

# Town Manager's Report Monday, August 1, 2011

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

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

## **FINANCE**

**Wide Spread Credit Rating Review:** One may recall that the “credit rating recalibration” of this past spring resulted in additional entities receiving a “triple-A” rating from Moody’s; all of these entities are, like Concord, now “under review for possible downgrade” according to the notice we received from Moody’s on July 28. This includes the Concord-Carlisle Regional School District and the Lincoln-Sudbury Regional School District.

The review will be conducted in the event that Moody’s downgrades the US Government’s credit rating. The rating of the United States was placed “under review for downgrade” on July 13. A downgrade of the United States credit rating could occur even with a debt limit deal in Congress. If there is a downgrade of the “sovereign” credit, then Moody’s will proceed within 90 days to conduct a review of all other Aaa rated credits it has identified across the nation as requiring its review. In the view of the rating agency, it is an unusual situation for a local unit of government to carry a credit rating higher than the “sovereign” credit and that this condition requires a specific review of almost all existing Aaa credits.

All Massachusetts municipalities currently rated Aaa by Moody’s received the same notice. A review will entail consideration of current financial position, the strength and stability of reserves, and the status budgetary and collection operations. The rating agency will also seek to make an assessment of the degree to which the town is exposed directly and indirectly to financial decisions of the national government and the capacity of the town to adjust to conceivable circumstances.

While it is expected that such a review would result in some entities being downgraded, we do not expect that Concord’s credit rating will be changed. We were most recently examined in connection with the May bond issuance; our reserve position, as measured by Moody’s is relatively strong within the Massachusetts Aaa group; our pension unfunded liability is dramatically lower than most and on par with Lexington and Wellesley among the top ten public pension funds in the State (measured by funded percentage), and our OPEB fund has already reached \$2 million indicating a serious approach to addressing this long-term liability. Positive financial operating results will be reported for the year ended June 30, 2011. We have a strong Free Cash position as well as a significant unused levy limit position, all enhancing our financial flexibility in the view of the rating agency. The external Concord

economy is also relatively strong, with considerable construction activity and residential prices that have held up with comparative strength.

## **LIGHT DEPARTMENT**

**New Solar Renewable Energy Credit Revenue:** The Solar PV System on the Willard School earned \$8,680 in Solar Renewable Energy Credits (SRECs) revenue in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2011, bringing the total SREC revenue earned since system operation began in September 2010 to \$17,431.67. This amounted to just above 50 cents/kwh for Q2. The Town sells SRECs to Investor-Owned Utilities that need credits to meet their Renewable Portfolio Standard obligations.

**West Concord Center Electric Upgrade:** After a productive week, Concord Light Lineworkers, working collaboratively with Light Plant Engineers, have completed the installation of new underground electric facilities in the West Concord business district. The design and planning for this complex project started approximately 18 months ago. The Lineworkers spent approximately 6 months installing the new system and this week transferred the customers from the old antiquated system to the new system. The new system provides greater reliability and circuit isolation. Over the next several weeks, the Lineworkers will physically remove the retired system and recycle the antiquated materials.

## **PLANNING & LAND MANAGEMENT**

### **Building and Inspections Division**

**Emerson Hospital Parking Garage Repairs:** During an inspection of the Emerson Hospital parking garage by engineering staff, the structural concrete elements within one of the two exit stair ways in that building were determined to be in a deteriorated condition. Working with a building code consultant, Emerson Hospital and the Building Inspection Division have agreed upon a plan to limit public access to the stairway that is of concern. Emerson has hired a contractor in the meanwhile to temporarily shore up the deteriorating stairway so that it will be safe as an emergency exit only. The existing failing pre-cast stairs will eventually be lifted out of the stair enclosure shaft and new pre-cast stairs will be lowered in to replace them.

**Pump’N Pantry:** The Pump’N Pantry located at 1089 Concord Turnpike will be changing from a Sunoco branded gas station to an Exxon gas station. The Dunkin Donuts retail store will remain.

### **Natural Resources Division**

**The Community Food Project:** An outgrowth of the 2009/2010 food safety/food security discussions led by the League of Women Voters and ConcordCAN, the Community Food Project is an initiative that will examine food production, food security and safety, and food distribution within Concord. Planning and Natural Resources Division staff met with representatives from the community, food service for CCHS, League of Women Voters, Agriculture Committee, and ConcordCAN on a proposal to work with graduate students from

the Conway School of Landscape Design to prepare a plan that includes looking at current and future farming opportunities. The group will provide current and historical information to the students, as well as develop a charge to prepare a useable plan that identifies public and private open space for agricultural production, the potential for food production in Concord, and the viability of working with local businesses to provide locally-grown foods. Representatives from the group will be meeting with the Agriculture Committee and will regroup in September. The plan is expected to be developed over the winter and spring.

