

# BOARD OF SELECTMEN



Seated from left: Stanly Black, Gregory Howes, Chair; Standing from left: Virginia McIntyre, Jeffrey Wieand, Anne Shapiro

## General Business

The Board of Selectmen is the elected board responsible for the development and implementation of Town policy. It performs these functions by making recommendations to Town Meeting, implementing the decisions of Town Meeting, managing the by-laws and budget of the Town, monitoring and evaluating the annual goals and objectives of the Town Manager, making appointments to a variety of Town boards, committees and task forces, guiding the development and evaluating the performance of the Town's operating and capital budget, and acting as the authority for the granting of numerous licenses. The Board of Selectmen further represents the Town in a variety of roles with Federal, State, regional and other local government agencies.

The Board of Selectmen this year modified its schedule of meetings from every week to every other week on Monday evenings to conduct the business of the Town. The Board uses a consent calendar to streamline routine and non-controversial matters such as gift acceptances and special licenses to increase the time available for substantive discussion. Meetings are open to all interested citizens and time is scheduled at each meeting to hear citizen comments. The meetings are broadcast live on cable television's community channel and reported by the *Concord Journal*.

This year the Board met regularly with the Town's State Representative and Carlisle officials. The weakening economy prompted discussions about the possibility of diminished State aid and of potential cost savings through the regionalization of services.

## Committees

The Board heard regular reports from a number of *ad hoc* and standing boards and committees as well as from Town departments, and made and approved appointments to those volunteer groups. Some important issues brought before the Selectmen this year included: Trammel Crowe's 350 units of new rental housing on Powdermill Road at the Acton line known as Alexan Concord; the ongoing construction of the new Willard School; the completion of the new playing fields above the High School; traffic congestion at Starbucks;

the lack of Verizon FIOS (fiber-optic internet service); the next steps in the design of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT); the construction on the Pine Street and Flint bridges; the completion of the repairs to Heath's Bridge; the commitment to repave Route 62; the redesign of the Route 2 Rotary; a new administrative code between the CMLP Board and the Town Manager; the completion of the sale of the Thoreau birth house to the Thoreau Farm Trust; several Public Records requests; the first efforts to institutionalize PILOT (payment in lieu of taxes) payments to the Town by non-profit organizations; the Natural Resources Commission's promotion of a local wetlands bylaw; and the consideration of a long-term lease for the Emerson Umbrella.

Several new committees were established to consider emerging issues in the Town: by citizen request, the 375th Birthday Celebration Committee was formed to advance plans for a Town anniversary in 2010; by necessity, the Waste Water Task Force was established to research solutions to the Town's wastewater capacity problems; growing from a Town Meeting article, the West Concord Task Force was established to help preserve the unique quality of that area; the Concord Housing Development Corporation replaced the Affordable Housing Committee and went immediately to work with the development of parcels at 335 Walden Street; and in response to the worsening economic situation, the Local Option Local Income Tax Committee was established to study the possibilities of a local income tax.

On April 28, Concord voters gathered for the Annual Town Meeting. In three efficient evening sessions, 48 Articles were considered and voted upon. Notable among them were: the passage of the Town and school budgets without an override; funding for improvements at the Emerson Playground; the Beede Swim and Fitness Center Enterprise funding; \$800,000 for Concord Public School renovations; the submission of the 25% design of the BFRT to the State; continued funding for further BFRT design and the decision to build an all-asphalt trail. The CPC's funding recommendations, including \$750,000 for the acquisition of the Hubbard Brook Farm field, were adopted. In two separate articles, the voters also approved the CPC's appropriation of \$225,000 for land acquisition at 335 Walden Street and \$385,000 for the construction of affordable housing there. Lastly, an article requiring the inclusion of a housing advocate at the preliminary discussions of the Town's land purchases was adopted by Town Meeting.

