone; removal of old utility poles; easements for permanent pole moves; future lighting conduits; and other, miscellaneous issues. The next monthly meeting will be held on August 24, 2011.

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

##### (2) 24<sup>th</sup> Biweekly Report, Route 133 Reconstruction Project

I issued the subject report on July 28, 2011. The report provided an update on project progress along with a forecast for future work. Presently, all base and binder paving work from the causeway bridge to Western Avenue has been completed and the project will not require any further temporary dirt road surfaces. Sidewalk and curbing crews are working along one side of the roadway toward Western Avenue and will begin on the opposite side once that side has been completed.

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

##### (3) Future Lighting Conduits, Upper Main Street

At the last meeting, the Board discussed a suggestion that the Route 133 Reconstruction Project accommodate future lighting conduits on the upper section of Main Street, between roughly Burnham Court and Western Avenue, in addition to the conduits that are being installed in the causeway area. However, after discussion of that topic at a recent monthly construction update meeting, it became clear that this will not be possible due to design, cost, and timing issues.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

##### (4) Sloped Driveway and Parking Lot Adjustments

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When the new, mountable curb was installed in front of Periwinkle's Restaurant, it became evident that the higher profile made for a steeper slope in the establishment's parking lot. The construction contractor has now worked to feather out that grade by adding material and other issues involving that property will be reviewed by the design engineer soon. The same higher profile has created a steeper slope on the driveway entering the Town Landing and might require similar action.

*Recommendation:* **Board discussion relative to the Town Landing driveway slope.**

(5) Selection and Deployment of Benches in Project Zone (\*)

The Route 133 Reconstruction Project zone can accommodate in excess of twenty benches when both sidewalk and pocket park areas are considered. Several options exist from the re-use of the old seawall capstones, to the re-use of old granite curbing, to the purchase of new benches.

*Recommendation:* **Board discussion regarding bench selection and placement.**

(6) Conomo Point Bridge Lease Appraisal Update

Work regarding the appraisal process at Conomo Point will begin in earnest during the week of August 8, 2011. The Selectmen's Office has worked with various representatives of the leaseholders to schedule interior inspections of all habitable structures at the Point. To date, our appraiser has been conducting background and preparatory work.

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

(7) Conomo Point Subdivision Preliminary Plan Decision (\*)

The Planning Board has issued a decision regarding the Board's Preliminary Subdivision Plan application for the Southern Conomo Point subdivision. The Planning Board is inclined to grant a variety of necessary waivers and has conditioned their approval on the passage of the necessary zoning by the Office of the Attorney General. The Board of Health has issued a favorable opinion of the project.

It has been suggested that the Board might consider applying for a waiver to allow the end of Cogswell Road to serve four houses as a common driveway. The normal standard for a common driveway is up to three houses and the required width is 12 feet (which that section of roadway already is). The Fire and Police Chiefs have visited the area and have offered preliminary comments.

*Recommendation:* **Board discussion relative to the Cogswell Road area.**

## **E. Insurance**

No items.

## F. Facilities

### (1) Rail Trail Prospect

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At the last meeting, I provided the Board with information regarding a section of railroad land that has been offered for sale (\$17,500). Since the Town has a right of first refusal on that type of land, and since the Long Term Planning Committee is interested in future rail trails, the offering was worth reviewing. The Board was in general agreement and acknowledged that the land in question likely connected to both the Lahey building parcel (which is for sale) and the Town's property adjacent to the DPW barn. If that is in fact was the land in question, it would make an excellent walking and biking trail and could be purchased using Community Preservation Act funds.

The Board asked that I contact the State Rail Trail Coordinator to inquire about the process and the Coordinator put me directly in touch with the railroad offering the land. I have learned that the land in question is actually one small lot (Map 36, Lot 94) and the rear section of a lot (Lot 92) that the Assessors' maps shows as already being privately-held. However, the railroad maintains that the rear of lot 92 is actually still owned by them and that the Assessors' map incorrectly shows that section in private ownership. The Assessors agree with the map's inaccuracy.

Given that the property in question for the transaction we have been noticed about is not the long, thin strip of railroad land that would potentially make a nice rail trail, the Board should deliberate over that transaction and come to a decision regarding the purchase. The property in question is interrupted by other private lots and is not very long. The Town has until mid-October to engage in the purchase of the land, and inclusion of the potential purchase on the September 12, 2011 Special Town Meeting warrant would work very well. Alternatively, the representative of the railroad indicated that the railroad would consider an offer from the Town on the long, thin strip of land known as lot 99 if the Town were inclined to make such an offer and that could instead be presented to the Town for potential funding using the Community Preservation Act.

***Recommendation: Board discussion regarding the transaction at hand and regarding the potential to make an offer on other land (lot 99).***

### (2) Handicapped Parking Delineation, Senior Center

At the last meeting, the Board learned that the Council on Aging has requested that three handicapped parking spaces be delineated on the ground at the Senior Center. Presently, only signage marks the two existing handicapped spots. The requested marking plan called for a blue background with white borders and emblems. The Building Inspector has indicated that the available space may only allow for the two existing spaces in order comply with the required dimensions in the Americans with Disabilities Act. The Board has indicated that, for aesthetic

reasons, only the blue square with the handicapped emblem should be painted, as opposed to painting the entire space blue. I will continue to work with the Building Inspector, the Council on Aging, and the Department of Public Works to delineate as many spaces as are allowable. The Chairman of the Council will be discussing the matter further with the Building Inspector.

