

Town Manager's Report

Monday, October 28, 2013

To: Board of Selectmen
From Christopher Whelan, Town Manager

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

FINANCE

Accounting Office

Annual Audit Examination: Melanson Heath & Company, PC, the Town's external audit firm, has been at the Town House since Monday October 21 to complete their field work portion of the FY13 audit (for the year ended June 30, 2013). This portion of the audit includes reviewing the reconciliations of Cash, Tax Receivables, Warrants Payable and grant activities. The process has gone well to date and the auditors expect to complete their field work on Wednesday October 30. A draft of the Town's audited financial statements for the year ended June 30, 2013 is expected to be available by mid-December.

Board of Assessors

Valuation Update: The Board of Assessors is preparing the valuation update for FY14 property tax assessment. Fiscal 2014 is the year that began July 1, 2013. Tax bills for the first and second quarters, due August 1 and November 1, 2013, are based on the prior fiscal year bill with adjustment as permitted by state law. The tax rate for FY 2014 is set before December 31. The resulting annual tax for July 1, 2013 through June 30, 2014 is then calculated, the billed amount of the first and second quarters is subtracted, and the result is divided between the two remaining quarterly bills due February 1 and May 1, 2014.

The valuation date is January 1, 2013. The valuation for that date is based upon sales that occurred in calendar year 2012. The Board expects to submit all valuation forms to the state Department of Revenue, Division of Local Services, Bureau of Local Assessment (DLS/BLA) by the middle of this week. The 2012 sales analysis showed almost no change in overall town value from 2011 data.

The State DLS/BLA review and approval process is a required step in the annual process to set the tax rate. It is currently running about 10 days, so we hope to have approval by the middle of November. The New Growth, the tax levy on the value of new construction and property newly added to the taxable roll, is certified by DLS/BLA as part of this review. New Growth is important in two respects: 1. it reduces the cost of funding the adopted budget for all other taxpayers; and 2. It affects the calculation of the property tax levy limit. New Growth is measured based on work completed through June 30, 2013.

The tax classification public hearing, at which the valuation results and FY 2014 property tax rate recommendations will be discussed, is scheduled for November 18 at the meeting of the Board of Selectmen. Following the Public Hearing, the Selectmen will vote on the property tax rate recommendations resulting in the tax rate to be applied to FY2014 assessed valuations and tax bills to be issued by January 1.. The Board of Assessors and Town Assessor Lane Partridge are also planning to conduct a public forum as part of their December meeting, at a date to be scheduled.

Tax Collector's Office

Property Tax Quarterly Payment Due: Fiscal Year 2014 second quarter preliminary taxes are due in the Collector's Office no later than Friday, November 1, 2013. The Town House business hours are Monday through Friday 8:30AM to 4:30PM. The Tax Collector's office reminds all taxpayers that postmarks are not proof of timely payment. State law sets forth the legal requirement that payment must be received at the Tax Collector's office in the Town House, by mail or in hand, no later than the close of business on Friday, November 1, in order to avoid any interest charge.

Curbside Subscription Bills Due: Curbside subscription renewal payments for the pick-up cycle November 1, 2013 through April 30, 2014 are due in the Collector's Office by Friday, November 1. The cost of the six-month subscription is \$105.00. In addition, beginning Friday, November 1, customers must display either a current barrel sticker for the six-month time period or a green tag affixed to the barrel and/or disposal bags. Barrel stickers and individual green tags are available for purchase at the Town House, Concord Lumber, Crosby's Supermarket, CVS, Cumberland Farms (tags only), West Concord Pharmacy, and West Concord 5 & 10.

Online Payment Option: The Town provides an online payment option that credits your account as soon as you successfully submit your payment. The taxpayer has the choice of either paying electronically from a checking account or by credit card. While there is no charge to the customer for payment from a checking account, there is a fee charged by the credit card company when using MasterCard, VISA, or Discover. The applicable credit card fee is displayed on the payment screen for the customer to approve before finalizing the payment transaction.

To process a payment online, go to www.concordma.gov and click on "Online Payments". With bill and checkbook/credit card in hand, complete the necessary fields on each screen to process your payment.

Special Note for Paying Curbside Bill Online: Please be advised that the six digit bill number on the curbside bill must be entered with the prefacing zeros when accessing your bill. The 'year' designation for the online payment is 2014B.

Town Clerk

Special Town Meeting Registration: The Town Clerk's Office reminds residents who are not yet registered to vote in Concord that the deadline to register to vote if you wish to participate in the December 4, 2013 Special Town Meeting is **Friday, November 22**. The

Town Clerk's Office will be open for voter registration until 8:00 pm on November 22. Registration may be done by mail (download a registration form from our web site – www.concordma.gov – click "Elections & Voting") or in person at the Town Clerk's Office, which is located on the first floor of the Town House, 22 Monument Square. Office hours are Mondays through Fridays, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm. All registrations must be postmarked by November 22 if you wish to participate in and vote at the Special Town Meeting.

