



Town Administrator's Report Select Board Meeting of September 13, 2021

Matthew Coogan

Boxford School Committee Update

The School Committee has a new vacancy due to a recent resignation. The School Committee and the Select Board will now undergo the same process completed last month for the other most recent vacancy – an announcement to voters for candidates, followed by a recommendation of a candidate by the School Committee and a vote by both bodies in joint session. The plan is to hold that joint session at the next Select Board meeting on September 27.

Masco School Committee Update

Carolyn Miller of the Masco School Committee will update the Board on the status of contract negotiations with the teacher's union. We have also been informed today of a Boxford member vacancy on the Masco School Committee due to a resignation. Information on the appointment process to follow.

ARPA Funds – Health Department Staffing Hours

Included in the agenda packet is a memo from my office outlining a plan to utilize ARPA funds as a funding source for the increased hours of the Administrative Assistant position in the Health Department. This was something Alan Benson had been coordinating with the Health Department and Board of Health. I recommend the Board approve the use of \$12,500 of ARPA funds for an additional 10 hours per week of administrative staff time in the Health Department for a 1-year period. These additional hours would fully staff the department during Town Hall hours, would improve workflow for the department, and is in response to expanded trash sticker services. The ARPA Committee will continue to develop a recommendation to the Board on how the Town should spend the total \$2.49M ARPA funds. The Committee will meet again on September 23rd.

Center at 10 Elm Project Update

Excavation for the new foundation continues. Fencing and erosion control and been completely installed and will remain throughout the duration of construction. Clearing of the site, including removal of trees and grubbing, is nearly complete. The clapboards of the Cummings House have been

removed, exposing the wall cavity and allowing for the contractor to make minor repairs, including sill repair.

Proclamation for Jim Locke Field

We have prepared a Proclamation that summarizes the actions taken by the Board at the last meeting to rename Jim Locke Field at Boy Scout Park. Jim Locke's wife and family will be attending the Select Board meeting Monday night for the Board to issue the Proclamation.

Boxford Common Parking September 12

Yesterday was a very busy and congested day for Boxford Common, and there were parking and circulation issues. Scheduled for both fields were men's league soccer and youth field hockey in the morning, followed by six Masco Youth Football games, including youth cheerleading squads. Chief Riter reported that the lots at the Common, as well as the overflow lots at Cole School and at the Council on Aging, were full throughout the day. Chief Riter has reached out to the BAA to discuss the situation on Sunday and address the traffic and parking issues for future weekends.

National Grid Stray Voltage Issue

National Grid's underground crew connected the newly installed grounding rods and grid to the transformer on Janes Rd last week. This did not have an impact on the stray voltage issue at 38 and 40 Janes Rd. NGrid will proceed with replacing the transformer next week. This work has been delayed due to National Grid's recent storm responses. Power will need to be turned off to replace the transformer, which will affect 5 houses on the street. Our National Grid liaison Joe Muraco will continue to work with residents in the neighborhood and will notify them of the upcoming work and scheduled outage for next week.

On a separate topic, next week National Grid will be replacing a collapsed culvert located on the right of way off Georgetown Rd. Joe wanted to make sure the town was aware, as this right of way is heavily utilized by pedestrians and bikers, and the area will not be passable during construction. National Grid's contractor will place "roadway closed" signs in the area, and I will coordinate with Joe to post an announcement on the Town website and Facebook page.

The Willows at Boxford Conservation Restriction


Land Use Director Ross Povenmire and members of the Conservation Commission CR Subcommittee will be presenting the Select Board with a draft Conservation Restriction (CR) for the Willows at Boxford development project. Approximately 91 acres of the 117-acre site will be included within the CR boundaries and the restriction will provide the public access to trails. The CR Subcommittee has been working on the CR with the project applicant and the National Heritage and Endangered Species

Program (NHESP) on behalf of the Conservation Commission. Since Select Board will be signing and endorsing the CR, tonight’s meeting will give the Board an opportunity to review.

