



Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of October 6, 2008

Report covers from September 20, 2008 to October 3, 2008

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

A. Town Department Reports/Requests

(1) Joint Project Coordination Meeting

The Planning Board, the Conservation Commission, and the Building Inspector will attend the present meeting to discuss coordination of the Pallazola property permitting. The Board asked at the last meeting if a joint discussion of this nature could be arranged.

Recommendation: Board discussion at the present meeting.

(2) Public Information Regarding Building Permit Application Process

One theme that came up at the chairs and department heads session held at the last meeting was the need for guidance on seeking a building permit. The group suggested that an overview of the process be posted on the Town's website. As such, I developed some information and had it reviewed by the Building Inspector along with others who had commented on the issue. The finished product is available on the Building Inspector's page (direct link is: http://essexma.org/Pages/EsssexMA_Building/Building%20Permit%20Process).

Also, I have worked with the Building Inspector to revise his existing building permit checklist to allow him to customize a "game plan" for each applicant. He will be able to indicate any steps that are not necessary and to prioritize those steps that are necessary. Contact numbers for the various departments have been added along with a footnote indicating that review time and the likelihood of multiple iterations increase as the complexity of the project increases.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(3) Adaptation of Ipswich Wetlands Brochure for Use in Essex

At the recent chairs and department heads meeting, a Conservation Commission member provided us with a copy of a brochure developed by the Ipswich Conservation Commission that provides the public with useful wetlands information. I was able to obtain an editable electronic copy of the Ipswich brochure from the Ipswich Commission and I tailored it for use in Essex. The new brochure has been placed on the Essex website at: http://essexma.org/Pages/EsssexMA_Conservation/wetlands and the Commission may include a budget request for color printing and mailing next fiscal year.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

B. Computer Systems

(1) Continued Network Analysis

Our computer consultant visited Town on September 24, 2008 to assist me with further analysis for improvements to our Town computer networks. We had installed a new type of router on a trial basis but that installation had presented some problems with certain communication protocols. On the 24th, we investigated an idea that changing the IP addressing to similar subnets across the entire Town network would allow traffic to pass over the Cable I-Net without routing devices. A small-scale test of that idea indicated that this was not possible. As such, our consultant will assist me in locating a low-cost routing device that allows more open communication than the first type of device we tried. In fact, he has a particular device in his own inventory that we will use in another test before I purchase identical units for Essex.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(2) Purchase of Remote Backup Server

I have consulted with a computer expert representing the company that will be hosting our remote backup server in Manchester, NH at no cost. He has recommended a certain specification for the server that will work well with the facility that it will be housed in. He also recommended a firewall device that will be necessary for us to communicate with and maintain the server remotely. I have ordered the server and I will order the firewall device once I get that specification.

I will also be working with our various proprietary software vendors to determine if they will grant us the right to install duplicate copies of their programs on the backup server. In that way, if the server needs to be pressed into service, there will be no downtime associated with getting applications loaded and configured. Backup data will be streamed to the backup server on a nightly basis and would just need to be imported by a given software application for a quick recovery. Further, as software versions change, I plan to mirror any updates performed on our live servers by also performing those on our backup server.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(3) Repair of Internet Explorer

The Internet browser on the Police Clerk's computer system became non-responsive during the week of September 22, 2008. I reviewed the situation and was eventually able to reinstall the program by downloading it to the network and pulling it off of the server. Her system is working well.

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

(4) Antivirus Repair and Maintenance

The Board of Health Clerk's computer system experienced a problem with corrupt antivirus program files and was in need of other routine maintenance. I was able to work with the system while the Clerk was out of the office and it is again working property.

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

(5) Repair of Network Drop

The connection to the Emergency Center computer from the Fire/Police server at the network switch was working only intermittently. As such, I spliced a new connector onto the network drop at the switch and the system is working well.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

C. Personnel

(1) Teamsters Collective Bargaining

The Management Team was to engage the Teamsters in continued, mediated collective bargaining on September 30, 2008. However, the union canceled that meeting due to a conflict with other business. The next session is scheduled for October 21, 2008.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(2) Annual Submission of Employer Health Insurance Responsibility Disclosure

The Health Care Reform Law requires each employer in the State to file the subject document (known as the Employer HIRD) with the Massachusetts Health Care Connector using an on-line tool on an annual basis (after September 30 in a given year). As such, I entered the necessary data into the on-line system during the week of October 29, 2008. The Treasurer is checking the data and is developing one particular statistic. I will certify the form and officially submit it once the Treasurer's work is done. The deadline for submission is November 15, 2008.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

D. Procurement

(1) Conomo Point Subdivision RFP Update

Various consultants interested in submitting proposals relative to the subject RFP provided questions to me through 10:00 a.m. on September 24, 2008. The RFP Subcommittee of the Conomo Point Planning Committee met on September 25, 2008 to address the questions and I was provided with the Subcommittee's

answers on September 26, 2008. As promised by the schedule in the RFP, I provided those answers to all document holders by noon on September 26, 2008.

