



Dan Fox, Chair
M. C. Moses Grader
Erin M. Noonan
Alexa J. Singer
James R. Zisson

Office of the
SELECT BOARD
ABBOT HALL
188 Washington Street
MARBLEHEAD, MASSACHUSETTS 01945

Thatcher W. Kezer III
Town Administrator

MEMORANDUM

To: Select Board
From: Thatcher Kezer, Town Administrator
Date: September 23, 2025
Re: Town Administrator Update

This memorandum provides a consolidated summary of key ongoing projects, operational updates, and upcoming initiatives currently underway across town departments.

Fiber Network Transition

The Town's switchover to the new municipal fiber network is scheduled for **September 28**. Engineers will be on-site at Abbot Hall, the Fire Department, Police Department, Highway Department, and other critical facilities during the transition to confirm system functionality. Department heads were asked to remain vigilant and test applications tied to the network, including security cameras, swipe box entry systems, and dispatch software, to ensure uninterrupted service. Town staff and IT contractors will continue monitoring closely throughout the process to minimize disruption.

This fiber project was made possible through **American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding**, which the Town allocated to create a **new municipal fiber loop** connecting all municipal facilities, water and sewer pump stations, and major intersections. The investment is designed to **significantly improve bandwidth and provide redundancy** across the municipal network, strengthening both daily operations and emergency resiliency.

An additional goal of this infrastructure improvement is to enhance **public meeting accessibility**. The expanded bandwidth and redundant connections will support the Town's capacity to **video stream Select Board, School Committee, and other board and committee meetings**, building on the recommendations of the **Article 44 Committee established by the 2022 Town Meeting**. That committee studied ways to improve transparency and public access to local government, and the fiber project provides the technological foundation needed to carry that work forward.

Elevator Projects – Abbot Hall and Old Town House

The long-awaited **Abbot Hall elevator modernization project** is in its final stage. A pre-inspection has already been completed with positive results, and the project is now awaiting the official state inspection. Once approved, the elevator will return to full service, restoring accessibility for staff and the public.

At the same time, the Town is facing significant challenges with the **accessibility lift at the Old Town House**. The lift has reached the end of its life cycle, is failing more often than it is operational, and cannot support the frequency of runs needed for public events and elections at the building. Numerous maintenance calls have been required to temporarily restore service, but the equipment is no longer reliable. This creates risk of violating **ADA requirements** if all floors are not consistently accessible.

As a result, the Town may need to **limit future events at the Old Town House** until a permanent solution is identified. Staff will be analyzing the costs of full replacement and developing options for consideration in the next iteration of the **Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)**.

Beauport Ambulance Performance

As previously reported to the Select Board, **Beauport Ambulance officially assumed ambulance service in Marblehead on August 15**. In its first full month of operation, Beauport responded to **97 calls** with an **average response time of 7.5 minutes**, reflecting strong service capacity and efficiency.

The Fire Chief expressed his satisfaction with Beauport's early performance, noting both the **positive reporting metrics** and the **absence of resident complaints**. The quality of service has been described as excellent, with Beauport staff successfully handling multiple back-to-back emergency calls without interruption in coverage.

Beauport Ambulance will soon be relocating operations to **8 Sewall Street**, the former location of the Town's previous ambulance vendor, once upgrades to the facility are completed. In the interim, **temporarily hosting Beauport at the Fire Station** has proven beneficial, as it allowed fire personnel and ambulance staff to work closely together from the outset. This arrangement helped foster strong **relationships, communication, and trust** between the two teams, which will be essential as they continue to respond side-by-side to emergency medical situations in the community.

Village Street Bridge Replacement Project (MassDOT Project No. 612947)

The **Village Street Bridge Replacement Project** has now advanced to the **25% design review stage with MassDOT**, marking a key milestone in this critical infrastructure effort. As part of the 25% submission, the Town received correspondence on **September 8, 2025**, from Greenman-Pedersen, Inc. (GPI) addressed to the Select Board. This letter initiates the required **early environmental coordination and public outreach process**.

The **Village Street Bridge (M-04-001)**, constructed in 1939, spans the Marblehead Rail Trail and Highland Terrace. It is a **structurally deficient bridge** that has exceeded its useful life and now presents safety and accessibility challenges. The bridge serves as a vital east–west route for local traffic, provides an **emergency access corridor for fire apparatus**, and carries a **water main** that is essential to Town operations. Its replacement is necessary to prevent further deterioration and to ensure the continued safety and reliability of the roadway and supporting infrastructure.

The project scope includes the **removal of the existing superstructure and replacement with a precast concrete rigid frame bridge**, widened sidewalks, ADA-compliant curb ramps, striped shoulders, and roadway improvements from Byors Road to Heritage Way. The design also proposes realignment of the off-street access path to the Marblehead Rail Trail and staged construction that will maintain alternating one-way traffic on Village Street while temporarily closing the rail trail underpass.

MassDOT has determined that the project is **eligible for Federal Aid highway funding**, with an estimated Total Federal Participating Construction Cost (TFPCC) of **\$4.45 million**. Final funding decisions will be made by the **Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)** as part of its Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Projects such as this typically take **several years to advance through the MPO’s approval and funding process**, requiring continued design progression, environmental permitting, and right-of-way coordination.

At the same time, the Town recognizes the importance of our **MBTA 3A zoning compliance status**. We will continue to work with MassDOT and state officials to determine what, if any, impact non-compliance may have on the progress and prioritization of this project within the MPO process. Despite this uncertainty, staff will remain focused on advancing the design and keeping this **critical project moving forward** through each stage of the state and federal review process.

The replacement of the Village Street Bridge will address significant structural deficiencies, improve accessibility and safety for all users, and preserve an essential emergency and utility route. Staff will continue to update the Select Board as the project advances through MassDOT’s milestones and the MPO’s funding process.