## **Town Meeting**

The Town received many gifts from local residents, charities and other organizations. Gifts in excess of \$500 are formally accepted by the Board of Selectmen. Some of the larger gifts in 2008 are as follows: The Selectmen accepted the very generous gift of \$178,750 from the Friends of CC Fields to the Concord Playing Fields Gift Account. In addition, the Friends donated \$10,000 for the baseball field at the Alcott School and \$50,000 for the maintenance of the new CC playing fields. The Community Chest donated \$44,654 to a variety of community gift accounts and community service personnel. CC Pools, Inc. donated \$60,000 to the Beede Pool Capital Reserve, and Middlesex School presented the Town with a new all-terrain-vehicle. The Rotary Club of Concord donated \$1,980 for the plaque in Monument Square to honor Capt. Thomas Hudner, a recipient of the Medal of Honor for his conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty as a naval aviator in the Korean War. And the Selectmen continued, for the third year, their Annual Appeal. This year's donations, unless otherwise directed, will be administered by the Hugh Cargill Trust to help citizens pay their property taxes.

## **Gifts**

**Proclamations**

As usual, the Selectmen acknowledged Community Chest month, Concord Public Works week, United Nations Day, and the Holocaust Remembrance Day. In addition, the Board recognized this year three new Eagle Scouts, Earth Hour, the Journey of Old Glory to mark the flying of the American Flag at the North Bridge on Patriots’ Day, Medal of Honor recipient Capt. Thomas Hudner, and Question 1 on the State Election ballot, which would have repealed the Massachusetts income tax.

**Acknowledgements**

The Board would like to thank Town Manager, Chris Whelan, and the employees of the Town of Concord for their efforts on behalf of the residents of Concord. We would also like to acknowledge and thank the hundreds of volunteers that make Town government in Concord a pleasure to serve.

Finally, the Board would also like to acknowledge, with sadness, the passing of three gentlemen who served our Town with honor and enthusiasm:



Ed True, Selectman from 1971-1976, served the community in a number of different capacities over some 40 years, including as the building inspector, a member of the Board of Appeals, and a member of the Planning Board.



Gordon McCouch served as Selectman, 1979-1982, and Town Moderator, 1984-1992. His service to the Town also included the Finance Committee, Town Meeting Study Committee, Bylaw Re-codification Committee, and others. He and his wife Bettye were named Concord’s Honored Citizens in 1990.



Bill Sullivan served as Selectman from 1986-1992 and was proud of his involvement in a number of civic organizations such as the Concord Business Partnership, REUSIT, SUASCO Watershed, Organization for the Assabet River, and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Study for which he testified before Congress.

# TOWN MANAGER



*Town Manager Christopher Whelan*

As 2008 drew to a close, financial storm clouds, which had been gathering throughout the year, appeared quite threatening. The Town is positioned well financially to respond to the challenges we will face in the coming year. I agree with those observers who believe the economic downturn we are now experiencing is likely to last longer than anything we have seen for some time. Therefore, Town departments are bracing for an extended period of economic contraction. I appointed an “Employee Efficiency Team” this past fall to identify ways in which the Town can provide services at lower cost to the tax-payer. Town Meeting prudently appropriated \$2.5 million into a Stabilization Fund in 2008 to be used to level-out the peak tax increase that can be expected in the first few years of repaying the debt issued to finance the new Willard School. I have asked Town department managers to re-focus on traditional, core operations, to ensure that our limited resources are expended in the most fruitful manner possible.

This year, in response to the Selectmen’s leadership, the goals of Town boards and committees, as well as Town departments, were carefully aligned with the goals and objectives established by the Board of Selectmen in June. This will help ensure that everyone within the organization is working together to meet the needs of Concord’s residents. Progress on the Selectmen’s goals is reviewed quarterly, and new items are added as circumstances demand.

In the area of Public Works and infrastructure, it was encouraging to see the Commonwealth of Massachusetts finish work on Heath’s Bridge on Sudbury Road, and begin work on the Pine Street and Flint Bridges. Although the construction detours are inconvenient, the repairs will at last enable heavy Town vehicles such as school buses and fire engines to utilize these roads. Once this work is done, we will focus our effort on encouraging Mass Highway to repair the South Bridge on Main Street, which emergency vehicles must now bypass due to the poor condition of the bridge.

The Massachusetts Highway Department is continuing to study improvements in the Route 2 corridor, including Crosby’s Corner and the Route 2 Rotary. MHD hosted two

## **Fiscal Climate**

## **Goal Setting**

## **Infrastructure**

public workshops in West Concord in 2008 to review the final two design alternatives for the Rotary improvements. MHD also requested bids for the reconstruction of Route 62, from the Damon Mill to the Acton town-line, and awarded the construction contract this past fall. Work on Route 62 is scheduled to begin in the late spring of 2009, and this long-overdue project is expected to cost approximately \$3.3 million in State funding.

