

Correspondence received by the Concord Select Board  
Week Ending – July 14, 2025

1. Bianca Taylor
2. Sven and Claudia Weber
3. Mimi Graney, Economic Vitality Manager
4. Jonathan Smith
5. Tanya Gailus
6. Mark and Tanya Gailus

Please note: The Select Board Correspondence has been updated as of January 27, 2025. The letters posted here reflect the views and opinions of the author as recorded in the body of their email. Neither the Select Board nor Town staff have verified or reviewed the contents. The Select Board and the Town do not necessarily agree, condone, support or advocate the ideas expressed in these letters and have not verified any factual statements made in the letters.

**From:** [Mark Howell](#)  
**To:** [Shannon McAndrew](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Letter to School Committee Members  
**Date:** Thursday, July 10, 2025 7:15:45 AM  
**Attachments:** [School Committee Letter.pdf](#)

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**From:** Bianca B. Taylor <[bianca@tourmalinegroup.com](mailto:bianca@tourmalinegroup.com)>

**Date:** Monday, July 7, 2025 at 8:43 PM

**To:** Mark Howell <[markhowell@concordma.gov](mailto:markhowell@concordma.gov)>, Wendy Rovelli <[wrovelli@concordma.gov](mailto:wrovelli@concordma.gov)>, Paul Boehm <[pboehm@concordma.gov](mailto:pboehm@concordma.gov)>, Mary Hartman <[mhartman@concordma.gov](mailto:mhartman@concordma.gov)>, Cameron McKennitt <[cmckennitt@concordma.gov](mailto:cmckennitt@concordma.gov)>

**Subject:** Letter to School Committee Members

[You don't often get email from [bianca@tourmalinegroup.com](mailto:bianca@tourmalinegroup.com). Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification> ]

Dear Select Board,

Please find attached a letter I submitted to the School Committee today.

Regards,

Bianca B. Taylor

Dear Members of the Concord-Carlisle School Committee:

I am a resident of Concord and a mother of children in our schools. We are a multi-ethnic family of color. The [recent news](#) of the federal inquiry into the rampant antisemitism at CCHS revealed shocking facts. Yet, to many of us, none of it was surprising. These are grave, systemic and long-standing issues here in Concord.

For the benefit of those who have been unaware of the problems, below are three recent examples. There are many more like these.

- Last year a boy of color at CMS was targeted by a classmate and assaulted with shocking hate speech. A lengthy investigation took place that uncovered more shocking and vile material but ultimately the perpetrator was too young to charge and instead served a long supervised suspension.
- Last year, the math department at CCHS refused to place 17 students of color in calculus classes. These students had been participants of The Calculus Project<sup>1</sup>, and had successfully completed pre-calculus with a passing grade. CCHS math accession explicitly outlines directives for math accession, namely that a passing grade in Pre-Calculus qualifies the student for Calculus in the following year. Yet, without notifying the students, nor the parents, these children were placed in “Financial Literacy.” Parents who reached out to the school to override the decision were ignored. Repeated emails did not receive acknowledgement of receipt. Adrian Mims PhD, founder of The Calculus Project repeatedly met with administrators and the superintendent beginning in January 2024. His repeated requests for clarification regarding their decision met with no response. Finally in June he said he would withdraw the program from the Concord Carlisle school district if the school district failed to follow through with its promises and its own math succession guidelines. When details [became public](#) CCHS backtracked on the earlier decision, allowing students into their well deserved calculus class.
- Last year, a Latino student of a Puerto Rican<sup>2</sup> mother and South American father was denied placement into Honors Spanish. Without any testing, she was told her Spanish was insufficient. During a meeting the Spanish teacher had trouble communicating in Spanish with her father, so they switched to English. The department’s decision was accepted under the condition that should the lower classes prove to be too easy, the child would be moved up. After receiving an “A” in the quarter, her father once again requested Honors Spanish, and was denied. The matter was resolved when he demanded a parent override. In the Honors Spanish class, she was shunned by her new teacher. She was made to sit in the front row and was constantly called upon. If a wrong answer was given she was told it was her father’s fault she “was not doing well” because he had forced the department to place her

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<sup>1</sup> For those who may not be aware, The Calculus Project was brought to Concord following an equity audit that found there were no students of color in higher level math classes.

<sup>2</sup> Due to the current climate, it may be important to clarify that Puerto Rico is a U.S. territory. All residents of Puerto Rico are US citizens.

there. After more similar shunning experiences, including being told to buy a calculator at the same time a White boy at her side was offered one, the family decided to move out of Concord.

## **Root Causes**

We have a community problem. Wealth and education abound... but values are treasures we inherit, hold, and pass on to the next generation. Such endowments are not ubiquitous.

In addition, our culture of non-confrontation often prevents meaningful conversations from taking place. On the one hand it helps to keep a civil discourse open, but on the other hand it has also meant that ugly matters become unfit for discussion.

