



## Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of Nov. 17, 2008

Report covers from November 1, 2008 to November 14, 2008

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

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### A. Town Department Reports/Requests

#### (1) Conomo Point Drainage Issue

At the last meeting, the Board reviewed a letter from a Conomo Point resident asking for a drainage issue to be investigated and improved if possible. At the request of the Board, I forwarded that request to the Department of Public Works. The Superintendent of Public Works was familiar with the issue from the past and noted that leaves and debris often accumulate and clog the outlet pipe. He indicated that he would simply have his workers clear the pipe to alleviate the problem.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

### B. Computer Systems

#### (1) Network Improvement and Disaster Recovery

Our computer consultant visited my office on November 12, 2008. We started up and evaluated the configuration of the disaster recovery server that I had uncrated and prepared for use in the past. That system will be ready for transport to Manchester, NH for installation once I finish loading backup copies of various CD media for our applications. I will complete that task in advance of a December deployment date (our consultant will have time for this issue sometime in December). Our consultant also provided me with the specification for a device that will serve as our firewall/router to enable me to manage the disaster recovery server remotely. I have ordered that device and will have it available when I transport the server to Manchester, NH.

Once the disaster recovery server is set up and on line in New Hampshire, I will work with School District officials to also set up a near-site recovery point at the school. Superintendent Marcia O'Neil recently informed me that a small amount of space at the Essex Elementary School could be relied upon for that purpose. That area would be utilized temporarily if all Town buildings were somehow rendered unusable but the school was still viable. Pre-positioned, shelved workstations could be activated and could access the disaster server in New Hampshire remotely until such time that other Town quarters could be acquired (i.e. temporary trailers, etc.).

Also, the consultant will bring with him on a future date a router that will be able to switch network traffic more effectively between Town buildings and will

eliminate reliance on the actual network servers for routing. We had experimented with a lower-cost router but it had some hard-wired limitations that would not allow certain communications protocols to pass from Town Hall to the other buildings. This new device should not have those limitations. I will purchase additional units for use in all three of our interconnected buildings after testing.

Further, the consultant helped me to evaluate an issue with our Domain Naming Service (DNS) and we optimized our DNS capabilities by centralizing that role on our firewall/router device. I will steadily make the necessary changes on each workstation that will allow for the improved DNS environment.

*Recommendation:* I will update the Board as necessary. Total time – 3 hours.

#### (2) Software Upgrade and License Renewals

Recently, I ordered a license renewal for 10 of our antivirus client software installations. The license renewal arrived and I have taken the necessary registration steps with the vendor. Also, I had been informed that our backup software license was eligible for a version upgrade. The media that I had ordered arrived and I will implement that upgrade in the future once other aspects of our local networks have been worked out (see above). Further, our backup software support licenses are due to expire in early December. As such, I have placed the necessary order to keep those support contracts current.

*Recommendation:* I will update the Board as necessary. Total time – 1 hour.

### **C. Personnel**

#### (1) Employer Health Insurance Responsibility Disclosure (HIRD)

Under the new Health Care Reform Law, each employer must certify their health insurance offerings on an annual basis. Last year, the certification was done manually. However, this year, I was able to use an on-line tool to provide the necessary certification via an electronic Employer HIRD. I submitted our certification on line prior to the November 15, 2008 deadline after reviewing my responses with the Town Treasurer.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

#### (2) Regional Emergency Communications Center

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The Essex County Sheriff's Office has reported to us the potential for a grant application relative to a regional dispatch center. The proposed center could be known as the Regional Emergency Communications Center (RECC). Recently, at the request of the Sheriff's Office, Chairman Randall, the Chief of Police and I met with the coordinator for the new RECC effort to learn more about that effort. At this point, it is likely that the Sheriff's Department will apply for a grant to tap

funds provided by a recent change in law. The Board may be asked to sign a letter of support for that application in the near future.

