

Town Manager's Weekly Report

Monday, August 11, 2008

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

1. **Recreation Department Golf Tournament.** Concord Open Golf Tournament was scheduled to be held Monday, August 11 at Nashawtuc Country Club. However, the tournament was cancelled due to flooding on the course. It has been rescheduled to Monday August 25. The event was fully "sold out" (128 participants) with a broad group of very generous sponsors. This is the 6th consecutive year the event has been held. It is a fund-raiser put on by the Recreation Department to fund scholarships for its summer camp program. Last year the event raised \$32,000 for camp scholarships for 80 financially deserving youth.
2. **Warner's Pond Dam.** The "coffer dam" redirecting the flow of the Nashoba Brook around the work area at the Warner's Pond Dam was breached over the weekend. This occurred in the early afternoon on Saturday and sent a surge of water under Commonwealth Avenue out to the Assabet River. Fortunately, no one was hurt. But there was some property damage sustained in the retaining wall adjacent to the Nashoba Brook Bakery. As a result of the breach, the level of the pond dropped considerably. However, with the heavy rains received Sunday night, the water level rose again. The coffer dam was breached intentionally on Monday to release pressure on the fabric holding back the water. No work will take place on the dam until we see a return to "low flow" conditions. The work was actually nearing completion on the main spillway, and the project was due to be completed in early October before this weekend's events.
3. **Other Public Works Department Activities**
 - a. **Roads.**
 - i. WILLARD SCHOOL AREA. Reconstruction of several roads in the Willard School area (Dover St, Paul Revere Rd) is underway. Rain has delayed some of this work. Base course paving should be completed next week.
 - ii. ORNAC. As with the roads in the Willard area, sections of this road must be reconstructed due to the trench that was completed last year when water pipes were installed connecting the White Pond Well with the new Deaconess Well filtration facility. Work on this road will begin in September. The base course of paving will be put down this year; the final course will likely be delayed until the spring to allow for settlement.
 - iii. ROUTE 62. It is expected that on August 23, Mass Highway will advertise for bids for the reconstruction of Route 62 from the Damon Mill to the Acton town-line. If the bids come in reasonably close to the \$3.6 million project estimate, work could begin late this coming fall. The State has provided for a two-year project schedule. The Town Engineer will be working to have that schedule compressed somewhat, to reduce disruption to the public. However, like the eastern end of Route 62 in Concord, there is no short detour route for the re-direction of traffic during construction, so this will require regular communication with residents and the traveling public to minimize inconvenience to the extent possible.
 - iv. CAMBRIDGE TURNPIKE has been a recurring problem this summer, with the road repeatedly closed to one lane of traffic only. Two culverts allowing water to flow underneath the road from Sandy Pond are completely clogged, causing

water to sheet over the road surface. Rain and high water levels have prevented CPW from de-watering the area and installing additional drainage capacity. An effort will be made during the next week to alleviate this problem. CPW engineers are working closely with Natural Resources staff to address the problem.

- v. **MAIN STREET CROSSWALK.** A new crosswalk is planned for Main Street near Academy Lane. The plans call for a “neck down” that will reduce the width of the street and will eliminate parking adjacent to the crosswalk to improve the visibility of pedestrians to motorists. The crosswalk will have a raised surface that will tend to slow motorists down as they approach. Concord Academy has agreed to fund the majority of the cost of this work, which will also include some drainage improvements. The project was approved by the Historic Districts Commission at the Commission’s last meeting.

b. **Bridges.**

- i. **FLINT BRIDGE.** Zoppo Construction, the contractor undertaking the repair of the Flint Bridge on Monument St, has completed work on the structural enhancement of the bridge; however, Zoppo has ceased work awaiting further guidance from Mass Highway about how to proceed with the next phase of construction. The company was nearly 2 months ahead of schedule and had been making very good progress toward having the bridge work completed in 2009, not 2010 as the contract and schedule would permit. The Town Engineer will be pressing for swift resumption of construction activity.
 - ii. **HEATH’S BRIDGE.** Work has resumed on Heath’s Bridge and travel is once again restricted to one lane with the use of temporary traffic lights. The steel portions of the bridge are being sand-blasted and re-painted by Mass Highway. This aspect of the project was inadvertently left out of the re-construction project that was completed earlier this year. Work is expected to take until October to complete.
- c. **Waste Water Planning.** The Waste Water Task Force has invited about 30 of the town’s largest property owners and institutions with a likely need for addition wastewater capacity to a discussion forum on August 26 at 7:30 a.m. in the Town House. The goal is for the Task Force to gain some insight into the likely need for additional wastewater capacity in Concord. The Bedford Street wastewater treatment plant is essentially **at capacity** and the Public Works Commission has begun rejecting applications for increased flow from new or expanding businesses. The Task Force hopes to have a recommendation for the Selectmen and Town Manager concerning the need for more capacity late this coming Fall.
- d. **Reduced Water Use in July.** The Water Division reported pumping 69.3 million gallons of water in the month of July. Due to rainfall that was 4-inches higher than normal, this is well-below average.
- e. **Town Engineer Leaving.** Jim Shuris the Town Engineer for four years, will be leaving on August 22 to assume the role of Director of Public Works in the Town of Holden. Jim was instrumental in securing the Federal Railway Administration’s approval to maintain the Town’s “Quiet Zones” prevent train engineers from blowing the loud air-horns each time a train approached one of our five RR crossings; Jim also helped laid the groundwork for securing State funding for the reconstruction of Rt 62 in West Concord and the repair of several bridges; he also played an active role with Mass Highway on two major projects now in the planning stages: the reconstruction of Crosby’s Corner and the Route 2 Rotary Reconfiguration. We wish Jim well in the future. We are pleased that Bill Renault, Public Works Engineer, has agreed to assume the responsibilities of Acting Town Engineer.

