

Town Manager's Report

Monday, November 8, 2010

To: Board of Selectmen
From Christopher Whelan, Town Manager

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

FINANCE

FY12 Budget development: The Finance Committee Guidelines Subcommittee voted budget guidelines to be presented to the full committee at its next regular meeting on November 18. The recommendation for Town government operations is an increase of \$750,000 on the FY10 base of \$17,352,013, an increase of 4.32%.

FY11 Tax Rate: The Department of Revenue has approved the proposed new values submitted by the Board of Assessors and the New Growth documentation, and has given clearance to conduct the Tax Rate hearing set for November 15. The Board of Assessors is recommending a uniform tax rate of \$13.19, up 10 cents from the prior year rate.

The Report of the Board of Assessors, "Tax Rate Analysis, Fiscal Year 2011", will be distributed and placed on the website on Monday, November 8.

FY11 Taxable Valuation notices: The new property valuations are set as of the assessment date of January 1, 2010 and are based upon an analysis of sales data from calendar year 2009. New construction is assessed as of each June 30; thus, the FY11 valuation included the valuation of all new construction completed or in progress from July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2010.

While the overall taxable base is virtually unchanged (at \$5.045 Billion), there are about 950 residential properties that will see a valuation increase of 2.5% or more. Many of these changes are due to building permit work, but others are due to a variety of reasons related to market changes and data corrections. Each of the residential property owners with a valuation increase of 2.5% or more have been sent a letter from the Board of Assessors showing the new property record card information. This is being done in order to provide property owners with an opportunity to understand the changes and raise any questions with staff and the Board during November and December, before the third quarter bills are issued on January 1.

Owners who do not feel that the new valuation represents the January 1, 2010 market value or who believe that the value is disproportionate to other property values will have the time period from the issuance of the third quarter tax bills on January 1 until the due date of February 1 to file an abatement application with the Board of Assessors. Abatement applications cannot be accepted prior to the issuance of the third quarter bill. The basis for an abatement application must, in accordance with state law, be a valuation that is demonstrated to be over the market value or that is demonstrated to be disproportionate to the valuation of other property.

Election Day: Turnout was a very strong 71.5%, one of the highest in the state, with about 12% of the vote counted as absentee ballots. New state election procedures in place for this election included electronic absentee ballots issued to overseas registered voters. Ballots could be returned electronically by election day (which required manual counting by the registrars). There is also a 10-day period within which ballots properly issued electronically to voters by the Town Clerk may be counted if returned in paper form and postmarked by election day. This same rule applies to absentee ballots issued by mail to active military voters. The Town Clerk's office and the Board of Registrars are also reviewing a handful of provisional ballots issued to those who appeared at polling places but were not on the voter registration lists. Thus the final official tally will not be available until after November 12.

FIRE

Apparatus: The Fire Department is in the process of developing an appropriate bid document for the ladder truck replacement, in anticipation of going to bid in early January in preparation for a FY12 capital borrowing authorization request at Town Meeting.

EMS: The Fire Department's ambulance license must be renewed every two years, and is now up for renewal. This is a routine matter, and the application process is underway (to be followed up by a State inspection).

The Fire Chief reports that five additional defibrillators have now been placed in our school facilities; four at the High School and one in the Ripley gymnasium.

LIBRARY

The Leslie Riedel Memorial Lecture for Young People with Caldecott-Award winning author/illustrator David Macaulay on October 30 was very well received with approximately 100 people in attendance. The Library filmed the program that evening and, with the author's permission, plans to make it available via the Internet and local cable access. Another 80 people attended the author talk on *the History of the Fur Trade in America* with author, Eric Jay Dolin on 10/30 as part of the Concord Festival of Authors.

The Library Director has arranged to have the architect from the Fowler project speak at the December 16 meeting of the Concord Rotary Club to discuss and showcase the progress of the Fowler Library renovation.

The kick-off meeting for the Library's long range planning process took place on Thursday, November 4. The Long Range Planning Committee plans to meet monthly for up to one year. Desired outcomes include: a revised mission statement, vision statements with several strategic areas of focus, along with goals and objectives over a span of three to four years. Committee members will actively engage members of the community for input to insure the broadest range of citizen participation in this process.



