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# A Review of Regional and Shared Services for the **Towns of Essex and Manchester by the Sea**

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*Prepared for the Towns of Essex and Manchester by the Sea, Massachusetts by the*

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## **Executive Summary**

As both the cost of providing services and the complexity of service demands continue their long-term rise for Massachusetts municipalities, the challenges facing smaller towns have grown and will continue to grow for the foreseeable future. Due to these trends, the regionalization or sharing of services between towns has been an area of interest among Massachusetts municipalities for many years now as a way to become more efficient and sometimes as a way to improve services. With funding support from a Community Compact “Best Practices” grant, the towns of Manchester by the Sea and Essex asked that the Collins Center for Public Management undertake this study of opportunities for the regionalization or sharing of services between these two towns directly and with others in the immediate region in which they are situated.

The purpose of this study is to compile a baseline inventory of the levels of regional and shared service delivery in Essex and Manchester by the Sea, and to identify candidates for possible enhanced regionalization, service-sharing, or any other forms of intermunicipal cooperation.

The proposed deliverable for this project is this report that includes the following:

1. A review of local services currently delivered in each municipality and brief descriptions of the methodologies used for the provision of those services, including staffing levels;
2. Recommendations for services that appear to be good candidates for regionalization or service sharing in some manner, based on the analysis of existing services and the challenges faced by each municipality to provide those services; and on research into regionalization experience of other Massachusetts municipalities; and
3. Recommendations based on options available for regional approaches to shared services, examples of other municipalities that have undertaken similar efforts, and general next steps to further evaluate them and/or to implement them.

Also, as requested by each town at the onset of the project, the project team delivered an early report on readily implementable early actions in the spring of 2019 in advance of the eventual final report. As such, the report that follows seeks to make recommendations in three broad areas:

1. Immediate-term recommendations that should be easily implemented by either or both towns, including, but not limited to, those presented in the early report discussed above;
2. Medium-term recommendations that require further analysis and discussion of the next steps which the towns should take to consider them; and
3. Long-term recommendations in areas of future opportunity but which require the development of political consensus and stronger relationships between Essex and Manchester by the Sea, and perhaps other municipalities.

The following table is a summary of the key recommendations resulting from the study:

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1	<p><b>LEADERSHIP LEVEL ENGAGEMENT:</b></p> <p>Essex and Manchester should execute a detailed Intermunicipal Agreement creating an ongoing effort of joint cooperation in which local leaders commit to meet regularly and jointly to discuss specific local government services that might be undertaken on a shared basis, including a joint discussion of the respective service delivery goals for each community and establishment of objective performance measurements. The local leadership should consider inviting the leadership of the MERSD to join in the agreement and subsequent work.</p>
1.2	<p><b>SHARE A PROFESSIONAL ASSESSOR:</b></p> <p>Essex and Manchester should consider sharing Assessing personnel. In the short term, Essex benefits immensely from the volunteer services of a resident who is also a professional tax assessor in a nearby community. In the longer term, this professional assessing capability might best be covered by a formal Intermunicipal Agreement between the two municipalities. The Essex Board of Assessors might also benefit from an improved flow of information on the estimated tax value of new building construction if the Assessors’ Office provide space and staff support to the Building Commission similar to what exists in Manchester.</p>
1.3	<p><b>PERSONNEL BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION:</b></p> <p>Explore an Intermunicipal Agreement between Essex, Manchester, and the Manchester Essex Regional School District (MERSD) in which the personnel/benefits administrator for the MERSD provides orientation for new employees, as well as employee benefits administration services to municipal employees in both towns.</p>
1.4	<p><b>FORM A SMALL COMMUNITY ACCOUNTING SOFTWARE CONSORTIUM:</b></p> <p>Perhaps in conjunction with the emerging North Shore IT Network Administration Initiative, Manchester and Essex should work to establish a consortium of Town Accountants to pursue improvements to conventional municipal software to provide more flexibility and functionality for smaller municipalities. Longer term the municipal accounting software group might be encouraged to pursue a broader consortium along the lines of the Town Accounting Program offered by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments to smaller communities in western MA. An early ‘first step’ would be to organize a regional meeting of Town Accountants in the Cape Ann/North Shore region and invite participants in the Franklin Regional Council of Governments program to discuss its success.</p>
1.5	<p><b>GENERAL PERSONNEL COMPLIANCE AND ADMINISTRATION:</b></p> <p>As a part of the Intermunicipal Agreement/Joint Cooperation Agreement in Recommendation 1.1, the Towns should engage in a joint review of personnel administration tasks and activities in each town and explore the level of budget commitment that would be required to share an appropriately trained personnel administration/HR professional, either jointly between themselves or with other municipalities. It may be desirable to include the administration of the MERSD in those discussions.</p>

1.6	<p><b>NORTH SHORE IT NETWORK ADMIN:</b> Essex and Manchester by the Sea should each continue their active participation in exploring the feasibility of joining the North Shore Regional IT Network Initiative, organized around the Town of Danvers IT Center. The Administration of the MERSD should be invited to participate in planning discussions of the NS Regional IT Initiative. Essex’s ten-year experience with regional IT may be helpful to other communities as services are potentially engaged.</p>
1.7	<p><b>FACILITIES MANAGEMENT:</b> The Towns of Essex and Manchester by the Sea and the MERSD should consider an Intermunicipal Agreement in which they consider acting jointly to manage facilities maintenance responses and repairs in a more effective and efficient manner.</p>
2.1	<p><b>POLICE - ENHANCED MUTUAL AID/JOINT COOPERATION AGREEMENT:</b> Establish Joint Cooperation Agreement and Enhanced Mutual Aid Agreements under MGL c. 40, ss 4A and 4J to support higher levels of joint operations and efficiencies over time.</p>
2.2	<p><b>POLICE - SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER WITH MERSD:</b> Create and Implement a School Resource Officer with the MERSD.</p>
2.3	<p><b>ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER:</b> Lay the groundwork for a regional, shared animal control officer in the future.</p>
2.4	<p><b>POLICE - JOINT SERVICE LEVELS REVIEW:</b> Implement joint engagement at the leadership level to desirable police staffing levels and objective performance measures and how joint operations might add efficiencies.</p>
3.1	<p><b>FIRE – SERVICE LEVELS REVIEW:</b> The two towns should jointly carry out an evaluation of their respective services delivery goals and expectations and include long-range projections of staffing needs under shared assumptions (e.g., Population Growth, Demographics, Aging of Population, etc.) and how these projections impact both the Essex Fire Department and the Manchester Fire Department in the future. This should lead to a discussion of how joint operations and enhanced mutual aid can help manage these changing demands.</p>
3.2	<p><b>FIRE – ENHANCE MUTUAL AID:</b> Enhancement of the mutual aid agreement between Essex and Manchester should include automatic mutual aid responses between communities once an emergency call reporting evidence of an actual fire in a building or structure. Typically, mutual aid is invoked by a community after it is on the scene and typically after it has sounded multiple alarms and as a result has invited a mutual aid response. An example of such an enhanced response would be for Essex to specifically send its water tank with two call firefighters to Manchester when a serious fire is reported. This automatic response would send a source of water and, importantly, two additional firefighters to the scene that would count towards the OSHA and NFPA standards. OSHA and NFPA standards require that a minimum number of firefighters be present on the fire scene before an</p>

	assault on the fire inside the building can begin.
3.3	<b>FIRE – INCREASE JOINT OPERATIONS:</b> Establish and increase the level of joint cooperation on recruitment of call personnel, development, training, and retention of call firefighters in each community.
4.1	<b>COMMUNICATIONS – REGIONAL DISPATCH</b> The Town of Manchester should renew investigation into the feasibility of joining one of two recently established Regional Dispatch Centers: The North Shore Regional 911 Center in Middleton or the Danvers Regional Dispatch Center in Danvers. Capacity to accept a new participating community is said to currently exist at either center. Essex currently participates in the North Shore Regional 911 Center Dispatch Center. The renewed review should consider recent changes in the operation of what is now known as the North Shore Regional 911 Center.
5.1	<b>DPW – REVIEW POTENTIAL OF JOINT PROCUREMENT TO OPERATE WATER TREATMENT PLANTS</b> Essex should consider the advantages of outsourcing the operation and maintenance of its water treatment plant. Since Manchester currently operates its water treatment plant under such a contract with a private operator, the two towns should evaluate whether sufficient efficiencies or synergy would be created to justify a joint procurement of a single contractor to operate both plants.
5.2	<b>DPW – SHARED SOLID WASTE TRANSFER STATION</b> Manchester and Essex should evaluate the benefits of operating a Joint Solid Waste Transfer and Recycling Center.
5.3	<b>DPW – JOINT COOPERATION ON WASTEWATER PUMP STATION MAINTENANCE</b> Essex should join Manchester in a joint procurement of an on-call utility contractor to respond to pump station maintenance needs.
5.4	<b>DPW – JOINT PROCUREMENT FOR UTILITY CONTRACTOR</b> Essex and Manchester should jointly procure an on-call utility contractor to respond to water and sewer line breaks and service disruptions.
5.5	<b>DPW/HEALTH – DOMESTIC HAZARDOUS WASTE COLLECTION/DISPOSAL</b> The Essex DPW and the Manchester Health Department have collaborated on a joint Domestic Hazardous Waste Collection Day. The two municipalities should institutionalize this joint approach in a formal Intermunicipal Agreement.
6.1	<b>INSPECTIONS – FORMALIZE EXISTING SHARED SERVICES PRACTICES IN AN OFFICIAL INTERMUNICIPAL AGREEMENT AND EXPLORE A REGIONAL CONSORTIUM IN THE FUTURE:</b> The towns of Essex and Manchester could replace these individual arrangements with an Intermunicipal Agreement: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. either between themselves to jointly hire a qualified single individual to serve as the Inspector of Buildings/Building Commissioner for a combined total of 25 - 30 hours per week; or</li> </ol>

	2. between themselves, the City of Gloucester, and the Town of Rockport, creating in essence a regional Municipal Inspection Program.
7.1	<p><b>HEALTH – EXPLORE REGIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH DISTRICT</b></p> <p>Essex and Manchester by the Sea should evaluate the establishment of a public health district under the provisions of MGL c. 111, ss. or similar ‘cross jurisdictional agreement’ such as an Intermunicipal Agreement. They should pursue this either between themselves or in discussion with additional communities in the Cape Ann and North Shore area. The Metropolitan Area Planning Council is available to assist at least the early stages in these discussions.</p>
7.2	<p><b>HEALTH – JOINTLY REVIEW LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES</b></p> <p>Essex and Manchester should jointly monitor further developments in implementing the recommendations of the Special Commission of Local and Regional Public Health and evaluate the implications of the National Foundational Public Health Services (NFPHS) and associated standards and implications for local public health service offerings. Understanding the true scope of the NFPHS standards would be helpful in evaluating the current levels of public health services in the communities and how a shared regional approach might address any identified gaps in services. The Special Commission’s report is likely to create impetus for expanded regional collaboration and regional organizational approaches meeting the National Foundational standards.</p>
7.3	<p><b>HEALTH – JOINT PROCUREMENT OF CONTRACTED SERVICES</b></p> <p>Essex and Manchester by the Sea should jointly review their respective contractual approaches to subsurface sewer (septic) systems in the case of Manchester and restaurant and food safety inspections in Essex and Manchester, and should consider pursuing joint, cooperative procurement of these services and others.</p>
7.4	<p><b>HEALTH – SHARED O.S.H.A. TRAINING AND COMPLIANCE MONITORING</b></p> <p>Essex and Manchester should formalize their emerging collaboration on OSHA workplace safety in the form of a written IMA setting forth the details and other terms and conditions of this new collaboration and should consider expanding the scope of IMA to include other risk management/loss prevention activities that would beneficially impact insurance premiums. If other municipalities join the collaboration in the future, they should become parties to the IMA.</p>
7.5	<p><b>HEALTH/YOUTH – ACT JOINTLY TO REVIEW REGIONAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT CONCLUSIONS</b></p> <p>Essex and Manchester Boards of Health, together with the Essex Youth Services Commission and Manchester Parks and Recreation, may be interested in the recently completed Regional Community Health Needs Assessment performed by hospitals in the region, and could consider a shared initiative in partnership with the MERSD to address the Assessment’s findings concerning the emotional and mental health needs of children. (See Youth Services/Recreation recommendation below).</p>
8.1	<p><b>SENIOR SERVICES – TRANSPORTATION AND OTHER SERVICES</b></p> <p>Manchester and Essex should continue their early efforts at sharing vehicles and related resources in order to improve the access to transportation and lower the</p>

	<p>overall costs per trip through better utilization of the vehicles. Ideally, this arrangement should result in a written IMA between the two towns. Given the similarities in the types of services that each council seeks to provide its senior citizens, the IMA should be structured to encourage ongoing exploration of other areas of shared delivery of services.</p>
8.2	<p><b>SENIOR SERVICES – JOINT PLANNING OF SENIOR CENTER FACILITIES AND PROGRAMS</b></p> <p>While acknowledging that cultural sentiments within each community may serve as a barrier to physically sharing a regional Senior Center, Manchester and Essex Councils on Aging might consider joint planning and program design/evaluation discussions on their respective needs and goals related to improving or opening a center.</p>
9.1	<p><b>YOUTH SERVICES/RECREATION – JOINT COOPERATION</b></p> <p>Essex and Manchester by the Sea should pursue an Intermunicipal Agreement providing for joint cooperation between the two towns in the area of youth services, recreational programs, and athletic programs. There is great potential to leverage differing but complementary approaches to youth and recreational programming in each community to the benefit of both communities. Since children from Essex and Manchester will all largely attend the Manchester Essex Regional School District, the towns should invite the MERSD to participate in the agreement.</p>
9.2	<p><b>YOUTH SERVICES – JOINTLY REVIEW REGIONAL COMMUNITY HEALTH ASSESSMENT CONCLUSIONS ON YOUTH</b></p> <p>The Health Departments and Youth/Parks and Recreation Department should jointly review a recently completed regional Community Health Needs Assessment completed by several Cape Ann/North Shore hospitals that has led to an improved understanding of the mental health needs and problems of children and young adults in the Cape Ann Region. Again, the MERSD should be invited to participate.</p>
10.1	<p><b>ALTERNATIVE ON-BILL RENEWABLE ENERGY CREDITS</b></p> <p>Essex should continue to evaluate the benefits of participating in the recently-created Alternative On-bill Renewable Energy Credits program in MA with the assistance of Manchester. The two towns may wish to consult with MAPC and its North Shore Task Force on how this program might support that organization’s sustainable energy and carbon reduction goals in the North Shore.</p>
10.2	<p><b>NORTH SHORE REGIONAL DREDGING EQUIPMENT INITIATIVE</b></p> <p>Essex and Manchester should continue participate in the North Shore Regional Dredging Equipment initiative and lend support to the creation of a regional entity that would purchase, own, and maintain the dredging equipment. This initiative should be formalized in an Intermunicipal Agreement once the effort is complete.</p>
10.3	<p><b>MUNICIPAL STREET LIGHT MAINTENANCE AGREEMENTS WITH IPSWICH</b></p> <p>Manchester and Essex should finalize the arrangements with the Ipswich Municipal Light Department for streetlight maintenance and formalize the terms of the arrangement in a written Intermunicipal Agreement.</p>

10.4	<p><b>AFFORDABLE HOUSING – REGIONAL APPROACHES</b></p> <p>The Town of Essex and the Essex Housing Coalition and the Town of Manchester by the Sea and the Manchester Affordable Housing Trust should continue to refine what activities they believe will promote the development of increased levels of affordable housing in their respective communities and which of those activities might be undertaken on a shared basis regionally. At that point, the option of creating a Regional Housing Services Organization to assist in carrying out these activities might be discussed with MAPC.</p>
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## IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY AND NEXT STEPS

**Level 1: Implementable in the immediate to short term time frame. Costs or levels of effort to implement are not significant. Action addresses an immediate operational problem with resulting improvement in service delivery outcomes and operational efficiency. Implementation requires executive/administrative action. Downside risk is negligible. While staff level discussion and planning may be required, support is likely.**

1.1	<b>Leadership Level Engagement</b>	<p>Execute an Intermunicipal Agreement (IMA) committing each municipality to a leadership level discussion of regional and shared service delivery options. The mission and purpose of the agreement is to improve current relationships and levels of understanding and reciprocity as the foundation for implementation. The agreement should specify an expressed agenda consisting of the relevant recommendations contained in this report and achieve the following goals:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Joint understanding of current service delivery levels and expectations in each community;</li> <li>2. Establish common understanding of the existing unit costs of services at the levels determined above and how those costs might be allocated under a regional or shared services approach</li> <li>3. Establish common understanding for measuring performance under the recommended shared approach</li> <li>4. Establish methods and timing of reports.</li> <li>5. Execute IMA for shared services.</li> <li>6. Consider inviting the MERSD to join as a party to the IMA.</li> </ol>
1.3	<b>Personnel Benefits Administration</b>	<p>Include this as an agenda item in the IMA recommended in 1.1 and include the administration of the MERSD in planning discussions.</p>
1.4	<b>Small Communities Accounting Software Consortium</b>	<p>Convene a meeting of Town Accountants and comparable municipal professionals in the North Shore and Cape Ann regions to explore the overall interest in creating a regional consortium that might lead to improvements in the functionality of municipal accounting software for smaller communities. Consider inviting representatives of the Franklin Regional Council of Governments to discuss its Regional Town Accounting Program, an a la carte fee-for-service program that may serve as model.</p>

1.5	<b>General Personnel Compliance and Administration</b>	An agenda item in the IMA recommended in 1.1 with short term emphasis on establishing joint understanding of minimum compliance and administration standards. Consider outreach to the MAPC and other North Shore communities. As compliance gaps are identified and projected costs become known, this will likely shift to a medium-term implementation item requiring an appropriation.
1.7	<b>Facilities Management</b>	Include this as an agenda item in the IMA recommended in 1.1 and include the administration of the MERSD in planning discussions.
2.1	<b>Police – Enhanced Mutual Aid/Joint Operations Agreement</b>	Enhance existing mutual aid agreements or execute a separate IMA to encourage regular and periodic joint operations, particularly in the areas of training, reaccreditation, and shared equipment.
2.4	<b>Police – Joint Service Levels Review</b>	Include this as an agenda item in the IMA recommended in 1.1. This review seeks to develop a joint understanding of desired levels of police services in each municipality, the current approaches to delivering those services, and discrete opportunities to act jointly to improve services.
3.1	<b>Fire – Joint Service Levels Review</b>	Include this as an agenda item in the IMA recommended in 1.1. This review seeks to develop a joint understanding of desired levels of fire and emergency medical/advanced life support services in each municipality, the current approaches to delivering those services, and discrete opportunities to act jointly to improve services.
3.2	<b>Fire – Enhanced Mutual Aid</b>	Enhance the existing mutual aid agreement to provide for higher levels of automatic and prearranged mutual aid response when a report of a fire or similar event is confirmed. The spirit of the agreement is to improve the overall response time, placing additional fire personnel and apparatus on the fire scene in the shortest possible time to support the responding department.
3.3	<b>Fire – Joint Operations</b>	Enhance existing mutual aid agreements or an IMA to encourage regular and periodic joint operations, particularly in the areas of training, reaccreditation, and shared equipment.

