



Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of Dec. 15, 2014

Report covers from November 29, 2014 to December 12, 2014

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

A. Town Department Reports/Requests

(1) Open Space Plan Revision Update

I met with Mr. Stephen Winslow of the City of Gloucester on December 3, 2014. As the Board may recall, Mr. Winslow is on contract to assist the Open Space Committee with a comprehensive update of the Town's Open Space Plan. The purpose of our meeting was to review recent and planned development in Essex and generally review the climate for potential development in the future. Mr. Winslow will also interview other Town officials about this topic.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

B. Computer Systems

(1) Network Router Failover Improvement

As the Board may recall, we recently moved to a new type of building interconnection system using routers and new high-speed cable drops. Each building has a primary and a secondary router and a technician from Edgewater Technology had already configured failover capabilities for power supply failure and network-side port failure. On December 3, 2014, he returned to configure the Internet-side port failure and our new systems are now as robust as possible.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary. Total time – 1.5 hours.

(2) Assistance with Setup of Evidence Room

As part of the certification process, the Police Department is using the old dispatch area as an evidence room. We had received in the past some specialized scanning and label printing hardware from the Regional Dispatch Center that catalogues and organizes police evidence and lost property. That equipment had been installed in the police office and I have now performed maintenance on the computer system in the old dispatch center and have moved the specialized hardware onto that system. The counter in the new evidence room is now more organized for evidence processing and the reconditioned system is working well.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary. Total time – 1.5 hours.

(3) Provision of Limited Wi-Fi Capability for Internal Use

The Essex Fire Department has need for vendors and trainers to periodically have Internet access at the Station. This service has not been offered since we did not want to co-mingle that private traffic with the Town's official network traffic. However, I learned that our Internet Service Provider (Comcast) now offers a modem that provides a segregated Wi-Fi channel that has no chance of co-mingling traffic. The modem does not cost any additional money per month and only carries a one-time installation fee. I worked with a Comcast technician to swap out the modem during the week of December 8, 2014 and the service is working well. I took a similar action at Town Hall, since that modem was due for upgrade anyway.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary. Total time – 1.5 hours.

C. Personnel

(1) Town Administrator's Performance Review and Goal Setting (*)

At this time each year, the Board arranges to review my performance and to set goals for the upcoming year. In the performance area, I will rely on the detailed reports filed with the Board at each Board meeting as a record of my activities, service, and accomplishments. As the Board may recall, my evaluation template was updated with five specific goals at the outset of this calendar year for use at this time.

Also, it is necessary to work with the Board to develop goals for the upcoming calendar year. In addition to the general roles and responsibilities in my position description, which I will continue to update the Board on in detail for each new Board meeting, I recommend the following specific scope and welcome discussion with the Board:

- Assist the Board, its consultants, and other Town boards and committees with continued planning and implementation of activities at Conomo Point, all in accordance with DEP compliance and Board guidance. Activities will include: working toward the completion of the Robbins Island Subdivision approval process; the coordination of appraisals for the properties on Robbins Island; the development of Purchase & Sale Agreements and coordination of sales for Robbins Island properties should Town Meeting vote to sell; completion of any necessary road alterations on Robbins Island; coordination of ongoing northern waterfront access and long-term lease planning and design efforts in conjunction with our consultant and the DEP; evictions and legal actions; and renewal of bridge leases as necessary.
- Continue to advance the transition of the Town's information/technology infrastructure from in-Town resources to the Melrose datacenter and vendor-hosted platforms. Work will involve: the migration of most users

to the virtual desktop environment that has been successfully piloted and the migration of our Assessors' database to a vendor-hosted product, if cost-effective to do so. The Essex Police Department will be the last department migrated to the virtual desktop environment and may instead utilize PC's that are coming off-line from other departments.

