

Town Manager's Weekly Report

Monday, September 22, 2008

To: Board of Selectmen
From Christopher Whelan, Town Manager

Items with italicized headings relate to the Town Manager's goals for 2008-2009.

- 1. Fire at Verrill's Farm.** The community was shocked and saddened to hear of the fire which destroyed the Verill farm stand on Plainfield Road on Saturday. The fire broke out around 5:00 p.m. while the farm stand was occupied. Fire companies from 14 area towns responded, but they were unable to save the structure. The entire community shares a sense of loss. I spoke with Steve today, and he said they plan to rebuild and they will be working with Building Commissioner John Minty to develop plans. In the meantime, he has set up his original farm stand and is open for business, selling corn, pumpkins, flowers and other produce. Steve expressed appreciation for the huge outpouring of support from the community and his customers.

Fire Chief Ken Willette reported that the first truck to respond to the scene was a Sudbury engine responding from the North Sudbury sub-station within about six minutes. This truck and engine 4 from West Concord were able to put about 1,500 gallons of water on the fire immediately. Unfortunately, that area of Plainfield road is not served by public water, and the nearest fire hydrant was 1,500 feet away at the corner of Sudbury Rd and Route 117. Firefighters also used the hydrant at the opposite end of Plainfield Road, about 1500 feet away. A typical fire pumper truck carries 1200 feet of hose, so hose from multiple trucks was required to get water onto the fire. A tanker truck from Carlisle was also deployed to draw water from the irrigation pond about 800 feet down Plainfield Road. 70,000 gallons were drawn from the pond and 250,000 gallons was used from the municipal water supply.

The fire was apparently started when a ventilation fan in the attic malfunctioned. The fire was burning fairly intensely before it was noticed. Fortunately, all employees and customers were able to get out safely. One Lincoln firefighter was taken to Emerson Hospital suffering from heat exhaustion, but he returned to the scene several hours later.

- 2. Public Works Matters.**

- a. Monument Square Traffic Circulation. Police Chief Len Wetherbee has recommended that we consider changing the traffic circulation pattern at the "flagpole rotary" in Monument Square. Currently, the rotary does not operate as a true rotary, because motorists in the rotary wishing to turn from Lexington Road west onto Main Street must yield to Lowell Road traffic. Normally, vehicles attempting to enter a rotary must yield to motorists already in the rotary. Several citizens have suggested that we correct this anomaly and then properly post the correct rotary circulation pattern. We would like to try changing the pattern on a trial basis some time this fall; but before doing so, we have engaged an engineering firm to conduct some traffic counts and to estimate the delays that might be caused for north-south traffic using Lowell Road and Monument Street. If the*

*engineering study determines that the delay of Lowell Road traffic is tolerable, we will proceed to implement the change on a trial basis, using the Police Chief's authority to temporarily order changes in traffic rules. Ultimately, any **permanent** change in the traffic rules and regulation would require approval from the Board of Selectmen.*

- b. Flint Bridge-Monument Street.** Public Works Director Rich Reine reports that Mass Highway's bridge section has provided him a copy of the draft re-design of the bridge which will be reviewed by Zoppo Construction. The Contractor will then provide an estimate of the cost of the additional work and will engage with MHD in negotiations over a fair price for the work. MHD hopes to conclude those negotiations swiftly and have work resume as soon as possible.
- c. Route 2 – Assabet River Bridge Assessment.** Public Works received word this week that MHD will be performing some work during night-time hours on the bridge over the Assabet River (near the State Police barracks). On Tuesday, September 23, beginning at approximately 9:00 p.m., MHD will be restricting traffic in both directions to only one lane in order to take some core samples of the concrete arch of the bridge. The restriction will be removed at approximately 5:00 a.m. on Wednesday the 24th.
- d. Main Street Crosswalk at Concord Academy.** Greener Construction has been awarded the contract to construct the traffic-calming crosswalk on Main Street near Academy Lane. The firm has submitted a traffic management plan to the Public Works and Police Departments for review and expects to begin preliminary construction work later this week.

