



Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of September 8, 2014

Report covers from August 23, 2014 to September 5, 2014

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

A. Town Department Reports/Requests

(1) New Harbormaster Boat in Service

The Harbormaster has put the refurbished boat that the Town received from the State into service during the week of August 25, 2014. I worked with the Department to remove the old boat from our insurance policy and to add the new one.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(2) Potential Brush and Tree Cutting at Conomo Point

At the last meeting, the Board agreed that a Conomo Point resident should have the benefit of any normal roadside cutting that the Department of Public Works is able to perform under its existing Order of Conditions for roadside maintenance. I asked the resident to get in touch with the Superintendent of Public Works to show the Superintendent the work he had in mind. However, the cutting that the resident desires is outside the scope of the Department's approval. As such, I informed the resident that the Board would support his separate investigation with the Conservation Commission relative to new permitting for Town-owned areas, if the desired activity is permissible, at the resident's own permitting and implementation cost.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary at this time.

(3) Potential Formation of Fire Explorer Post in Essex and Manchester

The Essex Fire Chief has recommended that the towns of Essex and Manchester consider establishing a Fire Explorer post to work within the two departments. The Fire Explorer program allows young people between the ninth grade and 21 years of age to investigate potential careers in the fields of firefighting and related emergency services. If the Board is supportive of the concept, the Fire Chief can provide an analysis of any potential costs and/or liabilities for further consideration and vetting.

Recommendation: Board discussion of this concept with the Board of Fire Engineers at the present meeting.

(4) Quarterly Department Head and Board/Committee Chair Meeting

The next gathering of the various department heads and board and committee chairs will occur at the Selectmen's meeting of October 20, 2014. The Town Planner will discuss the Green Communities Program and the Board will discuss the prospect of creating a Strategic Planning Committee.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(5) Regional Cable Advisory Committee Update

As the Board may recall, we had started to pull together the subject Committee during the transition between an outgoing and an incoming Chief Administrative Officer within the City of Gloucester. James Duggan had taken a job elsewhere and the Mayor has now appointed Sal Di Stefano to the post. I contacted Mr. Di Stefano recently and he agreed that this is a good time to resume pulling the Committee together, as it coincides with recent letters from Comcast officially notifying each of the four Cape Ann communities that Comcast has initiated the formal cable contract renewal procedure. The company will most likely negotiate concurrently on an informal basis (which is also allowed), as has been the case in the past. However, the initiation of the formal process reserves the company's rights.

Subsequently, I contacted the other two Cape Ann towns, along with the City, and suggested that the respective representatives from the various jurisdictions begin to plan an initial meeting (Mr. Barry O'Brien, in the case of Essex). I suggested that the City Solicitor and shared counsel from Kopelman and Paige (representing the three towns) be present to provide the new Committee with an overview of the process that will unfold over the next three years. Presently, the Committee is planning to meet for the first time on September 18, 2014.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

B. Computer Systems

(1) Replacement of Fire Department Wireless Access Point

A wireless network access point used by the Fire Department failed recently and required replacement. I purchased a new device and also purchased a spare device (since we also use one in Town Hall and will now have a backup option on hand). In the near term, the Fire Department has decided to connect the equipment that had been connecting via the access point via a wired connection, instead.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary. Total time – ½ hour.

(2) Configuration of Police Sign Board Trailer Software

The software that controls the posting of notices on the Police Department's signboard trailer experienced problems during the week of August 25, 2014. I

reviewed the matter and found that one or more of the program files had been corrupted. As such, I reinstalled the software, and with the assistance of Officer Romeos and the manufacturer's technical support line, I was able to restore normal operation. All settings that were configured at this juncture were recorded for future reference. I also purchased a new battery for the laptop computer that is used to communicate with the signboard, since the original battery had failed.

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

C. Personnel

No items.

D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects

(1) Contract for Auctioneer Services Concerning Real Property, Conomo Point (*)
Bids for the provision of auctioneer services for up to eight Conomo Point properties in the southern area were opened on September 4, 2014. A total of two auctioneers submitted bids and the lowest responsive and responsible bidder was The Zekos Group of Shrewsbury, with a bid of 3.9% of the sale price of each property (to be paid by the buyer as a separate buyer's premium, on top of the Town's price). I had hosted a site visit for auctioneers interested in bidding on the contact on August 27, 2014. A total of three prospective auctioneers had attended the site visit and a total of six firms had requested bid packages.