Children also face a new danger: They often have unfettered access to the internet, including the Dark Web. Investigations from incidents at the middle school uncovered that kids were being enticed to use hate speech by entities on the Dark Web. Investigations also revealed that kids were using “burner phones” to gain access to these dark crevices. “Burner phones” are old devices found in the house that are not being used by anyone. Kids can often open them and access the internet, thereby bypassing parental controls and school firewalls.

If ignorance, bigotry and hate was not enough, two months ago a cartoon referencing pedophilia was posted in a group chat amongst 6th graders. I reported the matter to the administration.

## **Suggestions**

The Concord Bridge reported this week that some of the School Committee members feel that they have not been apprised of important events in the schools.

The superintendent may feel as though she is communicating all that is relevant, but I imagine it may be difficult, and perhaps not in her professional interest to be as forthcoming as the community would like to see. Without explicit directives in place, the School Committee will continue to receive only partial information.

Below are suggestions for your consideration:

- Establish an incident reporting hotline or email address that simultaneously informs all School Committee members, the superintendent and any other responsible party. Ensure that the hotline is the first call to be made, immediately at the time of first knowledge no matter how small the matter might seem at the outset.
- Develop a new reporting structure for incidents whereby an outside, third party committee has discretion in conducting investigations and discipline. We have a resident and mother in town who runs programs like this around the world with great success. I can put you in touch.

- Speak directly with the principal at CMS, Justin Cameron. In our experience, he is interested and committed to addressing hate and bigotry. He may have insights for the School Committee.
- Develop a more open, welcoming and collaborative rapport with parents. Set aside a specific time and date for parents to come forward to you with their grievances - and listen respectfully to what they have to share with you.
- A more daring and honest portrayal of our history may help children understand the brutal, abusive and horrific context of the words they thoughtlessly adopted from dark crevices. The sanitized version of history that we offer in classes does little to educate our children about dangers into which they are being ensnared, and which degenerate our community.

Hate speech, bigotry, ignorance, racism, biases and crimes against children cannot be pinned on any one person or group. It is a community problem, and the School Committee has the power to bring the community together and lead it to resolution.

Let us not forget that the ideals of freedom and equity that over centuries have become the foundation of our laws are non-existent in many other parts of the world. We, Americans - and especially Concordians - have the privilege and responsibility to address these human problems.

Your full and immediate attention is required. I wish you courage and clear direction.

Respectfully,

Bianca B. Taylor

**From:** [Sven Weber](#)  
**To:** [Mary Hartman](#); [Wendy Rovelli](#); [Mark Howell](#); [Cameron McKennitt](#); [Paul Boehm](#)  
**Cc:** [Claudia Weber](#); [Shannon McAndrew](#); [Erik Shaw](#); [Katy Hopewood](#); [Ian Hopewood](#)  
**Subject:** Shade Tree Removal - Letter in Support of Applicant  
**Date:** Thursday, July 10, 2025 9:39:37 AM

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Dear Members of the Select Board,

We understand that the removal of a shade tree located at 62 Belknap Street will be discussed at the upcoming Select Board meeting on July 14. As direct neighbors to the property, we are writing in support of the removal application.

The pine tree in question is in poor condition, and it is likely only a matter of time before it causes damage. In anticipation of this, we planted a new Armstrong Maple tree last year just a few yards away on our shared property line. This tree, provided by the Tree Warden, is healthy and will grow to provide ample shade in the years to come—far more effectively than the existing pine.

We respectfully ask the Board to approve the removal request.

Sincerely,

Sven and Claudia Weber

**From:** [Mimi Graney](#)  
**To:** [Shannon McAndrew](#)  
**Cc:** [Kerry Lafleur](#); [Megan Zammuto](#)  
**Subject:** For the Select Board  
**Date:** Thursday, July 10, 2025 5:09:32 PM  
**Attachments:** [Outlook-cv1icc3q.png](#)

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To the Select Board --

A quick note that the "[West Concord Art Loop](#)" sidewalk art decals have been reinstalled and are again available for viewing. As you'll recall, the Select Board approved this public art project by the West Concord Cultural District. Technical difficulties meant they began peeling up prematurely and needed to be removed. We're pleased to have a reprint on the correct material and to bring the designs back to the sidewalks.

The latest issue of the [Economic Vitality E-Newsletter](#) has just been issued. If you're not already signed up to receive it, [it is easy to subscribe](#). Issues are roughly produced monthly.

Hope you're all have a great summer --

Mimi

Mimi Graney (she/her)  
Economic Vitality Manager  
**Town of Concord**  
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[Visit Concord, Massachusetts](#): Located only 20 miles from Boston, Concord, MA, is the perfect place to visit for invigorating historical tours and sites, recreational activities, and enriching arts.