- 3. **Assessing Records Available On-line.** The Assessing Department announced that property record cards are now reviewable on-line at VisionAppraisalTechnology.com. There is a link to this site on the Assessors page of the Town's website (concordma.gov). Property photos will be added to the files and should also be viewable in the next few weeks.
- 4. **Community Policing Grant.** Police Chief Len Wetherbee reported this week that the Department's application for a community policy grant was approved in the amount of \$63,750. This is the fifth year of such funding and enables the Police Department to perform a wide range of community-oriented services, including supporting the School Resources Officer and support for the Council on Aging, traffic enforcement that we would not normally be unable to fund, specialized training classes, domestic violence program participation, restorative justice program involvement, RAD training for the community, department wide cultural diversity training, and traffic enforcement equipment.
- 5. **New Community Services Coordinator.** Julia Crozier is our new Community Services Coordinator. Julia started work last Monday, taking the place of Sadie Simone, who served for nearly four years. The position is entirely funded by the Concord-Carlisle Community Chest and provides 20 hours per week of human service referral assistance to senior citizens and others experiencing financial hardship or need.
- 6. **Town Staff Attending Fuel Assistance Meetings.** Attorney General Martha Coakley is convening a series of roundtable discussions about how communities can help people manage this winter with high fuel bills and limited fuel assistance programs. Fire Chief Ken Willette, COA Director MaryAnne Mortenson, Public Health Director Brent Regor and Asst Town Manager Doug Meagher will be attending one of the sessions. The Fire Chief is concerned that when fuel costs increase, some residents turn to unsafe measures to keep warm, often putting them at risk of a fire. The winter heating discussions are intended to share ideas to help address this consumer and health crisis before the problem begins.
- 7. **New Septic System Regulations.** The Board of Health is reviewing a complete re-draft of the Concord Onsite Wastewater Regulations that was prepared by the Health Division staff. The proposed regulation accounts for changes in technology, and creates a stronger framework for

environmental and public health protection. The regulations have been sent to local design engineers and septic installers for comment. It is expected that a public hearing will be held in November in regards to the adoption of the proposed changes.

8. **Boston Bark Mulch Operation.** Boston Bark has appealed the Building Commissioner's decision that the operation on Barretts Mill Road does not conform to zoning and therefore should be stopped immediately. The Zoning Board of Appeals has scheduled this matter for Thursday, October 16. Building Commissioner John Minty and Town Counsel are engaged in discussions with the operators. Boston Bark has requested that they be allowed to continue operations on the site until July 1, 2009, at which time the site would be brought into full conformity with the Town's zoning bylaws. This is still under discussion.
9. **Alexan Concord Affordable Housing Project.** *The Acton Zoning Board of Appeals continued the hearing on the 350-unit affordable until this Wednesday, September 24. The project was approved by the Concord Board of Appeals in June of this year.*
10. **Bruce Freeman Rail Trail.** A lot has been happening on the BFRT front. Mass Highway Project Manager, Larry Cash, requested the Town's consultant VHB submit the 25% design plan and report to Mass Highway as soon as possible, so District 4 can begin its review prior to the Project Review Committee meeting in October. The VHB contract amendment will be prepared on Monday, September 22nd so that the items approved at Town Meeting can be incorporated into the 25% design (asphalt surface and culvert replacement) prior to submittal to Mass Highway.

Becky Williamson of Greenman-Pederson Inc. (consultant preparing the STEP application for design funding) informed the Town that there appears to be support for the application and a desire that the two projects be handled as one (thereby combining Phase 2A (Acton-Carlisle-Westford) with Phase 2C (Concord). The Town of Acton would be the lead community, which will require an Inter-municipal Agreement between Concord and the other three communities.

The Statewide Transportation Enhancement Program Steering Committee will be meeting on Wednesday, September 24th to review the application for design funds. There is a possibility that the total funds requested (\$1.4 million) will be available as early as January 1, 2009. Acton is intending to enter into a contract for the 75 – 100% design with Greenman-Pederson, Inc. Since it appears that this will be one project, GPI will also be designing the Concord portion of the trail.

With the 25% design soon to be submitted and design funding on the horizon, Concord has sent a letter to the Executive Office of Transportation expressing interest in negotiating a lease agreement for the right-of-way controlled by EOT and associated with Phase 2C of the Bruce Freeman Memorial Rail Trail.