**Recommendation: Board discussion in executive session since the proposal relates to collective bargaining.**

#### **D. Procurement**

##### (1) Route 133 Reconstruction Project Update

As the Board may recall, we had posed to the Route 133 Reconstruction Project Manager the idea of raising the causeway slightly more than planned to more effectively deal with storm flooding. Two abutting landowners agreed to consider entering into hold harmless agreements with MassHighway if those are necessary to alleviate drainage and other liability concerns. Presently, the Project Manager has informed me that he may know more in early December relative to his agency's position on the matter. I will contact him then for a further update.

Also, I contacted National Grid Manager Kevin Kelly regarding that utility's progress with the pole-by-pole analysis that he had agreed to coordinate at a past Selectmen's meeting. Mr. Kelly has commented that the engineer working on the analysis has completed his preliminary work and is now coordinating his observations with an engineer from MassHighway. Mr. Kelly will soon provide me with more details relative to when he expects the final report to be made available.

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

##### (2) Conomo Point Subdivision Contract

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At the last meeting, the Board voted to award the subject contract to the Horsley Witten Group subject to funding at the Special Town Meeting (which did approve the funding). As such, I informed the company of its success and arranged for the contract to be signed by its principal.

**Recommendation: Board vote to sign the subject contract with the Horsley Witten Group.**

##### (3) Purchase of New Swim Float

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The recent Special Town Meeting appropriated the sum of \$5,000 to replace the swim float at the Centennial Grove Beach and to refurbish the two fishing/boating floats there. I have since priced out a new, polyethylene, maintenance free swim float (10' x 13') at \$4,192.62. If the order is placed soon, we can take advantage of this year's pricing. A 10'x10' float is also available for less money (\$3,334.04) but would not be as stable as the larger unit.

The two other floats will be covered with indoor/outdoor carpet in the spring just prior to redeploying them and the old swim float will be hauled away as solid waste. The \$800 remaining in the appropriation should cover the carpet and the dumpster cost.

*Recommendation:* **Board vote to approve the order.**

## **E. Insurance**

### (1) OccHealth Connect Program

As the Board may recall, we recently switched our occupational health provider from Danvers Family Doctors to Quadrant (since the former provider is no longer offering pre-employment testing). Danvers Family Doctors was also our provider under our insurer's OccHealth Connect program which is intended to deal proactively with work-related injuries. I therefore provided Quadrant with the necessary paperwork for them to become our OccHealth Connect partner and that agreement has been executed.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

### (2) Freeze-up Prevention Checklists

I completed the freeze-up prevention checklists for the various Town buildings for the month of November as part of the MIIA Rewards Program. We participate in this initiative each year during the colder months to raise awareness relative to pipe freezing risks. I will continue to complete the checklists monthly throughout the winter.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

### (3) October Pothole Log

I inquired to the DPW as to whether any potholes had been reported during the month of October as part of the MIIA Rewards Pothole Prevention Program that we participate in. One pothole had been reported and it was filled the following day.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

## **F. Facilities**

### (1) Winterization of Field of Dreams Sprinkler System

The Field of Dreams sprinkler system was blown out and winterized on November 6, 2008. The same irrigation contractor will restart the system in the spring.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

(2) Field of Dreams Restoration

The Jr. Hornets have proposed what will be necessary to restore the Field of Dreams after the recent football season. The Superintendent of Public Works met with representatives of the organization to develop a plan that will involve raking and minimal loaming with hydroseeding now and, potentially, slice seeding in the spring. The Town will supply some loam for the filling of low spots prior to hydroseeding.

In the future, it is likely that the Jr. Hornets will desire to continue to use the Field of Dreams for practices. A separate request for that use will be presented to the Board annually. Further, the organization will be bringing permanent power to the Field of Dreams concession at no cost to the Town and may be writing the Board soon relative to the potential placement of a second concession building and possibly a multi-sport scoreboard there.

