



Town Administrator's Report Board of Selectmen's Meeting of January 22, 2018

Report covers from January 6, 2018 to January 19, 2018

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

A. Town Department Reports/Requests

(1) Town Building Committee Meeting Summary (*)

The Town Building Committee met on January 18, 2018, to discuss plans to present various artistic renderings that have been developed by our architect for two separate public safety building renovation/replacement scenarios. One option constructs a new fire house between Town Hall and the existing fire/police station. The other option demolishes the existing fire/police station and builds a larger, combined facility on that site (requiring roadway and utility relocation). Also discussed was the prospect of acquiring new property in the downtown area and constructing either a new fire house or a new combined facility on that property. The Committee is prepared for the public forum concerning this topic, which will be held on January 24, 2018 at 7:00 p.m. in the third-floor auditorium at Town Hall.

Recommendation: Board discussion relative to the various options and the overall content of the public forum.

B. Computer Systems

(1) Update of Assessors' Database System for New Fiscal Year

I performed database maintenance activities under the direction of the Assessors' database vendor on the Assessors' counter terminal and three office workstations during the week of January 8, 2018. These procedures are completed annually after the tax rate has been set for a given fiscal year.

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

(2) Police Clerk Computer System Repair

The Police Clerk's computer system experienced a file corruption problem during the week of January 15, 2018. After investigation, I was able to restore the system and it is operating properly.

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

C. Personnel

(1) Schedule and Process for Town Clerk Interviews (*)

Applications for the Town Clerk vacancy were due on January 16, 2018. The Town received a total of 25 applications and 7 had previous Town Clerk experience. The Board should now determine when to interview the top candidates and how many candidates will be interviewed.

Recommendation: Board discussion relative to process and schedule for interviews.

(2) Process for Promotion and/or Interviews, Town Accountant Vacancy (*)

At the last meeting, the Board discussed the potential for promoting the present Treasurer/Collector to fill the upcoming Town Accountant vacancy and to backfill the Treasurer/Collector's position by promoting the present Assistant Treasurer/Collector into that role. The Board also wanted to review the final assembly of external applications for the Town Accountant position before determining which course to take. The outgoing Town Accountant will remain in place until early February and the Assistant Town Accountant will be able to generate weekly bills payable and payroll warrants for a time after that.

The application period for external applications closed on January 16, 2018 and a total of three applications were received; two with past Town Accountant experience. The Finance Committee, through its Chairman, was asked to comment on the possibilities and I understand the Committee will make a recommendation after its meeting of January 23, 2018. Whichever pathway is chosen, it will be very important to get a new Accountant in place as soon as possible, since this position is critical to the daily operation of the Town.

Recommendation: Board discussion relative to which pathway is preferred to fill the Town Accountant vacancy.

D. Procurement/Ongoing Projects

(1) Contract for Construction of Fiber Optic Municipal Network (*)

The Fall Town Meeting appropriated sufficient funding for the Town to hire a contractor to construct a fiber optic municipal area network (FMAN) on utility poles jointly-owned by National Grid and Verizon. The Board has informed both utilities of the Town's intent to exercise its rights to utilize a reserved space on the poles for this purpose and the Comm-Tract Corp., a reliable vendor on the State Contract has presented a proposal to the Town to implement the project.

The Board sent National Grid a follow-up letter at the last meeting, after the utility had sent a letter to the Board that needed factual correction, for the record. The cost of the project will be approximately \$70,000, plus the cost of police details,

and the project has a nine-to-ten-week lead time, after a work order is signed by the Board. We have not heard back from National Grid since the January 8th letter and we never heard back from Verizon after the Board's December 8th letter.

Recommendation: Board consideration of the contract proposal from Comm-Tract, including consideration of when it should be signed, in consultation with Town Counsel.

(2) Beneficial Sediment Re-use Project Update (*)

As discussed in the past, the Army Corps of Engineers typically puts together a Management Plan for any beneficial sediment re-use study (known as a Section 204 Project) that it undertakes. The Corps has been working to draft a "Management Plan" for the project but is dealing with some regulatory questions at present. The project will review a variety of barrier beach and salt marsh restoration strategies that could be undertaken using appropriate dredged materials. While the re-use of sandy material is likely a permissible practice, the more silty material usually gets disposed of on land or out at sea, due to stringent regulations concerning the marsh system (especially with its Area of Critical Environmental Concern status). Presently, I am working to set up a meeting involving Town, State, and Federal officials to discuss some of the options for the silty material in more depth.

Recommendation: Board discussion regarding the status of this project.

(3) Further Review & Development of RFP for Centennial Grove Master Plan (*)

At the last meeting, the Board agreed that I should work with those in the planning field to better vet the draft second attempt at a Request for Proposals for a planner to produce a Master Plan for the Centennial Grove. I had been given an example of a RFP used in another community in the past for a similar project and had adapted that for use in Essex, in a preliminary fashion. It is my understanding that the RFP generated four responses with respect to that other past project.

After sharing the draft with individuals in the planning field, including the Town Planner, I am gathering feedback and should have that input by meeting time. Once the feedback is reviewed by the Board, it will be possible to revise the draft RFP and then share it with the Finance Committee again for review.

Recommendation: Board review of any input received by meeting time.

E. Insurance

No items.

F. Facilities

(1) Further Comparison of Options for Street Light Conversion (*)

At the last meeting, the Board asked me to firm up with the Town Planner the cost of the Town purchasing, converting to LED, and maintaining all existing street lights. This information will be useful when comparing the outright purchase option to the lease-purchase or “subscription” option that the Board has discussed in the past.