Recommendation: **Board vote to award the contract for auctioneer services to the Zekos Group.**

(2) Promotion of Town Resources Contract Update (*)
As the Board may recall, the Essex Merchants' Group had been awarded \$5,000 to promote the Town's resources, attractions, etc. after the Special Town Meeting appropriated funding for this purpose for the first time in November of 2013. In fiscal year 2015, the Town's general budget carried a line item of an additional \$10,000 for the same purpose. Presently, I have learned from the Merchants' Group that the original \$5,000 has been spent and the Group has provided a detailed breakdown of how the money was used.

Recommendation: **Board discussion relative to a potential strategy for the use of the fiscal year 2015 appropriation.**

(3) Tentative Release of Request for Proposals for Potential Sale of 5 Beach Cr.
As reported previously, I have been working with Town Counsel relative to the development of a Request for Proposals (RFP) to allow qualified, interested parties to submit proposals for the purchase of the Town's property at 5 Beach Circle. Based on my current understanding of the process, it is likely that the RFP

will be advertised and released on September 17, 2014, with a tentative proposal due date of October 20, 2014. The sale would, of course, be contingent upon a future vote of the Town Meeting authorizing the Selectmen to sell the property.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

E. Insurance

No items.

F. Facilities

(1) Report Relative to Town Hall Clock Tower/End Wall Problem (*)

Our consulting engineer has completed his review of the recently-noticed separation between the Town Hall end wall and the stairwell running up through the Town Hall clock tower. His report indicates that a main carrying beam that runs along the end wall has rotated over time due to dissimilar properties of the two materials it sits upon (partially stone and partially wood). This rotation has placed an outward force on the stonework in this area, causing the stonework to bow out. The engineer has recommended a solution involving new footings, steel tubes, and some new framing and recommends a more intensive investigation before his preliminary observations should be relied upon for construction purposes.

Recommendation: **Board discussion relative to the next steps for problem verification and resolution.**

(2) Demolition Update and Contract for 103 and 138 Conomo Point Road (*)

Asbestos removal in both at both of the subject properties is expected to begin during the week of September 8, 2014 and I have already received demolition permit application sign-offs from the DPW, the Fire Department, the Historical Commission, and the Conservation Commission. A heating contractor will be removing the two, above-ground oil storage tanks that are present in the basement in the near future. After asbestos removal has been completed, I will approach the Board of Health for that board's sign-off as well. The Department of Public Works plans to supervise and conduct the filling of the basement hole and the grading and stabilization of the site. Also, recently, I received a quotation from a demolition contractor (George Ricker, Jr.) who will conduct the demolition work on both properties for just under \$10,000. As in the past, the Town will contract directly with a disposal company to continuously haul demolition debris off site as our demolition contract generates it.

Recommendation: **Board signature of the contract with George Ricker, Jr. to perform the demolition of structures on both properties.**

(3) Phone Lines for Town Hall Fire Alarm System Dialer

The installation of the new, Town Hall fire alarm system is almost complete. The new system, of course, has the ability to automatically dial the Regional Dispatch Center in the event of an alarm activation. The system requires two, dedicated phone lines (one primary and one backup) which I have ordered from Verizon. Once the lines are installed and the system is complete, I will work with the alarm contractor and the Regional Dispatch Center to have the system configured properly.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

G. Fiscal/Budget

No items.

H. Complaints

No items.

I. Meetings Attended

(1) Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce Essex Division Meeting

I attended the subject meeting on September 4, 2014. The meeting featured a discussion regarding the Chamber's recently-completed schedule of summertime events. In addition, I updated the group regarding various ongoing Town projects and initiatives.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

J. Final Judgment

No items.

K. Town Meeting, By-Laws, and Regulations

(1) Continued Review of Potential Fall Town Meeting Topics (*)

The Board briefly reviewed a list of potential Fall Town Meeting topics at the last meeting and asked that the matter be raised for discussion again at the present meeting.

Recommendation: **Continued Board review of the topic list.**

L. Legal Issues

No items.

M. Grants

(1) Discussion with Gloucester Citizens' Group Relative to Grant Funding

I met with a group known as the Friends of Good Harbor on August 26, 2014 to provide the group with my perspective on aligning the grant writing process with a particular goal and a grant program that holds a good chance of success. The group was interested in the history of the Essex Downtown Boardwalk grant funding since they desire to see a boardwalk constructed along Thatcher Road in Gloucester, adjacent to Good Harbor Beach. I was able to share some of the challenges we faced in Essex between 2008 and the present relative to our project and its recent funding.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

N. Emergency Planning

No items.

O. Other Items

(1) Town Administrator Leave

I was out of the office, on leave, on August 29, 2014.

(2) Labor Day Holiday

The office was closed on September 1, 2014, in observance of the subject holiday.

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