

# Town Manager's Report Monday, December 3, 2012

**To: Board of Selectmen**  
**From Christopher Whelan, Town Manager**

Following are some of the matters reported on this week by various Town Departments:

## **FINANCE**

**FY13 Tax Rate set by Selectmen at \$14.07 for all property classes; Tax Rate Recapitulation and supporting documents reviewed and approved by State Department of Revenue:**

Following a Public Hearing conducted by the Selectmen on Monday, November 19, a FY13 uniform property tax rate was voted by the Board of Selectmen. The rate is calculated at \$14.07, as recommended by the Board of Assessors. On November 27, 2012, the rate was approved by the Department of Revenue.

### ***The FY13 Tax Bill Impact in Perspective***

- 20% of single-family residential parcels will have lower tax bills than in the prior fiscal year;
- 60% of these parcels will have increases less than 2%;
- 62% will have a lower tax bill for the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> quarters of FY13 (due dates of Feb. 1 and May 1 of 2013) than they did for the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> quarters (due dates of Aug. 1 and Nov. 1 of 2012).

### **Reports and Information Available on Website**

The report of the Board of Assessors to the Selectmen, "Tax Rate Analysis, Fiscal Year 2013", the slide presentation from a November 8 Public Forum conducted by the Assessors, and other background information about the valuation process is available on the web page of the Board of Assessors at [www.concordma.gov](http://www.concordma.gov). Access to the Assessor's online database is from the home page of the Town website.

The Assessors are required each year, by state law, to value all property at market value, in this instance using market sales that occurred during calendar year 2011. The analysis is based on consideration of: house style, actual age, price range, lot size, building size, sale date, neighborhood, and construction grade. The process is thoroughly described in "The Assessment Process – FY13" available on the website.

## **Data Submitted to DOR**

Pursuant to the vote of the Board of Selectmen, staff completed and assembled the Tax Rate Recapitulation form and supporting documents which were transmitted to the State Department of Revenue (DOR) on November 19. DOR reviews and verifies all elements of the town's budget enactments and ensures that the adopted tax rate balances the municipal budget and otherwise complies in all respects with State law, including the Property Tax Limitation commonly known as "Proposition 2 ½".

## **Perspectives on the Property Tax Levy**

The property tax levy of \$71,123,429 funds 86.5% of the \$82.3 million General Fund budget enacted at the 2013 Annual Town Meeting. The FY13 General Fund budget, for the period July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2013, is a 2.6% increase over the prior year. About 66% of this spending plan is for expenses related to primary and secondary education.

### ***Equation: Tax Rate Equals Tax Levy Divided by Assessed Value***

The increase in the tax levy, \$2,000,432, is a 2.9% rise. This is less than the 3.6% percent change in the tax rate because the total taxable assessed value of the town has dropped by seven-tenths of a percent, to \$5.055 billion. Since it is the levy rather than the tax rate that is constrained by State law, and since the town's tax levy is at about 96% of the Levy Limit, a decline in the town's taxable value results in a rise in the tax rate. Conversely, rising property values do not create new revenue but rather would result in a lower tax rate.

### ***"New Growth"***

About 60% of the FY13 tax levy increase, \$1,183,336, is derived from "new growth", the value of new construction added to the tax rolls in the 12-month period ending June 30, 2012. Half of this increase is from the Concord Mews development alone. The remainder of the tax levy increase, \$817,096, is an aggregate 1.18% increase on all other taxable property.

Single-family residential parcels account for 76% of the Town-wide assessed value.

The table below shows the tax bill impact at the average and median single-family parcel values for both FY12 and FY13:

	<b>SINGLE-FAMILY PARCELS</b>	
	<b>FY12</b>	<b>FY13</b>
Average value	\$851,674	\$838,804
Tax bill	\$ 11,566	\$ 11,802
Median value	\$677,900	\$669,850
Tax bill	\$ 9,206	\$ 9,425
Tax per \$1,000 of value	\$ 13.58	\$ 14.07
Tax as percent of assessed	1.358%	1.407%

“Average” in this context does not connote “common” or “typical” but, rather, represents the arithmetic only, dividing the total town single family residential value by the total number of single family residential parcels

**Median vs. Average Value:**

- The median single-family parcel value is 80% of the average;
- 68% of the 4,850 single family residential parcels are valued below the average;
- One-quarter of these parcels cluster plus or minus 15% from the median value

FY12 tax rates and those FY13 rates that have thus far been set or projected by communities surrounding Concord are shown in the table below, for comparative purposes (values in parenthesis show the equivalent *Uniform Tax Rate* in communities using differential rates for residential and commercial property):