CFPL Long Range Planning Committee

LIGHT DEPARTMENT

Power Supply: Contract preparations moved forward this week with a target bid date of November 12 for a five megawatt block of wholesale energy covering the years 2013-2015 and possibly 2016.

Rates: 2011 rates were discussed at the Light Board meeting this past Wednesday and will be the main focus on the upcoming meeting (Wednesday Nov 10). A rate Hearing will be held on November 30 at 7:30PM at the Town House.

R-7 Rate Deployment: Installation of Rate R-7 meters (new rate to bill electric heating kwhs at the first tier of the residential rate) continued this week for participating customers using geothermal and air-to-air heat pumps as well as electric resistance heating systems.

Smart Grid/ Fiber: Work remains ongoing for the Smart Grid/Fiber project. NextGen/ElecComm completed the installation of 21,361 feet of aerial cable and 4,800 feet of inner duct. They plan to continue with the installation of fiber this week, as well as start splicing operations next week. The Light Plant is tentatively planning to install the fiber electronics at Substation 223 during the week of December 13.

West Concord Underground System Upgrade Project: A scheduled power outage took place on Bradford Street on Saturday, November 6. All customers affected by the outage were notified. The purpose of this outage was to upgrade electrical facilities inside the electric manhole located in Bradford Street. During the outage operations staff upgraded aged facilities to prevent future unplanned outages. The upgrade will also allow CMLP to install new facilities through the electric manhole as part of their larger upgrade project.

Staff will also be communicating with customers on Beharrel Street this week to schedule a power outage within the next two weeks. This power outage is also part of the system upgrade project, and will tie the street to the future system.

PLANNING & LAND MANAGEMENT

Natural Resources Division

The Division received notification this week that the Department of Environmental Protection issued a Superseding Order of Conditions (Denial) for the Crosby's Corner reconstruction project. Under the Wetlands Protection Act Regulations, this Denial is required before DEP can act on the Variance request from MassDOT, which is expected to be filed in the next week or so.

Four proposals for the Warner's Pond Watershed Management Plan were received by the deadline last week. The proposals will be evaluated next week by Natural Resources staff and representatives of the Warner's Pond Stewardship Committee.

Planning Division:

Historic Districts Commission: The HDC met on Thursday night to review two continued applications and four new applications for Certificates of Appropriateness. Of particular note, the Commission approved Certificates to relocate the Caesar Robbins House to the North Bridge area and install temporary signage on the site.

Battle Road Scenic Byway Meeting: The Battle Road Scenic Byway Working Group is holding a public meeting on Tuesday, November 9, 2010, beginning at 6:00 PM at the Cary Memorial Hall Auditorium, 1605 Massachusetts Avenue in Lexington. This is an opportunity to learn more about the proposed Byway; the corridor management options and opportunities available for Concord through this program; and the recommendations proposed for transportation, land use, and tourism opportunities along the Byway. The Working Group will be seeking input from attendees on these recommendations, and is hoping for a good turnout from each of the four communities (Arlington, Lexington, Lincoln and Concord). From 6-7 PM there will be a “meet and greet” with displays to review recommendations and resources along the Byway, followed by the Public Forum at 7:00PM.

Planning Board: The Planning Board will be meeting with the West Concord Task Force next Tuesday to discuss the Task Force’s recommendations for zoning bylaw amendments in three areas: creating a Village District in the West Concord business area along Commonwealth Ave., amending the table of uses for the West Concord Industrial District to change some of the uses by special permit to allowed by right, and creating an overlay district for 50 Beharrell Street. The Planning Board also hopes to discuss the Formula Business bylaw with members of the WCTF, since they were the ones to propose the bylaw amendment, which failed, last year. The Board will also be reviewing draft 53(g) regulations to require applicants to provide funds to hire consultants for additional or exceptional review of submitted projects when such review is determined to be needed; a public hearing will be scheduled as required if the Planning Board determines this is something they want to have available.

