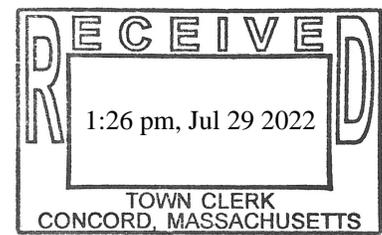


**Town of Concord  
Select Board  
Minutes  
January 8, 2022**



Pursuant to a notice duly filed with the Town Clerk, the Concord Select Board convened in a meeting in via Zoom on January 8, 2022 at 9:00am.

Present were Terri Ackerman; Chair, Matthew Johnson; Clerk; Henry Dane, Linda Escobedo, and Susan Bates. Also present was Kerry Lafleur, Interim Town Manager.

Chair Ackerman Called the meeting to order, by roll call:

Mr. Ackerman: Aye  
Ms. Bates: Aye  
Mr. Dane: Aye  
Ms. Escobedo: Aye  
Mr. Johnson: Aye

**Welcome & Overview**

Chair Ackerman welcomed participants to the virtual meeting and emphasized that this meeting was a preview for the annual town meeting, not the special town meeting. A motion to open the warrant for the annual town meeting on January 8, 2022 at 9:00 a.m. and close the warrant on February 2, 2022 at 4:00 p.m. passed unanimously.

**Town Meetings in 2022**

Town Moderator Carmin Reiss announced that the Special Town Meeting would be held in-person on January 20, 2022, in the high school with various COVID precautions in place and that the meeting will have one article – the middle school building project.

Annual Town Meeting will begin Sunday, May 1, 2022, indoors at the high school. Ms. Reiss reminded all citizen petitioners to seek help from her and town staff on procedural matters.

**Finance Committee**

Chair Reynolds reviewed a recurring warrant article for \$1M from free cash to offset property tax increases and recurring articles governing meeting procedures. She then reviewed a new article to appropriate \$500k from free cash toward the debt stabilization fund for the new middle school project. If approved, this will bring the balance in the debt stabilization fund to \$3.5M toward a goal of \$5.0M.

Vice-Chair Patel then gave an update on the budget guideline process. The final FinCom guideline would increase operating spending by 3.25%, resulting in a 3.37% increase in property tax and maintain a 4.21% levy limit capacity. At this stage in the budget process, the budget entities are \$1.1M above guideline. Mr. Patel was hopeful that gap would close before town meeting.

**Town Manager's Office Updates**

Interim Town Manager Lafleur gave an update regarding the FY23 town budget. Key strategic issues addressed in the FY23 budget include compensation & benefits, infrastructure, governance, and welcoming community initiatives. She stated her intention to meet the final FinCom budget guidelines. She then gave an update on the FY23 thru FY27 capital and debt plan which showed a substantial gap between requests and target spending.

Two articles related to OPEB (Other Post-Employment Benefits) included a new request to hire an investment advisor to manage the \$33.6M fund. Other articles included an article to establish a revolving fund to collect receipts from tourism activities, a trust fund to receive qualified charitable distributions for sustainability and electrification, and two articles needed to continue the senior means-tested tax exemption.

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**Question and Answer Period #1 to Cover Topics Above Only**

Chair Ackerman opened the meeting to Q&A. Karlen Reed asked a question about the charitable trust, Mary Hartman asked questions about the investment manager for the OPEB fund, Matt Johnson directed a question to Mr. Patel to estimate the impact to property tax if the \$1.0M is not used as an offset, Tanya Gailus mentioned the importance of protecting trees, Stephan Bader asked about the recurring \$500K for affordable housing and Henry Dane urged FinCom to consider the sale of the Peabody school site when estimating the funding goal of the debt stabilization fund.

**Personnel Board**

Mr. Mrachek will introduce three Personnel Bylaw Amendments. The first will give non-union, regular status employees paid leave for the Juneteenth holiday, propose language that references Indigenous Peoples' Day and replaces gender-specific terms with neutral terms. The second removes the 6-month waiting period restriction on vacation leave. The third increases bereavement leave from 3 to 5 days and broadens the relationships covered.

**Community Preservation Committee Update**

Chair Proctor indicated that the committee is working to allocate >\$2.0M in funding across 11 projects.

**Historical Commission**

Chair Saalfield deferred to town planner Elizabeth Hughes who explained the Scenic Roads Bylaw by detailing which nine roads are included, what fines would be imposed, which changes would trigger a review and the process involved in the development of guidelines.