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

(3) Inspection of Lahey Building

At the last meeting, the Selectmen agreed that members of the Town Building Committee with expertise in building evaluation should arrange for an informal inspection of the Lahey building and its various systems. The Town Building Committee needs some further background information about the building's condition before making a recommendation to the Selectmen about potential purchase. I have assembled interested members of the Committee, the Town's various inspectional services officials, and other interested volunteers. We have arranged to view the building on August 15, 2011.

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

(4) Installation of Lock, Grove Cottage

In preparation for the use of the Grove Cottage by the annual Music Festival, I have installed a lock on the bathroom, since the size of the crowd drawn by the event would likely overwhelm the Cottage's on-site wastewater system. Portable toilets will be used as usual.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

(5) Potential Donation of Temporary Office Trailer for Police Department

At the present meeting, the Board will be considering the potential donation of a temporary office trailer to provide the Police Department with additional space until final plans can be made for a new facility. The Chief of Police hosted a site visit on August 4, 2011 to explain the nature of the trailer and to review with various Town employees and officials where the trailer would go (behind the Fire Station).

Even though the trailer would be donated, funding for the connection to utilities and handicapped accessibility, etc. would be necessary. As such, I have contacted Senator Tarr's office and that office is working with the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security to determine if any grant funding for that sort of project might be available. The Chief of Police is looking into the availability of surplus items such as handicapped ramps and stairs, etc. Further, it is possible that general labor could be supplied by community serve work crews operating out of the Lawrence Correctional Alternative Center. I have asked our insurance company of any of the needed work is eligible for funding under their Risk

Management Grant program (since the project will allow for the installation of a proper interview room within the main building).

*Recommendation:* Board consideration of the potential donation.

## **G. Fiscal/Budget**

### (1) MunEnergy Electricity Supply Contract Options (\*)

Our Constellation New Energy representative recently provided various cost analyses regarding options for future electricity supply. The Town could see its present contract through and lock in a lower rate now for a future contract (post-December, 2012) or could blend our present rate with today's lower rates to arrive at a future contract that carries that blended rate forward. It appears that locking a new rate for a new contract would be far more advantageous and I met with our representative on August 4, 2011 to discuss in more detail.

Overall, it appears that the trend in natural gas prices (which electric supply pricing tracks closely) will return to its current state likely after the hurricane season (November or so). The Town could lock a price now or could use the next few months to explore two additional programs as well. CNE offers a Peak Response program that involves the use of the Town's generators during high-demand days in an effort to lower the Town's base delivery charge. CNE also offers an energy efficiency program that installs new lighting fixtures in municipal buildings with the cost of that installation borne by a) lower usage costs, and b) a slightly higher base supply rate over a multi-year contract.

***Recommendation:* Board discussion regarding the various options and the potential authorization of the Chairman to sign a successor contract if pricing hits a specified threshold.**

### (2) Successor Solid Waste Disposal Contract (\*)

As the Board may recall, at a recent meeting with the Board of Public Works present, the Superintendent of Public Works and I agreed to review the prospect for a new solid waste contract, both with the current vendor, and with others. The Board of Public Works had the current vendor (Covanta) into its meeting of August 1, 2011 and the vendor suggested that a six-month extension, at a modest increase, be worked out to get the current contract from its current expiration date of January 2013 to June 30, 2013 (so that the successor contract may begin at the start of a new fiscal year – FY14). Alternatively, the vendor suggested that a new contract could be worked out to begin soon (during FY12). That suggestion is likely not feasible since budgets and revenue sources will need to be increased. It is possible that a new contract could begin in July of 2102 (FY13) – six months early – or the minor extension discussed above could be implemented for the FY14 start.

Continuing the present contract through its termination and adding the six-month extension at a modest increase is likely the most cost-effective scenario offered by Covanta. Otherwise, a successor contract will likely carry sharply higher rates earlier than expected. Another factor to consider is whether Covanta will offer their own attendant if the DPW scales the transfer operation station days back from four to three. Presently, we are awaiting word from the vendor to determine if that will be possible. If not, it is possible that the Town will need to hire its own, part-time attendant, possibly for just two days per week. Further, other vendors may offer other scenarios and rates. At this point, the various options with Covanta should be firmed up so that they can be compared to other vendors.

*Recommendation:* **Board discussion relative to next steps.**

## **H. Complaints**

No items.

## **I. Meetings Attended**

No items.

## **J. Final Judgment**

No items.

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

### (1) Special Town Meeting Warrant

At the last meeting, the Board discussed the potential need for a Special Town Meeting in September to primarily consider a matter related to Conomo Point. Other items of interest include the potential purchase of local railroad property for a rail trail (using Community Preservation Act funds), an appointment to the Conomo Point Planning Committee, and the establishment of a fee structure for sheet metal permits.

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

## **L. Legal Issues**

### (1) Red Flags Rule Policy

After the Board of Public Works met recently with the Selectmen regarding the Town's development of the subject policy, I provided the Superintendent's revised draft to Town Counsel for review and further comment. Counsel suggested that the draft policy be expanded to cover certain areas and the Superintendent is in the process of developing a further revision.

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

## **M. Grants**

### (1) Boardwalk Feasibility Study Grant

As the Board may recall, the grant funding for a feasibility study of a proposed boardwalk at the causeway seawall will be available in this new fiscal year. I contacted the staff at the Seaport Advisory Council and I have learned that a formal contract for that grant will be extended to the Town in the very near future (likely during the month of August).

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

## **N. Emergency Planning**

No items.

## **O. Other Items**

No items.

*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.*