5.2	<b>DPW – Joint Cooperation Pump Station Maintenance</b>	Include this as an agenda item in the IMA recommended in 1.1 and evaluate the efficiencies to be gained by sharing personnel or contractors to perform routine, preventative maintenance of sewer pumps stations in each community.
5.3	<b>DPW – On-call Utility Contractor</b>	Essex joined Manchester in a joint procurement of a on-call water and sewer utility contractor to respond to water and sewer emergencies. The effectiveness of this approach should be evaluated annually and continued as appropriate.
5.5	<b>DPW/Health – Domestic Hazardous Waste</b>	Execute a formal IMA in order to institutionalize this practice and to reflect community expectations as to how often collection and disposal events will be held.
7.2	<b>Health – Jointly Review Local Public Health Services</b>	Evaluate the complete range of ideal public health service delivery offerings in each community, and identify gaps and opportunities to provide services jointly.
7.4	<b>Health – OSHA Training and Compliance</b>	Continue the early shared efforts to perform OSHA-related training and compliance monitoring and joint applications for grants. Execute an IMA to institutionalize shared activities moving forward.
7.5	<b>Health/Youth – Joint Review Community Health Assessment on Youth</b>	Organize a joint meeting of Boards of Health, Essex Youth Services Commission, and Manchester Parks and Recreation Commission to review a recent regional community health assessment on the mental health needs of young people in the Cape Ann region. Consider including the MERSD.
8.1	<b>Senior Services – Transportation and Other Services</b>	Monitor the effectiveness of the recent efforts to share local transportation assets on a subscription basis and memorialize in an IMA as appropriate. Work with the Cape Ann Transit Authority to expand services where local ‘carve out’ of MBTA assessment may create resources. As part of the IMA contemplated in 1.1, consider a range of other services and programs that may be operated or provided on a shared basis.
8.2	<b>Senior Services – Joint Planning of Senior Center Facilities</b>	Members of the respective Councils on Aging and staff should meet and share information and plans for their respective senior citizens centers. Where appropriate and as part of the IMA contemplated in 1.1, evaluate future potential to shared facilities and programs.

9.2	<b>Health/Youth – Joint Review Community Health Assessment on Youth</b>	Organize a joint meeting of Boards of Health, Essex Youth Services Commission, and Manchester Parks and Recreation Commission to review a recent regional community health assessment on the mental health needs of young people in the Cape Ann region. Consider including the MERSD.
10.1	<b>Alternative On-Bill Renewable Energy Credits</b>	Manchester has been working with Essex to share its experience and expertise in implementing the so-called Alternative On-bill Renewable Energy program recently created in Massachusetts. This work should continue. Explore larger regional opportunities to act regionally with MAPC’s North Shore Task Force.
10.2	<b>Regional Dredging Initiative</b>	Support legislative efforts to purchase dredging equipment for North Shore. Execute an IMA to define local responsibilities relative to operating costs.
10.3	<b>Municipal Streetlight Maintenance – Ipswich Light Dept Agreement</b>	Execute an IMA detailing the scope of services and cost allocations for the maintenance of streetlights on municipally owned utility poles.
10.4	<b>Regional Affordable Housing</b>	Continue to support the efforts of Essex Housing Coalition and the Manchester Affordable Housing Trust. In time and as it becomes more apparent what affordable housing activities might best be undertaken on a shared or regional basis, consider establishing a Regional Housing Services Organization with technical assistance from MAPC.
<p><b>Level 2: This level of recommendation should be implementable in the short to medium time frame. Advance planning and consensus to act jointly may facilitate opportunities to act in the future, for instance in the event of staff turnover or retirement. Implementation will likely require an increase in an appropriation. Savings or efficiencies are anticipated but a calculation of return on investment must be calculated to support the investment. Downside risk may exist and requires evaluation and a modest amount of organizational planning is required to assure success. Town Meeting approval required.</b></p>		
1.2	<b>Share a Professional Assessor</b>	Early discussion of desired services and opportunities to share assessing personnel will lay the groundwork for the future when the need for the services of a professional assessor increases.

1.6	<b>North Shore IT Network Administration</b>	Continued involvement in this initiative will lead to a specific opportunity for each town to improve upon the administration of their IT Networks. It is anticipated that ongoing participation in the initiative will require an increase in budgetary funding by each of the towns' respective town meetings.
2.2	<b>Police – School Resource Officer with MERSD</b>	Proposal to assign a shared School Resource Officer at the MERSD will require an increased appropriation as early as FY 2021.
2.3	<b>Animal Control Officer</b>	Early discussion of desired services and opportunities to share the same Animal Control Officer will lay the groundwork for the future when a retirement or turnover may create an opportunity to act.
4.1	<b>Communications – Regional Dispatch</b>	Manchester should renew its consideration of one or more regional dispatch centers which currently possess the capacity to accept additional communities. An appropriation may be required, but anticipated savings and efficiencies should result. Significant costs in technology, equipment, and facilities improvements will be avoided.
5.1	<b>DPW – Joint Procurement of a WTP Contractor</b>	As part of the IMA contemplated in 1.1, evaluate the efficiencies to be gained by a procurement of a private operator for the municipal water treatment plants in each community. Since Manchester presently contracts with a private contractor to operate its treatment plant, this process should begin with an assessment in Essex of the feasibility and efficiency of engaging a private contractor to operate its treatment plant. If deemed feasible, the next step would be to evaluate the added efficiencies to be gained in sharing a common contractor for both plants.
6.1	<b>Inspections – Formalize Existing Arrangements in IMA – Explore Consortium</b>	Initiate discussions with the City of Gloucester and the Town of Rockport to memorialize current practices of sharing a local Building Commissioner on an after-hours basis. Explore the efficiency of creating a regional consortium among all four communities to meet the requirements of a Building Commissioner and inspectional services on a regional basis.
7.3	<b>Health – Joint Procurement of Contracted Services</b>	Evaluate the manner in which each community currently contracts for certain health department services and where appropriate jointly procure those services.

9.1	<b>Youth/Recreation Joint Cooperation</b>	Explore the apparent complementary nature of youth services provided in Essex and parks and recreation programs for youth in Manchester, and execute an IMA to better coordinate. Consider including the MERSD.
<b>Level 3: Recommendations are more likely to be implemented in the longer term. A community and organizational consensus will be required. Other factors may limit action in the short but ongoing discussion may facilitate implementation in the future. Downside risks exist and significant planning and management planning may be required. Savings and efficiencies may be significant but may also involve significant investment.</b>		
5.2	<b>DPW – Shared SW Transfer Station</b>	When feasible from an operational standpoint, evaluate the efficiencies of operating one solid waste disposal and recycling center on a shared basis serving both communities. The operational feasibility may require a commitment to jointly procure a shared disposal site contract in the future.
7.1	<b>Health – Explore Regional Public Health District</b>	Monitor the implementation of the recommendations of the MA Special Commission on Local and Regional Public Health which will likely establish a formal baseline of public health services that residents across Massachusetts should expect in their community and likely advocate if not incentivize regional districts or ‘cross jurisdictional’ approaches to providing them.

## Project Overview

Massachusetts municipalities have spent several decades facing a very challenging financial and operating environment. This will likely continue to be the case for the foreseeable future. The Towns of Essex and Manchester by the Sea are not immune to this, as the pace of change in their immediate region accelerates and the demands of services and expectations of residents increase over time.

On the expenditure side of the budget, both the increased number of responsibilities and expectations facing municipal governments and the increased impacts of fixed or externally determined costs such as health insurance, retirement and other postemployment benefits (OPEB), intergovernmental assessments, etc. have been rising and constraining the ability to respond to new demands and challenges within their communities.

At the same time, on the revenue side, the two main sources of municipal revenue, state aid and local property taxes, have been constrained. The revenue challenge can be particularly difficult in municipalities with little commercial tax base and in those that receive a relatively smaller proportion of their budgets from state aid. In those places, most of the revenue comes directly from the residential taxpayer. Each of these are applicable to Essex and Manchester by the Sea.

Adding to the challenge of year-to-year limits placed on growth in property tax revenues by Proposition 2½ is the fact that many indirect costs associated with the operation of local government, most notably health insurance premiums, increase at traditionally higher rates of inflation than other costs over which there is a higher degree of control.

It is worth noting that each of the towns has a healthy level of sharing and openness to regional approaches. The two towns formed the relatively new Manchester Essex Regional School District (MERSD) in 2000, and local leadership has exhibited an ability to meet and discuss matters of mutual interest involving the district, most notably in the area of the annual budget. The Town of Essex joined the Essex County Regional Emergency Communications Center through the Essex County Sheriff's Office in Middleton, along with five other municipalities, and has benefited from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' absorption of operating costs of the center in their entirety as of July 1, 2019. Manchester by the Sea is a member of a Regional Veterans Services District, along with the City of Gloucester and the Town of Rockport, while Essex belongs to a different Regional Veterans Services District with seven other communities to the north. Both Essex and Manchester by the Sea are participating in a regional grant under the Community Compact IT Grant Program to explore the creation of a regional IT Network Administration program, which will build on a regional IT service and hosting suite that Essex has forged with the Town of Danvers over the past decade. Many other examples for each community are described in Appendix A. This bodes well for the implementation and advancement of many of the recommendations contained in this report.

Nor are Essex and Manchester by the Sea alone among Massachusetts municipalities in seeing shared service delivery and regionalization as potential short, medium, and long-term solutions to these challenges. These are among the most commonly pursued tools available to local governments to create efficiency and improve effectiveness of local services.

While the focus of the report is to build on that history of sharing resources and regional cooperation, it is important to recognize that the residents and businesses of each town benefit greatly from the many dedicated officials and municipal employees currently serving the towns. Through their own creativity

and problem-solving in the face of scarce resources, many have been active contributors in the process of solving the imperative of doing more with less.

## Regionalization in Massachusetts

Much of what residents of Massachusetts and New England often think of as ‘local government services’ are delivered elsewhere across the United States by regional governments, such as county governments or regional Councils of Government. Smaller and often unincorporated communities and land areas lack the scale and size to operate efficiently. Much of the acceptance of this regional approach reflects the fact that many of the organizational structures and governance cultures across the United States were established during the progressive era or the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. They reflect more modern thinking about government structures and organizations, and those structures are more firmly based on principles of business organizations and the deliberate goal of operating efficiently.

Massachusetts and much of New England, by contrast, have established across several centuries a strong tradition of local governance and ‘Home Rule’, meaning a deference to local decision-making and a willingness at the state government level to concede that matters not reserved exclusively to state government (for instance, the power to tax) are best left to local communities to decide and manage. Home Rule in Massachusetts reflects a long history and tradition of self-government among residents dating back to the earliest days of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. In its expression in local government, it places a very high value on direct and active participation by residents through local formal and informal town meetings and on high degrees of accountability.

This historical embrace of Home Rule and active local control are sometimes a barrier or impediment to regional approaches to more efficient and effective delivery of local services, since those approaches may often be viewed with a degree of skepticism and suspicion as decision-making and oversight move a step further away from taxpayers, residents, and businesses in local communities, albeit at a lower cost or more effective level of service.

While examples of strong successful regional service-delivery entities and approaches to shared services abound in Massachusetts, no discussion of those approaches can ignore the historical and cultural attitudes that often create significant head winds in the face of specific proposals. To overcome these attitudes, three preconditions must exist as municipalities and other entities choose to move forward:

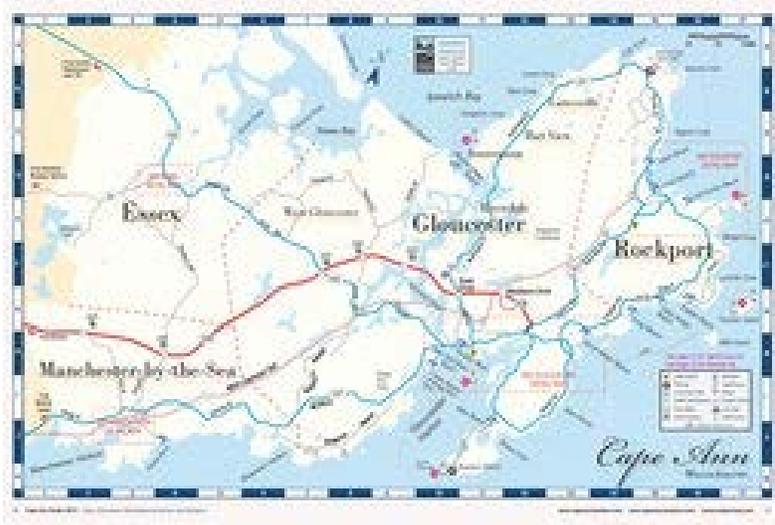
- **Leadership:** Strong, active support among local elected leaders and senior management and a willingness to champion both the broader concept of regional service delivery as well as specific proposals being advanced. This includes a commitment to engage in the necessary dialogue with community stakeholders and opinion setters in the wider community.
- **Trust and Reciprocity:** Mutual trust and confidence is an attribute which is built over time, between individual managers and local leaders active in the collaboration but also in the wider ‘community narratives’ which often set the boundaries for what stakeholders believe is possible by way of cooperation. Communities with a visible track record of successfully sharing resources and solving common problems develop higher levels of trust and confidence and lay the groundwork for what is possible in the future for high levels of shared service efforts.
- **Clear Goals and Measurable Results:** Specific and clearly articulated goals enable communities to enter a collaborative shared services approach with each believing that the effort is worthwhile and, at the same, a clear-eyed set of objective measurements on whether the effort will be considered successful.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For more discussion of these preconditions, see “A County Manager’s Guide to Shared Services in Local Government,” IBM Center for the Business of Government, [www.businessofgovernment.org](http://www.businessofgovernment.org).

## Regional Context: The North Shore and Cape Ann Regions

Essex and Manchester by Sea are situated in Essex County, north of Boston and more specifically on what is known as Cape Ann. Geologically speaking, Cape Ann is a beautiful, rocky extension of the Massachusetts coastline approximately 30 miles north of Boston pushing out into Massachusetts Bay and the protected waters of the Atlantic Ocean. It represents the northwestern end of Massachusetts Bay, which stretches southward and eastward to Provincetown on Cape Cod. Viewed thus, the four communities that can be thought of as constituting Cape Ann or the Cape Ann region are Essex, Manchester by the Sea, Gloucester, and Rockport.



These four communities have a combined population of 45,015 people as of 2015, with City of Gloucester as the largest with a population of 28,781. Other comparative information on these Cape Ann communities is presented in Table 1, below. What the geography and data suggest is a compact and well-defined land area with a modest size 'anchor' community and with a history of cooperative relationships which might form the basis for enhanced regional cooperation on service delivery and other shared interests. For instance, the Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce, with a membership consisting of business, industry, and institutions in the region, has organized itself around these four communities.

From the standpoint of evaluating opportunities for shared service delivery or expanded regional approaches to shared service delivery in the Towns of Essex and Manchester, however, it would be useful to recognize a slightly broader area and set of interlocal relationships. The communities of Ipswich, Beverly, Hamilton, and Wenham, for instance, are all situated contiguous to either or both Essex and Manchester by the Sea and have established relationships to one degree or another with each. One such formal relationship is represented by the Cape Ann Transportation Authority, which includes the Town of Ipswich, along with Essex, Gloucester, and Rockport, but not Manchester by the Sea.