- Serve as the Town's chief overseer of the Town Hall/Library exterior renovation and associated life-safety and ADA improvement project. Work will involve: interfacing with our Project Manager, who will be providing preliminary project design and cost estimation and, later, subject to appropriation - construction oversight; completing the necessary procurement work for a designer and a contractor; interfacing with our contractor to properly sequence work from a logistical perspective; and acting as a liaison to building staff during design and construction.
- Advance the Town's readiness for Essex River dredging grant funding by working toward Federal Channel re-designation based upon the recommendations of our consulting engineer and the Army Corps of Engineers. Work will involve: dovetailing the chosen recommendation with steps that Federal regulators must take to obtain eventual approval of the final new channel configuration; coordinating any State-supported dredging work that is offered (whether at the mouth of the River on in Essex Harbor); and potentially expanding the permitting effort that will be necessary for the downtown boardwalk project to include others areas of the harbor (if budget allows).
- Assist the Board, Town consultants, other Town boards and committees, other project stakeholders, and project abutters with the combination of the downtown boardwalk project and the improvement of the Town Landing; and the implementation of the final construction project. Work will involve: management of the grant that has been approved but not yet awarded, in the amount of \$1.5M, to conduct project final design and permitting, Town Landing design and permitting (if budget allows), and overall construction and oversight of the entire project.

Recommendation: Preliminary Board discussion relative to this year's evaluation process using the current template and the goal setting process for the upcoming calendar year.

(2) Revision of Town Clerk Position Description

(*)

The Town Clerk has in the past received assistance from the Treasurer/Collector's Clerk. However, steadily, the Treasurer/Collector's Department has taken on additional responsibilities and workload as the management of the Town has become increasingly complex. As such, the Treasurer/Collector can no longer dedicate the TC Clerk's time to the Town Clerk's Department. It will be necessary therefore for the Town Clerk to seek a part-time employee to assist with certain tasks and to provide office coverage for the Town Clerk when she is not in

the office. To that end, the Town Clerk's position description should be modified to allow her to supervise Assistant Town Clerks.

Recommendation: Board vote to modify the Town Clerk's position description to allow the supervision of assistants.

(3) Approval of Part-Time Assistant Town Clerk Position Description (*)

As noted above, the Town Clerk will need to have assistance with some office tasks and for general office coverage due to the inability of the Treasurer/Collector's Office to continue to provide those services. The Town Clerk has proposed a position description for this new role.

Recommendation: Board vote to approve the new position description for Part-Time Assistant Town Clerk.

D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects

(1) Next Steps for Federal Channel Realignment (*)

At the last meeting, the Board and members of the public benefitted from a presentation by our consulting engineer regarding his recent mapping of the Federal Channel. Encroachments to the existing channel boundaries were readily-identifiable and the firm has recommended a realignment of the channel, keeping the width at 60 feet. One distinct advantage to this approach is that approval of the new boundary can be completed by the Army Corps of Engineers internally, without the need for legislative approval.

A variety of stakeholders were present at the meeting and provided a wide range of comments. Also, as requested, the draft report and drawings have been posted on the Town's website. After the presentation, we did receive some public input and our engineer posed some new potential changes that might make the future dredging volume lower. Presently, the firm is awaiting guidance from the Town regarding which option the Town prefers to pursue. Once that decision is made, the firm will provide the Army Corps of Engineers with an encroachment elimination plan and will provide limited coordination with the Corps after the plan's submission.

Recommendation: Board discussion relative to which option should be pursued (including discussion regarding the post-meeting changes) and whether any elements should be added to the existing scope of work.