State Initiative Petitions: Initiative petitions for ballot questions for the November 2014 State Election are now circulating in Concord. The Town Clerk's Office has already certified over 500 signatures of Concord voters on a ballot question to expand the State's Bottle Bill to require deposits on containers for all non-alcoholic non-carbonated drinks (with some exceptions). Other ballot questions that have been submitted to the Clerk's Office for certification include a petition to require employers to provide sick leave benefits to employees (with some conditions and exceptions), and another to increase the state's minimum wage. These and other petitions will be circulating in Concord in the coming weeks. If you choose to sign a petition, be sure to do so legibly and use your name and address as you are currently registered to vote.

FIRE

Station 1 Renovation: Work is well underway on the Station 1 emergency Generator replacement. Excavation to drop conduit began last week.

Unusual Emergency Responses: Thursday October 24, CFD responded to a broken gas main on Bradford Street near #43 Bradford Street. A contractor digging hit and severed a gas main. Surrounding buildings were monitored for gas levels with no dangerous levels detected.

Sunday October 27, Ladder 1 responded on the 2nd alarm to Turning Mill Road, Lexington for a house fire.

PLANNING & LAND MANAGEMENT

Building Inspections Division

Construction in Concord: Building permits are now up 16% over a year ago at this time. Based on the activity, this year will be a record breaker for the number of permits issued. 36 new house permits have been issued to date; which compares to only 24 house permits issued a year ago.

Architectural Access Board (AAB) Training: Concord's three building inspectors attended an AAB training course taught by Debbie Ryan, former director of the Board. The training centered on differences between the State and Federal access regulations and how building inspectors need to deal with the differing requirements of each.

Concord's Stretch Energy Code: The Massachusetts Board of Building Standards and Regulations (BBRS) voted this summer to adopt the 2012 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) as the Commonwealth's Base Energy Code. Once the new Base Code becomes the sole effective code on July 1, 2014, the State's current Stretch Energy Code will be updated as well, and will automatically come into effect in Concord without the need for Concord to take any further action.

Health Division

Healthy Concord Implementation Grant: The Health Division received notice this week that it has been awarded a \$25,000 grant from CHNA 15 to implement the initiatives identified during our healthy community planning process. Two major initiatives are planned: a stress reduction program for all residents, especially youth; and, a road and bicycle safety program.

COA Senior and Employee Flu clinics: The COA flu clinic was held October 21 - 135 seniors received influenza vaccine at no charge. This clinic was also run as an emergency dispensing site drill to meet MDPH requirements. Clinic set-up time and speed of patient through-put were measured. The Employee flu clinic was held on October 23 - 90 Town employees received influenza vaccine at no charge. Administrative Assistant Karen Byrne organizes the flu clinics and coordinates with Emerson Hospital Home Care who administers the vaccine; Karen's coordination ensures that these clinics always run very successfully.

Beaver Permits: At the request of the Engineering Department to alleviate road flooding, Assistant Health Director Stan Sosnicki issued permits for removal of beavers in wetland areas adjacent to Cambridge Turnpike and Lowell Rd. Six beavers were removed from the Cambridge Turnpike area.

Soil Testing for a New Subdivision on Commerford Road: Assistant Health Director Stan Sosnicki spent two days witnessing test holes for design of the septic system and road drainage anticipated for a proposed new subdivision on Commerford Rd. Sixteen test excavations were completed.

Food Service Reviews: Health Inspector Gabrielle White approved plans for the expansion of Trails End Café and for Concord Teacakes' new wholesale operation. Trails End Café is expanding seating and will become a full restaurant with alcohol service. Concord Teacakes is building a new wholesale baking facility on Domino Drive, as the development project at 50 Beharrell St. has forced them to relocate. Pre-opening inspections have been performed at Bondir, 24 Walden St., and final build-out issues are being resolved. It is anticipated that construction will be completed by the end of next week.

Planning Division

Historical Commission Demolition Delay Hearing: Senior Planner Lara Kritzer coordinated the Historical Commission's first of two hearings on the proposed revisions to the Demolition Delay bylaw. Although the hearing was not well attended due to a schedule

conflict with the first game of the World Series, the hearing was video-recorded for future broadcast on CCTV. Building Commissioner John Minty attended the hearing and asked questions that will likely be on resident's minds as they review the proposed bylaw and consider their own houses in relation to the proposed changes. The next hearing is scheduled for Thursday, November 21, and will be held at the Harvey Wheeler Community Center.

