

Town Manager's Report November 18, 2014

To: Board of Selectmen
From Christopher Whelan, Town Manager

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

- **Concord Municipal Light Plant- Concord Residents Sheltered from Winter electric Rate Increases Compared to Region:** As the region prepares for winter, Concord Municipal Light Plant (CMLP) is anticipating high purchased power prices. Similar prices were paid in the winter period 2013/2014 and much conversation has occurred in the media about the high winter prices in the wholesale electric market.
- While last year was a much colder winter than anticipated in the coming months, the higher prices are a reflection of the increased reliance on natural gas-fired generation in New England (after the retirement of both a coal and a nuclear generating plant) and continued natural gas pipeline constraints to the region. Additionally, winter natural gas forward price forecasts are up and there is below average natural gas storage to drive prices up as winter approaches.
- Due to the high prices last winter, significant cash reserves had to be utilized to stabilize the impacts to the bills. In preparing for the upcoming winter, a pre-emptive Power Cost Adjustment (PCA) to mitigate depletion of working capital and ensure financial stability will be implemented.
- CMLP has locked in strategic pricing to cap exposure to market prices and the results are reflected in the proposed PCA. While it was widely highlighted in the media that electric rates will be increasing approximately 38% for many Massachusetts residents, the proposed PCA will increase the typical residential bill 9.7% or around \$14.
- The winter PCA rate changes will go into effect on December 1, 2014. Staff will be monitoring power costs and revenues and anticipates updating the PCA--as well as electric base rates--at the January, 2015 rate hearing based on the most current market data and actual recovery. Information on how to be involved in the public process for the rate hearing will be made available to the community through the town website (www.concordma.gov), local, and social media.

- In the meantime, citizens and businesses alike can begin implementing conservation efforts to keep bills low during the higher winter prices.
- Here are some energy saving tips that can help you offset the rising price of electricity this winter:
 - Hang laundry to dry using indoor drying racks and/or hangers rather than using your dryer. If machine drying is necessary, avoid over-drying, and keep the lint filter clean to improve air circulation.
 - Set your refrigerator's temperature to 38°F to minimize the cost of running it. According to the Department of Energy, your refrigerator should be between 35°F and 38°F. Your freezer should be between 0°F and 5°F. If your refrigerator does not have a temperature display, consider buying an appliance thermometer specially designed to measure the temperature in a refrigerator or freezer. Read the thermometer after 24 hours, and adjust the temperature accordingly. As an alternative to buying a thermometer, adjust the temperature to the middle of the range, or to the recommended mark.
 - Keep lights turned off in unoccupied rooms.
 - Replace incandescent light bulbs with energy efficient compact fluorescent or LED bulbs. Contact Concord Light at 978-318-3151 for information on the best performing brands. Take advantage of a \$3/bulb rebate offered by Concord Light to help offset the cost of higher priced LED bulbs.
 - Power down your cable or DVR box when not in use. Some models use a surprising amount of electricity even when no one is actively watching or recording a show. Consider plugging your set-top box, television, and other home theater equipment into the same power strip and then turning that power strip off when you're not using the TV. A more hands-off approach is to plug the power strip into an inexpensive mechanical outlet timer – the same type you might use to turn a light on and off while you're on vacation. Set the timer to cut power to your TV and set-top boxes overnight.
 - Turn off your computer at night. Save even more by plugging your computer, monitor, and printer into one power strip and turning the strip off when you go to bed.
 - If you have a forced hot air furnace, make sure the filters were changed in preparation for the heating season. A dirty filter will slow down air flow and make your heating system's electrically powered fans work harder to keep you warm.

- Want to learn more about which appliances and devices in your home use a lot of electricity and which use only a little? Borrow a watt meter from Concord Light or from the Concord Free Public Library, and use it to identify the big power users in your home. Contact Concord Light at 978-318-3151 or jaceti@concordma.gov to arrange to pick up a watt meter, or stop by the Main Library.
- **Concord Conserves Campaign:** Thanks to the efforts of many people, electricity consumption across fifteen Town buildings went down 5% during our year-long Concord Conserves Campaign from October 2013 through September 2014. By making individual changes in daily routines, adopting the use of small-scale energy-saving devices, and decommissioning unnecessary energy-using equipment, Concord employees reduced the amount of energy used in their day-to-day work lives. Several major upgrades that improved the energy efficiency of heating and lighting equipment in Town buildings also contributed to the decline in electricity consumption during this time period. The 5% decline saved the Town \$17,000 during the Campaign year, and prevented 65 tons of carbon dioxide emissions. That's equivalent to the CO2 emitted by an average passenger vehicle driven 140,398 miles.

- **FY15 property tax rates set following Public Hearing at Board of Selectmen meeting on Monday, November 17th**

A Public Hearing regarding the setting of the FY2015 property tax was conducted by the Board of Selectmen at its meeting on Monday, November 17th.