4. **State Bond Bill.** Senator Susan Fargo's office contacted me last week to ask whether there are any important public safety projects that require funding in Concord. I indicated that two projects included in our Five Year Capital Plan are the renovation of the Concord Center Fire Station (\$4.5 million) and the replacement of our 1987 Aerial Ladder Truck (\$1 million). While we have some funds programmed for these projects, we do not as yet have them fully financed. Senator Fargo was successful in adding both to the draft bond bill legislation before the bill was finalized last week. The Fire Station improvements were not included in the final bill that is now on the Governor's desk awaiting approval. But \$1 million has been authorized to replace fire equipment in Concord. This is an **authorization**, not an appropriation, so a second bill will be required to actually fund the new ladder truck for Concord. With the State's finances so precarious at the moment, it will still be an up-hill struggle to secure this funding; but at least the initial reaction has been favorable.
5. **MCI-Concord Land Preservation Bill.** It was also learned this week that a bill preserving about 100 acres of farmland in Concord and Acton, currently controlled by the Department of Corrections, has been approved by the House and Senate and is awaiting a signature by the Governor. This bill would not impact the current operations of MCI-Concord prison nor the Northeast Correctional Center (prison farm), but would permanently protect the prison farmlands which have been deemed by the Department of Agricultural Resources to be highly valuable farmland. The bill also does not cover the six acres of land south of the prison, adjacent to the abandoned railroad line; and does not cover any land which Mass Highway feels might be needed for the reconfiguration of the Route 2 Rotary, currently in the planning stages. Senator Fargo's office agreed to contact us with any news of action by the Governor on this bill.
6. **West Concord Task Force.** The Task Force held its second meeting at Concord Park and reviewed the "committee charge". They elected Dan Holin as chair and Betsy Stokey as vice chair. Their next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, September 2 at 7:30 p.m. The Task Force also hopes to arrange an informal walking "site visit" of West Concord locations and problem areas some time before their next business meeting. A web page has been set up for this group, as well as links to a long list of previous studies and reports involving West Concord issues.
7. **Boston Bark – Barretts Mill Road.** Building Commissioner John Minty issued an enforcement order requiring Marabello Farms and Boston Bark to demonstrate how their mulching operation on Barretts Mill Road complies with zoning, given the property's "residential" zoning status. The order required a response by Friday, August 8. This followed numerous complaints from neighbors regarding excessive truck traffic, noise and odors. Several Town staff and I attended a meeting, together with Town Counsel, hosted by the Department of Agricultural Resources to discuss the problem. Boston Bark indicated to Town Counsel that they intend to immediately cease the importation of materials from off-site. They have requested some additional time to sell-off or relocate the materials currently on-site. John Minty is in discussions with Boston Bark and the Marabello family concerning the need to come into compliance with local zoning regulations. These regulations allow composting, but only as an adjunct to a primarily farming use of the property. The mulching operation is considered a "processing" operation, which is therefore commercial or industrial, **not** agricultural. Boston Bark submitted an appeal of the Building Commissioner's enforcement letter; but they have indicated that the filing was only for the purpose of allowing the discussions to continue regarding an orderly discontinuance of the mulching operation.
8. **Fire Chief Retiring in February.** Fire Chief Ken Willette submitted to me on Friday written notice of his intention to retire as of Friday, February 28, 2009. Ken was appointed in 2003, so he will have served just over 5 years as Concord's Chief. He came to us after serving more than 30 years in the Town of Wilbraham, Mass., and was successful in implementing a variety of new

programs in the Fire Department. Ken focused considerable energy up-grading the Town's Emergency Preparedness System and deserves much credit for the improvements he made in the program, including the involvement of many citizen volunteers.

9. Light Plant Activities.

- a. Emerson Field Underground project is on schedule. To date, conduit installation progress is as follows:
 - Thoreau Court: 95%
 - Walden Terrace: 90%
 - Devens & Belknap: 95%
 - Academy & Middle Street: 65%
 - Thoreau Street: 50%
 - Laurel St, Sudbury Rd, Hubbard, Union, Willow, & Field Streets: 0%

Overall average of work completed is 45%. The Water Division and the Light Plant are closely coordinating work on Walden Terrace and Laurel Street. After the electric conduit is in place, Light Plant crews will install pipe to each dwelling after which cables will be placed. The estimated cost of the conduit work now underway is \$1.4 million for the contractor and another \$600,000 for the materials. The total project is estimated to cost between \$3 and \$4 million depending on the price of copper.

- b. New residential street lights are being installed to replace the old tall aluminum poles that have been in place for some 30 years or more. The new lights are in full compliance with the Street Lighting policy. Winslow Drive, Oak Hill Circle and Blue Jay Drive have been completed.
- c. The conversion to underground service properties on Main Street from the river to the library is underway. So far, 6 houses and 1 business have been converted. The work is scheduled to be completed before winter.

10. Town Manager's Report Posted on Web. The Town Manager's Report will be posted on the Town's website the day following a Selectmen's meeting.