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

(3) Recreational Uses at Clammers' Beach

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At the last meeting, the Board asked that I contact the President of the Conomo Point Association to ask if they agreed that better management of the various recreational uses at Clammers' Beach is in order. A resident had recently indicated that she felt that other uses were crowding out the use of the beach for swimming and that it should be closed to other uses.

I contacted Association President Heidi Rowe and she indicated that she had not heard any similar concerns from Association members. She also commented that the recent invitation for parties to use Front Beach on the Essex River has caused a general decline in the swimming use at Clammers' Beach. Further, she acknowledged that Clammers' Beach has always supported a mix of recreational uses and feels that this arrangement is appropriate.

*Recommendation:* **Further Board discussion relative to this matter.**

(3) Town Buildings Planning

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At the recent Special Town Meeting, the Town postponed action on funding for conceptual plans for new and renovated Town buildings. However, the need for new and improved space is still present and the Board may wish to consider the next logical step. The Chief of Police and another member of the Ad Hoc Study Group will be in attendance at the present meeting to discuss as necessary.

*Recommendation:* **Further Board discussion at the present meeting.**

(4) Annual Fire Extinguisher Inspection

Each year at this time we have our Town Hall fire extinguishers inspected and serviced as necessary. The Selectmen's Assistant has made arrangements for that process to occur as usual and, this year, we will be adding the Senior Center's units into the process (since they are no longer new).

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

(5) Re-piping of Town Hall Boilers and Chimney Breakdown

As the Board may recall, it became necessary to re-pipe the two Town Hall boilers to another chimney that leads from the boiler room due to an unsafe condition regarding the original chimney. That work has now been completed and the mason who will be dismantling the original chimney down to the roof line has scheduled that work for November 21, 2008. I have alerted the Librarian and the Historical Commission relative to the scheduled work. The Librarian has chosen to close the Library for the two days that the project will be occurring over (the Library entrance will be inaccessible due to a falling debris hazard).

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

(6) Town Hall Events Sign Repair

We had been experiencing trouble with balancing letters on the top ledger on one face of the Town Hall events sign. The problem was related to three rivets that had been left out during the sign fabrication process. We reported the issue to the Manchester Essex Rotary and Rotary members assisted by asking the sign company to make the necessary repair under warranty. The repair was made on November 10, 2008 and the sign is working well.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

**G. Fiscal/Budget**

(1) Financial Forecast

At the last meeting, the Board reviewed a suggestion by the Town Accountant that it may be wise to begin making cautionary statements to the various Town departments given the present economic backdrop. The Board asked that the issue be studied further with the Finance Committee and that any substantive indications of the need for spending changes be brought back for review. I passed that request on to the Town Accountant and the Chairman of the Finance Committee and they will act accordingly.

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

## H. Complaints

No items.

## I. Meetings Attended

### (1) Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce Essex Division Meeting

I attended the subject meeting on November 4, 2008 along with Selectmen Randall and Lynch. We updated the Chamber on a variety of continuing projects and initiatives including the Route 133 Reconstruction Project.

*Recommendation:* No further action is necessary.

### (2) Essex Regional Retirement Board Discussion

I met with Essex Regional Retirement Board Executive Director Timothy Bassett on November 13, 2008. Mr. Bassett was in Town for open office hours with any interested employee and he stopped by to discuss some general topics with me.

Relative to the recent decline in the stock market, there will eventually be an interest income shortfall that will need to be made up with individual contributions from the various communities in the District. However, the scale of that shortfall will be dampened somewhat by the use of the present five-year income averaging. It is possible that the State Legislature will also look at the ability to use a longer time period for averaging in light of present financial conditions.

Further, a recent change in the law allowing for a limited amount of additional cost of living adjustment funding will be explained to each member community at public hearings over the coming months. Once the hearings have been held, the Board will ask each local Treasurer to vote regarding whether the additional funding mechanism should be enacted in our District.

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

### (3) Meeting with Representative-Elect Ferrante

Representative-elect Ann Margaret Ferrante met with for a second time on November 13, 2008. We discussed a variety of issues that are presently facing the Town and I updated her regarding any developments that have occurred since our first informal meeting. The Representative-Elect will likely schedule a time to meet with the Board just after the new year begins.