DPW Update

Town Engineer/ Superintendent Chris Olbrot has provided a thorough department update that he will review at the Select Board meeting. There are two items in particular that I’d like to call out because Chris and I will work on providing more information at a future meeting. As mentioned, we did meet with Bayside Engineering on the Rt 133 TIP project, and the intention is to set up a presentation to discuss the status of the progress and next steps, particularly the intersection improvements at Main St and Washington St, at a later meeting. In addition, on page 4 of his report Chris will be seeking guidance on whether the Select Board would like to pursue a 25 MPH town-wide speed limit. Many communities have implemented this in the North Shore area for traffic safety. Chris will provide some context for this request. I will work with Chris to arrange for a future discussion and public process with the Board.

Roadwork begins this week on Wednesday, September 15, and Thursday, September 16 on Main Street between Glendale Road and Brook Road.

			
2021 Roads Program			
STREET	Length (FT)	Width (FT)	Area (SY)
Main (Glendale to 133)	1707	26	4931
Middleton (BB to Endicott)	1995	22	4877
Roberts Rd	2112	22	5163
Harris Rd	1194	22	2919
Moonpenny	2300	24	6133
Crooked Pond	3810	24	10160
Total Miles	1.762878788		34182.66667

Inspectional Services Report – August

Inspector of Buildings Bob Aldenberg provided the Select Board an update on permits issued by Inspectional Services for August, see chart below. August 2021 was the busiest month in terms of permit volume during Bob’s tenure, and to date the inspectional services department has processed 97 more permits in calendar year 2021 compared to calendar year 2020.

The following permits were issued by Inspectional Services for the month of August 2021:

PERMITS	FEES COLLECTED	VALUE
68 Building Permits (30 Inspections)	\$44,796.00	\$7,751,839.00
	August 2020 Comparison	
35 Building Permits (28 Inspections)	\$26,969.00	\$1,621,287.00
22 Electrical Permits (40 Inspections)	\$9,324.00	
	August 2020 Comparison	
21 Electrical Permits (37 Inspections)	\$9,306.00	
10 Plumbing Permits (10 Inspections)	\$7,482.00	
	August 2020 Comparison	
20 Plumbing Permits (12 Inspections)	\$5,200.00	
18 Gas Permits (15 Inspections)	\$1,685.00	
	August 2020 Comparison	
19 Gas Permits (10 Inspections)	\$ 1,515.00	
TOTAL FEES COLLECTED	\$63,287.00	
	August 2020 Comparison	
TOTAL FEES COLLECTED	\$31,148.00	

Free Cash

Finance Director Kathy Benevento has already shared with the Board our FY22 Certified Free Cash amount of \$3,699,386. Less the town's holdback policy of 5% of the previous year's budget, there is \$1,920,831 of available free cash. This amount is close to pre-pandemic free cash levels (last year's FY21 available free cash was \$899,722). This is encouraging news, as free cash provides the town a funding source for one-time expenditures, such as capital improvement items. As mentioned, we will be starting the FY23-FY27 CIP planning process this fall.

Miscellaneous

Indoor Mask order - Staff has been complying with the local indoor mask order (in effect as of 9/2/2021 as per Boxford Board of Health), and we have masks available for visitors in case they arrive without one. Thanks to Assistant Town Administrator Susan Inman, we now have a tent set up outside behind Town Hall that allows a place for staff to have lunch together safely, as well as a place to hold meetings outdoors. The library's Cookbook Club held its September meeting under the tent this past Friday. We also held our department head meeting under the tent last week. These will be monthly meetings going forward.

MVPC Mayor's and Managers Quarterly Meeting - On Wednesday I attended the first quarterly meeting with new Executive Director Jerrard Whitten. We work with the MVPC on many initiatives, including our GIS and the mobile apps utilized by DPW and I look forward to exploring future opportunities. The next meeting will be with the Merrimack Valley legislative delegation, and I suggest we discuss legislative priorities for Boxford prior to this meeting.

MCPPPO Training - My first class is this week Monday to Wednesday. The second class is scheduled for October 12-14, and the final third class needs to be completed by November 14.