The Town Planner and I have researched these matters in more depth with personnel from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), which has been instrumental in assisting other communities with conversions in the past. According to MAPC, the Town would need to have the full amount for the purchase of the lights (the Town has \$14,000 but National Grid is now indicating that \$17,000 will be necessary); the Town would need to appropriate an additional \$10,000 for the audit and design contract and an additional \$22,000-\$38,000 for the actual conversion contract. Thereafter, the Town would need to annually appropriate about \$3,000 to go toward maintenance and replacement (likely to be spent after the lights get older). The total cost to convert, without grants and incentives, could be as high as \$65,000 and could be \$49,000 or lower with grants and incentives. Thereafter, \$3,000 per year should be carried for maintenance and replacement. Maintenance could be handled on a time and materials basis or perhaps with some future, multi-community maintenance contract.

Recommendation: **Further Board discussion concerning the various options.**

(2) Adjustments to Town Hall Window Casings

The extreme cold and wind that we have experienced this winter were excellent test factors for the new Town Hall windows. We noticed that some windows were drafty, even though brand-new. I reviewed the matter with our architect and contractor and all windows are being assessed for frame adjustment via shimming, with the addition of fresh foam insulation. The work involves removing window trim and replacing it after the adjustment and insulation is complete. Some work has already completed and more will follow. If we notice additional problems, the contractor will stay engaged and all of the work is at his expense, under warranty.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(3) Preservation Award Nomination, Town Hall and Library (*)

Our architect feels that the recent renovation of the Town Hall and Library is an excellent candidate for a Preservation Award through the Massachusetts Historical Commission. The architect will complete and file the application but is in need of several letters of support, which I am working to coordinate. The Selectmen, as one of the primary building users, could also provide a letter of support, if interested.

Recommendation: **Board consideration of a letter of support for this award.**

(4) Status of Historic Safe Door Restoration Project

As the Board may recall, Lisa Mehlin had been hired to clean and restore the decorative safe doors that had been hung on the wall in the Town Hall foyer. Work on that project has been proceeding steadily and should be wrapped up by the end of January.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

G. Fiscal/Budget

No items.

H. Complaints

No items.

I. Meetings Attended

(1) Massachusetts Municipal Association Annual Meeting and Trade Show

I attended the subject meeting from January 19-21, 2018, in Boston. The conference featured excellent networking opportunities with other municipal officials and with consultants and vendors. The various breakout sessions provided useful information and updates concerning municipal law and initiatives.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary.

J. Final Judgment

No items.

K. Town Meeting, By-Laws, and Regulations

(1) Preliminary Draft of Annual Town Meeting Warrant (*)

I have developed a preliminary draft of the Annual Town Meeting warrant in accordance with the Board's guidance from the last meeting.

Recommendation: **Initial Board review of the preliminary Annual Town Meeting warrant.**

L. Legal Issues

No items.

M. Grants

(1) Green Crab Trapping Grant, FY18

(*)

The Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) has announced another round of green crab trapping in the amount of \$10,000. The Town has participated in this program in the past and its goal is to remove this invasive species from the environment. DMF will prepare a standard contract for the Chairman's signature and I can then enter into subcontracts with trappers to harvest up to the grant limit.

***Recommendation:* Board vote to authorize the Chairman to sign the contract, either at the meeting, if available, or subsequently, when available.**

N. Emergency Planning

(1) Initial Disaster Assessment, January 4, 2018 Storm

The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) is conducting the subject assessment, otherwise known as an IDA. This process will determine whether damages from the recent storm are large enough to likely cross the Federal threshold for disaster funding. All communities are asked to submit IDA forms by January 24 and, if the total by county is sufficient, a more in-depth, Preliminary Disaster Assessment (PDA) process will ensue. While municipal damage in Essex was not major, several businesses along the causeway sustained heavy damage. Damage figures from the businesses will be included on the IDA forms.

Recommendation: I will update the Board as necessary.

(2) Regional Dispatch Center Monthly Meeting

I presided over a joint meeting of the various Regional Dispatch Center advisory boards, as Chairman of the Executive Advisory Board, on January 16, 2018. The group received an update on Center staffing (the former director has left the agency and an Interim director, promoted from within, has taken his place). Also, representatives from the State 911 Department were on hand to indicate that employees of the Dispatch Center may at some point become State 911 employees. Under that scenario, rather than continuing to operate under the present Intermunicipal Agreement, the Center would be offered as a service of a State agency. It is likely, due to timing, that the Center will run through fiscal year 2019 under the IMA and could transition to another model for fiscal year 2020. We expect that the fiscal year 2019 budget proposal will be reviewed at the next monthly meeting, in February. Since the Town's initial involvement with the Regional Dispatch Center, in 2013, the Town has saved over \$1.25M versus the cost necessary to run its own dispatch center.

Recommendation: No further action is necessary at this time.

O. Other Items

(1) Support for Energy Efficiency on Cape Ann, as a Green Community (*)

The Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce is soon going to partner with National Grid relative to the promotion of energy-saving strategies and improvements that area businesses can take advantage of. The Chamber will be planning a media release event sometime in February and would like each of the four communities to express support for the concept of energy efficiency. The Town would not be endorsing the program, per se, but rather, as a Green Community, just highlighting how the business sector can also contribute to the effort. The Chamber would like to identify an elected official from each community to be part of the event.

Recommendation: Board discussion relative to which Selectman may wish to participate.

(2) Town Administrator Leave

I was out of the office on January 10 and 11, 2018, on vacation leave.

(3) Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

The office was closed on January 15, 2018, 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.