(2) Town Hall Renovation Project Management Update

At the last meeting, the Board entered into a contract with NETCO to serve as the Owner's Project Manager (OPM) for the Town Hall exterior and associated items renovation project. The charge of the OPM in this initial phase is to complete any necessary investigations or studies that will allow for an accurate cost figure for

all facets of the work to be presented to the Annual Town Meeting in May of 2015. Presently, NETCO is working to line up architectural and engineering subcontractors to help with the cost assessment phase.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(4) Promotion of Town Resources

At the last meeting, two members of the Board voted to sign outside of a meeting a new contract with the Essex Merchants' Group for the promotion of Town resources. This new contract uses a fiscal year 2015 appropriation for \$10,000 and includes a new focus on the offerings of the various non-profit organizations in the Town. The contract has been finalized and signed and the Merchants' Group plans to begin work right away.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(5) FEMA Flood Map Appeal Update

(*)

At the last meeting, the Board discussed on a preliminary basis options for hiring a consultant to appeal the coastal portions of the FEMA flood maps in Essex. I have learned that the Army Corps of Engineers is presently conducting a technical study on the East Coast that may affect the FEMA flood maps. It is possible that this study will be released early in 2015 and it has the potential to obviate the need for the Town to conduct its own study. As such, it is prudent to wait for a limited amount of time before getting proposals to spend the Town's money. It is also possible that the Town of Manchester and the City of Gloucester will be interested in collaborating with respect to the appeal process.

Recommendation: **Postpone action on soliciting proposals until more is known about the potential of the Army Corps' current work.**

(6) Preliminary Proposal for Northern Conomo Point Planning and Design

At the last meeting, the Board met jointly with the Conomo Point Planning Committee and no objection was registered to seeking a proposal from consulting designer James Heroux to provide additional Northern Conomo Point Planning services. Mr. Heroux is now with Copley Wolff Design Group. The Fall Town Meeting approved \$25,000 for this purpose and Mr. Heroux's past experience with Conomo Point and well-received work products positions him well to provide a preliminary proposal. As such, I provided Mr. Heroux with some goals and guidance that the recent joint Board meeting had arrived at. In turn, he provided me with a preliminary proposal that the Town can review and modify until the proposed scope of services is well-aligned. The Conomo Point Planning Committee members have had the opportunity to individually review the preliminary proposal and additional discussion may be held at the present meeting.

Recommendation: Further Board discussion, with Conomo Point Planning Committee input, regarding the finalization of a scope of services with Copley Wolff.

(7) Town Hall Health/Safety Project Designer Change Order (*)

The project has taken longer to complete than anticipated since it included 14 construction change orders ranging from small items to a major structural repair. As such, our designer has requested that the Town consider a change order to help offset the additional site visits and administrative burden that the firm has continued to bear. Further, two structural engineering change orders that have been approved in concept require formal signature as we approach project closeout. I will have more information by meeting time.

Recommendation: **Board discussion relative to the approval of engineering/designer services change orders.**

(8) Town Hall East Wall Repair Change Order (*)

The interior plaster in the Town Hall main stairwell was removed recently to allow the placement of steel in the wall to address the structural instability problem. A recent rainstorm revealed that water has been leaking down from the upper reaches of the building for some time now (between the interior and exterior walls). The water has been exiting the building through the foundation before it even hits the basement floor and had not ever created stains on the interior plaster. As such, this leak has gone unaddressed for quite some time and rotten studs have resulted. It will be necessary to replace any rotten wood and to stop the leak at its source before the interior wall is replaced using sheetrock.

Recommendation: **Board approval to sign the necessary change order outside of a meeting once the contractor develops the necessary change order proposal and Board approval of a time and materials change order for the investigation of the leak so that the scope of work can be established.**

E. Insurance

(1) Monthly Pothole Log

I obtained the pothole log for the month of November from the Department of Public Works during the week of December 1, 2014 and provided it to our insurer as part of the MIA Rewards Program. No potholes were reported during November.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

F. Facilities

(1) Potential Demolition of Structure at 1 Robbins Island Road (*)

As the Board is aware, the leasehold at 1 Robbins Island Road was abandoned by a former tenant a year ago and is in disrepair. Since this property is an area that the Board may desire for future public use, it may be appropriate to demolish the structure. Like the previous demolition projects, many permits and preparations are necessary and the process is lengthy.