FY2015 is the year that began July 1, 2014 and ends June 30, 2015. The Board of Assessors presented its recommendation to set the FY15 property tax rate at a uniform rate of \$14.29 per thousand dollars of assessed valuation, down from the prior year rate of \$14.45. As assessed property values have generally increased for the assessment date of January 1, 2014 (based on analysis of calendar year 2013 sales data), most property tax bills will increase despite the drop in the tax rate. The tax rate is based upon the budgets voted at the May 2014 Annual Town Meeting. The total property tax levy required to fund the adopted budgets is up 4.32%. The required levy is about 5% below the Property Tax levy Limit.

The FY15 valuation list and other useful information for taxpayers is available for review on the Town's website at:

http://concordma.gov/Pages/ConcordMA_Assessor/FY2015

A memorandum from the Finance Director explaining the tax policy decisions considered by the Selectmen, in accordance with state law, is available at:

http://concordma.gov/Pages/ConcordMA_Assessor/TaxRateMemo.pdf

The Report of the Board of Assessors to the Board of Selectmen, including the recommendations of the Assessors as required by state law, is available at:

http://concordma.gov/Pages/ConcordMA_Assessor/Class15.doc

The listing of assessed valuations is available for public review at the Main and Fowler branch libraries and was published in the November 13th edition of the Concord Journal. This information is available also at the Council on Aging office at the Harvey Wheeler Community Center and at the Town House first floor counter. A copy of a property record card is available upon request from the Assessing Office, 978-318-3070 or via e-mail at assessing@concordma.gov.

The property tax rate adopted by the Selectmen and all supporting information is now presented to the state Department of Revenue (DOR) for review. The Property Tax Rate is not official until the state DOR reviews the documentation and conveys its approval.

- **Beede Center Report**

- The first of two HVAC units was delivered Friday morning at 5:30 am. It took several hours to maneuver the four pieces of the unit across the pool deck. The next 10 days will see lots of activity as the contractor assembles the unit and connects all the wiring and duct work. While the pools were closed and members use was minimal, the master mixing valve for the domestic hot water was installed.
- With the pools being closed for the construction project, Aquatic staff took the opportunity to perform some pool maintenance. The Lap pool was super shocked, the dive well and the Kiddie pool were back washed. The diving boards cleaned and greased and the deck was given an extra thorough scrubbing.
- Monday begins the members' promotion to help them continue to work out through the holidays. If they work out 20 times between November 17th and January 11th they will earn a Beede T-shirt.
- Fitness' newest trainer, Craig Lifner, began this week and already has two clients and numerous member orientations scheduled.
- Fitness and Aquatics have begun planning their spring and summer sessions as the brochure information is due December 12th.



- The Lamont Family has officially agreed to be the sponsor of the Spring Family Event “Touch a Truck” held by the Recreation Department in 2015.
- The Recreation Department has been busy enrolling children for their popular skiing and basketball programs with both boys’ and girls’ 1st and 2nd grade basketball programs sold out.
- The heads of the sports groups will be meeting with the CCHS Athletic Director and the Recreation Department to discuss the scheduling of the Turf Fields and the new athletic fields at CCHS.

- **Community Services**
 - This week’s assistance requests related to issues such as food stamps, fuel assistance, mental health referrals, housing, food and holiday gift donations, financial assistance, utility bills and medical bills.
 - Community Services collaborated with the following groups/agencies/departments:
 - SVDP, HCT, SNAP, SMOC, Concord Police Dept., Concord COA, Carlisle COA, Open Table, Commission for the Blind, CMLP, Concord Carlisle Community Chest, Concord Carlisle Youth Services, Concord Veteran’s Agent and the North Shore Center for Hoarding and Cluttering
 - The Community Services Coordinator is planning a “Meeting of the Minds” for Wednesday November 19th to include the local funding groups and the agencies that use those groups. The purpose of the meeting is to allow for collaboration and sharing of information to improve the services that are provided to the low income families of Concord and Carlisle.
 - The Community Services Coordinator is finalizing the list for the Silent Fund Holiday program. The due date for this list is November 21st, 2014.

- The Community Services Coordinator continues to assist with fuel assistance applications. Please contact Aileen Buford, MSW at 978.318.3034 or abuford@concordma.gov if you are under the age of 60 and would like more information about the SMOC fuel assistance program. Anyone over the age of 60 can contact the Concord COA for SMOC fuel assistance information at 978.318.3020.
- **Concord Senior Services**
 - The Concord Carlisle High School Junior class will once again be serving a Thanksgiving meal for Concord and Carlisle seniors on Saturday, November 22 at noon. Reservations can be made by calling the COA at 978-318-3020.
 - The COA Board is working on compiling a history of the COA. If interested in participating, please contact Volunteer Coordinator, Carol Dromgoole.
 - Seniors who would like a bucket of sand delivered to their home during the month of December for use during the winter may call the COA to sign up.
 - Seniors who have lost a spouse or partner are encouraged to attend a discussion on December 9th at 10am entitled “Coping with the Holidays”. Please call Sally Lopez at the COA for more information.
- **Department of Planning & Land Management**
- **Planning Division**
 - Black Horse Place PRD – Commerford Rd: At the November 13th Zoning Board of Appeals meeting, the ZBA heard additional testimony from a packed room in support and opposition to the proposed 22-unit planned residential development. Supporters commented on the significant value of the 28+ acres of open space that would be deeded to the Town, providing protection of the Baptist Brook, public trail connections to the 118 acre Town-owned Annursnac Hill conservation area, and preservation of a large wildlife corridor. Opponents from the Commerford Road neighborhood had concerns with the density of the development, traffic generation and need for a sidewalk along Commerford Road. The ZBA continued this item to the December 11th hearing.
 - “How to Hold a Public Hearing”: At the request of the Planning Board and Board of Appeals, the Planning Division is working with the Citizen