<b>Table 2: Expanded View of 8 Cape Ann/North Shore Communities at a Glance</b>								
	<b>Essex</b>	<b>Manchester</b>	<b>Gloucester</b>	<b>Rockport</b>	<b>Ipswich</b>	<b>Beverly</b>	<b>Hamilton</b>	<b>Wenham</b>
<b>2015 Population</b>	3,661	5,366	28,781	7,206	13,804	41,186	8,175	5,163
<b>2015 DOR Per Capita Income</b>	57,774	127,809	38,945	40,586	48,008	42,387	66,838	70,123
<b>2015/2016 EQV Per Capita</b>	225,842	449,299	203,666	270,786	194,207	149,215	179,474	161,317
<b>2009 Housing Units/Sq Mile</b>	115	259	556	604	187	1,103	203	186
<b>2013 Road Miles</b>	30	39	28	41	95	149	52	32
<b>FY 2019 Average SFR Tax Bill</b>	8,780	12,859	7,436	6,382	7,641	6,761	9,895	12,121
<b>FY 2019 Average SFR Value</b>	571,264	1,145,064	585,945	647,257	542,308	511,822	600,426	672,624
<b>FY 2018 General Fund Expend. Per Capita</b>	3,961	5,288	3,610	4,040	3,954	2,686	3,519	3,329
<i>Source: MA DOR Municipal Database – Communities at a Glance</i>								

Beyond even this expanded view of Cape Ann, there exists a much wider network of regional relationships and collaboration across the larger North Shore region and Essex County. One such emerging regional collaboration, for instance, is the North Shore Regional 911 Dispatch Center located in Middleton, which includes the Town of Essex, as well as the towns of Middleton, Topsfield, and Wenham, and the City of Amesbury. As this report was being developed, an IT and Network Administration collaboration is being developed between the Town of Danvers and a group of North Shore communities that includes Manchester by the Sea and Essex, with Essex already enjoying an IT services and hosting relationship with Danvers that Essex hopes to see expand. Lastly, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, of which Essex and Manchester by the Sea are members, leads a smaller metropolitan regional North Shore Task Force which routinely brings 16 North Shore Communities together to address regional concerns and shared local interests.

## Essex Local Context

While the land area that is now the Town of Essex was originally settled in 1634 and originally part of Ipswich, the Town of Essex was not incorporated as a town until 1819. It has a total area of 15.9 square miles of which 14.0 square miles is actual land area. Historically, Essex was home to a thriving shipbuilding industry delivering schooners and similar coastal vessels to the Gloucester fishing industry and other fleets along the Atlantic coast up until the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when sailing vessels gave way to steam powered vessels. At present the harvesting of shellfish and tourism (including the antiques industry, water-based recreation, and many successful restaurants) are the principal industries drawing on the community's coastal heritage. The town is principally a residential community with about 90% of its tax value derived from residential activity.

Between 1900 and 1940, Essex saw its population shrink from 1,660 to 1,340, according to the U.S. Census, a 19% decline. In the years following World War II, the population rebounded and grew at a rate of between 20% -30% per decade through 1980, when rates of population growth began to slow. In 1990, Essex attained a population of 3,260 and has grown at a modest 12% to reach its 2015 population of 3,661. Essex has maintained a unique rural, coastal character, featuring the Essex River as a prominent and distinctive natural feature, as well as forest, marshes, and open space. Essex has a housing density of 115 structures per square mile.

Essex is situated contiguous to the Town of Hamilton to its west, Ipswich to its north, Gloucester to its east, and Manchester by the Sea to its south. The Town is located on Cape Ann, along with Manchester by the Sea, Gloucester, and Rockport and is located approximately 33 miles north of Boston. Mass. Route 128 touches Essex to its south, but otherwise Essex's connection to this major highway is by way of interchanges in both Manchester by the Sea and Gloucester. Mass. Route 133 passes from the northwest to the southeast from Ipswich to Gloucester, and Mass. Route 22 carries traffic from the west and terminates at its intersection with Rt. 133 in Essex Center.

The Town of Essex is governed under an Open Town Meeting form of government. A part-time three-member Board of Selectmen is elected with the fiduciary, prudential, and executive functions of town government. In 2000, the Town approved the appointment of a full-time Town Administrator to administer and supervise the day-to-day functions and operations of the town organization. According to the Mass. DOR, in 2018 Essex Town government employed 31 fulltime equivalent employees with a payroll of \$3.177 million dollars. DOR reports that in FY 2018 the Town had total expenditures of \$14,500,907, which amount to \$3,961 per capita. The Town's total equalized property tax valuations supporting Town operations amounted to \$225,842 per capita. Essex is a member of the Manchester Essex Regional School District (MERSD) and the Essex North Shore Agricultural and Technical School District and as such does not operate a local school system of its own.

## Manchester by the Sea Local Context

Manchester by the Sea was originally settled in 1629 and incorporated as a town in 1645, being formed out of a portion of Salem to its southwest and Gloucester to its east. Manchester hosted an active commercial fishing industry for over 200 years but gradually began shifting towards a role as a Boston summer colony at the midpoint of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It had a population of 2,522 in 1900 and likewise maintained approximately that population through 1940 when the population was reported by the U. S. Census at 2,472. Between 1950, at which point the population was 2,868, and 1980, it experienced rapid rates of growth, reaching 5,424 people by 1980. The 1960s and 1970s saw the highest levels of growth, with rates of growth in excess of 30% in each of those decades. Growth leveled off thereafter, and between 1980 and 2015 the population barely changed, standing at 5,692 in 2015. Manchester by the Sea today is a compact, coastal village community with a protected harbor serving both a local fishing fleet and a recreational boating community and features a distinctive coastal character of rocky ledges and shoreline with occasional beaches. Manchester by the Sea has a housing density of 259 units per square mile. It is substantially a residential community with a very limited commercial/industrial tax base. Ninety-five percent of its taxable valuation is classified as residential.

Manchester by the Sea is situated contiguous to Gloucester to the east, Beverly to southwest, Wenham and Hamilton to the west, and Essex to the north. It is located 24 miles north of Boston and has direct connection to MA Route 128. It is served by the MBTA's Newburyport/Rockport commuter rail line with a station located in its village center.

Manchester by the Sea is governed by an open town meeting form of government. It elects a five-member Board of Selectmen, which is charged with the fiduciary, prudential, and executive functions of Town government. The Selectmen in turn appoint a fulltime Town Administrator to supervise and administer the day-to-day functions and operations of Town government. According the MA DOR, in 2018 Manchester by the Sown government employed 89 fulltime equivalent employees with a payroll of \$5.581 million. DOR reports that in FY 2018 the Town had total expenditures of \$28,377,512, which amounts to \$5,288 per capita. The Town's total equalized property tax valuations supporting Town operations amounted to \$449,299 per capita. Manchester by the Sea is a member of the Manchester Essex Regional School District and the Essex North Shore Agricultural and Technical School District and does not operate a local school system of its own.

## Manchester Essex Regional School District Context

In 2000, the towns of Essex and Manchester by the Sea voted to create the Manchester Essex Regional School District (MERSD) under Chapter 71 of the Mass. General Laws. Prior to that time the Town of Essex operated a local system with an elementary school, grades K-8. Students from Essex thereupon attended high school in adjacent communities, notably Manchester by the Sea, Gloucester, and the Hamilton Wenham Regional School District. Prior to 2000, Manchester by the Sea also operated a local school system, grades K -12. In 2018, MERSD had a total enrollment of 1,405 students, of which 51 were attending under the MA School Choice program. The average per pupil expenditures for the district in 2018 was \$17,448, compared to a statewide average of \$15,911. There were 149 faculty, 25 support staff, and 23 administrative staff.

The district agreement for the new MERSD established a seven-member school committee, with four members representing Manchester by the Sea and three members representing Essex. The district agreement mandates at least one elementary school, grades PreK-5, in each community. From grade 6 onward, all students attend the Manchester Essex Middle School and the Manchester Essex High School.

At the time of the decision to create the MERSD, each town recognized the need to design and construct a new middle school and a new high school, both to improve otherwise obsolete facilities and to accommodate the growth in enrollment. Voters in each community approved \$49 million in funding for the design and construction of a new educational complex consisting of the Manchester Essex Middle School and Manchester Essex High School, together with voter approval of a Debt Exclusion referendum which excludes the principal and interest on the debt from the normal calculation of the allowable tax levy in each town under Proposition 2½.

Similarly, the two towns recently voted to approve the construction of a new Manchester Memorial Elementary School. The new school is under construction at an approved cost of \$52 million.

By all accounts, leaders of the two towns and the MERSD enjoy positive, constructive relationships and meet regularly to resolve by consensus differences on questions of budgets and assessments, and all demonstrate an understanding of the financial constraints that each are operating under. Given these constructive relationships and the fact that Manchester and Essex essentially comprise the entire MERSD, the district represents a unique opportunity to pursue joint, shared solutions to common challenges and administrative challenges. Not to exclude any topic from future conversations, interviews revealed three areas in which the MERSD and Essex and Manchester town governments might collaborate to their mutual benefit:

- Personnel and Benefits Administration, mainly in the area of administrative processing of required paperwork, employee orientation, and benefits administration (particularly health insurance and retirement system).
- Facilities Management, recognizing that while the district has a capable maintenance staff to address maintenance tasks and repairs, the district shares a common challenge with the towns in its ability to efficiently assess developing problems or needed repairs on the front end of the facilities management process.
- IT Network Administration, considering the emerging North Shore IT Network Management consortium developing in the region and in which both Manchester and Essex have been participating.

These areas of opportunity are discussed further in the course of the report.

## Hamilton/Wenham Enhanced Regionalization and Merger Analysis Study

Of interest due to their proximity to Essex and Manchester by the Sea and due to the sweeping scope of the effort, the nearby Towns of Hamilton and Wenham accepted a proposal by the MA DOR Division of Local Services in 2009 to conduct a detailed and in depth analysis of enhanced regionalization of the delivery of local services within their communities, up to and including a complete merger of their two municipal governments into one new political subdivision in Massachusetts. While the level of detail and analysis contained in the resulting 2009 DOR report exceeds that contemplated by this current report, the conclusions reached in that study are illustrative and instructive of some of the opportunities and challenges facing municipalities exploring broad regionalization and shared services delivery. Those 'lessons' include:

1. While the projected total savings resulting from a complete merger of two communities or even aggressive enhanced regionalization can be substantial, the actual distribution of benefits or savings will be distributed at very different levels in each of the existing jurisdictions depending upon factors such as differing levels of staffing, budget support, existing levels of efficiency, and local expectations of service levels.
2. In addition, the actual impact of savings on local budgets or on the tax bills of individual taxpayers is dependent upon the unique composition of the local assessed real estate tax values of the respective communities in the first year of the merger.

While a full merger of the two communities was not pursued, both Wenham and Hamilton have numerous shared services, including one library and one school district, and they continue to seek out new opportunities.

## Authority for Regionalized Shared Service Delivery

### **Intermunicipal Agreements (c. 40 MGL s.4A)**

The authority for two or more cities or towns or other governmental units to enter into Intermunicipal Agreements (IMAs) is perhaps the most commonly used tool for regional cooperation and shared service delivery. Mass. General Law authorizes two or more cities and towns, as well as a variety of other “governmental units,” including a regional school district, to enter into a written agreement to act jointly in delivering services to residents and businesses and to carry out activities of mutual interest and concern to municipalities. The delivery of the specified services or activities may be performed jointly by all parties to the agreement for the mutual benefit of all or may be delivered by one municipality on behalf of all the participants subject to the terms and conditions of the agreement. The key factor governing this approach to regional shared service delivery is the requirement that the unit(s) providing the services or carrying out the activities must be authorized by law to provide or perform those services and activities.

The term of an IMA cannot exceed 25 years. In towns, an IMA may be authorized by a majority vote of the Selectmen. In a city, it may be authorized by the Mayor. Among the government entities that may execute an IMA with cities and towns are regional school districts, regional transit authorities and regional planning agencies. Because IMAs are authorized by a majority vote of the Board of Selectmen or by the Mayor of a city, they represent a straightforward, flexible, and easily understood approach to regional, shared services.

### **Police Mutual Aid, Fire Mutual Aid and DPW Mutual Aid**

Under mutual aid agreements, local governments agree to lend services to one another, usually in extraordinary circumstances. For example, mutual aid has worked to the benefit of communities in a region when there is a major fire in one community and the mutual aid agreement initiates a planned response by other communities to either assist directly in suppressing the fire or providing back up station coverage during the cover of the fire. Nevertheless, agreements may address issues relating to pay and benefits, insurance, indemnification, and injury, etc. Agreements allow for a much more efficient deployment of resources among the participants, which are relieved of the necessity of individually planning and resourcing for worst case scenarios.

### **Joint Purchase/Procurement Agreements**

MGL c. 30B, ss. 22-23 authorizes two or more municipalities or other government entities to enter into written cooperative purchasing agreements for the procurement of supplies, provided the lead procurement unit conducts the procurement in a manner that constitutes full and open competition.

### **Public Health Districts**

MGL c. 111, s.27B provides that two or more communities may form a regional public health district consisting of a regional board of health and a regional health director and such staff as the board and director may determine. While Essex and Manchester have never had such a relationship, the two communities did share a Health Agent during the mid and late-1990s.

### **Veterans Services Districts**

Under MGL c. 115, s. 10, two or more contiguous local governments, one of which must be organized under a city form of government, may create a Veterans Services District. As of the time of this report, Essex and Manchester by the Sea each participate in separate Veterans Services Districts.

### **Regional Police Districts**

MGL c. 41, ss. 91B – 99K authorizes two or more municipalities to create a regional police district. The creation of the district must be presented to voters in each of the participating communities as a ballot question in an election and approved by local voters in each municipality.

### **Regional School Districts**

Mass. General Laws, Chapter 71 authorizes the establishment of regional school districts consisting of two or more municipalities. The Towns of Manchester by the Sea and Essex voted to create the Manchester Essex Regional School District in 2000.

### **Solid Waste and Refuse Disposal District**

MGL c. 40, ss. 44A-44K authorizes a solid waste and refuse disposal district for the provision of solid waste and recycling services on behalf of participating communities. This can occur either through facilities directly owned by the district or through a contractual relationship. The process for formation is comparable to that of regional school districts.

### **Regional Water and Wastewater Districts**

MGL c. 40N, s. 25 authorizes Regional Water or Wastewater Districts which are formed and governed through a process like regional school districts.

### **Regional Districts by Special Act**

Local communities have the flexibility under the Massachusetts Constitution's Home Rule amendment to create regional districts, including multimember Councils of Governments, by vote of their respective legislative bodies, provided the entities do not intrude into areas expressly reserved to state government and are consistent with Mass. General Laws.

## DEPARTMENT SUMMARIES

### Town Government Administration

#### Executive Leadership and General Government Administration

By all accounts, Essex and Manchester by the Sea benefit from strong local elected leadership which has been to open to collaborative, regional, or shared approaches to local government services and problem solving. The two municipalities have an impressive track record in a variety of regional or shared services initiatives which form the basis for expanding and enhancing the extent to which they pursue these types of approaches.

A particular strength stems from the participation of Essex and Manchester by the Sea as the exclusive members of the Manchester Essex Regional School District (MERSD). Decisions involving the MERSD routinely bring leaders from both communities together to work through issues and decisions, particularly as they relate to annual budgets and operating assessments to members. The constructive manner in which these decisions are made result in strong relationships at the leadership level of both Essex and Manchester by the Sea, as well as at the MERSD. These relationships between the three entities form a unique opportunity to meet regularly to pursue areas of mutual interest with which enhanced regional approaches can be pursued.

#### **Recommendation 1.1**

**Essex and Manchester should execute a detailed Intermunicipal Agreement creating an ongoing effort of joint cooperation in which local leaders commit to meet regularly and jointly to discuss specific local government services that might be undertaken on a shared basis, including a joint discussion of the respective service delivery goals for each community and establishment of objective performance measurements. The local leadership should consider inviting the leadership of the MERSD to join in the agreement and subsequent work.**

## Financial Administration

Responsibilities related to the financial administration of town government are assigned to three departments, largely as required by Massachusetts municipal finance laws but also consistent with sound business practice and a system of internal financial controls, such as the segregation of duties and financial controls. The three departments are the Assessing Department, the Treasurer/Collector, and the Town Accountant.

### Assessing

Simply stated, the principal role of the assessing function within a town is to establish the full and fair market value of taxable property in accordance with the mandates of the Massachusetts General Laws. The assessors are required to seek the certification of these taxable values as of January 1<sup>st</sup> just prior to the fiscal year for which they will be used to calculate the property tax rate. Since property taxes are the largest single revenue source supporting municipal government in Essex and Manchester, it is a critical operation, and one that must be carried out efficiently and equitably to assure revenues are collected on time and in a manner which is fair to taxpayers. The Assessing office also handles all motor vehicle commitments, boat excise commitments, and personal property commitments to the Treasurer/Collector, along with other functions.

The assessing function in each town is supervised by a three-member Board of Assessors. In Manchester by the Sea, the three Assessors are appointed by the Board of Selectmen, each for a staggered three-year term. In Essex, the three assessors are elected, one each year for a staggered three-year term.

In Manchester, the Board of Assessors is supported by a fulltime Principal Assessor. The Assessing Office in Manchester is also supported by a fulltime Administrative Assistant. The Assessing office is co-located with that of the Inspections Department, and the Principal Assessor and Administrative Assistant provide administrative support to the Inspectors and provide service to customers seeking permits and inspections, as well as customers doing business with the Assessing Department itself. This is a productive relationship, since timely information on construction activity is of great value to assessing officials in maintaining accurate property records used to determine full and fair market value.

Essex does not employ the services of a professional assessor. The Board does employ a part-time Clerk who is available at times during the week to serve the public. At present, Essex benefits from the fact that one of its part-time Assessors is also the full-time professional Assessor for the Town of Danvers. Therefore, in the short term, the part-time Board of Assessors benefits from a great deal of knowledge and expertise. In the longer term, however, the Town's dependence on this knowledge and expertise being provided by the election of a single individual with this unique professional background puts it at risk if the individual in question should leave office.

### **Recommendation 1.2:**

**Essex and Manchester should consider sharing Assessing personnel. In the short term, Essex benefits immensely from the volunteer services of a resident who is also a professional tax assessor in a nearby community. In the longer term, this professional assessing capability might best be covered by a formal Intermunicipal Agreement between the two municipalities. The Essex Board of Assessors might also benefit from an improved flow of information on the estimated tax value of new building construction if the Assessors' Office provide space and staff support to the Building Commission similar to what exists in Manchester.**

### Treasurer/Collector

Each municipality has combined the collections function and treasury function, an option permitted under Massachusetts municipal finance laws, and employs a Treasurer/Collector. The collection function (for simplicity's sake, "the Collector") receives the annual property tax and motor vehicle excise tax commitments from the Board of Assessors and is charged with the duty of collecting the amounts so committed. The Collector may also receive commitments from other departments, for instance water and sewer enterprise bills, and assume responsibility for the collection of those bills in addition to property and excise taxes. It is important to note that the Collector is obligated to collect the exact amount committed by the Assessors. In the event of an error or dispute over the amount of the committed bill, only the Assessors have the authority to correct the commitment through the abatement process. This is an important internal control and segregation of duties, and one that benefits from good communication between the collection function and the assessing function.