Proposals were due on October 1, 2008 and a total of six consultants submitted proposals. The RFP Subcommittee is presently evaluating the proposals based upon the criteria found in the RFP. The total cost proposed for the desired services ranged from \$70,560 to \$229,440. The Selectmen will be asked at the next meeting to consider awarding a contract, subject to funding, to the consultant that is recommended by the Conomo Point Planning Committee.

Further, at the last meeting, the Board indicated that the RFP process should play out before additional planning discussions regarding the Point are initiated. The Planner for the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) had offered to assist the Town in an advisory fashion if other planning issues were to be explored. I have thanked Ms. Rowcroft for her offer on behalf of the Board and have indicated that the Board may consult her in the future should the need arise.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(2) Senior Center Maintenance Contracts

I have asked each of the vendors who provide maintenance for major systems at our Senior Center to determine whether those contracts will remain at the same prices or will increase in fiscal year 2010. I will use the replies to plan for that budget as we go into the budget planning season.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

E. Insurance

(1) Occupational Health Provider

The Town has been using Danvers Family Doctors for many years to conduct pre-employment drug and medical screenings and as our occupational health provider associated with workers' compensation. However, we have received word that the clinic will no longer be providing those services effective November 30, 2008. We had originally set up these services through our insurer and their contractor – Health Resources. I contacted our insurer and they are presently working on suggesting some alternative clinics.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(2) Pothole Logs

As we are again approaching the fall and winter, I will be providing our insurer with the Department of Public Works' pothole logs on a monthly basis as part of the MIIA Rewards Program. The logs provide a record of any potholes that are reported and when corrective action was first taken.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary at this time.

F. Facilities

(1) Potential Conversion of Town Hall to Natural Gas

At the suggestion of the Chairman, I contacted National Grid to determine what the cost would be to bring in a gas line and to convert both of the Town Hall boilers to natural gas. A National Grid analyst is presently reviewing our request and I will bring the results of that analysis to the Board once completed.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(3) Minor Roof Leak, Essex Fire Station

A minor leak developed in the Fire Station roof in the area of the Police Chief's office during the recent, heavy rain. The Fire Chief was easily able to find the problem (a single hole) and will have the issue repaired by a roofing contractor.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(4) Winterization of Centennial Grove

The Department of Public Works recently removed the floats from the beach at the Centennial Grove. The Selectmen's Assistant will have the portable toilets removed from the upper area soon and from the lower area by the Field of Dreams in mid-November. The Department of Public Works will shut off the summer water feed to the Grove Cottage in mid-October and we will have a plumber blow out the cottage pipes. Also, I have contacted a sprinkler contractor to blow out and winterize the Field of Dreams sprinkler system.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(5) Facility Checklists

I completed the quarterly checklists for the Town Hall and the Essex Senior Center during the week of September 29, 2008 as part of the MIIA Rewards Program. Any findings are discussed at quarterly Safety Committee meetings. This quarter, I developed and posted an emergency exit route map in the Senior Center.

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 along with Selectman Lynch on September 23, 2008. The meeting featured a discussion regarding the upcoming Route 133 Reconstruction Project which MassHighway recently put out to bid. One major concern is whether MassHighway is willing to consider raising a key area of the causeway by about one foot to lessen the impact of flooding during major storm tides. I indicated to the group that I would explore that issue further with the Project Manager for the project, Mr. Steve McLaughlin.

Subsequently, I spoke with Mr. McLaughlin and he was able to authorize an on-site meeting with his design contractor – Mr. Forest Lindwall of Mistry Associates. I will be meeting Mr. Lindwall, along with a marina owner and a restaurant owner, at the area in question so that Mr. Lindwall can better understand the request and can explain potential options to the Project Manager. Thereafter, the Project Manager will determine if there is something that can be done to address the concern.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

J. Final Judgment

No items.

K. Town Meeting, By-Laws, and Regulations

(1) Special Town Meeting Warrant

(*)

I have revised the draft Special Town Meeting Warrant in accordance with the Board's comments from the last meeting and it is available for final review and signature.

