



Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of August 31, 2015

Report covers from August 8, 2015 to August 28, 2015

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

A. Town Department Reports/Requests

(1) Alewife Brook Clearing

Members of the Essex Conservation Commission and the Chebacco Lake Association, and inmates from the Sheriff's work program pooled efforts on August 15, 2015 to clear a large portion of the main channel of the Alewife Brook of excess vegetation and debris. When the Brook channel is free from impediments to flow, water can much more efficiently exit Chebacco Lake and its environs, translating to more stable Lake levels. I assisted by lining up a Sheriff's work detail and the Department of Public Works assisted by supplying hand tools and by hauling away debris piles the following week. All work was conducted under the auspices of an Order of Conditions that the Selectmen had obtained in the past and additional clearing work may be undertaken in the future.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Schedule for Release of On-Line Digital Parcel Maps (*)

As the Board may recall, the Board of Assessors had worked for over four years with our mapping contractor (CAI) to update the Town's paper tax maps with more accurate, digital maps. These new maps have now been loaded into on-line, web-based viewing system for internal review only at this point. Before the site can go live, more work needs to be performed by our Assessors' database vendor to ensure that the new maps and the existing, on-line Assessors' database are seamlessly aligned. When the viewer does go live, for a given property, the user will also be able open a link to our on-line tax data site hosted by our assessing database vendor (<http://essex.patriotproperties.com/default.asp>), and vice-versa. The on-line map viewer will allow the user to see property lines and buildings as well as a bird's eye, photographic background and other data layers available through the State. Our mapping contractor provided me with a preview orientation of the new site and its capabilities on August 27, 2015 and we hope to work through any remaining issues with our Assessors' database vendor in the coming weeks.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(3) Cape Ann Regional Cable Advisory Committee Meeting

The Cape Ann Regional Cable Advisory Committee (CAC) met on August 27, 2015, after a hiatus. The Committee has been working with legal counsel to proceed through the ascertainment phase of the upcoming renewal of the cable

franchise contract with Comcast. During this phase, the Committee takes public input concerning services provided by Comcast and develops ideas regarding what should be discussed as the contract renewal is negotiated. Ultimately, each of the four Cape Ann communities will sign its own contract with Comcast. However, the use of a regional CAC has been shown to promote excellent sharing of ideas and experiences that, as a package, can make the common components of each contract stronger and more community-focused.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(4) Strategic Planning Committee Meeting (*)

The Strategic Planning Committee met on August 24, 2015 to continue developing and prioritizing planning goals and milestones with measurable outcomes. The group has made great strides over the series of meetings held so far and plans to meet again in late-September, after the individual members provide to our consulting planner their ideas for the best timing and measures associated with the collection of goals that is shaping up.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(5) Adoption of Fuel Efficiency Vehicle Policy (*)

As part of the Town's application for the Green Communities designation and initial grant, it is necessary for the Board to adopt the subject policy. Most of the Town's vehicles are exempt from the policy (heavy DPW vehicles and emergency vehicles) and the few light duty vehicles we may need to purchase in future years generally will already meet the necessary fuel economy. Our Town Planner developed the policy using the guidelines provided by the State.

Recommendation: **Board vote to adopt the subject policy.**

B. Computer Systems

(1) Continued Migration of Public Safety Systems to Virtual Platform

I have continued to migrate other public safety users, including the Chief of Police, to the new, virtual platform hosted by the City of Melrose. We will soon work out a system of migrations that allows a particular PC to be tied up overnight for a migration without inconveniencing the officers who happen to be on shift that evening.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary. Total time – 1.5 hours.

(2) Preparation of On-line Tax Map Viewer

As noted above, we will soon be able to offer our new, digital tax maps to the public via an on-line portal. I worked with our mapping vendor, CAI, during the week of August 10, 2015 to provide the vendor with information and a data

extract from our Assessors' database, since the viewer works in concert with our Assessors' data. In the future, as Assessors' data changes, the Assessors' Clerk will update the viewer using a tool provided by CAI. I also worked with CAI during the week of August 24, 2015 to review what will be necessary to make our on-line Assessors' portal seamlessly-aligned with our new, on-line tax map portal.