	FY12			FY13		
	<i>Uniform</i>	<i>Residential</i>	<i>Commercial</i>	<i>Uniform</i>	<i>Residential</i>	<i>Commercial</i>
Acton	\$18.55			<i>not yet available</i>		
Bedford	(\$18.98)	\$15.21	\$33.21	(\$19.31)	\$15.37	\$33.80
Carlisle	\$17.14			\$17.68		
Chelmsford	\$17.49			\$17.95		
<b>Concord</b>	<b>\$13.58</b>			<b>\$14.07</b>		
Lincoln	(\$13.98)	\$13.81	\$18.17	(\$14.40)	\$14.23	\$18.72
Maynard	(\$19.54)	\$18.45	\$27.17	(\$21.23)	\$20.05	\$29.55
Sudbury	(\$17.98)	\$17.60	\$22.95	<i>not yet available</i>		
Wayland	\$19.01			<i>not yet available</i>		
Westford	(\$15.55)	\$15.55	\$15.79	(\$16.13)	\$16.13	\$16.38

**FY14 Budget Guideline issued by Finance Committee**

Following a vote of the Finance Committee at its November 15 meeting and pursuant to a Town Bylaw, the Committee has issued its guidelines for Town and School operating

budgets for the next fiscal year beginning July 1, 2013. The Committee issues its Guideline to the Selectmen and Town Manager as well as to the School Committees (Concord Public Schools and Concord-Carlisle Regional School District) and Superintendent of Schools. The Committee's guidance is advisory only, but the published Guideline is an indication of the budget levels it expects to recommend to the Annual Town Meeting next April. The Guideline is the culmination of work begun in August and a series of meeting with the Town Manager and Superintendent reviewing current and proposed operations.

The Guideline provides for a combined increase of 3.87% in town and school operating budgets for FY2014. The Finance Committee projects that this budget increase would require a 4% increase in property tax bills of which about 1% is attributable to the beginning of debt service on the new High School (a \$30million serial maturity bond, about half of the anticipated total local share to be financed through calendar 2015, is planned to be issued in June 2013).

The full memorandum issued by the Finance Committee is available on the Town website at concordma.gov (under "Committees/Finance Committee") or at the Finance Director's office in the Town House.

## **FIRE**

**Personnel:** Final interviews for the Firefighter/EMT vacancy created by the departure of Scott Wodzinski were conducted last week. A hiring recommendation will be forwarded to the Town manager shortly.

**Other Items:** November 27, the CFD held a public forum at Harvey Wheeler Community Center to discuss the results and recommendations of our recently published EMS Strategic plan. We thank all who attended for a lively and productive discussion.

## **PLANNING & LAND MANAGEMENT**

### **Building Inspection Division**

**Concord Riverwalk Project Completed:** Concord Riverwalk is a 13-unit Planned Residential Development located at 1631-1641 Main Street in West Concord. Last week, Building Inspections staff completed the final inspections on the last dwelling unit of this project; final review of landscaping is expected this week.

**New Plumbing/Gas inspector:** The Concord Building Inspections Division announces that Jim O'Reilly has been appointed as Concord's new principal Plumbing/Gas Inspector. He replaces Dick Doherty who had worked for the Town for the past six years. Jim has been Concord's back-up Plumbing/Gas Inspector for the past two years.

## **Health Division**

**THRIVE: Healthy Concord:** Initially launched on November 19, the Healthy Concord survey has received 472 responses, and we are hoping to hear from many more residents. Everyone is invited to take the on-line survey at:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/HealthyConcord>. Paper copies of the survey are also available at key locations around Concord, including the libraries, COA, Beede Center and Hunt Gym, and the Town House. Please visit the Healthy Concord webpage: [http://www.concordma.gov/Pages/ConcordMA\\_Thrive/index](http://www.concordma.gov/Pages/ConcordMA_Thrive/index) to learn more about healthy communities, view the results of our most recent resident surveys, find links to new surveys, and see progress on Concord's Healthy Community Planning Process.

**Annual License Renewals:** Administrative Assistant Karen Byrne is in the process of issuing annual license renewals for Disposal System Installers, Septic Haulers, Rubbish Haulers, and Registered Title 5 Inspectors.

## **Planning Division**

**Planning Board:** Tuesday night, the Planning Board began their meeting with preparation for their Residence B Zoning District workshop scheduled for December 4 at the Town House. The Board then opened the public hearing on the proposed 8-lot subdivision at 9B Monsen Road, which was continued to January 8 to allow the Applicant time to address staff comments and submit revised plans. The Board then had another in-depth discussion on the TD Bank project at 1112 Main Street, focusing mainly on lighting, hours of operation, on-site circulation and architecture. New information was submitted by the Applicant on Monday and new information was presented at the meeting, so the Board decided to continue the discussion to December 4, to finalize a recommendation to the Board of Appeals.

**Community Preservation Committee:** At their November 26 meeting, the CPC began the final review of this year's requests for funding and began deliberations on the recommendations for funding at the 2013 Annual Town Meeting. The CPC has approximately \$1.2 million in new CPA funds to allocate for projects in 2013, as well as approximately \$400,000 in reserve accounts for Community Housing, Open Space and Land Acquisitions. The CPC is expected to complete their review and vote on recommendations at the next meeting on December 10.

