



Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of August 11, 2008

Report covers from July 26, 2008 to August 8, 2008

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

A. Town Department Reports/Requests

(1) Removal of Hay from Tennis Courts

The group that ran the soapbox derby last fall had saved the hay associated with the racecourse in Memorial Park for use this past winter. The hay had been stored in one of the tennis courts and was no longer needed. As such, the Department of Public Works removed the hay and disposed of it as compost.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) School-Town Sharing of Resources Meeting

As the Board may recall, the Chairman had convened a group of Essex, Manchester, and Regional School District officials and employees last month to begin to discuss how the three entities could better share resources and work cooperatively on finances. The next meeting of that group will occur on August 13, 2008 and will feature appearances by representatives of each town's department of public works. The agenda will also include follow-up regarding issues and topics raised at the first meeting.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(3) Emergency Training – Shellfish Department (*)

As the Board is aware, the Harbormaster had agreed to mark the Shellfish Constable's boat as a Harbormaster's boat to allow for incidental enforcement of waterway regulations. The Shellfish Constable completed CPR and First Aid training and the markings have been installed. From time to time, both Deputy Shellfish Constables utilize the shellfish boat. As such, the Harbormaster has suggested that each of those individuals complete the same basic training and be appointed as Assistant Harbormasters. The Shellfish Constable is in the process of coordinating the training with the parties.

Recommendation: **Appointment of the two Deputy Shellfish Constables as Assistant Harbormasters once training has been completed.**

B. Computer Systems

(1) Configuration of Router Devices

As noted in the past, I had ordered cable routers for the routing of traffic among our three buildings over the Cable I-Net. The routers will replace the routing that

is presently being handled by individual servers and will make inter-building communication less susceptible to downtime. The routers arrived during the week of July 28, 2008, I have pre-configured them, and our computer consultant will assist with their deployment during the week of August 18, 2008.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary. Total time – 1.0.

(2) Computer Configuration for New Wastewater Technician

The new Wastewater Technician, David Frithsen, has begun work and was in need of his own network and e-mail accounts. I configured those for him and worked with him to make his accounts operational.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary. Total time – 0.5 hours.

(3) Network Setup for Public Health Nurse

Now that new Public Health Nurse Kim Paskalis has begun work, it was necessary to equip her with a computer system and access to network resources. The Board of Health Administrator supplied an older model laptop and I configured it for use on the Town Hall network after running a new network drop from a new hub in the Administrator's office. I then configured and made operational network and e-mail accounts and added a network printer for the Nurse's use.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary. Total time – 2 hours.

C. Personnel

(1) Massachusetts Municipal Personnel Association Benchmark Survey

As a member of the MMPA, I was asked to update the Town's wage and salary information using the MMPA's new, web-based benchmarking database. Formerly, the MMPA used a paper survey that was published once per year. Now, the web-based tool will allow for real-time adjustments, is searchable, and will compute statistics. The tool will be very useful for the development of comparables relative to wage and salary data. I have input the most recent data for Essex and I have access to the tool via my own password.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

D. Procurement

(1) Causeway Utilities Meeting

Chairman Randall and I met with Representative Verga, staff from Senator Tarr's Office, and staff from National Grid on July 28, 2008 to discuss the potential burial of utility poles and wires on the causeway concurrently with the upcoming Route 133 Reconstruction Project. We reviewed the Town's inquiry into this

topic a number of years back when the utilities noted that any work would have to be funded via surcharges to the users or via lump sum funding from the Town (a multi-million dollar cost). Presently, National Grid's perspective on the matter has not changed. However, during the project, a small section of wires will need to be relocated in order to install the new seawall. This relocation will likely only be temporary and will likely only involve a few poles. Further, even if the Town were in agreement with surcharge or lump-sum funding, the planning and engineering necessary for the burial of the lines would take considerably longer than the expected commencement of the Route 133 Reconstruction Project.

Unless the Board desires to look into one of the above-described funding methods and is willing to delay the Route 133 Reconstruction Project, it does not appear that the burial of utility lines will be occurring in conjunction with the project. However, National Grid staff did agree to walk the causeway with me and with property owners that abut the causeway to collect information concerning small jobs that could be undertaken to improve the aboveground system that is present. That site walk occurred immediately after the meeting and several items such as old and leaning poles were identified. National Grid representatives also had the opportunity to directly speak to various business owners along the causeway. National Grid will make efforts to improve the aboveground system's appearance and function based on that site walk using their own capital funds.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Conomo Point RFP

The subcommittee that is working on the Request for Proposals for a consultant to guide the subdivision of a portion of Conomo Point will meet on August 12, 2008. I will attend the meeting and will work with the subcommittee members to develop the specific criteria by which each proposal will be rated. Once I have that input, I can finalize the RFP, seek Town Counsel review, and arrange to release the RFP to interested parties.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

E. Insurance

No items.

F. Facilities

(1) Accrual of Clean Choice Program Funds

(*)

The Town is presently accruing funding toward the installation of a solar panel on a Town building via the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative (MTC) Clean Choice Program. That program credits funding to the Town from electricity customers who have elected to utilize green forms of electricity. Chairman

Randall recently became aware of a program in Sharon that is designed to accrue funds more quickly by challenging residents to donate \$100 toward wind energy in Massachusetts. That program, known as the Sharon Community Solar Challenge, will leverage funding that goes back into the MTC fund. I contacted the Town Administrator in Sharon and learned that Sharon had just joined the program recently and, as such, has no experience yet.