Health Division

Influenza Clinics: The Health Division, in conjunction with the Council on Aging, held its annual seasonal influenza clinic at the Harvey Wheeler Community Center on Friday, October 29, 2010. Emerson Hospital Home Care administered approximately 225 influenza vaccines to Concord Seniors – a lower turnout than in years past. This year, the early availability of influenza vaccine from manufacturers to primary care physicians and other venues such as CVS, Walgreens, and Rite Aid was certain to have had an effect on the totals.

Building and Inspections Division

The former Chrysler Jeep dealership: Last week, staff met with the owner of the former Chrysler-Jeep dealership at 135 Commonwealth Avenue to discuss the possibility of selling the vacant lot across from 135 Commonwealth Avenue (formerly used as auto dealership/sales lot). Because the various uses at 135 Commonwealth Avenue building rely upon parking on the vacant lot at 13B Commonwealth Ave., the owner has been informed that he needs to develop a plan for the 135 Commonwealth Avenue building that will rely only upon the parking provided on that site alone.

Building permit activity is up: Comparing current permit activity to last year, building permits issued have increased by 14% over a year ago. The number of permits for new homes issued has increased from 28 homes in 2009 to 39 homes to date. This increase in permitting reflects a 3 million dollar increase in construction value over a year ago. The Building Division has still not issued any permits for the new 350 unit Longview Meadow rental project but expects to soon. The following picture is of the Concord Riverwalk project on Main St. in West Concord.



POLICE

Support Services: The Police Chief reports that several of our officers have volunteered to work with CCTV, C4RJ and the Domestic Violence Victim Assistance Program in the development of a cable TV show with the goal of further informing the community of the services available through these programs. Filming has begun with the DVVAP program, and the Department is hoping to use this as a model for crime prevention programs in the future.

Command Staffing: The Police Chief has completed the screening of the twelve (12) police lieutenant applicants and will start scheduling first round interviews this week.

Special Operations: The Department's NEMLEC Regional SWAT Team members were part of a large scale warrant service involving several Federal, State and Local Law Enforcement agencies early Friday morning in Lowell. Several automatic weapons and drugs were confiscated during the warrant service.

PUBLIC WORKS

Engineering and Administration

2010 Roads Program: Work within the Sarah Way/Mildred Circle neighborhood is completed for the 2010 construction season. This work included reclamation and binder course pavement installation and resetting of the granite edging. The reconstruction of Sarah Way and Mildred Circle included coordination with CMLP and Comcast to allow the installation of new conduit throughout the neighborhood. Due to all the utility work in the neighborhood, CPW will leave the pavement at binder course pavement grade over the winter to allow for any settlement of the utility trenches prior to final top course pavement installation in the Spring of 2011. MacArthur Road and the Ministerial Drive/Tarbell Spring Road neighborhood has been reclaimed, fine graded and paved with binder course pavement. Bituminous curbing was being installed last week with top course pavement anticipated to begin the week of November 8. The drainage improvement work proposed on Nimrod Road has been completed; however, reclamation and paving operations are being deferred to next construction season due to contractor scheduling and cold weather.

2010 Sidewalk Program (Lowell Road – SW Extension): Project contractor Allied Paving continued work throughout October on the sidewalk on the eastern side of the road, from the second Middlesex School entrance near Westford Road to the driveway of #1710 Lowell Road. Work is anticipated to be completed to binder course pavement elevation by the end of the week of November 8. The drainage improvements in this sidewalk section, saw cutting and patching the raveling sections of the road's shoulder and the installation of the bituminous curbing in sections of the sidewalk adjacent to the roadway are also anticipated to be completed prior to winter shutdown.

Westford Road (Spencer Brook) Culvert: The Engineering Division completed design and environmental permitting for a replacement of the failed Westford Road culvert. As anticipated, permit conditions limit construction to the low flow season which is July 1 to November 1, so work will be deferred to Summer of 2011 at the earliest. The Engineering Division also forwarded an application to FEMA to obtain Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) funding for the construction of the culvert replacement project by the November 1 deadline. The FEMA application requests \$73,700 for the culvert replacement (meeting the required 1.0 HMGP benefit cost ratio). Should the Town not be successful in obtaining the HMGP funding, Chapter 90 Funds will be utilized for the culvert project or to cover any additional costs needed for construction. The Town will be notified within April 2011 with a decision on the HMGP Application.

