

Town Manager's Weekly Report

Monday, April 14, 2009

To: Board of Selectmen
From Christopher Whelan, Town Manager

1. **New Fire Chief.** I am pleased to announce the appointment Captain Mark Coutreau to serve as Concord's next Fire Chief. Mark has been involved in the fire service for 28 years, all but two of which he has spent in Concord. Mark spent the last 12 years as a Captain in the Department, including 11 months in the role of Acting Fire Chief before Ken Willette was hired as Chief in 2003. Mark successfully competed for the position with 22 other candidates, including experienced Chiefs from other communities. He was selected for his professionalism, commitment and dedication to the Town of Concord. The traditional public "swearing-in" ceremony is tentatively scheduled for Monday, May 18th at 6:30 p.m. in the Town House.
2. **Town Meeting Motions.** Town Moderator Ned Perry has requested that the motions that will be made under each article at Town Meeting be posted on the Town's website by Wednesday, April 22, so Town Meeting Coordinator Laurel Landry will be posting the motions, as reviewed by Town Counsel, as of the end of the day next Wednesday, if not sooner. Town Meeting begins Monday, April 27 at 7:00 p.m. in the High School.
3. **Library News.** The Library staff report a 10% increase in activity compared with 2008. This may be due to the deteriorating regional economy. The Library just completed a month-long "Concord Reads – Food for Thought" program, which was consider very successful. Also, there an excellent exhibit now on display in the Library's gallery entitled "A Day To Remember" . This is in celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the creation of Minuteman National Historical Park and is the result of a collaboration among the Concord Free Public Library, the National Parks Service, and the Massachusetts Mass Historical Society. The exhibit runs through June 30.
4. **375th Anniversary of Concord's Founding.** A page has been created on the Town's website for use by the 375th Celebration Committee. September 12, 2010 marks the official anniversary date of the incorporation of the Town of Concord, and plans are underway for appropriately marking the occasion. The public will want check out the site from time to time to see what kinds of activities are in the works.
5. **Finance Committee's Report Mailed to Residents.** The printing and mailing of the "2009 Finance Committee Report" this week concludes the Finance Department's publication of three major budget documents this spring, which also includes the "2009 Town Manager's Budget" and the "2009 Enterprise Fund Budget Book". All three documents are available on-line and each contains a wealth of information about the Town's finances in a specific area.

Public Works Department

6. **2009 WATER QUALITY REPORT.** This report has been printed and will be sent to all existing customers by the end of the April. This annual report provides a detailed update of water supply, treatment, quality and conservation matters.

7. **NASHAWTUC BRIDGE.** CPW will be preparing and submitting a Notice of Intent to the Natural Resources Commission for a May 20th hearing on the proposed bridge rehabilitation. CPW is beginning negotiations with the low bidder of the original bid from the fall of 2008 and will be evaluating whether the project should be rebid or awarded to the original low bidder after the NRC permitting process is complete. Construction is anticipated to begin June/July and to be completed by the Fall of 2009. Community Preservation Committee funding in the amount of \$250,000 was committed last year. Roads Program funding will be used to add \$150,000 toward the \$400,000 total estimated cost for the rehabilitation project, which involves re-installing the historic granite sidewalls of the bridge.
8. **FORMER LANDFILL CLOSURE CERTIFICATION.** Minor exploration work is scheduled to take place over the next several weeks at the “stump dump” portion of the capped landfill on Walden Street to characterize the thickness and permeability of this portion of the low perm soil cap. This final step will provide the necessary information to the State Department of Environmental Protection and will enable DEP to issue final closure certification for the former Landfill, which ceased operation in 1994. Gas and groundwater monitoring, as well as routine site maintenance will continue in accordance with the existing DEP permit requirements.
9. **ROUTE 62 – MAIN STREET PROJECT SCHEDULE UP-DATE.** Mass Highway awarded the contract for the reconstruction of Main Street, from Water Street to the Acton town-line, to E.H. Perkins, Co. last fall. A preconstruction meeting with MassHighway, Public Works, CPW’s design consultant Stantec and E.H. Perkins is scheduled for April 29th to review the project and schedule. The estimated construction start date for the project is Spring 2009. All drainage work, pavement reclamation, binder course pavement and sidewalk installation is expected to be complete within the 2009 construction season, with top course pavement anticipated to be installed during the 2010 construction season. It is known that traffic management will be challenging, because there are no easy detours available for the diversion of traffic.