***Recommendation:* Board discussion relative to the potential implementation of a similar program in Essex.**

(2) Inspection of Town Hall Chimney

Both the Board of Health Administrator and the Librarian heard loud, crashing sounds from within a Town Hall chimney that abuts their offices during the week of July 28, 2008. This particular chimney serves as the flue for our heating system. I contacted our architect (since his firm had recently inspected all of the Town Hall chimneys as part of an assessment) and he indicated that a basic inspection should be completed immediately. Our heating contractor was able to investigate the situation via a cleanout door in the chimney and found only a few bricks at the bottom. That initial inspection confirmed that no major damage was present and that, most likely, a few interior bricks near the top of the chimney had broken loose.

Presently, the Fire Department is considering deploying their camera down the chimney. The camera will be able to produce images of the chimney's interior that our architect and others will be able to analyze. Depending on what is found, it may be necessary to bring in a contractor to make repairs.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

G. Fiscal/Budget

No items.

H. Complaints

(1) Dog Complaint

A resident has complained about aggressive behavior of a dog in their neighborhood. A hearing on the matter will be held by the Board on August 25, 2008.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

I. Meetings Attended

(1) Massachusetts Municipal Management Association Monthly Meeting

I attended the subject meeting on July 31, 2008 at the Crane Estate in Ipswich. The meeting featured a presentation by the Massachusetts Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs.

The Secretary discussed recent energy/environmental initiatives including the Green Communities Act that was recently signed by the Governor. The Act intends to increase energy efficiency, increase the use of renewable energy, and to exert additional oversight on utilities. Under the Act, municipalities can become "Green Communities" if they meet certain performance criteria and they then become eligible for grant funding.

The Secretary also discussed future plans to limit greenhouse gases, "zoning" of the ocean waters of the Commonwealth via the Oceans Act, the recent passage of a new State Building Code with many energy efficiency provisions, and the future use of additional wind/solar power and ethanol derived from cellulose.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) General Topic Discussion with Legislators

(*)

When Representative Verga and a representative of Senator Tarr's Office were present to discuss the status of the Route 133 Reconstruction Project utilities (see item D1, above), they were able to take some additional time to also discuss a variety of other issues and topics. Specifically, we discussed shellfish management, potential sewer rate relief, trench permitting regulations, sidewalk and road funding, potential Town building renovation and replacement, regional dispatch and prisoner lockup, dredging, River access, and other items.

Relative to shellfish management, we discussed the potential benefit of gaining access to the shellfish weigh-in slips that shellfish dealers generate each time local clammers sell their catch. With that data, our Shellfish Constable could review the daily catch for any given clammer as an additional tool to ensure that daily limits are being adhered to. We were advised that a letter from the Board addressed to both legislators' offices would likely be beneficial in gaining access to the data. The issue at this point may involve the Division of Marine Fisheries concern regarding disclosure of the amount paid per pound of shellfish and we are only interested in the clammers' names, the dates, and the weights of each catch. Pricing information could be redacted. I placed an additional call to DMF recently but the agency has not replied with any further information to date.

Relative to sewer rate relief, we were advised that Rockport, Gloucester, and Essex could potentially bring more attention to the issue if a coalition is formed among the three communities. Representative Verga's staff is willing to help

facilitate that type of arrangement and will be back to us after discussing the idea with other jurisdictions.

Relative to River access, it is possible that the Seaport Bond Bill could provide funding for public docks in Essex. The Harbormaster is in favor of this type of additional water access. Other communities have benefited from the Bond Bill but Essex has not to date. We were advised that a letter to the Seaport Council would be the best initial step to take.

Recommendation: **Board discussion relative to the referenced dealer slip, sewer rate relief, and public dock issues.**

J. Final Judgment

No items.

K. Town Meeting, By-Laws, and Regulations

(1) Trench Permitting Authority

After the last meeting, I contacted the Superintendent of Public Works to discuss some upcoming training relative to the subject new requirements. He indicated that he will attend the training along with me. Our insurer subsequently announced that the training will be held on September 4, 2008. He and I will continue to gather information as the Board prepares to appoint an Authority for Essex with an effective date of January 1, 2009.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(2) Potential New Dog Control By-law Language (*)

At the last meeting, in response to a visit from residents interested in additional control of dogs in Town, the Board agreed to consider some additional by-law language at an upcoming Town Meeting. As requested by the Board, I have collected language from a variety of other communities and have developed a suggested by-law for Essex that is a hybrid of the provisions I studied.

Recommendation: **Further Board review of potential new language in light of the various examples that I have provided.**

(3) Potential Issues for Fall Town Meeting

I have been keeping track of potential Town Meeting topics since the Annual Town Meeting back in May. I have begun to compile a list that I will bring to the Board for discussion in September.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

L. Legal Issues

No items.

M. Grants

No items.

N. Emergency Planning

(1) National Incident Management System Assessment Tool

As was the case last fiscal year, the Federal Government is utilizing an on-line assessment tool known as the National Incident Management System Capability Assessment Support Tool (NIMSCAST) to understand the emergency readiness capability of each local jurisdiction. The Essex Fire Department is familiar with the tool from last year and will complete this year's submission by the September 30, 2008 deadline.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

O. Other Items

(1) Town Administrator Vacation Leave

I was out of the office on vacation leave on August 1, 4, and 5, 2008.

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