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

## J. Final Judgment

No items.

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

### (1) Community Preservation Committee

At the last meeting, the Board made its two appointments to the Community Preservation Committee, rounding out the slate of seven members. The Committee's membership includes: Richard Ross of the Finance Committee (Selectmen), Town Treasurer Virginia Boutchie (Selectmen), Stephan Gersh (Conservation Commission), Paul Goodwin (Superintendent of Public Works), Diane Polley (Housing Authority), Kurt Wilhelm (Historical Commission), and Susan Robinson (Planning Board).

I informed each of the above parties about the fact that all seats had been appointed and the Town Treasurer acted as the coordinator for pulling together the Committee's initial meeting. I provided each member with a copy of the Community Preservation Committee By-law, a link to the Department of Revenue's manual, and another useful CPA link from the Town Accountant. Subsequently, the Committee met for the first time on November 12, 2008. Mr. Stephan Gersh is the CPC's Chairman and its Clerk is Ms. Susan Robinson. I am presently working with Committee Member Ross to get him access to the Town's website editor since he will be handling the Committee's new web page.

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

### (2) Town Planning Consultant

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The recent Special Town Meeting appropriated the sum of \$25,000 for a Town Planner on a consulting basis. In order to procure those services, which are subject to Chapter 30b, the Board may wish to define a scope (possibly in conjunction with other boards) and ask for quotations (not to exceed \$24,999) or may wish to release a RFP to evaluate proposers based on skills and approach with a separate cost proposal to be reviewed thereafter (not to exceed \$25,000). Also, the Planning Board will be in attendance at your next meeting to discuss the topic with the Selectmen.

*Recommendation:* **Preliminary Board discussion relative to the proposed planning consultant.**

## L. Legal Issues

### (1) Renewal of Joint Purchase Agreement, Sewer Camera

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Similar to the Joint Purchase Agreement we maintain with the Town of Rockport for our shared vacuum trailer, our Joint Purchase Agreement for our shared sewer

inspection camera runs on a five year schedule. The Agreement is renewable and the Town of Rockport does wish to continue this arrangement with respect to the camera. The Rockport Superintendent of Public Works has signed the successor agreement and it is available for the Board's countersignature.

*Recommendation:* **Board signature of the renewed sewer inspection camera Joint Purchase Agreement.**

## **M. Grants**

### (1) Library Renovation Grant Program

At the request of the Chairman, Senator Tarr's Office has asked a representative the State agency that provides grant funding for library renovations to consider meeting with the Board in the future. The purpose of the meeting would be to inform the Board and library officials alike about the program, its requirements, and how it may be able to specifically improve the Essex Library. Presently, the program coordinator is learning more about our needs from our Librarian and will contact our office to schedule an appointment in the future.

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

### (2) Final Senior Center Grant Closeout Agreement

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The Department of Housing and Community Development has provided the subject Agreement to the Board for the Chairman's signature. The only condition was that a copy of the Single Audit that was performed for fiscal year 2007 be provided to the Department. However, that submission was already made back in August of 2008. As such, on the advice of our Grant Administrative Consultant, I have attached a copy of the audit report to the Agreement for submission to the Department.

*Recommendation:* **Chairman's signature of the Closeout Agreement.**

## **N. Emergency Planning**

No items.

## **O. Other Items**

### (1) Request for Dead End Sign

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A resident of Sumac Drive wrote to me requesting that a dead end sign be placed at the beginning of Sumac Drive since, apparently, visitors unfamiliar with the area frequently mistake the road for a through way. Vehicles that need to turn around have caused damage to lawns and can cause a disturbance during sleeping hours, etc.

***Recommendation: Board consideration of the request and potential referral to the Department of Public Works for implementation.***

(2) Veterans' Day Holiday

The office was closed on Tuesday, November 11, 2008 in observance of the subject holiday.

*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.*