Recreation Facilities Strategic Plan: Director Marcia Rasmussen participated in the review committee of the two proposals received in response to the RFP for a consultant to conduct a Comprehensive Recreation Facilities Strategic Plan for the Town. A recommendation will be prepared by Assistant Recreation Director Laura Lunig for the Town Manager.

Planning Board: On Tuesday, the Planning Board heard a presentation by owner/developer James White, who is seeking relief from parking requirements to allow 20 additional seats and 5 additional employees at the Trails End Café. The Planning Board is recommending affirmative action to the Board of Appeals on the requested relief. The Board also met with members of the Millbrook Tarry Task Force to discuss the redevelopment plan for the Millbrook Tarry site, potential zoning bylaw amendments needed; potential sale of town-owned land; current activities of the Task Force (shared parking analysis, trip generation and factors to include in a traffic study, and, the developer's work to identify stormwater management, flood plain and wetland concerns with the site) and the approach to be taken in preparing a final report/recommendation to the Planning Board. The Board also preliminarily discussed possible zoning bylaw amendments for the 2014 Annual Town Meeting.

Green Communities Application: Director Rasmussen worked with Town Counsel to provide required zoning and permitting process evidence to support the Green Communities Application prepared by the Town Manager.

Natural Resources Division

Natural Resources Commission: At their regularly scheduled meeting of October 16, the Commission heard the following matters: The continued Abbreviated Notice of Resource Area Delineation for Keuka Road was withdrawn under Concord's Wetland Bylaw and the applicant requested the hearing be closed under the Wetlands Protection Act; the continued Notice of Intent (NOI) for 310 Lexington Road was continued for the applicant to meet with the Historic Districts Commission; the continued NOI for 216 Southfield Road was heard and continued to November 6th to issue an Order of Conditions. New applications discussed include an after-the-fact greenhouse at 109 Seymour Street, an NOI for a driveway repaving project at 1373 Monument Street, a Request for Determination of Applicability for Phase II and III for the Playscape at Ripley, and an NOI for a septic repair at 394 Monument Street.

New applications received for the November 6th NRC meeting include: a Notice of Intent (NOI) for 656 Strawberry Hill Road to construct additions, reconstruct the driveway, and upgrade the septic system; a Request for Determination of Applicability at 31 Riverside

Avenue to conduct invasive species removal and repair garden structures; an NOI for 52 Main Street to reconstruct the ADA accessible ramp, walkway, and HC parking spaces; an NOI for 374 Old Bedford Road to install a gas line, fence, a/c condenser, and paver driveway turnout; and, an Abbreviated NOI for 5C Dover Street to repair a retaining wall adjacent to White Pond. Continued hearings to be heard at the November 6th meeting include the NOI for 310 Lexington Road to demolish and reconstruct a single family house. The NOIs for CPW to replace the culvert at Sleepy Hollow Cemetery, driveway reconstruction at 24 Off Harrington Road, and a demolishing and rebuilding a single-family home at 310 Lexington Road are continued to the November 20th NRC meeting.

POLICE

Operational Services: On Monday October 21, officers responded to the railroad crossing on Conant St. on a report of a car that had been struck by a train. Upon officers' arrival, it was confirmed that the occupant of the vehicle had gotten out of the car prior to it being struck. The driver was subsequently issued a citation by Officer Burgess.

On Tuesday October 22, Emerson Hospital Security reported a larceny of money from the Security Office. This case is currently under investigation.

On Thursday October 24, a construction crew working on Bradford St. struck a gas main. Police and Fire Departments responded. The roadway was closed, and National Grid responded to repair the gas main.

On Friday October 25, several vehicles were reported broken into overnight. This occurred on both Hubbard St. and Ridge Rd. These cases are currently under investigation.

On Saturday October 26 a Billerica resident was arrested on Rte. 2 by Officer Moore for operating under the influence of liquor.

Community Services: The Domestic Violence Services Network began its semi-annual 40 hour training of volunteer advocates at the Concord Police Department training room. Sgt. Kennedy is attending the attending the training.

PUBLIC WORKS

Fall Drop Off-Swap Off Results: The October 19, 2013 Drop Off-Swap Off was highly attended with 851 vehicles at the Drop Off portion of the event alone. Among the numerous items collected for recycling and reuse were five 30 yard roll-off containers of scrap metal, five 30 yard roll-off containers of construction & demolition materials, 161 bags of expanded polystyrene (EPS), one 30 yard roll-off container of carpeting, 2 truckloads of household items, ten containers of rags, ¾ truckload of children's items, 35 propane tanks, 77 bikes, one truckload of reusable building materials, and 60% of a 53' trailer was filled with electronics. The unwanted medication collection took in 5 boxes of unwanted medication and 4 boxes of SHARPS. The Spring Drop Off-Swap Off is scheduled for May 10, 2014.