The treasury function (that is, "the Treasurer") is charged with the eventual receipt of all revenues and receipts from all municipal departments, including the Collector. Upon the receipt of revenues and receipts, the Treasurer is charged with effective and prudent management of the municipality's cash resources. Effective, in that the management of the organization's cash flow avoids unnecessary short term borrowing and allows for the short-term investment of idle cash, and prudent in that cash being held is not subject to unnecessary risk of loss or diminishment. The Treasurer may not disburse any of the funds placed in his or her custody other than by a Warrant approved jointly by the Town Accountant and the Board of Selectmen or its designee. This is another important internal control and segregation of duties. The Treasurer, in addition to processing checks for various accounts payable, also oversees and administers a payroll system producing weekly or biweekly wage and salary payments due employees in the amounts approved by the Town Accountant.

Because the Treasurer/Collector administers the payroll system for the municipality, it is not uncommon that the position plays a role in orienting new employees at the time the employee is added to the payroll, if only because the employee needs to make a decision on participating in group health insurance and, if so, which plan to join as part of that payroll process. Deductions for health insurance and contributory retirement system contributions need to be included in that process. In the absence of a personnel or human resource department, recurring questions pertaining to both health insurance and retirement benefits typically continue to be directed to the Treasurer/Collector. The Treasurer/Collectors in each town commented that fielding these questions and providing accurate information can be time-consuming and distract from the overall collections and treasury functions they manage.

The Treasurer/Collector in Essex is a full-time employee and is supported by one fulltime Clerk, by a part-time Payroll Clerk who works five to six hours per week on payroll entry, and by a part-time, Assistant Treasurer/Collector who works eight hours per week. Manchester employs one fulltime Treasurer/Collector and one fulltime Assistant Treasurer/Collector.

Similar to the relationship that must exist between the collection and the assessing functions, the efficient operation of the treasury function and the accounting function rely upon a constructive and professional relationship between the Treasurer/Collector and the Town Accountant. These working relationships were in evidence during the interview process.

### **Recommendation 1.3:**

**Explore an Intermunicipal Agreement between Essex, Manchester, and the Manchester Essex Regional School District in which the personnel/benefits administrator for the MERSD provides orientation for new employees, as well as employee benefits administration services to municipal employees in which both towns.**

#### **Town Accountant**

The Town Accountant is charged with maintaining a system of accounts and financial reports which accurately report the financial operations and overall financial condition of the town – both during the term of a fiscal year, as well as at the close of each fiscal. Central to this role is the establishment of books of accounts into which, in the case of the expenditure of money, the amounts of specific appropriations voted by town meeting and the purpose for which each is made are entered and into which, in the case of revenues to support those expenditures, all tax commitments, receipts, and collections are entered. Throughout the course of the fiscal year, it is this system of accounts that allows the Town Accountant and other town officials to monitor financial activity, and to assure that appropriations are expended solely for the purposes for which they were approved by town meeting and financial resources are properly managed, secured, and accounted for. For instance, by virtue of the dual requirement that no disbursement of funds be made by the Treasurer without the joint approval of the Selectmen and the Accountant and that all revenues turned over to the Treasurer be countersigned by the Accountant, the Accountant is able to independently determine the amount of cash that should be in the custody of the Treasurer/Collector at any point in time and to independently reconcile that amount with actual bank statements and cash.

An additional responsibility of the Town Accountant is the monthly reporting of appropriation account balances to each department and the Selectmen in order to assure that corrective action is taken in a timely fashion. The Town Accountant likewise prepares a summary of all appropriations and expenditures from the previous fiscal year and a mid-year report on the status of appropriations in the current fiscal year and to assist the Selectmen, Finance Committee, Town Administrators, and others to prepare estimates of budgets for the ensuing fiscal year. The Town Accountant typically supports these officials throughout the development of the municipal budget and its eventual presentation to and approval by town meeting.

In Essex, there is one full-time Town Accountant with a part-time clerk providing five to six hours of support per week. In Manchester there is one) full-time Town Accountant and one full-time Assistant Town Accountant.

The town accountants for Essex and Manchester each have substantial private sector accounting experience with custom software and, to varying degrees, each expressed frustration with the inflexibility of municipal software packages. For instance, to have more flexibility in producing reports, the accountant prints a file to a spreadsheet which in turn is then uploaded into a standalone report generator (Crystal Reports), which is then used to produce a report. In addition to being time-consuming, the process is prone to error. The two towns might wish to cooperate on the development of a regional proposal to the Community Compact IT grant program and, with the support of additional small-town accountants, pursue a regional municipal software improvement initiative geared towards the needs of smaller towns.

### Recommendation 1.4:

Perhaps in conjunction with the emerging North Shore IT Network Administration Initiative, Manchester and Essex should work to establish a consortium of Town Accountants to pursue improvements to conventional municipal software to provide more flexibility and functionality for smaller municipalities. Longer term the municipal accounting software group might be encouraged to pursue a broader consortium along the lines of the Town Accounting Program offered by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments to smaller communities in western MA. An early 'first step' would be to organize a regional meeting of Town Accountants in the Cape Ann/North Shore region and invite participants in the Franklin Regional Council of Governments program to discuss its success.

<b>Position</b>	<b>Manchester</b>	<b>Essex</b>	<b>Total</b>
Principal Assessor	1	0	1
Assessing Administrative Assistant	1	1	2
Treasurer/Collector	1	1	2
Asst. Treas. Collector	1	0.2	1.2
Treas./Coll. Clerk	0	1	1
Town Accountant	1	1	2
Assist. Town Accountant	1	0	1
Accountant Clerk	0	0.1	0.1
Payroll Clerk	0	0.1	0.1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>10.4</b>

### Personnel Administration

The two Town Administrators are heavily involved in the Personnel Administration activities of the Town. In Essex, the Board of Selectmen serve as the Personnel Board and are involved in the establishment of policy. The activities which the Town Administrators supervise include: monitoring Family Medical Leave Act leave; the investigation and administration of complaints, including those under the Towns' sexual harassment and hostile workplace policies; wages and salaries administration under the Town's personnel by-law and policies; criminal history checks, drug testing, and medical exams for new employees; and similar work. The Town Administrators maintain the personnel records of town employees, which are maintained in secure, locked file cabinets.

The Town Treasurers in each community are heavily involved with the orientation of new employees and their addition to the town's payroll system and explanation of employee benefits, most notably enrollment in the municipal employer provided group health insurance program and Massachusetts State Retirement System and the receipt of the federal form I-9 demonstrating citizenship and immigration status of new employees. Recommendation 1.3 above recommends that the two towns pursue an

Intermunicipal Agreement between themselves and MERSD to provide these employee orientation and benefits administration services on behalf of the two towns. While MERSD provides for employee orientation and benefits administration through the central office, much of the general personnel and human resource administration activity is carried out at the individual school level. Therefore, it is not readily apparent that the MERSD has the capacity in the form of a central HR Director to provide personnel administration services to Essex and Manchester. Nevertheless, personnel administrative and human resources management are specialized activities requiring training and education. Risks of error to the municipality if the personnel function is not executed properly can be significant and costly. To the extent that the towns rely upon their respective Town Administrator to execute this function, they add a very specific set of critical skills to the position which may add to the challenge of recruitment and selection of a successor. Assignment of these critical human resource duties to the town administrator without an overall assessment of how they detract from other critical duties exposes the Town to risks, as does the potential that the town administrator may not remain current on developments in labor relations law and personnel management requirements.

### **Recommendation 1.5:**

**As a part of the Intermunicipal Agreement recommended in Recommendation 1.1, the Town's should engage in a joint review of personnel administration tasks and activities in each town and explore the level of budget commitment that would be required to share an appropriately trained personnel administration/HR professional, either jointly between themselves or with other municipalities. It may be desirable to include the administration of the MERSD in those discussions.**

### **Information Technology Infrastructure and Network Administration**

The Town Administrators for both Essex and Manchester have operational responsibility for IT network administration in their respective communities. To the extent that the incumbent Town Administrators in each position possess the knowledge, skills, and abilities to carry out this function in the short term, they are unique, critical skills that may add to the challenge of recruitment of a successor in the future. The risks of an error or mistake to the municipality and its operations could be severe, particularly in the area of regular, proactive cybersecurity measures and the prevention a breach of the IT network or the insertion of malware or ransomware which have become all too common among municipal operations. Essex has recently moved much of its Network Administration responsibilities, including real-time disaster recovery, to a virtual server platform managed under an arrangement with the Town of Danvers, which in turn manages a robust IT and Network program services and hosting program jointly for its municipal and school departments.

Manchester contracts with an IT vendor to manage its computer network.

Essex and Manchester have each joined the towns of Danvers, Middleton, Topsfield, Hamilton, and Wenham in benefiting from a Community Compact Best Practices grant to explore the creation of a regional IT and Network Administration model. Under the model, the Town of Danvers IT department serves as the host community and hub, based upon the strength of that community's high level of performance in managing its local IT and Network infrastructure and programs for municipal and school departments, and its established staffing and capabilities. None of the six communities joining Danvers in exploring the creation of this Regional IT and Network Infrastructure and Administration collaboration have dedicated staff for IT and Network functions. The grant was recently awarded and the Town of Topsfield, which served as the lead community in submitting the grant application, recently voted to officially accept the grant.

Among the benefits and unmet needs that this collaboration might address and provide are improved strategic infrastructure planning and implementation; enhancement of business solutions; enhanced attention to issues of security and business continuity planning; customer service; and improvements to overall efficiency of local operations relying on information.

**Recommendation 1.6:**

**Essex and Manchester by the Sea should each continue their active participation in exploring the feasibility of joining the North Shore Regional IT Network Initiative, organized around the Town of Danvers IT Center. The Administration of the MERSD should be invited to participate in planning discussions of the NS Regional IT Initiative. Essex’s ten-year experience with regional IT may be helpful to other communities as services are potentially engaged.**

**Facilities Management and Maintenance**

The two Town Administrators are heavily involved in the assessment of day-to-day problems associated with municipal facilities and the implementation of identified solutions. Similar circumstances were described during interviews at the MERSD where the Director of Finance and Administration was described as involved in the routine evaluation of reported facilities problems, the identification of the solution, and instructions to staff on how to proceed. The MERSD has various tradespersons on staff to execute a solution, but the district faces the same challenge as the two towns of managing the front-end problem assessment, identifying a solution and providing directions to staff or vendors.

**Recommendation 1.7:**

**The Towns of Essex and Manchester by the Sea and the Manchester Essex Regional School District should consider an Intermunicipal Agreement in which they consider acting jointly to manage facilities maintenance responses and repairs in a more effective and efficient manner.**

## Police Department

Each municipality has an established police department, staffed with fulltime sworn police officers exercising power of arrest under Massachusetts General Laws. Each department is established and organized under MGL c. 41, s.97A, sometimes referred to as the ‘Strong Chief’ statute, which places the department under the control and supervision of a Chief of Police subject to written regulations established by the Chief governing the department. The effect of the ‘strong chief’ act is to place the Chief of Police in control of the department, including equipment used by the department and police officers whom he/she shall assign to duties and who shall obey his/her orders. The appointing authority for the Town may remove the Chief for just cause.

There are collective bargaining units representing police officers in each community.

Each community employs so-called “4 and 2” schedules in which officers work four consecutive days followed by two days off. The effect of the Four and Two work week is that officers work a total of 224 hours over a six-week cycle compared to 240 hours over that same cycle with a Five and Two work week, resulting in two extra days off with compensation during that six week cycle. However, officers have a rotating work schedule that includes Saturdays and Sundays.

Each department recently was awarded accreditation by the Massachusetts Police Accreditation Commission in February 2019. Accreditation is considered a significant organizational accomplishment across Massachusetts and consists of two major components: (1) the establishment of a body of professional standards for police agencies to meet, and (2) a voluntary assessment process by which agencies can be publicly recognized for meeting those standards considered best practices for the profession. Importantly, the respective accreditation of the Essex and Manchester by the Sea Police Departments puts each on common ground in terms of policies and procedures for the operation of police departments, as well as the actions required by each in the future to maintain their respective accreditations.

### Manchester by the Sea Police Department

The Manchester by the Sea Police Department has budget authority to employ 14 FTE police officers with power of arrest as shown in Table 1. Additionally, there are three full time civilian dispatchers and two part-time civilian dispatchers. Dispatchers receive calls for service for both police and fire departments. The dispatch function is discussed in a separate section of this report. There is one 3/4-time Administrative Clerk. Lastly, there is one part-time Animal Control Officer shared with the Town of Hamilton. This person represents a 0.5 FTE and is shared equally between Hamilton and Manchester by the Sea, that is, 0.25 FTE for each community.

Manchester by the Sea Police Department plans to participate in a shared School Resource Officer along with Essex and the Manchester Essex Regional School District.

<b>Position Title</b>	<b>Number of Officers</b>
<b>Chief of Police</b>	1
<b>Lieutenant</b>	1
<b>Sergeants</b>	3
<b>Detective</b>	1
<b>Patrol Officer</b>	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>14 FTE</b>
<b>Part-time Reserve Officers</b>	<b>12-14</b>

The Manchester Police Chief in office at the start of this review has since accepted the position of Chief of Police for the City of Gloucester. An Interim Chief of Police has been appointed and was subsequently interviewed as part of the project. At the time of the initial interview, the former chief had shared a very broad review of the potential for consolidating operations of the Essex and Manchester by the Sea Police Departments. The former chief believed that there were opportunities for significant benefits for each municipality. A second interview was conducted by the project team with the Interim Police Chief who was less convinced of the feasibility of merging the two departments but saw opportunities for the two departments to conduct more joint operations and activities, such as training and on-going accreditation activities.

In 2015, the Town of Manchester by the Sea engaged the services of Municipal Resources, Inc. of Meredith, NH, a consultant to municipal governments and to public safety organizations, to conduct a comprehensive organizational assessment of the Manchester by the Sea Police Department. The assessment included a review of how MPD organizes its patrol function, which is it considered the “backbone of policing,” and other than recommending that the department consider implementing geographically defined patrol or “beat areas” and other refinements or improvements, did not recommend any fundamental changes in the approach of the MPD to the patrol function.

MRI also reviewed staffing levels and scheduling of patrol officers by the MPD. Based on a survey of seven comparably sized municipalities in Massachusetts and their respective police department staffing levels, MRI concluded that the current staffing level of 14 FTE sworn personnel was appropriate. It also concluded that the MPD staffing goal of two patrol officers plus one shift commander per shift 24 hours per day, seven days per week was an appropriate staffing/scheduling goal and recommended that it continue. Employing a common technique known as an Assignment Availability Factor for the patrol function, MRI concluded that MPD was 0.6 patrol officer above the required number of patrol officers to consistently meet this goal thus felt the staffing level was appropriate. MRI similarly concluded that MPD should continue to provide supervision for each patrol shift in accordance with its current practice of assigning the one Lieutenant and each of three Sergeants to serve as shift commanders on each shift.

The project team’s reading of the MRI report is that the consultant concluded that the total staffing level of 14 sworn personnel was appropriate for a community of Manchester’s size.

### Essex Police Department

The Essex Police Department is staffed with nine FTE sworn police officers with power of arrest as well as with several part time reserve officers, and special police officers. (See Table 5.)

Public safety dispatching services are provided through the town’s participation in the Essex County Regional Emergency Communications Center located at the Essex County Sheriff’s facility in Middleton.

<b>Position Title</b>	<b>Number of Officers</b>
<b>Chief of Police</b>	1
<b>Sergeant</b>	2
<b>Patrol Officers</b>	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>9 FTE</b>
<b>Part-time Reserve Officers</b>	6
<b>Special Police Officers</b>	2

There is one fulltime Administrative Clerk assigned to the department.

The Essex Police Department also has a staffing goal of two Patrol Officers on each of three shifts 24 hours per day, seven days per week throughout the year. It attempts to meet this goal by deploying the one

Detective/Patrol Officer, the two Sergeants (one on second shift and one on third shift), and five fulltime Patrol Officers, and supplementing those officers with part-time Reserve Officers when possible. The project team did not establish an Assignment Availability Factor for the EPD like established by MRI for the MPD. However, given the comparable work schedule and time off provisions in the collective bargaining agreements in place, the project team concluded that employing the Assignment Availability Factor of 1.9 officers per six shifts per day to be filled in Manchester was a close approximation of officer availability in the Essex PD. The conclusion reached is that the eight fulltime sworn personnel (one Detective/Patrol Officer, two Sergeants, and five Patrol Officers) falls short of 11.4 FTE Patrol Officers required to meet the shift staffing goals of the department (even when the ninth sworn officer, the Chief of Police, on the day shift, is considered). Whether the availability of part-time Reserve Officers is enough to cover the approximately 6,700 hours during which there are fewer than two Patrol Officers warrants review by the Town as to what the actual staffing needs of the Town are at the Patrol level and whether they are being met.

Supervision of Patrol Officers within the Essex PD is provided by the Chief of Police (on the day shift) and/or the two Sergeants (one each on the second and third shifts).

The department has participated in several arrangements for lock up facilities involving the City of Gloucester and the Town of Rockport and most recently with Manchester by the Sea. The Town of Essex is considering the location and future design of an improved Police Department Facility. A site for a police/fire department facility was recently approved by the Town Meeting early in 2019, and an appropriation for the actual construction of the building was approved by a Special Town Meeting on September 23, 2019. In the meantime, the Essex Police Department has constructed a prisoner processing area in the basement of the existing police station. This new area allows the majority of pre-arraignment arrested parties to be released on bail in a few hours, obviating the need for frequent transport to Middleton.