**Planning Board**

Town Planner Elizabeth Hughes presented three proposed articles and a mentioned a potential fourth. The first is an amendment to Thoreau Business District Rezoning which has been in development over 2 years resulting in bylaw amendments to allow more flexibility and redevelopment near the Thoreau train station. The by-law is complex and more information can be found on the Planning Board's section of the town's website. The second is a grandfather provision for additional dwelling units. The third would add the Thoreau Business District to the formula business bylaw. The fourth would change ceiling height when calculating floor area ratio by-law.

**Question and Answer Period #2 to Cover Unanswered Topics Above Only**

Chair Ackerman opened the meeting for Q&A. Ned Perry directed a question toward Chair Mrachek around benchmarking compensation and benefits for town employees. Chris Reynolds questioned if maintenance is addressed in the Scenic Roads Bylaw.

**Select Board**

Chair Ackerman introduced a recurring article to fund affordable housing with a transfer of \$500k from free cash with the possibility of looking to other sources if the balance in free cash falls below 5%. The second article is a local option for future ballot indicatives that would allow explanatory language to be printed on the ballot.

**Concord Schools Superintendent**

Dr. Hunter gave an update on the FY23 budget process and explained it was still a work-in-progress. The CPS budget is \$43.3M which is \$486,848 above FinCom guideline. Most of this increase is contractual and included some increased staff for SPED. An article for capital will be \$900k spent across several school properties. Concord's portion of the CCRHS budget is \$22.1M which is \$436,414 above FinCom guideline. Debt assessment is \$3.2M. An article to repave and relight the access road is under consideration by the school committee. The school committee will vote the final budget by January 25, 2022.

**Public Works Commission**

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Alan Cathcart, Director of Public Works, presented a 5 year plan for improvements (paving, signage, stormwater improvement, pedestrian and bike improvement, etc.) to the town's 108 miles of public roads. He noted that in the past few years infrastructure maintenance has been underfunded resulting in even more funds required to keep right of ways in good working order. The amount of the five-year plan totals \$34M.

**Citizen Petition Articles**

Mr. Posner presented an article to appropriate not less than \$75k for a feasibility study for the Reformatory Branch Trail. The study would explore grading and drainage improvements along the trail and begin a process to connect Bedford rail trail to Monument Street in Concord.

Beverley Bryant presented an article for a five-year moratorium on the installation of synthetic turf on town owned lands to begin May 1, 2022.

Kate Kavanagh presented an article to authorize the Select Board to file a home rule legislation to elect town officials by Rank Choice Voting.

Elizabeth Hughes summarized a Virginia Road zoning bylaw amendment on behalf of the petitioner to return a historical residence to a residential district by changing the boundary between industrial vs. residential zoning.

**Question and Answer Period #3 to Cover Unanswered Topics Above and Public Comment**

Chair Ackerman again opened the meeting to Q&A. Dr. Hunter offered a clarification to update the gap between the current CCRSH budget and the FinCom guideline. Mary Hartman questioned funding for the Reformatory Branch Trail feasibility study and asked to hear from other committees about this proposal. Stephan Bader asked for clarification around the funding for traffic signals. Linda Escobedo asked about specific FY23 funding for infrastructure and if other funding sources might be available. Tanya Gailus encouraged people to walk the Reformatory Branch trail and gave updates regarding Bedford's efforts to connect. Mark Gailus suggested that a feasibility study is premature. Ellen Quackenbush asked for clarification on the role of the consultant for the Reformatory Branch Trail. Arra Avakian thanked the CPW and Mr. Cathcart and noted that frequent maintenance of roads saves money. Chair Ackerman mentioned that the Select Board would be holding a meeting on Jan 31<sup>st</sup> dedicated to hear requests for ARPA funds.

**Citizen Petition Articles**

Joseph Stein joined the meeting to speak to his citizen petition for a home rule petition to require Concord retailers charge \$.10 for bags.

**Chair's Closing Remarks and Adjournment**

Chair Ackerman ended the meeting by thanking all participants and urged people to attend hearings scheduled in January and February.

Meeting adjourned at 11:12 a.m.

**Minuteman Media Network Coverage:** [https://youtu.be/aKPD0kE\\_WWM](https://youtu.be/aKPD0kE_WWM)