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

C. Personnel

(1) Department of Labor Standards Recommendations

As the Board is aware, we were recently visited by an inspector from the Department of Labor Standards (DLS) as a routine follow up to a minor work injury. As a result of the visit, DLS recommended that the Town conduct a personal protective equipment (PPE) assessment to ensure that all of our PPE is up to date and all appropriate training has been offered. The DLS also recommended that we ensure that our material safety data sheets (MSDS) for all chemicals that we use are up to date and that all employees receive additional training in the safe use of chemicals. With assistance from our insurer, MIIA, the Superintendent of Public Works and I will work to address both recommendations over the next 90 days. We began the process by meeting with our insurer on August 26, 2015.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(2) Next Safety Committee Meeting

The Safety Committee will meet next on September 24, 2015. I have placed a draft agenda in the Board's reading folder.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(3) Retirement of Board of Health Administrator

Board of Health Administrator Elaine Wozny has retired after 15 years of excellent service in Essex. Ms. Wozny was involved with many public health functions over the years, including assisting with the management of the DEP final judgment. Ms. Wozny also started an annual youth triathlon, which may be something that continues in the future. The new Administrator, Ms. Erin Kirchner, started work as of September 24, 2015.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(4) Employee and Volunteer of the Year Awards

(*)

Last year, the Board discussed beginning to offer an Employee of the Year award and a Volunteer of the Year award as of this fall. The Board was interested in a

September or October nomination period, with announcement of the winners at the Fall Town Meeting, in November. I have provided the Board with an Announcement and Guidelines sheet that we worked on last year, so that it may be finalized and provided to employees, volunteers, and members of the public who may wish to nominate candidates. The Board was also potentially interested in presenting awards to employees for various lengths of service.

Recommendation: **Board discussion relative to the finalization and release of this new initiative and relative to length of service award categories.**

D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects

(1) Preliminary Analysis of Coastal FEMA Flood Maps (*)

Our engineering consultant, Woods Hole Group, has completed its preliminary review of the coastal FEMA flood panels for the Town of Essex. That analysis suggests that, as suspected, those existing panels are inaccurate, since they rely upon methods and assumptions that are not tailored to our specific area.

Recommendation: **Board vote to authorize the Woods Hole Group to make a formal application for a Letter of Map Revision, on the Town's behalf.**

(2) Second Phase of Town Hall/Library Interior Design Summit

As the Board may recall, on July 28, 2015, our designer for the upcoming Town Hall/Library renovation work hosted the first phase of a summit involving all building stakeholders. That phase was aimed at understanding what each department currently uses the building for and the constraints that each department is under. Also, each department had a chance to suggest what might be improved as part of the upcoming project. Even though most of the project will be dedicated to a complete, exterior renovation and ADA improvements, an opportunity does exist for some interior space improvement and redesign.

At the second phase of the summit, our designer took the information collected during the first phase and provided various options as to how the building's interior could be modified to accommodate other, necessary changes, hopefully providing more overall functionality in the process. In the end, the group reached consensus that the current Treasurer/Collector Assistant's Office should be transformed into a meeting room that can be shared by the Town offices and the Library and that the entire Treasurer/Collector operation should be moved up to the second floor, in reconfigured offices. Our designer will now consult with individual departments as they embark on a more detailed design process.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(3) Survey of Memorial Park War Memorial Area

(*)

At the last meeting, the Board agreed that I should solicit a quotation from a surveyor for a survey of the entire Memorial Park, contingent upon the Board of Public Works agreeing with that plan of action as a first step toward a Master Plan. I learned from the Superintendent of Public Works after the meeting that the Board of Public Works is only interested in a survey of the war memorial section of the Park (from the Town Hall to Shepard's Memorial Drive, between Martin Street and the baseball field backstop). As such, I met a surveyor on the site during the week of August 17, 2015 and have since received a quotation in the amount of \$1,800. I shared the scope of work and quotation with the Superintendent and he and the Board of Public Works will be in attendance at the present meeting to discuss.