The recently retired Essex Chief expressed support for creating a School Resource Officer (SRO) together with Manchester by the Sea to be jointly assigned to the Manchester Essex Regional School District. Under this arrangement, the District would pay for a portion of the SRO's total cost, along with each of the two towns. It is possible that detective work restructuring in Manchester could free up an officer to move into a SRO role. The SRO would spend about 85% of his or her time at the middle/high school and split the other 15% of his or her time between the two elementary schools. Presently, leadership from the three entities are beginning to talk over how costs might be apportioned among the entities and it is possible that all necessary funding will be in place as early as November of 2019. The former chief retired at the end of July 2019 and a Sergeant became Essex's new Chief of Police as of August 1, 2019.

## Commonly Used Tools for Regional Service Delivery and Shared Services

### Intermunicipal Agreements (MGL c. 40, s. 4A)

The authority for two or more entities to enter into an Intermunicipal Agreement to regionalized service delivery and shared services has been discussed earlier in this report and is a tool available to police departments and other government entities. IMAs are among the most flexible tools available to promote regional approaches to services and collaboration between departments.

### Police Mutual Aid Agreements (MGL c. 40, s. 8G)

Police mutual aid programs and agreements between several municipalities are authorized under MGL c. 40 s. 8G. The section allows police departments to create programs "to increase the capability of such

departments to protect the lives, safety and property of the people in the area designated in the agreement...are not sufficient to cope with a situation requiring police action.”

#### **Public Safety (Police and Fire) Mutual Aid Agreements (MGL c. 40, s. 4J)**

Public Safety mutual aid agreements are generally authorized under MGL c. 40, s. 4J and anticipate responses to public safety incidents such as an event, emergency or natural disaster... that exceeds the response and recovery capabilities of a governmental unit. The section anticipates a statewide public safety mutual aid agreement that creates a framework for the provision of mutual aid across the state. While section 4J contemplates that the sending community involved in such a response will absorb the costs related to the emergency, the section allows individual communities to enter into supplemental agreements related to issues of reimbursement, etc. Nothing in section 40J will affect, supersede, or invalidate other mutual aid agreements including those IMAs authorized under section 4A above. Public safety mutual aid agreements under section 4J therefore can be coordinated with an intermunicipal agreement under section 4A to provide a very high level of joint activity, operations, and cooperation between two or more municipalities.

#### **Regional Police Districts**

MGL c. 41, ss. 91B – 99K permits two or more towns to establish a regional police district and form a common police department to serve and protect the inhabitants of the participating towns. The process for creation is a referendum appearing on the ballots in each of the towns seeking to create the district. A majority of voters in each such town must vote affirmatively to establish the district as well as vote separately on the degree of authority granted to regional chief of police, in essence the establishment of the regional chief of police along the lines of Chapter 41, Section 97 or along the lines of Chapter 41, Section 97A.

#### **Recommendation 2.1:**

**Establish Joint Cooperation Agreement and Enhanced Mutual Aid Agreements under MGL c. 40, ss 4A and 4J to support higher levels of joint operations and efficiencies over time.**

The Towns of Essex and Manchester by the Sea should enter into formal Intermunicipal agreements (IMAs) or what might be called Strategic Cooperation Agreements on providing enhanced levels of joint operations, activities, and cooperation between the two departments. Such an agreement would supplement and coordinate with the public safety mutual aid agreement under section 4J. The towns should include a thorough review of existing mutual aid arrangements and expectations and develop an IMA as a tool to enhance the overall expected levels of strategic cooperation. Also, it should provide that the leadership of the two departments meet on a regular basis (for instance, quarterly) to review opportunities to address common problems and opportunities to address them. Such an agreement, for instance, could address a shared approach to training, officer development, and re-accreditation in the immediate term, while building relationships that will allow for a shared approach to other larger problems.

#### **Recommendation 2.2:**

**Create and Implement a School Resource Officer with the Manchester Essex Regional School District.**

From interviews there appears to be a high level of support for creating a School Resource Officer in partnership with the MERSD. The two towns and the district should proceed to formalize that shared resource officer in the form of an Intermunicipal Agreement.

### **Recommendation 2.3:**

#### **Lay the Groundwork for Regional, Shared Animal Control Officer in the Future.**

In the medium term, Manchester and Hamilton have a 0.5 FTE Animal Control Officer. Essex employs its own Animal Control Officer who works on an as-needed basis for an annual stipend of \$13,963. The Manchester Chief of Police expressed concern that their arrangement resulting in a 0.25 FTE may not be sufficient. Manchester by the Sea and Essex should engage each other proactively to explore a shared approach to Animal Control in advance of one or the other Animal Control Officers leaving town service. The two municipalities should engage Hamilton in that discussion, noting that between the three municipalities, the total hours of their respective Animal Control Officers could equal 1.0 FTE.

### **Recommendation 2.4:**

#### **Implement Joint Engagement at Leadership to Evaluate Necessary/Desirable Police Staffing Levels and Objective Performance Measures and How Joint Operations Might Add Efficiencies**

In the longer term, Essex and Manchester should engage in a review of the staffing levels of their respective departments and examine the potential of meeting unmet needs through closer cooperation and joint operations. An intermunicipal agreement would represent a more flexible tool for exploring these opportunities while at the same time conducting joint operations, training, re-accreditation activities. Additionally, an enhanced Mutual Aid Agreement under MGL c. 40, s. 8G would allow the two police departments to create programs “to increase the capability of such departments to protect the public safety.”

## Fire Department

There are very distinct differences in the organization and staffing of the fire departments in Essex and Manchester. Essex maintains an On-call or Call Fire Department of part-time firefighters governed by a three-member Board of Engineers, which selects one of the three to serve as Fire Chief. Part-time Firefighters in Call Departments are often organized in companies or similar, smaller units, each supervised and overseen by its own officers. These companies undertake training and maintenance of equipment, and each participates in a rotational schedule where they are periodically 'On Call' and during which time they are generally expected to respond to fire alarms and emergency calls. Personnel from companies or units not otherwise On Call may choose to respond, but there is a general expectation that firefighters who are On Call will respond to a certain percentage of alarms or calls for service as a condition of serving on the Fire Department. For call firefighters who respond to a fire alarm or call for service, they are compensated in accordance with a compensation schedule established by the Town. (This compensation distinguishes a Call Department from what was once a history of Volunteer Fire Departments.)

For a small community with manageable fire activity and calls for service, a Call Department can be a very cost-effective way of protecting persons and property from fires and accidents, particularly as modern fire codes and fire prevention activities reduce the overall frequency of fires and emergency calls. In small towns and communities across New England, the Call or Volunteer Fire Department is an institution steeped in history and tradition and a focus of community pride and appreciation. Chapter 48 of the Mass. General Laws includes a wide variety of provisions relating to appointment of Boards of Fire Engineers by Selectmen and the management of such departments. Most notably see MGL c. 48, s. 45 and subsequent sections. Essex operates its own Basic Life Support (BLS) ambulance service using its call force and uses a cascade of third-party Advanced Life Support (ALS) providers for more serious matters. The cascade first summons a commercial company, then the Town of Manchester's ALS capability, then the City of Gloucester's ALS capability, and finally a second commercial provider.

In contrast, Manchester has established a hybrid model for their Fire Department, which places the department under the management and control of a Fire Chief appointed by the Town Administrator with ratification by the Board of Selectmen and employing a core of full-time career firefighters, including a captain and 12 other firefighters, and supported by a call force of part-time on-call fire fighters when a fire or other emergency requires a response. The department has been established under MGL c. 48, s. 42, often referred to as the 'Strong Chief' statute. The Town Administrator/Selectmen appoint a single individual as the chief of the fire department. The statute states the chief has all the authority granted to boards of fire engineers in Massachusetts and is granted full and absolute authority to administer the fire department and to establish rules for the Manchester Fire Department.

### Essex Fire Department

The staffing for the Essex Fire Department is summarized in Table 6.

The Fire Chief typically works two days per week. Other personnel are part-time, on-call personnel. The department does assign a fire fighter to staff the Martin St.

<b>Position Title</b>	<b>Number of Employees</b>
<b>Board of Fire Engineers (Fire Chief and Deputies)</b>	3
<b>Captain</b>	1
<b>Lieutenants</b>	5
<b>Call Firefighters</b>	31

station on most days for the purposes of answering questions, issuing permits, and providing a rapid response to fire and medical emergencies

Table 7 shows the existing fire department apparatus managed by the Essex Fire Department.

The National Fire Prevention Association (NFPA) has established standards for the organization and staffing and fire suppression response capabilities for both fulltime career fire departments and for part-time call departments. NFPA Section 1720 is the standard

<b>Table 7: Essex Fire Department Fire Apparatus and Equipment</b>	
<b>Item</b>	<b>Number</b>
<b>Ambulances</b>	2
<b>Fire Engines</b>	2
<b>Tanker</b>	1
<b>Light Response Vehicle</b>	1
<b>Ladder Truck</b>	1

for organizing and staffing a call department. It was not an assignment of the project team to gauge the overall compliance of the Essex FD with Section 1720. In the course of discussions with the Fire Chief, however, it was clear that the management of the department understands the standards as they relate to organization, staffing, and response, and was conversant in each of the major provisions of the section, including how the standard relates to the minimum number of fire personnel required at the scene in response to a fire. The standard relating to the minimum number of call fire personnel required to be physically on the fire scene prior to the incident commander authorizing the initial assault requires a high degree of judgement and responsibility on the incident commander. The standard states that the incident commander will assess the unique circumstances presented by a specific fire and should not order the initial assault until he/she determines that adequate personnel and resources are on the scene. (The exception is the apparent need to initiate an imminent rescue.) The standard seems to recognize that, in the case of a call fire department, personnel and resources may arrive over an indeterminate period of time rather than in defined groups manning specific apparatus within an anticipated period of time. The Essex Fire Chief states the EFD call response routinely meets this standard.

The other important required is an Occupational Safety and Hazard Administration requirement known in the fire service as ‘2 and 2’. The ‘2 and 2’ OSHA requirement states that for every two fire fighters deployed into a burning building, two firefighters should be physically stationed near the incident commander in the event of an emergency. These four firefighters plus the incident commander and a presumed operator of a pumper require that six personnel arrive on scene prior to initiating the initial assault on the burning building. Once again, there is an exception for the need for an immediate rescue. The Essex Fire Chief was aware of the OSHA requirement and stated that the response levels of the EFD have historically assured that the requirement has been met.

The EFD is a participant in the Essex County Mutual Aid Agreement. The EFD has a written and detailed set of standard operating procedures and routinely conducts comprehensive training for its call firefighters. The Fire Chief agreed that these factors form the basis for closer cooperation with the Manchester Fire Department around joint operations and mutual aid in order to better understand the other’s standard operating procedures on those occasions when mutual aid is invoked, or joint operations are called for.

## Manchester by the Sea Fire Department

As mentioned, Manchester Fire Department was established as a ‘strong chief’ department pursuant to MGL, c. 48, s. 42. At the time of this review, the department was being led by an Interim Fire Chief.

It is perhaps best described as a ‘hybrid’ organization staffed with a core of fourteen career fire professionals and supplemented by a reserve contingent of call firefighters. Two Firefighter/Paramedics and one Shift Commander are deployed on each shift, totaling three fulltime fire personnel. In terms of Firefighter/Paramedics, this accounts for eight of the nine Firefighter/Paramedics. The ninth Firefighter/Paramedic is used to fill in when scheduled vacancies occur. This staffing level per shift reflects the minimum requirement of the relevant collective bargaining agreement. The department utilizes a 24 hours on/24 hours off/24 hours on/five days off work schedule. Since the Captain is also one of the Shift Commanders, that officer is deployed on the same work schedule. Two Firefighter/Paramedics respond with an ambulance to medical calls.

Position Title	Number of Employees
Fire Chief	1
Captain/Shift Commander	1
Lieutenants/Shift Commanders	3
Firefighters/Paramedics	9
Intermittent Call Firefighters	6

Fire Prevention and Inspections are carried out by the Captain. Because the Captain works 24 on/24 off/24 on/5fivedays off work schedule, the consequence of this work schedule is that fire prevention and fire inspections activities can typically occur only two days out of eight. The Interim Fire Chief believes that there is an opportunity to improve fire prevention and inspections activities in both communities through joint operations.

Emergency medical calls reflect an overwhelming percentage of response call activity in the department. According to the 2017 annual town report, there were 22 actual fire response calls and 560 EMS calls of all types. Total calls for 2017 were 1,385.

The Town of Manchester engaged the services of Municipal Resources, Inc. in 2009 to do a Fire Services Organizational Analysis of the MFD. The analysis took a comprehensive look at thirteen ‘focus areas’ within the MFD including such areas as Leadership and Staffing; Recruitment and Retention of Call Firefighters (to supplement the fulltime career fire services personnel of the department); Emergency Medical Services; Dispatch Center; Facilities and Equipment; Training; and other areas. The analysis led to the identification of the following ‘Top Five Challenges for the Town of Manchester:

Item	Number
Ambulances	2
Fire Engine	2
Light Engine/Rescue	1
Ladder Truck	1
Forestry	1
Admin/Inspections	1

1. Compliance with the Occupational Safety and Health Administrations ‘Two-in/two-out’ fire suppression response standard at the staffing levels in place at the time. The ‘Two-in/Two-Out’ OSHA standard provides that for every pair of firefighters deployed to enter a building to suppress a fire, a second pair must be stationed outside the building for the purpose of rendering aid in the event of an emergency. Since this minimum team of four firefighters must also be supported by an incident commander (Fire Chief or Shift Commander) as well as a firefighter operating a pumper truck, the operating impact of this standard is that six firefighting personnel should be present on the scene prior to initiating an assault on the interior of a burning building.

2. Compliance with the National Fire Prevention Association Section 1710 on scene fire suppression staffing standard at the staffing levels in place at the time. This standard establishes a response standard that requires that for a fire, a minimum of thirteen firefighters be on scene within eight minutes of the report of a fire ninety (90%) percent of the time. MRI characterized this standard as “almost impossible to meet” at current staffing levels.
3. The need to initiate planning and design of a new Fire Station facility and developing a financial proposal to be presented to the Town.
4. Concerns about the reliability of dispatching services and probability of errors and the desirability of initiating a transition to a more reliable and state of the art regional dispatch center.
5. Recruitment and retention of on-call firefighters necessary to support the fulltime career fire personnel.

To address these challenges, MRI advanced the following recommendations, among others, in its 2009 report:

1. Increase staffing levels on all shifts from the current level of one shift commander and two Firefighter/Paramedics to one Shift Commander and three Firefighters/Paramedics, together with stepped up efforts to support these personnel with additional Call firefighters and enhanced mutual aid agreements described below.
2. Expand efforts to recruit and retain additional call firefighters and to enhance existing mutual aid agreement to include automatic aid responses from neighboring communities on all reports of smoke/fire on the scene. The MRI report indicates that with a staff of seven fulltime Firefighter/EMTS, a town of the size of Manchester should have a reserve on-call department of 26 call firefighters. In 2009, the department was supported by 13 call firefighters and down to six in 2019.
3. The Town should initiate planning to replace the current fire station with new state of the art facility. An important element of that planning effort is a geographical local for the station.
4. The Town should consider joining efforts to establish an Essex County Regional Emergency Communications Center offering enhanced technology, facilities, reliability, and redundancy of public safety dispatching services in Essex County and the North Shore/Cape Ann region.
5. Aggressively seek federal funds from sources available at the time for the hiring of additional career fire services personnel and for the improved recruitment and retention of on-call firefighters and to conduct recruitment regionally beyond the borders of Manchester by the Sea.

## **Commonly Used Tools for Regional Service Delivery and Shared Services**

### **Intermunicipal Agreements (MGL c. 40, s. 4A)**

The authority for two or more entities to enter into an Intermunicipal Agreement to regionalized service delivery and shared services has been discussed earlier in this report and is a tool available to municipal departments and other government entities. IMAs are among the most flexible tools available to promote regional approaches to services and collaboration between departments.

### **Public Safety (Police and Fire) Mutual Aid Agreements (MGL c. 40, s. 4J)**

Public Safety mutual aid agreements are generally authorized under MGL c. 40, s. 4J and anticipate responses to public safety incidents such as an event, emergency or natural disaster... that exceeds the response and recovery capabilities of a governmental unit. The section anticipates a statewide public safety mutual aid agreement that creates a framework for the provision of mutual aid across the state. While section 4J contemplates that the sending community involved in such a response will absorb the

costs related to the emergency, the section allows individual communities to enter into supplemental agreements related to issues of reimbursement, etc. Nothing in section 40J will affect, supersede, or invalidate other mutual aid agreements including those IMAs authorized under section 4A above. Public safety mutual aid agreements under section 4J therefore can be coordinated with an intermunicipal agreement under section 4A to provide a very high level of joint activity, operations and cooperation between two or more municipalities.

