



Town of Wenham

Town Hall
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Selectmen / Town Administrator
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MEMORANDUM

TO: Selectmen
FROM: Peter Lombardi, Town Administrator
RE: Town Administrator's Report
DATE: June 23, 2015

Essex Street Culvert

This culvert is over 90 years old and was damaged in the Mother's Day storm of 2006. While several other culverts in Town that were damaged in the same storm event were repaired with federal funds years ago, this particular location still needs to be addressed. DPW Director Bill Tyack has sought funding through various state sources over the years to make the necessary repairs, to no avail. Likewise, Rep. Hill has advocated for state funding and was successful in including the project in last year's Transportation Bond Bill. However, the project was not incorporated into the recently released FY16 MassDOT Capital Investment Plan (CIP). Rep. Hill and I attended a public hearing on the CIP held last night, Monday June 22, at Gloucester City Hall and spoke to several high ranking MassDOT officials about the importance of this project. Based on our testimony and those conversations, a site visit with MassDOT has been scheduled for this Friday, with various repair scenarios and more concrete funding commitments to be considered thereafter.

Community Compact

The Baker administration has pledged to strengthen the state's partnerships with municipalities, starting with the Governor's first Executive Order (554) on January 23. Details of their flagship initiative on this front, the Community Compact, were announced this past week. Sean Cronin, the new Senior Deputy Commissioner of Local Services and co-chair of the Community Compact Cabinet, provided some further information on the program at the MMPA meeting I attended in Salem last week.

By signing on to this program, communities will have an opportunity to identify areas within the organization where they commit to implement best practices. The state then provides resources, either through technical assistance or grant funding, to help municipalities in making these improvements. Towns can focus on a number of different policy areas (up to three): Education, Energy and the Environment, Financial Management, Housing and Economic Development, Information Technology, Regionalization, and Transportation and Citizen Safety. Community Compact municipalities will also be awarded additional credits toward certain state grant programs by participating in the

program. I will provide more details to the Board of Selectmen at their next meeting for their review and consideration – a discussion which will likely dovetail with fiscal year goal setting.

DOR Taxpayer Assistance Program

The Town is participating in the Taxpayer Assistance Program offered by the MA Department of Revenue's Division of Local Services (DLS). In just its second year, this program is designed to help municipalities set their tax rates earlier in the calendar year in order to reduce the likelihood of last-minute corrections, increase internal efficiencies and improve communication with local residents regarding their tax bills. DLS staff will monitor our progress throughout the rate setting process and offer expertise and advice to work through any issues that may arise. Finance Director Angel Wills and Assessor Steve Gasperoni are taking the lead on this project, which will also help to distribute the workload in their Departments more evenly across the fiscal year. We have tentatively mapped out a workplan and schedule that will set the tax rate by the end of October, a full month earlier than in previous years.

COA Outdoor Amenities

Several site improvements have been made to the Council on Aging grounds over the past few weeks. The building entrance is now framed by four raised planting beds that are filled with organic vegetable gardens. A full-sized bocce court has also been installed and is ready for tournament or recreational play. I would like to thank Jim Reynolds, the COA Director, for championing these initiatives and George Ricker who volunteered his time and resources to make these projects happen. They are both great additions and hopefully will encourage more residents to take advantage of the resources provided by the COA.