Planning Department

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Health Division

- **Permitting Database:** The long-anticipated new Health Division permitting database software is now in the testing phase at 141 Keyes. Coler & Colantonio of Norwell installed the links to their servers on Tuesday and were in office Wednesday to orient Division staff to the new system. The Division will test the software for the next week or two. When the testing phase is complete, the software will be installed on the Town’s servers for full deployment. The new software replaces an aging Access-based system which continually experienced problems, lost data, and sometimes permit information simply disappeared. The timely arrival of the software will allow the Division staff to work through our busy spring permit renewal season and make sure the data transfer between systems is complete.
- **Septic Betterment Loan Program:** The successful Health Division Septic Betterment Loan Program is nearing \$1,000,000 in loans under the 2004 Annual Town Meeting authorization. To date, \$958,494.89 in funds have been committed to help 55 homeowners defer some of the costs of replacing their onsite wastewater systems. The program, which is returning to the 2009 Annual Town Meeting for an additional \$2,000,000 in funding authorization, secures the construction loans with a 2% betterment lien against the property, repaid in 10 years on the municipal tax bill.
- **Well-Driller Regulations:** Public Health Director Brent Reagor has been nominated, by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, to the statewide committee that will be revising the regulations for the licensing and oversight of well-drillers in the Commonwealth. Brent will be representing the local health official constituency. This committee has been formed because the well driller program is being moved from the Department of Conservation and Recreation to the Department of Environmental Protection, effective July 1, 2009.

Building and Inspections Division

- **324 Bedford Street - the Caesar Robbins house:** The historic Caesar Robbins house is listed as a “significant structure” under Concord’s Demolition Delay Bylaw. As required by the Demolition Delay Bylaw, the Building Inspections Division has notified the Concord Historical Commission of the demolition application and the six (6) month “demolition delay review period” has gone into effect. The Historical Commission had two options available to them. One option was to waive the “six (6) month demolition delay review period”. The other option was to use the six (6) month review period to find an interested party that might want to move and/or conserve the structures.
- **Important building permits issued this past week:** The new Verrill farm stand has been issued a building permit to begin reconstructing the fire damaged farm stand structure and parking lot. The Concord Housing Authority has been issued a building permit to build two duplex dwellings on their lot on the corner of Bedford Street and Old Bedford Road.

Natural Resources Division

- **Beavers and the Law:** Delia Kaye attended a DEP workshop on beavers, how to live with them, and how to address conflicts. A 1996 ballot referendum banning many forms of trapping resulted in a steep beaver population increase from 20,000 to more than 70,000 across the state. Complaints rose along with the beaver population. In 2000, the MA legislature amended the law to help address landowner problems associated with flooding from beavers and muskrat. If flooding is determined by the Board of Health to be a threat to public health or safety (flooding public/private wells, septic systems, agricultural fields, roads and driveways, emergency facilities, homes, or commercial or industrial buildings). The current law is reactive: a problem must exist before the Board of Health can declare an emergency. However, there is a trapping season for beavers (November through mid-April), and they can be removed by a licensed trapper without approval from the Board of Health or NRC. Tolerance for beavers is often the best solution, as they are a natural part of the ecosystem, provide wetlands habitat that is used by a large variety of wildlife, such as great blue heron rookeries. Other alternatives are to protect trees from beaver damage with heavy gauge wire fencing. Breaching and/or removing a dam requires approval from the Board of Health and the Conservation Commission and is not considered a long-term solution. Water flow devices (“beaver deceivers”) are often a good solution to alleviating flooding problems and allowing beavers to remain.
- **Community Gardens:** Spring is in the air, and the community gardens are beginning to come alive for the season. In preparation of the third community garden in Concord, Delia Kaye walked the former Ammendolia land with Peter Flynn and Mick Hone of CPW Park and Tree to look at brush hogging and putting in a trail. Jim Catterton of the Hugh Cargill Community Gardens will be talking to Bill Kenney about plowing the fields. Approximately ½-acre will be put into a community garden on the former Ammendolia farmland. (see photo)