**Heywood Meadow Bay Circuit Trail Marker:** Conservation crew installed a new Bay Circuit Trail marker on Heywood Street to direct walkers on the trail through the meadow as they leave the center of Town.



### **Planning Division**

**Planning Board:** Last Tuesday night, the Planning Board voted to recommend approval of the Special Permit and Site Plan application of Verizon Wireless to upgrade 6 antennas on the 120' tower on Annursnac Hill. After a discussion of goals for FY 2012, the Board determined that stormwater, housing and an extended stay hotel/motel bylaw are the priorities. The Board will discuss the formation of a West Concord Advisory Committee at their next meeting on August 9.

**Affordable Housing Opportunity at 87 Elm Brook Lane:** The Planning Division is working with the owners of 87 Elm Brook Lane to market their affordable housing unit to households at or below 140% AMI. Elm Brook Lane was completed in the early 2000s and contains 12 units of affordable housing. The Town has until October 14 to find a buyer or develop another approach for preserving the affordable unit under the existing affordable housing restriction for the property.

**Community Preservation Committee:** The CPC held their last meeting of the summer on July 18 where they approved the final draft of the 2012 Community Preservation Plan and set the schedule for their meetings in the fall. The CPC will next hold a public information meeting on Thursday, September 8, for any and all organizations interested in pursuing CPA funding at the 2012 Annual Town Meeting.

## **Health Division**

**Walden Grille – 24 Walden Street:** The owner of Walden Grille was ordered to appear at a hearing before the Board of Health on July 27 for further enforcement actions and possible revocation of the license to operate, based on numerous violations found at inspections held July 14 and July 18. The Board voted to allow Walden Grille to continue to operate with a stringent compliance plan, including weekly inspections by a food safety consultant.

**506 Old Bedford Road Planned Residential Development:** Health and Fire department staff met on site last week in response to a dust complaint resulting from demolition of buildings at that location. No nuisances were noted at time of inspection.

## **POLICE**

**Operational Services:** On Tuesday July 26, as a result of progressive traffic enforcement Sergeant Troiano conducted a motor vehicle stop on Sudbury Road. Through his observations and investigation, Sergeant Troiano recovered several controlled substances and summonsed the operator on drug charges.

On Tuesday July 26, officers responded to a Sudbury Road house break that had just occurred. Officers quickly developed information that identified the suspect, who was arrested. Interviews conducted by the officers developed information that allowed them to recover the family heirlooms and a large amount of sterling silver flatware.

On Wednesday July 27, officers responded to Silver Hill Road for a past house break in which only a watch box was taken. The case is currently under investigation and detectives are interviewing potential suspects. This was the 15<sup>th</sup> reported break-in that was reported as compared to 12 last year at this time.

**Community Services:** On Thursday and Friday, the Department assisted with traffic and parking for the wake and funeral for Gordon Bell, past Concord Honored Citizen.

On Saturday and Sunday officers assisted with neighborhood notification and traffic for funeral services for two Fenn School faculty members (held at the school).

The Police Chief reports that the Department has seen a slight decrease this year in domestic violence calls. As of July 27, we have logged 49 such calls as compared to last year at this time when we logged 55 calls. In 2010 we responded to 100 domestic violence calls all totaled.

The Department's drunken driving arrests have increased this year. To date, we have 35 arrests, with Officer Brian Soll leading the way with 13. This is more than we had all totaled in 2010 (30 total) as well as 2009 (27 total).

## TECHNOLOGY/COMMUNICATIONS

**Web Site:** It is useful to occasionally take “vital signs” of the Town’s web site to determine whether residents and other visitors to the site are finding the information posted thereon useful. One measurement we are able to take is the number of e-mail accounts that have signed up to receive our various “subscribable” news folders, such as this weekly Town Manager’s Report, the News & Notices feature on the main web page, Council on Aging newsletters, etc. As of last Wednesday, the number of subscribers to each of the folders was as follows:

News and Notices	754
Recreation News	484
Board of Selectmen Agendas	245
Board of Selectmen Minutes	225
Cemetery Committee Minutes	67
Public Works Comm. Minutes	182
Employment Opportunities	621
Council on Aging Newsletters	202
Town Manager Reports	235