**From:** [jonathan smith](#)  
**To:** [Erik Shaw](#)  
**Subject:** Tree at 62 Belknap St.  
**Date:** Friday, October 4, 2024 9:25:03 AM

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You don't often get email from smith.jonathan19@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Mr. Shaw,

I noticed the legal notice about the tree at 62 Belknap St. I would like to go on record as objecting to the removal of this public shade tree. Haven't we had enough of this already?

Thank you.

Jonathan Smith

66 Upland Rd.

Concord

[smith.jonathan19@gmail.com](mailto:smith.jonathan19@gmail.com)

**From:** [tbartevyan](#)  
**To:** [Mark Howell](#); [Wendy Rovelli](#); [Mary Hartman](#); [Cameron McKennitt](#); [Paul Boehm](#); [Shannon McAndrew](#)  
**Cc:** [Erik Shaw](#); [Mark Gailus](#)  
**Subject:** Public Shade Tree Removal - 62 Belknap St (we were present also) and others  
**Date:** Saturday, July 12, 2025 3:20:37 PM

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Dear Members of the Select Board,

Re: Public Shade Tree removal request at 62 Belknap St.

The Tree Warden's letter in your meeting packet does not mention that my husband Mark and I were also present at the public hearing for this tree. We were told there was already an objection in writing. We objected verbally, and I believe Mr. Shaw did note that.

The tree in question may not be as lush as some others, but it is beautiful, alive, and public.

As was noted in another public tree removal discussion during your last meeting, members of the public who are going to the hearings, and/or are visiting the trees earlier, and corresponding with the Tree Warden about reasons for removal requests, are doing a public service through their interest and their objections when appropriate.

In one recent instance, my husband withdrew a written objection after observing the tree (on Virginia Rd.) from the property side during the hearing and hearing the applicant's reasons. This is to say that the objections citizens submit and sustain are not arbitrary.

Whether a town tree would today be planted in its present location or not is also not the point. Property owners know (or should know) when a public tree nearby is in fact a public tree as they buy a property or make plans. Whether the objector is an abutter, or whether an abutter does not happen to object is also not the point.

The Tree Warden is already authorized (and perhaps required) to take down a public tree that is an actual hazard, without any hearings.

Please do not set so many precedents where property owners come with discretionary requests based on inconvenience or esthetics and succeed to obtain your permission for the removal of a public tree at the public's expense. This is several thousand dollars per tree that you are authorizing the town to spend each time. Postings for public hearings also cost several hundred. Plus, of course, the loss of the tree itself.

The efforts of members of the public who take the time to check out trees in question and stick their neck out to object are doing a service which should not be discouraged by routine treatment of these public trees as if the issue is one of private property rights.

If some of these requests required that the applicant pays for the removal, perhaps there would be fewer of such demands.

The tree at 62 Belknap is alive and beautiful.

Thank you,  
Tanya B. Gailus  
62 Prescott Road

**From:** [tbartevyan](#)  
**To:** [Mark Howell](#); [Wendy Rovelli](#); [Mary Hartman](#); [Cameron McKennitt](#); [Paul Boehm](#); [Shannon McAndrew](#)  
**Cc:** [Kerry Lafleur](#); [Mark Gailus](#)  
**Subject:** New England Deaconess Association Monetary Contributions- where to spend.  
**Date:** Saturday, July 12, 2025 3:44:59 PM

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Dear Members of the Select Board:

Re: Your agenda item: Discuss New England Deaconess Association Monetary Contributions for Affordable Housing for Seniors being designated to the Concord Municipal Affordable Housing Trust

Town Meeting only very recently decided to allow a Zoning Change to help the New England Deaconess Association to proceed with expansion plans. Part of the negotiations, we were told, was that the Association, \*after the expansion is completed AND the units full" would donate a certain amount of funds to the town.

We were told, both by the CEO of the Association and by the Select Board speaker that the money would be used for senior services of various kinds.

It is too early to commit these potential future funds to only one purpose.

Affordable Housing for seniors is indeed important. However, unlike what was said during public comment at your last meeting, it is not at all guaranteed that town seniors will not have other needs as well.

It certainly is not safe at this time (unlike what a speaker suggested) to assume that any of us will have good health care through government services as we age.

There are plenty of seniors who may be housed, but are in need of food assistance, transportation assistance, homecare assistance, tax relief assistance, home repairs assistance, emergency services, health care, and so forth. This situation will not improve as time goes by. These seniors are valuable and cherished members of our community.

Only recently the town did not buy an needed second ambulance, which was eventually obtained via a private donation.

Please do not write-off future revenue to one purpose. Town Meeting itself implied otherwise in mentioning several senior needs and services.

We understand that there are already steps taken to set up a gift fund to allocate these future funds for affordable housing alone. If so, this is too quick, too fast, and not in accordance with town meeting promises.

This is premature and inappropriate at this early juncture, especially when our town already gives so little for senior needs compared to schools and other expenses, and when future government policies are so unpredictable and unreliable.

Thank you,  
Tanya and Mark Gailus  
62 Prescott Road