Recommendation: **Board discussion of this potential survey work with the Board of Public Works.**

(4) Preparation for Annual Heating Oil Quotations

I have developed a specification and have solicited quotations for the provision of heating oil to the Town Hall and the Fire Station for the upcoming season. Quotations are due no later than September 10, 2015 and the Board will consider the award of a contract at its September 14, 2015 meeting. The contract will commence as of October 31, 2015 and pricing is based upon the *Journal of Commerce* low daily Boston wholesale price (vendor's added cost is indexed to that price). The contract will make clear that provision of oil to the Town Hall may be discontinued mid-contract since the building is being converted to gas.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

E. Insurance

No items.

F. Facilities

(1) Review of Electricity Demand for Town Hall/Library Renovation Design

The Town Hall/Library building is served by two, 400-amp panels. As part of the renovation design process, it is necessary for our electrical engineer to understand the overall and peak electricity demands within the building. Initially, our engineer thought that we might have to install demand meters for 30 days in order to capture the type of usage data he needs for his design. However, I was able to put our engineer in touch with staff from National Grid and the utility was able to provide him with the information he needed without installing the meters.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Potential Lease Via Unique Acquisition of 245 Western Avenue (*)

The lease of the former White Elephant annex at 99 John Wise Avenue for temporary Library quarters is no longer an option since that space has been rented to another party. As such, we have continued our search for temporary Library space. We have learned that space in the Teel complex at 245 Western Avenue may offer a good option. Like 99 John Wise Avenue, the space at 245 Western Avenue has ample parking and is located on a main thoroughfare (Route 22). The Board made a unique acquisition determination about 99 John Wise Avenue in the past and the Western Avenue building was not available for lease at that time. Given that the building at 99 John Wise Avenue is no longer available for lease, the Board could use the similar qualities of the Western Avenue building to make a determination that a lease can be uniquely acquired for that space.

***Recommendation:* Potential Board vote to determine that the space at 245 Western Avenue qualifies for unique acquisition and to consider authorizing the signing of a lease for that space.**

(3) Continued Discussion Regarding the Future Management of the Grove (*)

At the last meeting, the Board reviewed a variety of potential scenarios for the management of the Centennial Grove starting next season. One scenario involves the potential offsetting of attendants at the Grove (should it become a residents-only facility) via the continued collection of fees at the Town Landing boat launching ramp. Through August 15, 2015, the boat ramp has netted approximately \$3,600, which would be enough to employ two attendants on weekends during the summer.

Another scenario could involve the competitive procurement of a company which would manage the Grove on a daily basis, including enforcement of residents-only standards, in exchange for a fixed payment to the Town and the right to market and lease out the Grove for events. The management company would also maintain the Grove, dispose of trash, and assume liability for paid events.

***Recommendation:* Board discussion relative to the finances associated with potential Grove attendants; to the use of a competitive bid for a Grove management company; and to any other potential future management approaches. The Board of Public Works will be in attendance at the present meeting to participate in the discussion.**

(4) Preparation for Continued Conservation Commission Hearing

As the Board may recall, back in July, our application for a Request for Determination of Applicability (RDA) associated with the demolition of 153 Conomo Point Road went before the Conservation Commission. At that time, the Commission decided to continue the hearing until September 22, 2015. For the continued hearing, it will be important to have the Selectmen, Town Counsel, a

technical expert, and representation from the Conomo Point Planning Committee in attendance in order to answer any questions the Commission may still have.