Recommendation: **Board discussion relative to potentially authorizing me to begin preparations for demolition at 1 Robbins Island Road.**

(2) Selective Cutting of Trees on Town Parcel

At the last meeting, the Board approved the selective cutting of trees on a Town parcel bordering the marsh to allow an abutter to improve his marsh view. I contacted the abutter to indicate that cutting can only be selective, that written approval of the Conservation Commission is required, and that the abutter needs to hold the Town harmless in writing for any type of liability. Presently, the abutter has signed a hold-harmless agreement and is working to apply to the Conservation Commission for a Determination of Applicability. After the abutter receives written permission from the Commission to proceed, he will begin work.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

(3) Streetlight Inventory and Purchase Price Analysis (*)

As the Board may recall, back in August, the Town requested that National Grid assemble an inventory of all Essex streetlights and the cost to purchase them all since the Town is considering a LED retrofit project. National Grid has now completed that analysis and has provided the Town with a variety of documents for review.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

G. Fiscal/Budget

(1) Preliminary Draft of Selectmen's FY16 Capital Plan (*)

I have developed a preliminary version of the Selectmen's fiscal year 2016 capital plan. The plan is due to the Finance Committee on January 13, 2014.

Recommendation: **Board review and discussion as necessary.**

(2) Preliminary Draft of Selectmen's FY16 Operating Budget (*)

I have developed a preliminary version of the Selectmen's fiscal year 2016 operating budget. The budget is due to the Finance Committee on January 13, 2014.

Recommendation: **Board review and discussion as necessary.**

(3) School District Tentative Budget Hearing (*)

The Board of Selectmen, the Finance Committee, the Town Accountant, and I attended the subject hearing on December 10, 2014 in Manchester. Generally, the presentation from School District officials included several budget options, with a strong recommendation that the two towns strive to eliminate the District's past reliance on reserves.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

(4) Potential Sharp Increase in Vocational School District Assessment (*)

The Town may receive an unexpectedly-high assessment amount for our participation in the North Shore Regional Agricultural and Technical School District due to higher-than-expected enrollment. At present, the appropriation for the District for fiscal year 2015 is only sufficient to cover about \$120,000 in costs.

Recommendation: **Board discussion as necessary.**

H. Complaints

No items.

I. Meetings Attended

No items.

J. Final Judgment

(1) Transmittal of DEP Quarterly Report (*)

I have produced the Quarterly Report to the DEP for the quarter ending December 31, 2014. The report discusses the recent efforts at public auction and the recent Fall Town Meeting votes that will help the Town make progress in both the Central and the Northern areas. The report also recounts a recent discussion I had with DEP officials about the potential for the northern area to be treated as a "large system" under the transition rules established when Title 5 was revised in 1995. Such treatment qualifies the area for ongoing ownership by the Town as a single owner, so long as certain ongoing inspection and other criteria are met.

Recommendation: **Board vote to transmit the report.**

K. Town Meeting, By-Laws, and Regulations

No items.

L. Legal Issues

No items.

M. Grants

(1) Green Crab Trapping Program Suspension

The Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) terminated its grant agreement with the Town on November 21, 2014, after the Governor used his 9C budget cutting authority to close a budget gap. DMF will still reimburse the Town for any crab landings that were made prior to that date. As such, all program participants were immediately notified that all DMF-paid trapping needed to cease and that final invoices for trapping before the grant termination were required. I met with the Shellfish Constable and trappers with outstanding invoices on November 26, 2014 to compile the final paperwork for DMF. During the week of December 1, 2014, I provided to DMF the invoices we desired to have paid (in advance of the Town actually paying the trappers) so that we could be assured of our eventual reimbursement. After receiving that assurance in writing from DMF, we processed the invoices for payment and have applied to DMF for actual reimbursement.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

N. Emergency Planning

No items.

O. Other Items

No items.

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