Issues of particular interest included: a) the Youth Commission's recommendation regarding the level of General Fund subsidy that should be included in the Youth Commission budget; b) a chimney expert's opinion on what is necessary for chimney repairs in the short-term; and c) an evaluation of whether the existing floats at the Centennial Grove should be outright replaced versus simple resurfacing.

Regarding the Youth Commission recommendation, according to the Commission's new Chair, the Commission's sense at this time is to have the

\$10,000 contribution from the General Fund remain in place. As for the fiscal year 2009 revenue gap, the Commission favors the use of Youth Enterprise Fund free cash to address that issue. Regarding the Town Hall chimney, I have learned that the three chimneys may be repointed to eliminate any exterior brick fall hazard. The recent rain has delayed the quotation process but the figure will be within the amount of funding we already have for repairs and I can work with our architect to ensure proper attention to historic detail. No Town Meeting appropriation will be necessary for this chimney work and a full restoration will be required in the future when the building is renovated. Regarding the evaluation of the Centennial Grove floats, it appears after inspecting the structures with a marina owner that two of the three floats are in salvageable condition. The two best floats could be simply covered with indoor/outdoor carpeting like the existing gangway (which is in fine shape) and redeployed. The float that is in poor condition should be replaced with a new, maintenance-free, polyethylene float for swimming. Also, the Board may wish to discuss the status of future Town building planning.

***Recommendation:* Final Board discussion regarding the warrant and Board votes to: hold a Special Town Meeting on November 3, 2008 at 7:30 p.m.; to open the Special Town Meeting warrant; to add the articles as they appear on the final draft of the warrant (with any necessary revisions); to close the warrant; and to sign the warrant.**

(2) Trench Permitting Authority

At the last meeting, the Board appointed the Board of Public Works as the Trench Permitting Authority for the Town of Essex. Presently, I am assisting the Superintendent of Public Works with the development of the necessary forms and protocols to implement the permitting program by January of 2009, including input from Town Counsel.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

L. Legal Issues

No items.

M. Grants

(1) Safe Routes to School Funding

As the Board may recall, we had requested with the help of our legislators to be made part of the infrastructure component of the subject program in order to leverage the sidewalks that the Town constructed recently. The Town was not chosen by the program for the pilot round of infrastructure funding. The program has a new coordinator and I will be meeting with her to discuss potential funding in future rounds. Also, our legislators will again call attention to our need.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

N. Emergency Planning

(1) Potential Reassignment of Grant Funding for Planning Coordinator (*)

The Cape Ann Emergency Planning Team is in need of reassigning a host community to administer grant funding of the Team's Coordinator, Ms. Carol McMahon. The grant funding is currently hosted by the City of Gloucester. It is possible that the Planning Team will receive permission from the grantmaker to have Essex act as the host.

***Recommendation:* Board discussion relative to this potential need. I recommend assisting so long as there would be no additional audit requirement or major paperwork.**

(2) NIMSCAST Submission

As the Board may recall, the Fire Department was working on the submission of National Incident Management System (NIMS) compliance data via an on-line tool known as NIMSCAST. That submission was completed by the deadline of September 30, 2008 and the Town scored 88%. That score will increase as additional personnel take the requisite NIMS training courses (many personnel are new and have not taken the training yet).

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

O. Other Items

(1) Meeting with Ann-Margaret Ferrante

I met with the recent winner of the democratic primary for State Representative, Ms. Ann-Margaret Ferrante, on September 29, 2008. Ms. Ferrante was interested in hearing about the major issues facing the Town of Essex. We discussed a variety of ongoing projects and initiatives as well as initiatives that are just getting started such as the Town's recent application for Seaport Bond Bill funding.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary at this time.

(2) United Way "Thermometer" Sign

At the last meeting, the Board agreed to allow the placement of the subject sign to the left of the Library driveway on the Town Hall property. In past years, the sign has been placed to the right of that driveway. A United Way representative visited Town Hall to review possible suitable locations with me and the sign will again be to the right of the driveway. However, instead of affixing the sign to a tree, two, driven quick posts will support the sign in the grassy area adjacent to the driveway.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(3) Regional Dredging Plan

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Senator Tarr's Office informed me during the week of September 22, 2008 that Mr. Kevin Mooney of the Department of Recreation and Conservation may soon have \$500,000 to develop a Regional Dredging Plan. The Senator's Office is coordinating a meeting on November 10, 2008 with one representative from each community from Salisbury to Gloucester to discuss the proposal.

***Recommendation:* Board discussion relative to this development with Senator Tarr at the present meeting (he will be in attendance to discuss utility coordination).**

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