**Recommendation 3.1:**

**The two towns should jointly carry out an evaluation of their respective services delivery goals and expectations and include long-range projections of staffing needs under shared assumptions (Population Growth, Demographics, Aging of Population etc.) and how these projections impact both the Essex Fire Department and the Manchester Fire Department in the future. This should lead to a discussion of how joint operations and enhanced mutual aid can help manage these changing demands.**

**Recommendation 3.2:**

**Enhancement of the mutual aid agreement between Essex and Manchester should include automatic mutual aid responses between communities once an emergency call reporting evidence of an actual fire in a building or structure. Typically, mutual aid is invoked by a community after it is on the scene and typically after it has sounded multiple alarms and as a result has invited a mutual aid response. An example of such an enhanced response would be for Essex to specifically send its water tank with two call firefighters to Manchester when a serious fire is reported. This automatic response would send a source of water and, importantly, two additional firefighters to the scene that would count towards the OSHA and NFPA standards. OSHA and NFPA standards require that a minimum number of fire fighters be present on the fire scene before an assault on the fire inside the building can begin.**

**Recommendation 3.3:**

**Establish joint cooperation on recruitment of call personnel, and development, training, and retention of call firefighters in each community.**

## Emergency Communications/Dispatch

### Essex and the Essex County Regional Emergency Dispatch Center

The Town of Essex participates in the Essex County Regional Emergency Communications Center, which was recommissioned as of July 1, 2019 as the North Shore Regional 911 Center. The center is located at the Essex County Sheriff's facility located in Middleton and currently receives calls for public safety (police, fire and emergency medical) services and dispatch services to responding departments for the towns of Essex, Middleton, Topsfield, and Wenham and the City of Amesbury. The City of Beverly had entered into the regional agreement to participate in the center as a sixth community but chose to withdraw from the agreement prior to the center becoming operational in 2013.

At the time of a December 2008 grant application to further explore the feasibility of establishing a regional communications center in Essex County, 13 communities (Beverly, Danvers, Essex, Hamilton, Ipswich, Manchester by the Sea, Marblehead, Methuen, Middleton, North Andover, Swampscott, Topsfield, and Wenham) had filed letters stating their interest in participating. In March 2009, a grant of \$6,800,000 was awarded for the establishment of what would become the ECRECC. Ultimately, six of these 13 communities (Amesbury, Beverly, Essex, Middleton, Topsfield, and Wenham) decided to join the ECRECC. The new state of the art facility, which was outfitted with the latest technology, cost approximately \$12,000,000 to build and outfit. Much of this funding was provided by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The ECRECC facility opened for business in June 2013. In late 2013, after entering into an agreement with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the ECRECC began handling 911 cell phone calls (wireless calls) made from throughout Essex County, 32 communities in Middlesex County, and three in Suffolk County. This agreement was designed to boost the usage of the ECRECC, as well as relieve workload on an overburdened state police communications center in Framingham.<sup>2</sup>

In its six years of operation, the ECRECC is said to have suffered through a period of financial instability and associated problems seemingly related to the reduced levels of participation from as many as 13 prospective participant municipalities to the current number of five. The center has been heavily subsidized by the Essex County Sheriff and, as a result, operating assessments to the five participating municipalities have been stable through June 30, 2019, at \$16.26 per capita. At the operational level locally, the Town of Essex reports a high level of satisfaction with the quality and reliability of the dispatch services they have received, despite the past challenges of starting and maintaining a complex regional effort of this type.

To address the ongoing issue of operational subsidies by the Essex County Sheriff and to address the need for greater financial stability moving forward, the MA State 911 Department has absorbed the ECRECC as a formal part of its operations. The recommissioned North Shore Regional 911 Center now serves as the North Shore Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP), handling approximately 500,000 wireless 911 calls per year generated in the North Shore region and serving a population of 1.8 million people in all of Essex County and portions of Middlesex and Suffolk counties. Additionally, the North Shore Regional 911 Center continues to answer and fully process all 911 emergency calls, including police, fire and EMS dispatching from the five municipalities participating in the earlier ECRECC. The absorption of the former ECRECC into the state's 911 system has eliminated the operational assessments to the five municipalities participating in the center. With respect to Essex, emergency dispatch costs went from approximately \$81 per capita

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<sup>2</sup> The preceding paragraph is excerpted from a report entitled ESSEX COUNTY REGIONAL COMMUNICATIONS CENTER ORGANIZATIONAL ASSESSMENT & OPERATIONAL AUDIT, FEBRUARY 2018 performed by Municipal Resources, Inc., available at <https://www.ecrecc.org/statistics>.

prior to regionalization to \$16.26 per capita between July 1, 2013 and June 30, 2019 to \$0 per capita as of July 1, 2019.

A complete Organizational Assessment and Operational Audit of the ECRECC was performed by Municipal Resources, Inc. The resulting report was issued in June 2018 and is available at <https://www.ecrecc.org/statistics>. A wide range of performance data is also available at the same location.

### **Manchester by the Sea**

The emergency communications/dispatch function in Manchester is carried out by civilian dispatchers under the supervision of the police department. There are presently three fulltime dispatchers and two part-time dispatchers operating at the Manchester Police Department. Manchester by the Sea decided not to participate in the ECRECC. The Town recently assessed the feasibility of joining a proposed regional dispatch center which was designed, constructed, and is presently operated by the Town of Danvers.

Three independent management reviews/feasibility studies involving the dispatch function in Manchester have been conducted over the past 10 years. Each review commented on a variety of operational concerns in the current manner that emergency dispatch is organized, ranging from concern over the ‘hand off’ of fire and EMS calls from the dispatchers at the police station to a fire department dispatcher when one arrives at the fire station; to a lack of redundancy during an emergency; state of the technology being used; to the inadequate space and facilities at the Police Station, including a risk to individual privacy of information during dispatch operations.

In 2009, Municipal Resources, Inc. conducted a comprehensive Fire Services Organizational Analysis of the Fire Department. Of the dispatching system in place at the time, the Final Report said, “The current dispatch system with the Police Department could be characterized as fragile as it lacks redundancy and provides opportunity for error – dangerous for the public and fire fighter safety... A comprehensive regional dispatch system should be used that provides more redundant service.” In making the case of a regional approach to dispatching, it pointed to the availability of state-of-the-art communications and dispatcher technology and facilities that would otherwise be beyond the reach of a small municipality.

Similarly, in November 2015, MRI released a report resulting from an Organizational Assessment of the Manchester by the Sea Police Department. The report noted similar deficiencies or shortcomings in facilities, technology, and operations, and it offered a number of recommendations to improve operations. The report noted that in January 2015, MRI had been separately contracted to perform a feasibility study of joining the Essex County Regional Emergency Communications Center for the purposes of emergency dispatch services. In the January report, MRI noted concerns over organizational structure and lines of authority in managing dispatchers at the ECRECC, as well as high turnover rate and concern over the fiscal sustainability of the center. Nevertheless, it provided a conditional recommendation that Manchester move towards joining the ECRECC as long as the Town fully vetted the concerns outlined in the January study.

In August 2017, MRI was once again contracted to perform a Feasibility Analysis for Establishing a Regional Dispatch Center (RDC) for the Towns of Danvers, Hamilton, and Manchester by the Sea. The 2017 analysis includes an exhaustive review of the existing dispatch function in Manchester and concluded that “overall this (RDC) will be a beneficial endeavor for all participants and Hamilton and Manchester joining and transferring their dispatch operations there is very feasible.”

Both the North Shore Regional Emergency Communications Center and the Danvers-hosted Regional Dispatch Center are said to have sufficient capacity to absorb new members in their respective centers.

In the past three years, the dispatching operations in Manchester have undergone improvements, including training, equipment upgrades, and handling fire calls entirely within the police dispatch center. Interest remains in ultimately joining a regional service.

## **Commonly Used Tools for Regional Service Delivery and Shared Services**

### **Intermunicipal Agreements (MGL c. 40, s. 4A)**

The authority for two or more entities to enter into an Intermunicipal Agreement to regionalized service delivery and shared services has been discussed earlier in this report and is a tool available to municipal departments and other government entities. IMAs are among the most flexible tools available to promote regional approaches to services and collaboration between departments. The Town of Essex entered into an IMA as a participant in the Essex County Regional Emergency Communications Center.

### **Recommendation 4.1:**

**The Town of Manchester should renew investigation into the feasibility of joining one of two recently established Regional Dispatch Centers: The North Shore Regional 911 Center in Middleton or the Danvers Regional Dispatch Center in Danvers. Capacity to accept a new participating community is said to currently exist at either center. Essex currently participates in the North Shore Regional 911 Center Dispatch Center. The renewed review should consider recently changes in the operation of what is now known as the North Shore Regional 911 Center.**

## Public Works

Each municipality has organized its public works functions, including highways, water, sewer, and solid waste management, into Departments of Public Works. In Essex, however, the department is organized under a three-person Board of Public Works established under a home rule petition and resulting Special Act of the Legislature (Chapter 501 of the Acts of 1973). The Board is appointed by the Board of Selectmen to staggered three-year terms. The Selectmen defer to the Planning Board and to the Town Moderator on the recommendation for these three board members in two years out of each three-year cycle. The Selectmen are the appointing authority each year, regardless of the recommending entity. The Board of Public Works in turn appoints a superintendent of public works with authority to “exercise and perform, under the supervision and control of the board, such powers, rights and duties transferred to it... as it may from time to time designate.” The superintendent serves at the will of the Board.

In Manchester by the Sea, the Town Administrator appoints, with Board of Selectmen ratification, a director of public works who oversees and manages the same public works functions under the administrative supervision of the town administrator.

### Essex Department of Public Works

The principal functions of the department of public works in Essex are: maintenance and repairs of the public ways, including the clearing of snow and ice; water treatment and distribution; waste water collection and pumping the same to the nearby City of Gloucester treatment plant; supervision of the municipal solid waste transfer station/recycling center (which is otherwise operated under a third party contract); and seasonal maintenance and upkeep parks and cemeteries. In addition to the Board of Public Works, the staffing of the department, totaling 13.5 FTEs exclusive of seasonal laborers, is presented in Table 10.

The municipal solid waste transfer station is operated under contract with Covanta Energy, with whom the town has a separate contract to dispose of its solid waste. Covanta Energy operates the transfer station based on a fixed fee of \$8,205 per month, plus a separate tipping fee for tonnage hauled. The annual tonnage delivered to the disposal site in 2018 was 1,178.78 tons. The disposal fee for this tonnage was \$64.22 per

Function	Title	Number
<b>General Administration</b>	Board of Public Works (Part-time)	3
	Director of Public Works	1
	Administrative Clerks	1.5
<b>Water and Sewer</b>	Chief Operator (Water/Sewer)	1
	Water/Sewer Foreman	1
	Water Treatment Operators	3
<b>Highway</b>	Foreman	1
	Equipment Operators	3
	Laborer – Highway	0.5
	Laborer – Recycling Center	0.5
<b>Parks and Cemeteries</b>	Seasonal Laborers	Varies
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>15.5 FTE</b>

ton in 2018. The number of access stickers to the transfer station is approximately 900. The recycling center co-located at the transfer station is staffed with a laborer otherwise assigned to the highway department, as shown above. Covanta has recently announced that the company no longer wishes to

support the provision of its own employees to operate the Town's transfer station. The Town could save money through the approximately 3.5-year remaining contract duration if the Town hires its own employee, since Covanta is willing to discontinue certain other fees if the Town agrees to this contract change. Regardless of the Town's decision, at the end of the present Covanta contract (which carries a very favorable tipping rate), the cost of solid waste management will increase sharply.

There are 29.8 miles of roadway maintained by the highway function. There are approximated 1,000 water and sewer customers, a number that varies somewhat by season. The source of the municipal water supply consists of three gravel pack wells from which water is pumped to a water treatment plant operated by municipal employees. The treatment plant was designed by the engineering firm of Whitman and Howard and was built in 1982 based on a conventional design of the time. As such, it is currently in its 37<sup>th</sup> year of operation. The plant is said to operate reasonably well, but it is aging despite recent improvements. There is regular turnover of licensed operators at the treatment plant and recruiting, attracting, and retaining these licensed operators has been challenging, reflecting a competitive labor market for these licensed services. The aging of the water distribution infrastructure itself places a great deal of strain on highway department operations given the frequency with which water mains and service lines break and disrupt service. It falls largely on the highway department's Equipment Operators to assist in the emergency response and repair of these water line failures, with the resulting impact on their ability to undertake routine roadway maintenance and service requests from residents.

Essex does not own and operate a wastewater plant. Under the terms of an Administrative Consent Order, the Town constructed its own collection system, including sizeable sewer pump stations distributed widely across the relatively flat coastal terrain and delivering waste water to a central pump station from where it is delivered to the Gloucester Waste Water Treatment Plant for treatment and discharge under an intermunicipal agreement. The maintenance and upkeep of this fleet of pump stations places considerable strain on the operations of the department of public works generally and on rate payers was well. The rates for municipal sewer collection and disposal increased 6% per quarter during FY 2019. There have been some preliminary discussions at the Board of Public Works level considering the outsourcing of sewer pump station maintenance.

The Board of Public Works annual report for 2017 discusses these water and sewer system challenges, particularly in commenting on the aging water system infrastructure. There is a projected need of approximately \$4.5 million in water and sewer system improvements which have not moved forward due to capacity and financial constraints.

### **Manchester by the Sea**

The principal functions of the Manchester DPW include maintenance and repair of public roads; water supply and distribution; wastewater collection, treatment, and disposal; solid waste management and disposal; and the maintenance and upkeep of parks, beaches, and cemeteries on a seasonal basis. Recently the department hired a Capital Projects Manager who has agreed to take on certain duties related to facilities management. Internally, there is a mechanic who maintains the division's fleet.

The staffing level for the department totals 21 FTEs, exclusive of seasonal laborers. (See Table 11.)

<b>Table 11: Manchester DPW Staffing</b>		
<b>Function</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Number</b>
<b>General Administration</b>	Director of Public Works	1
	Facilities/Project Manager	1
	Administrative Support	1.5
<b>Operations (Roads, Solid Waste, Parks, Beaches, Cemeteries, Fleet)</b>	Foreman	1
	Laborers	3
	Mechanic	1
	Grounds Foreman	1
	Equipment Operators	2
	<b>Water/Sewer</b>	Foreman
	Laborer	2
	Chief Operator Wastewater Plant	1
	Wastewater Treatment Plant	3
<b>Water Treatment Plant (Contract)</b>	Water Treatment Plant Operators	2.5
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>21.0 FTE</b>

The Town is funding a robust capital improvement plan in the area of DPW infrastructure, with about \$3.0 million dollars having been budgeted for water and sewer system improvements. An additional \$1.0 million for drainage system improvements and another \$1.0 budget for other capital projects related to DPW functions have been approved. Thus, the department is managing about \$5.0 million in capital projects currently with anticipated annual capital projects totaling some \$3 million going forward. This led to the recent hiring of a Capital Projects Manager to manage capital projects. In the absence of a municipal facilities manager, the Capital Projects Manager has been thrust into a wider role related to the regular maintenance and repair of municipal facilities. The DPW has been accommodating that arrangement but notes that it stretches the ability of the Projects Manager to manage the department's capital projects with resulting financial risks.

The Town offers both curbside solid waste collection and a municipal solid waste transfer station, which is manned on both Wednesdays and Saturdays by a municipal employee on each of those days (0.4 FTE otherwise assigned to the DPW Operations function). The total annual tonnage delivered to the Town's contracted disposal site in North Andover is between 9,600 and 12,000 tons (reported as varying between 80 and 100 tons per month) and the FY 2019 disposal site tipping fee is \$65.26.

The combined water and sewer function employ three FTEs in the form of one foreman and two laborers to manage the water distribution system and the sewer collection system.

The Town owns and operates its own wastewater treatment plant located within the inner harbor/waterfront area. It is permitted by the US EPA to accept flows up to an average of 1.2 million gallons per day (MGD). While permitted at 1.2 MGD, it effectively operates under a reduced limit of 0.67 MGD under the Ocean Sanctuaries Act, which dramatically limits the extent to which the system can be expanded to accept additional flow. The Town staffs the treatment plant with four fulltime municipal employees, consisting of a Chief Operator and three Wastewater Treatment Operators. All four employees are licensed treatment plant operators in Massachusetts. As a result of recent capital

investments, the Town is about to complete a multiyear Inflow and Infiltration project, eliminating unnecessary water to the overall wastewater effluent that the treatment plant processes. The department will be turning its attention to modernizing the treatment plant itself and ‘hardening’ the plant against the risk of rising water levels in the harbor. The goal is to keep up with aging infrastructure on the one hand while acting strategically to protect the plant from flooding effects of rising sea levels and more severe weather.

The Town’s water treatment plant is operated under a contract with the firm of Woodard and Curran, which staffs the plant with its employees and assumes responsibility for the proper operation and maintenance of the plant under the terms of the contract. The plant was built in 1997 and became operational in 2000. Woodard and Curran have been the operator since that time. Woodard and Curran do not necessarily play a role in managing capital improvements at the plant but instead manages a fixed monthly maintenance and repair budget. Extraordinary repairs beyond that monthly budget are undertaken by the Town. As of the writing of this report, the contract for the operation and maintenance of the plant has not been extended, but when it is, it will likely for a new term of three to five years. Portions of the water distribution system date back to the 1800s and will need millions in improvements over the coming 30 years.

The source of the municipal water supply is Gravelly Pond, a surface water body located in the Town of Hamilton and recharged with water from the Round Pond subsurface well, also located in Hamilton, as well the Lincoln Street subsurface well. The pumping of raw water from the source to the treatment plant is managed by Woodard and Curran.

## Commonly Used Tools for Regional Service Delivery and Shared Services

### Intermunicipal Agreements (MGL c. 40, s. 4A)

The authority for two or more entities to enter into an Intermunicipal Agreement to regionalize service delivery and shared services has been discussed earlier in this report and is a tool available to municipal departments and other government entities. IMAs are among the most flexible tools available to promote regional approaches to services and collaboration between departments.

### Public Works Mutual Aid Agreements (MGL c. 40, s. 4K)

Public works mutual aid agreements are authorized under MGL c. 40, s. 4K and contemplate a mutual aid response to a public works incident defined as a foreseeable or unforeseeable event, emergency, or natural or manmade disaster that affects or threatens to affect the public works operations of a governmental unit. Section 4K sets forth provisions for public works mutual aid agreements that mirror those for public safety mutual aid in section 4J and includes the same proviso that public works mutual aid agreements do not affect, supersede, or invalidate IMAs under section 4A creating an opportunity harmonize and coordinating agreements to provide a high level of joint activity, operations, and cooperation between DPW departments and municipalities.