Regarding technical representation, I discussed the matter with Wetlands Scientist Michael DeRosa during the week of August 24, 2015 and he has agreed to be present for the meeting. He will also make any necessary preparations of his own prior to the meeting.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(5) Engineering Evaluation of Memorial Park Tennis Court Replacement (*)

Our consulting engineer has completed his analysis of the existing tennis courts at Memorial Park. He has indicated that additional field work (soil boring) will be necessary before an actual design of the replacement courts can be developed (all for an additional fee). At this point, his estimate is that the replacement work, to US Tennis Association standards, including new fencing, will cost between \$180,000 and \$220,000.

Recommendation: **Board discussion regarding potential next steps.**

G. Fiscal/Budget

(1) Annual Review of Risk Assessment and Monitoring Plan

As the Board is aware, we maintain a plan for assessing and monitoring risk associated with fraud in our operations. Each year, in September, key staff members meet to review the plan and make any necessary changes precipitated by changes in operations or the identification of new risks. I have provided last year's iteration of the plan to the necessary staff members and the annual meeting to discuss updates will occur on September 24, 2015.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(2) Department of Revenue Financial Management Review Report (*)

The Board had requested the Department of Revenue (DOR) to undertake the subject review at the beginning of the calendar year. After DOR staff conducted detailed interviews, reviewed various policies, and analyzed the collected information internally, the agency has released its final report. The report praises the Town for certain attributes but also recommends a comprehensive list of actions that could be implemented to improve operations and financial management further. Some of the recommendations cannot be addressed unless and until the Town chooses to address other recommendations as precursors. It will be necessary for the Town Accountant, the Town Treasurer/Collector, the Board of Assessors, the Finance Committee, the Board of Selectmen, and me to meet together at some point to go over the recommendations, determine which

elements the Town desires to address, and develop a process for working toward any selected goals over time.

Recommendation: Board discussion relative to how the recommendations in the report should be reviewed for possible implementation over time.

H. Complaints

No items.

I. Meetings Attended

No items.

J. Final Judgment

No items.

K. Town Meeting, By-Laws, and Regulations

(1) Draft Topics for Fall Town Meeting (*)

The Fall Town Meeting will occur on November 16, 2015. I have begun to develop a draft list of topics for consideration on the warrant.

Recommendation: Preliminary Board review of the draft Fall Town Meeting topics.

L. Legal Issues

(1) Affirmation of Conomo Point Superior Court Cases by Appeals Court

The Massachusetts Appeals Court has affirmed the original decisions in favor of the Town in both the Pratt and Walker cases relative to home ownership and rental rates at Conomo Point. Both cases had been decided by the Appeals Court in 2013 and two of the Pratt plaintiffs and the Walker class appealed shortly thereafter.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

M. Grants

(1) FY16 Coastal Community Resilience Grant (*)

We have been informed that the subject grant, which also involves the National Wildlife Federation (NWF), the Ipswich River Watershed Association (IRWA), and the communities of Newbury, Newburyport, Salisbury, Rowley, and Ipswich, has been awarded, with the Town of Essex as the lead agency. As the Board may

recall, the various project partners submitted an application back in June and the MA Office of Coastal Zone Management (CZM) announced the award during the week of August 17, 2015. Grants awarded as part of this round of funding, were officially conferred by the Lt. Governor at a ceremony in Winthrop of August 21, 2015. Chairman O'Donnell was in attendance.

With guidance and staff participation from NWF and IRWA, the six communities will now begin a process that will advance the following goals: 1) to significantly expand community engagement around coastal threats, vulnerabilities, and associated adaptation strategies, 2) to provide municipal officials, planners, and the general public with fine-scale maps of vulnerable municipal assets, and 3) to provide municipalities with financing tools and policy strategies that facilitate implementation of community-supported adaptation strategies.

***Recommendation:* Board vote to authorize the Chairman to sign any official grant paperwork outside of a meeting, once it arrives from the State.**

N. Emergency Planning

No items.

O. Other Items

(1) Town Administrator Leave

I was out of the office on vacation leave on portions of August 14, 18, and 24, and all day on August 28, 2015.

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