Concord Public Works was very busy this year, putting the finishing touches on the Warner's Pond Dam repairs, the Mill Dam Culvert repairs (beneath Main St), and nearly 8 miles of road reconstruction and resurfacing work. CPW will be taking steps this winter to reduce snow removal costs wherever possible, including delaying the removal of snow from the village centers following a snowstorm. This saves about \$20,000 per storm, but does leave the sidewalks somewhat less perfectly groomed than residents have come to expect.

The new playing fields at Concord-Carlisle High School were brought on-line in June and saw heavy use in the fall season. These fields will be maintained by CPW's Park & Tree Division, using funds donated by the Friends of Concord-Carlisle Fields. Late in the season, a bathroom and storage building was added to the fields complex using donated funds.

The Concord Municipal Light Plant was also very active this year, coordinating the undergrounding of overhead wires on Route 62 in West Concord and the subsequent removal of the old utility poles; continuing to plan for the Town's long-term energy needs following the expiration of the Constellation Energy wholesale power agreement that will expire in September of 2009, and continuing to improve opportunities for energy efficiency throughout the CMLP system. CMLP is also proposing in 2009 to employ "smart grid" technology to better utilize the energy we purchase and to hopefully forestall significant investments in additional electrical capacity in the near future. This technology will also provide an opportunity in the future for the Town to offer broadband and other telecommunication services.

#### **Development**

The Alexan Concord project, a 350-unit affordable apartment development, was approved on the former ESSCO site on Forest Ridge. When this project is completed, it will put Concord over the 10% goal of affordable housing, which will insulate the Town from "hostile" CHAPTER 40B housing projects. The Town will continue to promote affordable housing, but by encouraging small-scale, scattered-site development, rather than large-scale projects.

#### **Conservation**

The Selectmen worked with their counterparts in Acton and with our legislative representatives to secure legislation that places a conservation restriction 200 acres of Department of Corrections land along the Town border. This preserves a substantial amount of prime farmland at the gateway to the two towns while ensuring that the land is unlikely to be sold off for development that would be inconsistent with the area's agricultural heritage.

#### **Open Government**

Common Cause, a non-profit group that promotes transparency and accountability in government, recognized the Town's website as providing key information about committee meetings, public hearings and opportunities for the public to get involved in local decision-making and made Concord one of only 23 communities State-wide to receive its highest award in this area.

#### **The Road Ahead**

This year saw several major projects come to conclusion after several years of effort, while others made progress through the planning process. The coming year will present challenges, perhaps like none seen in recent times. It will be all the more critical that Town govern-

ment enhance opportunities for communication and connectedness, as we try to address issues of resource conservation and sensible planning within a financial context that will be constrained for several years to come. It will also be essential that the Town's residents, volunteers and staff employ their enormous talent, creativity and good will so that the community continues to thrive and to meet the challenges we will face together.



## WEST CONCORD TASK FORCE

The West Concord Task Force (WCTF) was appointed by the Board of Selectmen after the passage of Article 37 at 2008 Annual Town Meeting. This article proposed a plan of action to address residents' concerns that West Concord's village character is at risk due to commercial and residential growth pressures.

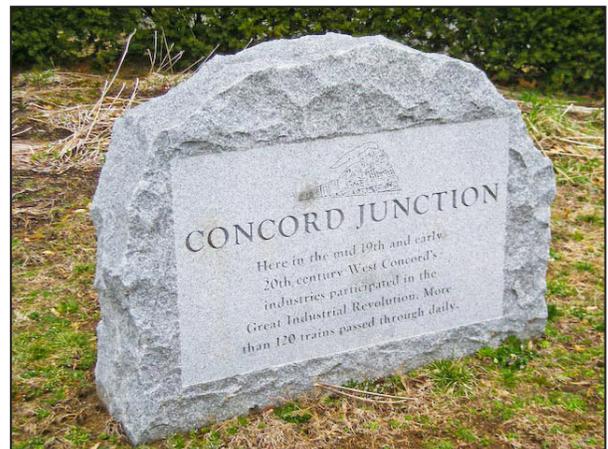
Appointed for a two year term, the Task Force is comprised of eleven voting members, plus Town Manager Chris Whelan and Selectman Greg Howes, who are non-voting members. The eleven voting members are Concord residents with a cross-section of skills and backgrounds including town planning, small business ownership, architecture, and long-time local residence.