## **POLICE**

**Operational Services:** On Tuesday November 27, officers responded the area of White Pond to take a report of a vehicle that had been broken into. The owner of the vehicle reported to Officer Hodgson that someone had thrown a rock through her window of her vehicle and stolen her purse while she was out walking her dogs first thing in the morning. The area was checked and no evidence was found. Officers processed the vehicle for fingerprints and are following up on several leads which have developed.

On Thursday November 29, officers responded to Goldsmith Jewelers on Main Street for a report of an attempted shoplifting. Officer Moore and Officer Carlton responded to the area and subsequently located the subject involved. After a brief investigation, they determined that the subject had attempted to leave with a \$2000 ring. Officers placed the subject under arrest and transported her back to the police station for processing.

On Friday November 30, Officer Soll took a report from a resident regarding the theft of multiple blank personal checks from his residence. The reporting party stated that, since August, an individual he had hired as a part time house cleaner has been stealing the checks, forging his signature and cashing the checks. The case is currently under investigation.

**Community Services:** On Sunday December 2, Lt. Roy Mulcahy, Lt. Thomas Mulcahy, Officer Carlton, Officer Walsh and Officer Reinold assisted the Chamber Of Commerce with the annual Holiday Parade and tree lighting ceremony in Monument Square. A large turnout was reported. The event went smoothly, and no problems were reported.

## **PUBLIC WORKS**

**Fitchburg Turnpike Culvert:** The CPW-Engineering Division received notice from MEMA that the Town's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) application for the replacement of the Fitchburg Turnpike culvert has been approved by FEMA. The project which includes replacement of the culvert and headwalls as well as embankment grading and paving repairs is estimated to cost \$100,000. The HMGP will provide \$75,000 in federal funds toward project. CPW's Engineering Division completed the in-house design and environmental permitting for the project within 2011. Construction is expected to begin within the low flow season in the summer of 2013.

**2012 Roads Program:** Paving contractor, Lazaro completed paving work on Brook Trail Rd., Brooks St., Byron St., and Grant St. and portions of Elsinore and Belknap Streets. These areas had significant drainage improvements over this construction season and will be left at binder pavement course for the winter to allow the trenches an opportunity to go through the freeze/ thaw cycle. Lazaro will return in the spring to complete the contract work including the balance of the reclaim, grading, paving of the neighborhood and final top course paving, loam and seed, and site cleanup. Lazaro will continue to move toward securing the roads for winter shut down by completing casting adjustments on the newly paved streets, resetting curb on Brook Trail Road and prepping and paving driveway transitions the week of 12/3. With favorable weather in the forecast, drainage subcontractor Fenton is tentatively scheduled to replace certain catch basins on Sudbury Rd and/or Laws Brook Road over the week of 12/3.

**Junction Park:** Cali Corp continues to make progress on the park rehabilitation by installing the stone reservoir and pervious pavers. Cali expects to have all of the hardscape completed by the week of 12/17, and weather permitting will install the Bio-retention area. The week of 11/19, Cali worked with CPW-Water and Sewer Division to install an underground self-retracting watering system as well as placing loam and installing granite

bollards. Erosion control matting was placed on the newly installed sloped loam to allow the “winter mix” growth to establish. The “winter mix” will be tilled in the spring, re-graded and grass seed will be planted to ensure a quality growth is established for the long term. Cali is awaiting delivery of blue stone to cap the sitting walls in the area of the relocated tracks. CPW-Engineering Division also received confirmation that the MBTA has approved the work scheduled on the adjacent property and is in the process of creating a license agreement with the Town in order for Cali to proceed with the proposed work. The project was already being funded largely - in excess of 50% - by grants and donations through various entities. Recently, CPW-Engineering Division was successful in obtaining an additional 15% of grant funding, bringing down the total Town contribution to less than 35% of the total project cost.

**2013 Roads Program:** CPW solicited RFQ’s for survey for the 2013 Roads Program. Contracts are being finalized with the low quote Coneco Engineers and Scientists. CPW expects survey and base plan development to be completed over the next several months once the preliminary roadway list is finalized. This work is, however, weather dependent. CPW will then utilize this survey for in-house design of the roads program over the winter months for a spring bid opening. Upon completion of preliminary design, CPW will begin its annual public outreach effort. Residents will be able to provide comment within the plan development process to ensure that, when possible their concerns will be addressed.

**Main Street Phase III -** CPW solicited RFQ’s for survey services for the Main Street Phase III Project, which is proposed to be funded through the State’s Transportation Improvement Program. Contracts are being finalized with the low quote Coneco Engineers and Scientists. CPW expects survey and base plan generation to be completed by the end of April 2013 or earlier as weather permits. Limits of the survey include 100-feet west on Main Street from the Church Street Intersection to 200-feet east on Main Street from the Old Road to 9 Acre Corner. CPW anticipates hiring an engineering firm over spring/summer to provide preliminary transportation and traffic design options and initial public outreach for project. The preliminary design and analysis will evaluate possible pedestrian, bicycle, signal and geometry upgrades within this section of roadway.