### Joint Purchase/Procurement Agreements

MGL c. 30B, the Municipal Procurement Act, allows for, and as a matter of policy encourages, two or more municipalities or other government entities (such as the Manchester Essex Regional School District) to jointly procure goods and services.

## Recommendation 5.1:

**Essex should consider the advantages of outsourcing the operation and maintenance of its water**

**treatment plant. Since Manchester currently operates its water treatment plant under such a contract with a private operator the two towns should evaluate whether efficiencies or synergy would be created to justify a joint procurement of a single contractor to operate both plants.**

A contract for the operation and maintenance of the water treatment plant would relieve the DPW of the challenges of attracting and retaining licensed Water Treatment Plant Operators. The evaluation should include the potential advantages of a joint procurement of a single contractor by Essex and Manchester by the Sea to run both plants and whether joint operations might result in efficiencies and synergies in the area of personnel and staffing. In Essex, consideration might also be given to the management of plant modernization and capital investments by the contractor.

### **Recommendation 5.2:**

**Manchester and Essex should evaluate the benefits of operating a Joint Solid Waste Transfer and Recycling Center.**

Manchester by the Sea should consider the feasibility of acting jointly with Essex to operate and maintain a shared solid waste transfer station and recycling center. Potential barriers to be overcome may include the feasibility of segregating solid waste from each community, delivering it to separate disposal sites, and billing each community for its appropriate disposal costs. The cost of a joint site would also need to be compared to the potential cost of Essex simply moving to curbside pickup at the end of the present Covanta contract.

### **Recommendation 5.3:**

**Implement Joint Procurement or Cooperation on Preventative Pump Station Maintenance.**

As part of its review of contracting for the maintenance and upkeep of its wastewater pump stations, Essex and Manchester should consider the benefits of acting jointly in procuring such contracted services. A variation on this theme would be for Essex and Manchester to enter into an IMA where they share personnel to maintain and repair sewer pump stations. A variation on this theme would be to include in the IMA a joint response capability for water distribution and sewage collection emergencies.

### **Recommendation 5.4:**

**Essex and Manchester should jointly procure an on-call utility contractor to respond to water and sewer line breaks and service disruptions.**

The Essex department of public works highway department is supervised by the superintendent of public works, and consists of five full-time employees, including a foreman, three equipment operators, and a laborer. Water Department personnel are dedicated to running the treatment plant/sourcing functions. The highway department work crew finds itself frequently called away from the regular roadway maintenance and repair and response to residents' requests for service whenever a water main break, sewer line failure or backup, or similar emergency occurs. The emergency may divert all the highway department's resources for the duration of the emergency and results in a substantial backlog in the street maintenance and repair and residential service functions.

Manchester by the Sea maintains an open "time and materials" contract with a North Shore-based utility contractor and, in the event of a water or sewer infrastructure emergency, calls upon that contractor for operators and machinery to respond to the emergency. Manchester by the Sea is preparing to rebid the

annual contract for this emergency, on-call utility contractor and would consider adding the Town of Essex DPW to the contract. In the opinion of the project team, such an arrangement would be of substantial assistance to the DPW and would allow for improved efficiency and effectiveness in the maintenance and repair of Town roads and response to residents' call for service.

**Recommendation 5.5:**

**The Essex DPW and the Manchester Health Department have collaborated on a joint Domestic Hazardous Waste Collection Day. The two municipalities should institutionalize this joint approach in a formal Intermunicipal Agreement.**

In the recent past there had been a regional, cooperative procurement of Domestic Hazardous Waste Collection (Site Set Up) and Disposal Services. The most recent contract expired, and the contract could not be renewed through a subsequent regional, cooperative effort. As a result, collection and disposal costs for domestic hazardous waste increased significantly. The Towns of Manchester by the Sea and Essex had been participating in the regional procurement. To provide some relief from the increased fixed costs of setting up and overseeing the collection sites in each town, Manchester by the Sea health department and the Essex department of public works, who carry out these domestic hazardous waste collections in their respective communities, are moving towards a joint collection effort in which they spread those fixed costs between the two towns. The plan being advanced in the year ahead is to conduct one collection event in Manchester by the Sea for the benefit of each town. While the towns can jointly share the fixed costs, each town will remain responsible for the disposal costs associated with products delivered by their respective residents.

## Community Planning and Natural Resource Preservation

### Planning

Essex employs a part-time planner with knowledge and experience in the Cape Ann and North Shore region. The individual generally works five hours per week and sometimes up to 10 when circumstances warrant. The focus of the part-time planner is on project management and grant writing opportunities to fund ongoing projects. There is a level of baseline work associated with the MA Green Communities Program consisting of annual and quarterly reporting of energy consumption and progress towards the Town's energy efficiency goals that assures on-going access to the energy grants. Since 2015, Essex has been awarded nearly \$500,000 in Green Community grants to increase its overall energy efficiency. The planner was able to secure a modest District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) program grant through the Metropolitan Area Planning Council that helped fund a Strategic Plan for the Town. That effort led to the creation of a Strategic Plan containing nine major strategic goals for the Town, which in turn has created a focus for further successful grant writing on projects to advance those goals, including a \$15,000 Main Street grant to conduct a parking study in the town center area and another \$15,000 grant to review the Town's current set of Zoning By-laws. Within these limited hours, the planner supports several citizen or stakeholder-based initiatives important to the Town, including the volunteer Strategic Planning and Economic Development committees and a housing coalition that arose out of a CHAPA technical assistance grant to evaluate a broad range of housing issues in Essex. The Economic Development Committee is presently working on drafting an Economic Development Plan and is guiding a recent Town appropriation to provide more organized parking striping and wayfinding signage in the downtown area. The planner maintains a relationship with the Essex Planning Board, but they successfully manage their responsibilities without significant help from the planner.

Manchester by the Sea employs a part-time planner. The position had been budgeted in the past at 18 hours per week. Hours for the planner have been gradually increased to 35 hours per week. As a result of this increase, the planner now attends at least one Planning Board meeting a month and Zoning Board of Appeals meetings occasionally. The additional hours also allow more attention to be paid towards larger, future-oriented planning for the community, along with grant writing to support planning and other capital projects. The Town has been updating its Master Plan and will shortly complete that task at which point the planner will begin playing more of a role in plan implementation and follow up work on recommendations. Manchester is also a Green Community and has received two grant rounds totaling over \$300,000. The planner works closely with the regional planning agency which has supplied a significant amount of technical assistance in the crafting of the Master Plan. The Town Planner also provides staff support to the Manchester Affordable Housing Trust.

### Conservation Commission

The Essex Conservation Commission consists of seven volunteer members appointed by the Board of Selectmen to approximately staggered three-year terms. Its largest responsibility is the administration and enforcement of the MA Wetlands Protection Act. It undertakes a variety of local activity related to the preservation of open space and the protection of natural resources in Essex. The commission is supported by a part-time Conservation Agent who is employed to work an average of 5.5 hours per week to provide professional and technical services related to the commission's work. Most if not all of the administrative support to the Conservation Commission is provided by an Administrative Clerk who works directly with the Chairman on such administrative matters. The Administrative Clerk currently works 19 hours per week.

The incumbent Conservation Agent is the former Conservation Agent for the City of Gloucester, where he had worked as an employee on a full-time basis and provided both technical and administrative support to the Gloucester Conservation Commission. In Essex, his work is largely carried out in the field performing site visits and inspections and also in technical review meetings on pending wetlands applications. He believes that the current arrangement for professional/technical services and administrative support works very well for Essex but also thinks the opportunity probably exists in the future to share positions with a nearby community if the opportunity arose.

The Manchester by the Sea Conservation Commission also consists of seven members appointed by the Board of Selectmen to staggered three-year terms. The commission is supported by a part-time Conservation Administrator who works 27 hours per week providing professional and technical support to the commission. The staff to the commission also includes a part-time Administrative Assistant who works 5.5 hours per week and a Grant Administrator who works eight hours per week on conservation related projects and general town-wide projects.

The Conservation Administrator believes that generally things are managed well given workloads and overall activity within the office. The commission shares space with the Planning Board/Director which creates some benefits in terms of serving the public and walk-in inquiries. She believes that she and the commission have not had as much time as they would like to add land acquisition planning and management of existing land assets. She also commented on a sizeable increase in the number of Certificates of Compliances issued during calendar year 2018. The number of Certificates issued jumped by 50% during 2018.

## Inspectional Services

MGL c 143 s. 3 requires that every city or town in the Commonwealth “shall employ and designate an inspector of buildings or building commissioner as well as such other local inspectors as are reasonably necessary ... to administer and enforce the state building code...” and a variety of other statutes and regulations. The statute also establishes the qualifications for these positions.

Two or more communities may petition the county commissioners to assign a single individual to serve a building commissioner among the communities and apportion the costs of doing so. The same shared arrangement and apportionment can be accomplished through an intermunicipal agreement.

The Town of Essex employs the Building Commissioner from the City of Gloucester on a part-time, afterhours basis. This is a five to seven hour a week arrangement. The individual is an hourly employee of the Town.

The Town of Manchester by the Sea employs the Building Commissioner from Rockport on a similar, part-time, off-hours basis. This is an 18 hours per week arrangement. The individual is also an hourly employee.

These part-time arrangements leave each town vulnerable in the event of the departure of either incumbent, raising the question of whether a qualified individual might be found to perform the functions on a similar basis.

### **Recommendation 6.1:**

**The towns of Essex and Manchester could replace these individual arrangements with an Intermunicipal Agreement, either:**

- 1. Between themselves to jointly hire a qualified single individual to serve as the Inspector of Buildings/Building Commissioner for a combined total of 15 - 20 hours per week; or**
- 2. Between themselves, the City of Gloucester, and the Town of Rockport, creating in essence a regional Municipal Inspection Program. (See the Franklin County Cooperative Inspection Program for an example of such a program.)**

Franklin County Cooperative Inspection Program (FCCIP) was formed in 1975 and merged with the Franklin County Council of Governments in 2004 and operates under an IMA in place with 15 towns in Franklin County. The program is funded by the participating towns based upon an agreed upon assessment formula. The FCCIP enforces the Massachusetts state building code, as well as plumbing, gas, and wiring regulations, and conducts inspections of public buildings and places of assembly.

## Public Health

The public health function in Essex and in Manchester by the Sea is overseen by a local Board of Health, an organizational approach mandated by M.G.L. c. 111, s 27A-27C. Boards of Health in Massachusetts are required by state and local laws and regulations to perform many critical duties related to the protection of public health. These duties cover a wide range of public health prevention, inspection, permitting, health services activities, including disease surveillance; the promotion of sanitary conditions in housing, recreational facilities, and food establishments; elimination of nuisances; the protection of the environment; and numerous other responsibilities. The legislative history of reliance on local governments to perform these duties reflects a belief that many critical health problems are best handled by local officials familiar with local communities and conditions. As an alternative, Boards of Health and municipal health departments may form regional health districts for the purpose of enhancing public health services, creating a more coordinated and efficient use of resources, and receiving certain grants. The creation of such a district or any other 'cross jurisdictional agreement' (Intermunicipal Agreement) requires both the approval of the local governing body, as well as the Board of Health itself.<sup>3</sup>

The Town of Essex chooses to elect the three members of its Board of Health. Each member serves a staggered three-year term. Currently, two of its three members are medical doctors. The department itself is staffed by a full-time Health Administrator, who is a Registered Sanitarian/Title V Inspector in Massachusetts. The department is also supported by a part-time Public Health Nurse, who works approximately six hours per week, and a full-time Administrative Assistant. The department enters into an annual contract for periodic food safety inspections which provides for approximately 200 hours of inspections of restaurants and food handling establishments each year. The health administrator indicated that the major activities of the department include monitoring such food establishments carried out by its contractor, performing subsurface sewer system inspections, and a wide variety of traditional public health prevention and reporting activities, for instance, influenza immunization and infectious disease reporting. The administrator also participates in regional planning activities and emergency health preparedness.

The Essex Health Department participates in several regional collaborations, including the regional Mass. In Motion grant, the Cape Ann Substance Abuse Initiative, and regional Public Health Emergency Preparedness.

The Board of Selectmen in Manchester by the Sea appoints five people to its Board of Health, each serving three-year terms on a staggered basis. Two of these members are currently a medical doctor and one is a registered nurse. The department is supported by an Administrative Assistant who is budgeted to work an average of 26 hours per week and a Public Health Nurse who works an average of 10 hours per week. These are averages for budget purposes and the actual hours worked vary according with week to week workloads.

The department has a contract with a private vendor for the testing, review, and inspections associated with the approval of subsurface sewage disposal systems outside of the municipal sewer district under Title V of the state sanitary code. The department reports that the level of septic system repairs, upgrades, and replacements increased dramatically since 1997 and continues at high levels as homeowners and builders improve, expand, and replace existing, older housing stock requiring compliance with more recent amendments to Title V.

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<sup>3</sup> Manual of Laws and Regulations Relating to Boards of Health, MA Department of Public Health, January 2010

The Manchester Health Department conducts restaurant and food establishment inspections twice per year as required by the State Sanitary Code and more often in response to a complaint or report of a condition. The department also conducts routine testing of six public bathing beaches, which are tested for water quality on a weekly basis during the summer season, and three semipublic swimming pools which are tested on a regular basis throughout the course of the year (in addition to being licensed annually and inspected twice per year). The department engages in a wide variety of public health programs, including immunizations, infectious disease reporting, and participation in regional substance abuse programs for children and young adults.

Both Manchester and Essex have a history of having participated in a regional procurement for the services for the collection of domestic hazardous waste materials. Over the course of approximately 25 years, more than twenty municipalities, including Essex and Manchester, participated in this regional procurement. In the last procurement, however, the group was unsuccessful in securing the services of a vendor on acceptable terms and conditions and the larger regional collaboration came to an end due to high costs associated with the program. As this review was being conducted, the towns of Essex and Manchester were planning to conduct a shared domestic hazardous waste collection day at the Manchester Wastewater Treatment Plant. This event was held on April 27, 2019.

The towns of Essex and Manchester by the Sea, together, with the Town of Hamilton, have a history of having shared a regional health agent between 1984 and 1997. At the present time, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council is working with communities in the North Shore region and helping to guide an early stage discussion of how communities in the region might work together on public health issues and consider the creation of a North Shore Regional Public Health Collaboration.

### **Mass. Special Commission on Local and Regional Public Health**

The Massachusetts state legislature recently created a Special Commission of Local and Regional Public Health in Massachusetts. The Commission released its report in May 2019, titled *Recommendations for Improved Effectiveness and Efficiencies in Local Public Health Protections for Massachusetts*. The report notes that Massachusetts, in relying upon each of its 351 cities and towns to carry out local public health programs, operates under the most fragmented public health systems in the nation. It likewise found that due to budget resources and capacity constraints, many cities and towns struggle to meet the statutorily mandated public health activities and programs, let alone meeting the more rigorous national standards for an effective public health system. Among the recommendations contained in its report, the Special Commission included:

1. Establishment of the list of *National Foundational Public Health Services* both as a statement of the minimum set of public health services that every Massachusetts can expect to receive and as a means of calculating the expected costs associated with providing those services; and
2. Active promotion of ‘cross jurisdictional sharing’, either through formal public health districts or cross jurisdictional agreements to strengthen local public health service delivery locally, create economies of scale, and provide for improved coordination in public health planning and programing.

### **OSHA Compliance/Division of Industrial Accidents Grant**

Effective February 1, 2019, an amendment to M.G.L. C. 149 s.6 ½ established a requirement for public sector employee safety, ensuring municipalities are adhering to the same safety standards outlined by the Federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) rules and regulations. These standards are outlined in the OSHA Workplace Safety and Health Program (WSHP). Responsibility for compliance falls

on each municipality and this new law is enforced by the Massachusetts Department of Labor Standards (DLS).

In response to these new requirements, the Town of Essex expanded the duties of its Public Health Agent to include safety coordinator duties to ensure they are meeting the standards as outlined in the law. This includes working with department heads to conduct self-audit inspections of all municipal buildings (Town Hall, Senior Center, DPW Garage, Water Treatment Plant, and the existing Public Safety building), as well as tracking employee training and injury records. Essex was successful in achieving this with the assistance of its insurance provider, the Mass. Interlocal Insurance Association (MIIA), and the templates MIIA provided. In addition, MIIA also has an online training platform with department specific courses that are offered at no additional charge to municipal employees.

Finally, the Town of Essex has applied for a grant through the Department of Industrial Accidents (DIA) to work on some of the training requirements outlined in the new safety standards, specifically for its Department of Public Works. The Essex Department of Public Works (DPW) operates heavy equipment and large construction vehicles, including plow trucks under a variety of difficult and hazardous conditions. While the Town has been fortunate to not have experienced a serious safety-related work incident, there is always room to improve operations and reinforce best practices in order to reduce the opportunity for injury to occur. Any such effort to protect workers from on the job accidents and injury can only benefit the Town through lower insurance premiums.

The Town of Manchester by the Sea recently made the decision to join Essex in submitting this grant application. The application seeks funding for certification of 25 DPW employees from the two municipalities in OSHA sanctioned 10-hour Construction and Safety course, as well as with additional job-specific training on occupational exposures such as confined space, prevention and protection from falls, protection from hazardous energy sources (e.g., lock-out/tag-out) practices, defensive driving, hearing protection, and personal protective equipment. The OSHA-10 certification will allow all DPW employees in Essex and Manchester to have a general awareness level knowledge of all the safety topics mentioned above, while providing more extensive training on the hazards that exist relative to specific job responsibilities.