Compost Site & Paint Shed: The Recyclable Paint Shed is closed for the season. The Paint Shed will reopen the first Saturday in April. The compost site will remain open Saturdays, 9-3, through early December, weather permitting. Residents can bring leaves and grass clippings at no cost; there is a charge for brush. There continues to be a supply of compost available at no charge for limited quantities for Concord residents.

Water and Sewer System – Construction Deadlines Approach: As seasonal temperatures begin to drop, customers are reminded that that water/sewer service work must be completed within the public Right-of-Way by November 15. Work within private property must be completed by December 1. Seasonal water services and public fountains will be decommissioned for the season by November 15.

Sidewalk and ADA Improvement Program: Project Contractor, Allied Paving is scheduled to complete the remaining punch list and minor work items during the first week of November. Remaining work includes the reconstruction of a stone dust portion of sidewalk that was installed at the intersection of Bartlett Hill Road and Monument Street. This will involve the installation of vertical granite curb, stone dust re-grading, and loam/seeding as needed. Punch list items for the project include the re-setting of a slate walkway at Thoreau Street, minor stone dust re-grading at 619 Old Bedford Road, the replacement of a cracked ramp panel at Monsen Road, and patching where the hand rails were installed at the granite steps adjacent to Monument Square.

Roads Program: The project contractor, Lazaro Paving, reclaimed, fine-graded, and compacted the roads within the Crescent/Nashoba neighborhood. CPW's Engineering Division is in the process of verifying grades in order to ensure proper drainage patterns and construction. CPW Engineering anticipates that Lazaro will pave the first course of pavement in this neighborhood the week of 10/28, excluding 10/31 to ensure public safety on Halloween. Also, Lazaro began reclaim operations within the Baker Ave/Saw Mill Rd neighborhood on 10/28 and is anticipated to be completed by 10/30. This neighborhood will also be fine-graded, compacted, and surveyed prior to installing the first course of pavement during the week of 11/4. That will conclude work for the season in both of those neighborhoods. Additionally, Lazaro resurfaced Caterina Heights the week of 10/21. Concurrently, Lazaro milled (cold-planed) two sections of Fitchburg Turnpike. The first section was from the Sudbury town line to Plainfield Rd. The second section was from Garfield Rd. to just beyond the intersection of Sudbury Rd and Fitchburg Turnpike. It is anticipated that these sections will be paved in the coming days. The division is evaluating the options of paving during the day (outside of rush hours) or paving at night, where temperatures have been significantly colder than the seasonal average. This should conclude the work for this season, prior to resuming work in the spring to complete the full project's scope.

Old Stow Road Bridge Rehabilitation: MassDOT recently requested that the Town of Concord approve a bridge closure and associated detour from Saturday 10/26/2013 to approximately Sunday December 1, 2013. This revised schedule aligns with maintenance activities being completed by Mass Bay Commuter Rail on the railroad line which will shut down train operations on Saturdays and Sundays for the next several weekends. MassDOT

feels that it will be far less disturbing than the overnight shifts that were originally anticipated for next construction season. After December 1, 2013 the detour will be removed and the bridge will be opened to traffic until work resumes in spring of 2014. The anticipated hours of operation for the active bridge repair work will be on Saturdays and Sundays from 6:30am to 4:30pm. CPW provided notification to the local residents and project abutters through door hangers, variable message boards and provided a notice to the Concord Patch, Concord Journal and a News and Notices website update.

Catch Basin Cleaning: This week CPW's Highway Division is anticipating the completion of the visual inspection, cleaning, GIS documentation and condition assessment of all catch basins in West Concord. With the East Concord portion of this stormwater component completed last year, this work will finalize the first town wide cycle of cleaning, measuring, photographing and documenting the structures for recording in the GIS system of all catch basins using Concord Public Works staff. This process has provided critical information relative to the scheduling of repairs and /or replacements that may be needed on basins in the future as well as ensuring compliance with the Town's Federal MS4 permit.

Cambridge Turnpike Flooding: CPW's Highway Division is continuing efforts to address the roadway flooding conditions and roadway deterioration on Cambridge Turnpike resulting from beaver dams impacting the flow of water and posing a public safety concern. Permit applications have been filed and received from regulatory agencies to notch these dams to lower the water level. Initial results appear favorable, however an ongoing effort will be required as dams are rebuilt and water levels rise.