Nashawtuc Bridge: The Engineering Division obtained FEMA approval for modifications to the Public Assistance funding obtained for the scouring of the bridge's embankments during the March 2011 flooding events. The repair will include the filling of the eroded/scoured areas with a gravel material, installation of geotextile fabric and the installation of a placed stone armament (stones laid flat mimicking the bridges appearance). The design approach has been reviewed by the NPS relating to the historic and scenic river as well as by NRC from an environmental perspective.

Artificial Turf Fields located at CCRHS: Work on field 1 continues to progress on schedule with removal of all field material and fine grading being completed last Friday. Installation of the new field began on Saturday, and is scheduled to take approximately 2 weeks. Field 2 is substantially complete with the contractor now addressing punch list items including infill depth, grooming, seaming and field planarity.

Water and Sewer

Nagog Pond Filtration Waiver, Annual Inspection: In accordance with CPW's existing Nagog Pond surface water filtration waiver, MassDEP conducted its annual watershed inspection survey. This survey includes an evaluation of water quality monitoring activities as well as land-use protection initiatives. Over the past year, water quality issues (most notably elevated levels of turbidity) and wildlife management (beaver mitigation activity) have posed the greatest challenges. The filtration waiver allows the town to defer the considerable expense for construction of a filtration plant at Nagog Pond while the water supply source is used primarily as a peak supply. Based on the waiver requirements for raw water quality sampling, management of the waiver has become increasingly difficult.

Farmer's Cliff Road Water Line Installation: Water Division crews have installed approximately 750 linear feet of 8 inch water main in Farmer's Cliff Road. This work was completed in coordination with the new culvert construction that Highway crews completed over this construction season. The water line will remain uncharged and inactive until the remainder of water main is constructed.

Wastewater Alternatives Analysis: Coordination meetings between CPW staff and Weston & Sampson consulting engineers continue in preparation for the upcoming Wastewater Planning Task Force meeting scheduled for December. A wastewater management alternatives evaluation matrix is being developed which will allow for a comprehensive and objective comparison of all likely management alternatives with specific consideration of the following key factors; economic, environmental, feasibility, public acceptance, regulatory, and timing. Once accepted by the Wastewater Task Force, this matrix will be populated for likely "conceptual" approaches. The matrix will be designed to stay current and allow for repopulation of data given site specific information

when such information is made available.

Route 2A Pump Station Upgrade: Stantec Engineering is nearing 90% design plans for the Route 2A pump station upgrade project. Staff continued to work with the Stantec engineers to establish requisite design basis to meet all operational and regulatory needs and interests with permitting, bidding and construction scheduled to begin spring 2011.

Highway and Grounds

Whittimore Road Drainage Improvements and Water Main Replacement: All drainage and water main work is now completed with temporary paving scheduled to take place late during the next week or two, following paving of Tarbell Spring Road and Ministerial Drive.

Tuttle Trail ADA Accessible Parking Area: Public Works has reached final completion of this project which provides an ADA accessible parking area off Walden Street for the trail. Parking spots have been delineated and signed, a new driveway apron installed and the forest paths reestablished to the parking area. Installation of signage will take place in the future.

Walden Street Parking Lot Repairs: CPW Highway crews have now completed interim repairs to the Walden Street Parking Lot behind the Post Office that included overlaying the exit way as well as patching two larger deteriorated areas of the lot. The Walden Street lot is scheduled for complete design and construction improvements over the next 2-3 years subject to funding availability.

Solid Waste and Recycling

Big Belly Solar Compactors: As originally mentioned last week, two ("BigBelly") Solar Trash Compactors were provided to the Town by Waste Management. This was at no cost to the Town, per the terms of the contract with Waste Management. These units have been placed on Thoreau Street and at Junction Park in West Concord.

The units are "wrapped" with Concord-specific scenes. They are completely self-powered, using only solar power for trash compaction. The capacity of these units is five times greater than regular trash receptacles of similar size. These innovative solar compactors reduce collection trips and fuel use, and are said to cut greenhouse gas emissions by up to 80%.

