



OLD NORTH BRIDGE

TOWN OF CONCORD

SELECT BOARD'S OFFICE
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To: Comprehensive Long Range Plan Committee
From: Select Board

The Select Board wants to thank the Comprehensive Long Range Plan Committee for their efforts to date. The SWOT analysis provided was thorough, comprehensive and demonstrates careful thought. We want to acknowledge the enormous effort, long hours, public forums, and focus groups that went into producing this working document.

We discussed the appropriateness of the Select Board responding to the Comprehensive Long Range Plan committee as it is customary for the SB to receive, comment and approve the work of the committees that developed it. But after discussion at our meeting we thought that there are specific areas of our purview that should specifically be considered for the final report relating to good governance and transparency of government.

This brief memo will address the questions you posed to all town committees.

What are the pressing issues for your board/commission?

The Select Board underscores that a sustainable community must balance the economic, environmental and social components of society. We are acutely aware that our community thrives on its tourist economy and for that we need vibrant downtown areas where visitors can shop, eat, and learn about our history. BJ Dunn, superintendent of the Minuteman National Historic Park, recently presented to the Select Board that some one million visitors come annually to the visitor center and add considerably to the local economy. The Bruce Freeman Rail Trail will be bringing bicyclists and others through West Concord, and we are working to establish other forms of inter-town transportation.

We need to look at the current incentives that drive our small businesses to succeed and those that create impediments to success. We are concerned that rising rents are outpacing business returns in many cases and that small businesses may need assistance from the town and commercial property owners to make Concord attractive to these enterprises and profitable for them at the same time. Other issues such as zoning, fees, congestion and in-town transportation have also been raised as concerns.

Recent town demographics show that we are an aging community with nearly half our town population 50 years old or older. Sustainable communities grow

and thrive when younger families find starter homes and raise their children there, and older residents are able to affordably downsize and stay in the community they love. The Select Board is mindful of this delicate balance and want to plan for a future where young and old can share in the economy, town services and our rich environment.

Where are the tensions in your work? Conflicts?

The Select Board is interested in *engagement* with all residents in our community. This requires ongoing efforts to reach residents, wherever they are and through whatever medium they follow. Engagement is a dialogue, not a static one-way communication. The town recently hired a Public Information Officer who, as a Millennial, has the savvy to exploit social media along with more traditional outreach channels to engage our residents in civic affairs and to work on improving our technologic outreach capacity.

The Select Board also seeks to improve civic literacy and has developed workshop materials for volunteers serving on our town boards and committees. A specific challenge is how to more effectively engage a younger demographic to serve on town committees and boards or to gain their insights and input in other ways.

Year after year, residents respond that Town Character is among the highest valued attributes of our community. However, there is not a single definition of Town Character nor unanimity on how it is best preserved. For some it is the economic vitality of our downtown areas, to others it may be our farming heritage, or recreational, and open space opportunities, and still others may define our character by its place in history during the American Revolution. Concord is a Welcoming Community - a community value that is in keeping with our transcendental history. Surely each is an important complement of our character. Balancing these attributes with other components of the CLRP is indeed the heart of the challenge.

Is there a particular project, program, or goal that your board is proud to have accomplished in the past year or so?

The SB established several new committees that will reap long-term benefits to Concord. These include the Financial Audit Advisory Committee, Disability Commission, Estabrook Woods Access Committee, Public Private Partnership Committee and the Energy Future Task Force. Two new committees are just getting underway – Dog Park Feasibility Study Committee and Affordable Housing Finance Committee.

Sincerely,



Jane Hotchkiss, Chair
Select Board