Planning Division

- **Comprehensive Sustainable Energy Committee (CSEC):** The CSEC had their monthly meeting this Tuesday, April 7th and discussed a variety of topics including assisting the Town Manager in considering the job responsibilities of the Concord Municipal Light Plant’s Energy Coordinator, working with the Town Manager to secure an ICLEI membership which will provide a platform for the Town to manage sustainability issues and format an energy use baseline. CESC also discussed creating a public outreach subcommittee that would focus on spreading the word about the Economic Stimulus Energy Rebates available to homeowners. In addition, the Committee voted to support Article 20 at the Town Meeting, with the condition that the SmartGrid should serve as a foundational tool to advance sustainable energy use in Town, and that development of the SmartGrid should be tied to a Comprehensive Plan for implementation that helps people realize the capacity of the system.

Updates were given on the Sawyer Trust Fund applications, potential sites in Town for solar demonstration projects, and the Town Energy Audit, which should be ready in mid-April.

- **West Concord Task Force Public Forum:** The second West Concord Task Force public forum was held on Tuesday, April 7. Marcia Rasmussen assisted in preparing a handout on the master plan and interim planning overlay district, as well as attended the meeting to assist with questions.
- **Update on 506 Old Bedford Road PRD:** Planning Division staff met with the Applicant's attorney and engineer on Tuesday to discuss the proposed changes to the PRD (further reducing the number of units from 9 to 8), the submittal of an Approval Not Required Plan to protect the right to seek a PRD use in the event Town Meeting approves Article 37 and the State statute concerning the expiration of conditions imposed on various permits (the original special permit was issued in 1975, so the limitation on further subdivision appears to have expired). The Plan Review Committee met on Thursday with the engineer and attorney to continue discussion of the design and information needed. This item will be discussed at the Planning Board meeting of April 14th.
- **Mass-In-Motion – Dept. of Public Health Grant:** Marcia and Julie met with Brent Reagor to discuss a cooperative grant application for a DPH grant to further educational outreach and planning for improved walk-ability in Concord to meet the needs of under-served residents. The application is due April 21st.



Up-grading of Little League Field at Alcott School.



Installing New Infield at Alcott School Little League Field



New Fenced Baseball Field at Ripley School would encroach slightly into Burke Farm property.



New Homes on Finigan Way under construction. The first home, closest to the entrance from Strawberry Hill Road, is an affordable housing unit.



Colonel Barrett Farmhouse on Barrett's Mill Road Rehabilitation.



Trash collected on Commonwealth Ave by volunteers during Spring Clean-up Week awaits removal by CPW.



Water flowing smoothly over the renovated Warners Pond Dam spillway.



Railroad Bridge over the Assabet River near West Concord Depot. The Selectmen requested the MBTA install a pedestrian bridge over the river to connect the Depot area with the Baker Avenue area.



A pedestrian connection over the Assabet River would not require extensive alteration to connect with existing West Concord Depot walkway and would eliminate the existing hazard of pedestrians walking on the tracks.



Pine Street Bridge expected to re-open during the summer of 2009.



First concrete decking pour curing on Pine Street Bridge.



Bill Kenny harrowing the former Ammendolia Farm property off Old Bedford Road.



Harrowing completed for new community gardens area on south side of former Ammendolia land, adjacent to the Ripley School.



Renovations and an addition under construction at the Thoreau Birth House property, 341 Virginia Road.