After being sworn in, members of the Task Force spent the summer reviewing past planning efforts, including but not limited to the Comprehensive Long Range Plan (2005) and the Village Center Study (2007). During the remainder of 2008, the WCTF held 13 public meetings. Additional public meetings were held by subcommittees that were formed to address a need to focus on particular areas such as real estate and architecture, infrastructure, natural resources, communication, and "the big picture." Some subcommittees were formed and dissolved as needed, while others continue to complete their work today.

The charge of the WCTF is "to seek ways to maintain and enhance the historic identity of West Concord village, improve traffic circulation and public transportation, and protect and promote the enjoyment of natural resources." Toward this end, the WCTF has pursued and will continue to pursue several courses of action:

## Master Plan

After identifying, discussing, and reviewing various ideas, the Task Force has determined that a detailed and graphic West Concord Master Plan will be the most effective tool to achieve the Selectmen's ambitious charge. Focusing on West Concord's village center, the Plan is to provide a comprehensive map for the village's future that addresses traffic, parking, wastewater infrastructure, design guidelines, land use, and natural resources in a single document. Unlike previous studies which established a vision at a macro level, the Master Plan will provide specific actionable items with supporting drawings and tangible steps for working with landowners to implement suggested improvements and potential zoning changes. Based on input from both the Task Force and the community, the Master Plan is to be developed using the services of professional consultants with the goal of a December, 2009 completion date. If any recommendations for zoning changes result from analysis in the Master Plan, then the Task Force may present them at 2010 Town Meeting.



*This memorial stone in Junction Park acknowledges the commercial and industrial heritage of West Concord that thrived due to the presence of the railroad.*

### *Article 38 at 2009 Annual Town Meeting*

After deliberating over different options at public meetings in the fall, the WCTF voted in December, 2008 to pursue a zoning bylaw amendment known as the West Concord Interim Planning Overlay District (WC-IPOD). As a bridge to the Master Plan, the WC-IPOD is to be presented as a Warrant Article by the Planning Board and voted on at April, 2009 Annual Town Meeting. This WC-IPOD would provide a temporary, yet necessary, mechanism to oversee land use changes during the development of the Master Plan. The WC-IPOD is to apply to a portion of the area covered by the Master Plan, consisting of the business and industrial zones. Assuming the Master Plan is completed by December, 2009, the IPOD could be ended with a vote of Town Meeting 2010; otherwise, it would expire automatically following Town Meeting 2011.

### *Quick Actions*

In an effort to make small improvements in West Concord traffic and circulation, the WCTF has identified several actions that can be undertaken by the Town quickly, at low cost, and without any need for outside resources. These actions are currently being pursued with the Public Works Department.

### *Communications*

Residents have provided the WCTF with comments and feedback at public meetings held to date. Several Town residents involved in past West Concord planning efforts and activities have been particularly helpful in providing their expertise and assistance. The WCTF publishes occasional articles in the *Concord Journal* and has created an email list to distribute announcements and documents. Interested community members are encouraged to join the list at [http://www.yahogroups.com/group/WCTF\\_announcements](http://www.yahogroups.com/group/WCTF_announcements) to subscribe.

### *Survey*

The WCTF created a survey asking what Concord residents want to protect, prevent, and change about West Concord. The survey was distributed on Election Day in November at the Harvey Wheeler polls and individually by Task Force members, and was also accessible on the Town web page and the WCTF announcements email

list. Surveys were collected through the end of February 2009 and feedback analyzed. In the spring of 2009, the WCTF will be holding public meetings to report survey findings and to gather community input on WCTF proposals.

Change itself is inevitable. However, in an effort to ensure that West Concord continues to be a place where people want to live, conduct business, and shop, the objective of the WCTF is to develop a road map that allows the community to best manage change while still preserving West Concord Village's unique character.



*Front row from left: Sue Felbin, Meg Gaudet, Jimi Two Feathers. Standing from left: Nancy Carey, Clerk; Chris Sgarzi, Susan Close, Dan Holin Chair; and Betsy Stokey, Vice chair. Not pictured David Holdorf, Chris Ryan and Rosalind Greenstein.*