Planner Training Collaborative to schedule a workshop in February or March on “How to Hold a Public Hearing”. The workshop covers legal and procedural requirements for conducting a public hearing and includes video clips to assist boards in understanding how to avoid constructive approvals, ease tensions between parties over controversial projects and calm chaotic hearings. This workshop will be open to all Concord board and committee members.

- Parking Management Plan implementation update: The Parking Management Group met to discuss various efforts underway by Planning, Public Works, Police and Finance staff to implement the 2013 Parking Management Plan – finalizing an agreement with Stop & Shop to implement pay for parking and enforcement of the 56 commuter parking spaces near Crosby Market; working with the MBTA vendor to implement cashless payment for the commuter parking spaces in West Concord; and meeting with a representative from Concord Academy to discuss expanding pay for parking on Main Street. Additional outreach meetings still need to be scheduled with the Concord Business Partnership and others. A scope of work with parking management consultant, Nelson-Nygaard, for additional assistance with implementation of the Parking Management Plan is expected to be finalized in the next week.
- 495/MetroWest Partnership forum on State’s Economic Development Incentive Program: Director Rasmussen attended a forum that featured staff from the Massachusetts Office of Business Development to hear about changes to the State’s Economic Development Incentive Program on Wednesday. The State has streamlined and simplified the process for various aspects of the program resulting from passage of the 2014 Economic Development Bill.
- **Health Division**
 - Routine Health Division Activities: Health Division staff provided the following services for the week of November 7-14.
 - Septic system permitting: 2 consultations with clients regarding large projects; 8 residents assisted with information at the counter; 1 permit issued; 13 field inspections; 2 Certificates of Compliance issued; 1 letter issued to septic designer requesting design changes; 1 Title 5 Sewer Review for proposed construction at Millbrook Tarry; 5 building reviews to assess septic system capacity prior to issuance of building permits; assistance with 1 septic betterment application.

- Other: 2 food service inspections; 2 consultations related to proposed food service projects; 2 animal inspections; 2 complaint inspections; 18 tobacco compliance inspections; 5 housing complaint consultations.
- Meetings attended: US EPA Public Meeting on Proposed Remedial Action Plan for Nuclear Metals site at 2229 Main St.
- MDPH Emergency Preparedness Drills Conducted: The Health Division completed Emergency Dispensing Site staff notification and site activation drills. These drills require notifying key town staff who serve in leadership roles in the event that the town needs to open an emergency dispensing site to administer medication or immunizations in a public health emergency. Completion of the drills meets required deliverables which are a condition for the Health Division to continue to receive MDPH Emergency Preparedness funding through Region 4A.
- Healthy Concord book discussion: A free community program was presented on Thursday, November 13 to discuss the book *Overwhelmed: Work, Love and Play when No One has the Time* by Brigid Schulte. The discussion was facilitated by Kathy Bowen, former K-12 Health Education Coordinator, who is currently a life coach and parent educator.
- **Building Inspections Division**
 - 427 Lowell Road: Inspections staff learned that the house under construction at 427 Lowell Road was not being constructed in accordance with the plan approved by the Historic Districts Commission. The contractor was informed that no further inspections would occur until the changes had been reviewed and approved by the HDC and the building permit amended accordingly. Inspections staff believes the house is 6-feet, 6-inches taller than the approved plan. All work has stopped on the construction of the house with the exception of some masonry work required to close an opening in the floor.
 - Review of 2015 Annual License Renewals: Local Building Inspector Laurie Livoli and Department staff have been involved with inspecting eighteen (18) liquor license establishments around town to confirm building and fire code compliance. This inspection occurs each year at this time of year just prior to the Selectmen renewing liquor licenses.
- **Natural Resources Division**
 - Open Space and Recreation Plan: The Division of Natural Resources is pleased to announce the draft 2014 Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) is ready for public review. The OSRP can be found on the Division of Natural Resources website at:

http://concordma.gov/pages/ConcordMA_NaturalResources/OSRP/OSRP

. Hard copies will be available upon request. Public input and letters of support by the end of the year would be much appreciated. A public meeting on the draft OSRP will be held in mid-December.

- Natural Resources Commission: At the November 19th meeting, the NRC will hear the following items: a Request for Determination of Applicability (RDA) for 110 Commerford Road to construct a portico; an Abbreviated Notice of Intent for 40 Whippoorwill Lane to construct a second story to the existing garage and remove five trees; a Notice of Intent (NOI) for 79 Commerford Road to repair an existing swimming pool; an RDA to confirm a wetland boundary at 740 Elm Street; and, an NOI to move a garage at 115 Williams Road.