#### **North Shore Hospitals Regional Community Health Needs Assessment**

Community hospitals in Massachusetts are required to periodically conduct regional community health assessments to assure that they are meeting the needs of residents in their service areas. North Shore hospitals recently completed such an assessment and included a variety of findings and recommendations related to the emotional and mental health needs of children and young adults.

#### **Recommendation 7.1:**

**Essex and Manchester by the Sea should evaluate the establishment of a public health district under the provisions of MGL c. 111, ss. or similar ‘cross jurisdictional agreement’ such as an Intermunicipal Agreement. They should pursue this either between themselves or in discussion with additional communities in the Cape Ann and North Shore area. The Metropolitan Area Planning Council is available to assist at least the early stages in these discussions.**

**Recommendation 7.2:**

Essex and Manchester should jointly monitor further developments in implementing the recommendations of the Special Commission of Local and Regional Public Health and evaluate the implications of the National Foundational Public Health Services and associated standards and implications for local public health service offerings. Understanding the true scope of the NFPHS standards would be helpful in evaluating the current levels of public health services in their communities and how a shared regional approach might address any identified gaps in services. The Special Commission's report is likely to create impetus for expanded regional collaboration and regional organizational approaches meeting the National Foundational standards.

**Recommendation 7.3:**

Essex and Manchester by the Sea should jointly review their respective contractual approaches to subsurface sewer (septic) systems in the case of Manchester and restaurant and food safety inspections in Essex and Manchester and consider pursuing joint, cooperative procurement of these services and others.

**Recommendation 7.4:**

Essex and Manchester should formalize their emerging collaboration on OSHA work place safety in the form of a written IMA setting forth the details and other terms and conditions of this new collaboration and should consider expanding the scope of IMA to include other risk management/loss prevention activities that would beneficially impact insurance premiums. If other municipalities join the collaboration in the future, they should become parties to the IMA.

**Recommendation 7.5**

Essex and Manchester Boards of Health, together with the Essex Youth Services Commission and Manchester Parks and Recreation, may be interested in the recently completed Regional Community Health Needs Assessment performed by hospitals in the region and consider a shared initiative in partnership with the Manchester Essex Regional School District to address its findings concerning the emotional and mental health needs of children. (See Youth Services/Recreation recommendation below.)

## Public Library

Essex and Manchester each operate established public libraries within their respective communities. The public library system in Massachusetts is highly integrated into a statewide library network. The statewide network is in turn organized into nine regional public library networks. The Essex and Manchester Public Libraries are members of the Merrimack Valley Library Consortium, a regional network serving 36 communities in portions of Essex and Middlesex counties. By virtue of their membership in Merrimack Valley Library Consortium, a resident holding a library card in either Essex or Manchester has access to the complete collections available throughout the region and, ultimately as a last resort, throughout Massachusetts. This longstanding regional arrangement results in high levels of efficiency and responsiveness on the part of member libraries, allowing each individual library to shape that community's collection on a prioritized basis to meet the unique needs and preference of local subscribers knowing that the access to other collections across the MVLC and Massachusetts assures ready access to other titles and materials not immediately available in the local library. The consortium also acts regionally to support participating libraries in a variety of ways such as training and development, joint purchasing, and other cooperative practices.

## Council on Aging and Senior Services

Essex and Manchester by the Sea each appoint an eleven-member Council on Aging to oversee programs serving senior citizens within their communities. Each council works to provide an array of important social, health, nutritional, transportation, and similar services to help senior citizens maintain a strong quality of life and remain active in their communities through various stages of aging and life.

The Council on Aging in Essex is supported by a part-time Director who is budgeted to work 19 hours per week. With the exception of a seven-month period in 2016, the Director has been with Council since 2015. The Council operates a senior citizens' drop-in center which is open from 9:00 AM until 1:00 PM on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. During the summer of 2019, the center was not open on Wednesdays but began opening on Wednesdays again after Labor Day 9:00 AM until Noon. Due to the layout of the Center, programming can be problematic, as it is difficult to conduct two events at the same time. At present, however, the Director manages to make things work.

In Manchester by the Sea, the Council on Aging is supported by a fulltime Director of Senior Services. While it does not operate a Senior Center at present, planning for one is underway. As of this writing, a site for such a Senior Center has been identified and the Town has made early contact with the owner. Fundraising to support a center will be in earnest when those discussions lead to a written purchase and sale agreement.

Among the services provided to local senior citizens by the respective Councils on Aging in Essex and Manchester by the Sea are transportation services, which are important to seniors who no longer drive and need transportation to doctors' appointments and other important events. In interviews with the Director and the Chair of the Essex Council on Aging, it was learned that the provision of these types of transportation services has been a struggle since the Council had concluded that it could no longer operate and maintain its own municipal vehicle. It recently entered into a contract with Beauport Ambulance services to provide these services. In similar discussions with the Director of Senior Services, it was learned that Manchester by the Sea owns and operates several municipal vehicles for this same purpose. The Director felt that there was probably capacity to assist the Essex Council of Aging in improving its efforts to meet transportation needs. This subject was among several communicated to the two municipalities in late March in a 'recommended early actions' memo and since that time the two councils have entered into a sharing arrangement involving the Manchester vehicles. This sharing arrangement is expected to begin in late August 2019 and will offer service as a supplement to the service provided by Beauport Ambulance. Additionally, the towns have received a grant through the state's 'Mass in Motion' program that will help provide transportation services to improve access for senior to healthier foods and physical fitness programs in the area.

In discussions with staff in each community, it was acknowledged that seniors in each of the communities identify very strongly with their local community and neighborhoods, and that sentiment is often a challenge to promoting increased sharing.

**Recommendation 8.1:**

Manchester and Essex should continue their early efforts at sharing vehicles and related resources in order to improve the access to transportation and lower the overall costs per trip through better utilization of the vehicles. Ideally, this arrangement should result in a written IMA between the two towns. Given the similarities in the types of services that each council seeks to provide its senior citizens, the IMA should be structured to encourage ongoing exploration of other areas of shared delivery of services.

**Recommendation 8.2:**

While acknowledging that cultural sentiments within each community may serve as a barrier to physically sharing a regional Senior Center, Manchester and Essex Councils on Aging might consider joint planning and program design/evaluation discussions on their respective needs and goals related to improving or opening a center.

## Youth Services and Recreation

The Town of Essex has established a seven-member Youth Commission, whose members serve on a volunteer basis. The commission was established for the purpose of establishing and operating a program of youth services in Essex. The commission is supported by a part-time Youth Commission Director who is budgeted to work 19 hours per week. The Director began work with the town and commission in 2018. The work associated with developing a youth program in Essex is underway, and much of the early work has focused on completing a Needs Assessment to guide the development of program activities. One early need that has been established by the department is the fact that upon the completion of fifth grade in the Essex Elementary School, Essex children move to a combined Manchester Essex Middle School, located in Manchester by the Sea, where Essex children establish friendships with Manchester children of Middle School age. In planning after school activities in Essex, the Youth Commission has found that Essex children would like to see activities that would include their friends from Manchester. The commission faces a logistical challenge around transportation in considering how to respond to that desire.

Among the other early priorities established by the Youth Commission are:

- An 'early release from school' program for children on those days when there is only a half day of school.
- Identifying space for a youth center or other gathering place for children after school.
- Engaging pre-teens (11-12 years of age) and older teens (13-15) in the planning around their specific needs and desires for youth programming.
- Encouraging donations, including materials and supplies for program.
- Developing a web-based capability to promote their programming.

Manchester by the Sea has a Parks and Recreation Department under the guidance of a five-member Parks and Recreation Committee. The Parks and Recreation Department is staffed by a full-time Parks and Recreation Director, as well as a full-time Program Director who assists in organizing a range of programs which rely upon properties and facilities provided by the town and school district.

One of the larger programs run by Manchester Parks and Recreation is a licensed After School Program for Kindergarten through Grade 5 students. A sample of the athletic programs that are organized in Manchester by the Sea by volunteer Manchester and Essex Boards include lacrosse, soccer, football, baseball, and softball. As these programs have expanded in the number of participants, the availability of facilities to accommodate the growth has become a problem. There has been some discussion of taking advantage of more playing fields in Essex, as well as researching additional field space in Essex to meet this facilities crunch. The programs in question serve the youth of both Manchester and Essex on athletic fields largely located in Manchester by the Sea. There is an opportunity to expand use of these assets for active recreational uses benefiting each town.

The Parks and Recreation Department also provides a variety of youth-oriented programming such as programs for middle school aged children and after school programming for children of Manchester by the Sea. One would expect that same desire among middle school aged children and older to include friends from school who live in Essex in some of these activities. All Manchester Parks and Recreation Programs are open to Essex residents as well at no additional fee. Many Essex residents participate in Manchester Parks and Recreation Summer programs.

Lastly, the Parks and Recreation Department operates several town beaches, including the staffing of lifeguards and Beach Facility Attendants at Singing Beach.

**Recommendation 9.1:**

Essex and Manchester by the Sea should pursue an Intermunicipal Agreement providing for joint cooperation between the two towns in the area of youth services, recreational programs, and athletic programs. There is great potential to leverage differing but complementary approaches to youth and recreational programming in each community to the benefit of both communities. Since children from Essex and Manchester will all largely attend the Manchester Essex Regional School District, the towns should invite the MERSD to participate in the agreement.

**Recommendation 9.2:**

The Health Departments and Youth/Parks and Recreation Department should jointly review a recently completed regional Community Health Needs Assessment completed by several Cape Ann/North Shore hospitals that has led to an improved understanding of the mental health needs and problems of children and young adults in the Cape Ann Region. Again, the Manchester Essex Regional School District should be invited to participate.

## Regional Energy Initiative – On Bill Credit Adjustment/SMART program

The Massachusetts legislature recently enacted and the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources recently implemented a new clean energy initiative named the Solar MA Renewables Target (SMART) to create the next iteration of state government support for further development of solar energy generation. It does so through a new, on-electric-bill crediting system that will help solar developers provide deeper savings on customers' electric bills. The new program, known as Alternative On Bill Credits (AOBC), allows solar developers to allocate solar net metering credits to multiple offsite customer accounts, including municipal governments and facilities, and for the first time have those net metering credits valued at the full value of the existing electric supply component of their bill. Since the credits are applied directly to the bill, there is no need to change electrical suppliers. These contracts between a municipality and a solar developer are an important financial tool for developing a solar generation facility. However, there is no actual outlay or commitment until the facility is constructed and generating electricity.

The Town of Manchester by the Sea has conducted its due diligence of this new program and recently entered into an Alternative on Bill Credit agreement with Sunraise Solar and expects to see a substantial savings on electricity costs. It has shared its analysis and experience in evaluating this program with the Town of Essex, and Essex is presently awaiting a chance to subscribe to a future Sunraise project.

### **Recommendation 10.1:**

**Essex should continue to evaluate the benefits of participating in the recently created Alternative On-bill Renewable Energy Credits program in MA with the assistance of Manchester. The two towns may wish to consult with MAPC and its North Shore Task Force on how this program might support that organization's sustainable energy and carbon reduction goals in the North Shore.**

## Regional North Shore Dredging Equipment Initiative

State Senator Bruce Tarr has been leading an effort to create a regional entity stretching from Cape Ann to the New Hampshire state line to assist coastal communities in lowering the costs of local coastal dredging of harbors, estuaries, and rivers. Last year, the Baker/Polito administration created a \$50 million grant program to assist coastal communities with these unique costs. Senator Tarr envisions a regional proposal for the purchase and ongoing ownership of dredging equipment. While each municipality would continue to absorb its share of the operation of the equipment, initial subsidized purchase and shared ownership of the equipment itself would lower each municipality's total cost of dredging. The Northeast Coastal Coalition, which includes communities ranging from Manchester by the Sea to Salisbury, may be the vehicle for supporting this effort, which may transition in the future to a specialized, council of governments-type organization. Both Essex and Manchester by the Sea are part of this new coalition and should continue to be active participants.

### **Recommendation 10.2:**

**Essex and Manchester by the Sea should continue participate in this initiative and lend support to the creation of a regional entity that would purchase, own and maintain the dredging equipment. This initiative should be formalized in an Intermunicipal Agreement once the effort is complete.**

## Ipswich Electric Light Department Equipment and Streetlight Maintenance

With the purchase of existing streetlight fixtures, which in turn will allow Essex to convert streetlights to LED technology in 2019, Essex became responsible for the maintenance of the light fixtures. Manchester has already completed the identical project. Neither town owns the type of utility bucket truck required for this maintenance and lacks the manpower (presumably in the DPW) to perform the task. Both towns are in discussion with the Ipswich Municipal Light Department to provide these maintenance and repair functions on a time plus materials basis.

### **Recommendation 10.3:**

**Manchester and Essex should finalize the arrangements with the Ipswich Municipal Light Department for streetlight maintenance and formalize the terms of the arrangement in a written Intermunicipal Agreement.**

## Cape Ann Housing Partnership

At the joint kickoff meeting for this shared services study on January 31, 2019, the subject of housing affordability was raised as a topic of concern and as a hope that the project would explore regional approaches to promoting affordable housing. The Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce has been hosting meetings to explore regional approaches to the challenge of housing affordability in the region. The Chamber has periodically held follow-up meetings during the course of this study. The Cape Ann Chamber hopes to identify consensus on what a regional approach to affordable housing might undertake as activities and tasks. This consensus could then be compared to regional models and examples elsewhere.

Interest continues to be expressed in formalizing a regional organization in the Cape Ann to promote the expanded development of affordable housing in the region. The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) has been active in the greater Boston area in promoting such regional approaches and has assisted several subregions within its service area in forming Regional Housing Services Organizations to perform housing services for those communities participating in the organization. The RHSO operates under the terms of the written Intermunicipal Agreement, including the formula for assessing members for its share of the costs of the organization.

One such RHSO is the North of Boston Regional Shared Housing Project, serving the communities of Danvers, North Reading, Reading, Saugus, and Wilmington. Danvers serves as the lead community under the Intermunicipal Agreement. The communities were assisted by the MAPC and a sample IMA is available through that organization. MAPC assisted these communities

Similarly, MAPC assisted eight municipalities in the Metro West region in forming an RHSO to perform a variety of housing services for individual members who choose on an 'a la carte' basis what services they desire and for how many hours. They are then invoiced annually for the work done on their behalf.

A necessary condition to formalizing a RHSO is to determine what specific activities the region would like to undertake or would like the RHSO to undertake for them. MAPC is a resource to assist in that task. A follow-on consideration, depending on the intensity of the work to be undertaken by the RHSO, is a funding source within the participating communities to cover the costs associated with the work.

### **Recommendation 10.4:**

**The Town of Essex and the Essex Housing Coalition and the Town of Manchester by the Sea and the Manchester Affordable Housing Trust should continue to refine what activities they believe will promote the development of increased levels of affordable housing in their respective communities and which of those activities might be undertaken on a shared basis regionally. At that point, the option of creating a Regional Housing Services Organization to assist in carrying out these activities might be discussed with MPAC.**

## Coastal Resiliency and Municipal Readiness

Both Manchester by the Sea and Essex are actively engaged in regional coastal resiliency and climate adaptation activities. The risks associated with rising sea levels manifest themselves in different ways in each community. Essex on the one hand has a substantial marshland and river environment representing one set of risks, while Manchester by the Sea has a coastline consisting of rocky outcrops and ledges. Nevertheless, each community recently became certified under the MA Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) grants program. Essex has received two MVP Action Grants and is presently wrapping up work with respect to those projects. Manchester by the Sea has received one grant related to storm surge enhanced flooding on Sawmill Brook and is working on a second application related to this first effort. Each is now eligible to apply for grants to address specific aspects of their unique vulnerabilities. Therefore, they should move collaboratively to understand their approaches and solutions and look for opportunities to work collaboratively whenever possible.

## **Appendix A: Regional and Shared Services Arrangements Currently in Place**

### **Manchester and Essex:**

- Manchester Essex Regional School District
- Vocational Education (Essex North Shore Agricultural & Technical School District)
- North Shore Joint Purchasing Consortium for road salt/chemicals
- Formal Mutual Aid Agreements – Police and Fire
- Age and Dementia Friendly Community Initiative
- Senior Van Services
- Household Hazardous Waste Day
- Maintenance of streetlights by the Town of Ipswich (Beginning soon)
- Retirement System – Essex Regional Retirement District
- Fire Explorers
- Emergency Planning (Cape Ann Emergency Planning Team (Also includes Ipswich))
- Healthy Eating and Lifestyle (Cape Ann ‘Mass in Motion’)

### **Essex:**

- Shared sewer camera with Town of Rockport
- Water Interconnection with Gloucester and Hamilton
- Wastewater Treatment Agreement with the City of Gloucester
- Eastern Essex Veterans Services District (Essex, Hamilton, Georgetown, Ipswich, Newbury, Rowley, Wenham, West Newbury)
- Building Commissioner – Off hours use of the Gloucester Building Official
- Town Planner – Off hours use of a Newburyport City official
- Assessor – Elected official but also off hours use of a Danvers professional assessor.
- IT Services - Support and disaster recovery, provided by Town of Danvers.
- Shared patrol of Chebacco Lake with Hamilton officials.
- Emergency Dispatch – provided by North Shore Regional 911 Center.
- Greenhead Fly Control – Northeast Mosquito Management District

### **Manchester:**

- Building Inspector: Off hours with Rockport
- Electrical Inspector: Off hours with Gloucester
- Water Supply back-up: Beverly and Gloucester interconnection
- Animal Control Officer (1/2 time position) shared with Hamilton
- Mosquito Control Collaborative
- Veterans’ Services (Gloucester/Rockport/Manchester Veterans’ District)

## ***ABOUT THE CENTER***

The Edward J. Collins, Jr. Center for Public Management in the McCormack Graduate School of Policy and Global Studies at the University of Massachusetts Boston was established in 2008 to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of all levels of government. The Center is funded by the Commonwealth and through fees charged for its services.



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