

Correspondence received by the Concord Select
Board
Week Ending – October 20, 2025

1. Tanya B. and Mark 62
Prescott Rd.
2. Serena Crosina 1501
Monument St.
3. Concord Agriculture
Committee

Please Note: The Select Board Correspondence policy 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.

10/19/2025

Dear Members of the Select Board:

Re: your agenda item Public Shade Tree removal at 36 Cottage Lane:

Please be advised that this tree is likely protected in two ways:

- 1) As a **Public Shade Tree** as explained in the Tree Warden's notes and
- 2) Under the **Tree Preservation Bylaw**; it is also mostly on private property, on the periphery of the site where new construction is to take place.

1) We first ask that, as a Public Shade Tree, you to preserve it. Construction plans may need to be worked around it. It is a healthy tree. We need our mature trees. It is not any likelier to fall than any other healthy tree.

2) If for some reason you permit for its removal as a Public Shade Tree, the owner would still need to pay for the removal as a private tree, and, under the Tree Preservation Bylaw, pay a fee to the town or plant other trees at the same location or nearby, where the sum of the new tree calipers is at least 12" (the existing tree having a 24"DBH.)

<https://concordma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/35832/Tree-Preservation-Bylaw---Amended-2021>

We really hope and ask that the tree be preserved; and also that all concerned are aware of the Tree Preservation Bylaw stipulations for private trees on the peripheries of properties.

We wish the owner well in the reconstruction of her home that suffered a fire.

Respectfully,

Tanya B. and Mark Gailus
62 Prescott Road

10/19/25

Dear Select Board,

A second effigy attacking our superintendent of schools, Dr. Laurie Hunter, was found over the weekend, this time placed near the home of one our School Committee members, Tracey Marano. The violent language used and the specific location chosen are a further escalation of the harassment that has been ongoing. It is unacceptable and it is time for Concord to step up.

Disagreements about policy, procedure, and vision for our schools are legitimate. Constant public attacks on our School Committee members, who are volunteer citizens, and our Superintendent, who is a vetted town employee, are not. These attacks are, by and large, perpetuated by community members who do not have children currently in our school district and who have little interaction with the schools or the students. They choose to present a vision of profound and widespread discontent with the schools, the committee, the superintendent, but that view is not shared by the vast majority of the community: students, parents, and educators all strongly support our district's leadership, the advocacy of our dedicated School Committee members, and the efforts of all parent and citizen volunteers who tirelessly work to ensure the best possible educational and social outcomes for Concord's students.

Loudly and aggressively repeating a lie, that our school system is failing our students, does not make it true. What it does do, however, is foster a hostile environment in our town, which in turn empowers lunatics to intimidate our fellow citizens with violent effigies. Where is our Select Board in all this? It is time for town leadership to show up and take a stand, and for the greater Concord community to call this behavior out for what it is: bullying.

Sincerely,

Serena Crosina

1501 Monument St

Alcott Elementary and CMS parent

Farmer Housing in Concord - 2025

The Concord Agriculture Committee wants to bring to the town's attention the growing problem of housing for farmers operating in Concord. Concord was founded by farmers, and farming has remained an important enterprise in the town ever since. While many towns in the area have seen dramatic reductions or even the complete disappearance of agricultural land, Concord has long prioritized the preservation of farms and farmers through a variety of means: policies favorable to local agriculture and maintaining open space, direct land acquisition, state and local partnerships, and conservation programs. About 10% of Concord's acreage is still actively farmed (compared to 2.4% in other commercial and industrial uses). Farms small and large, commercial and non-profit, all play a role in defining and maintaining the town's character and economic vitality.

For much of the last 50 years, town policy regarding agricultural promotion and preservation has focused on protecting open land from development, and the success of these policies is apparent in the town's unusually high percentage of active farmland relative to total acreage-- but new challenges have arisen that threaten the viability and sustainability of farms in Concord, the most salient of these being the skyrocketing cost of housing. Concord farms tend to be of a scale and nature that makes them highly dependent on both skilled and unskilled labor. Although different farms have different labor requirements and techniques for attracting and retaining workers, virtually all need to have workers and managers living in reasonable proximity to the physical location of the farm. This is particularly true for growing labor-intensive vegetables, fruits, and flowers that many farmers of Concord currently grow. Farmers must be close to their operations to deal with tasks such as irrigation, weather emergencies, and work during peak production times extends far beyond a typical 8-hour day. The potential labor force available to Concord farms has accordingly shrunk as housing rents have risen dramatically, and farms are of necessity contemplating creative and costly strategies to try and provide affordable housing or try to defray the cost of housing for their most critical staff members, with minimal success.

Small and medium-sized farms typically have very small profit margins, with crop failures, weather events, volatile input costs, and ever-rising labor costs contributing to an unpredictable income picture. Given the scarcity and cost of housing in the area, farms are generally unable to offer their employees compensation that would allow them to reside locally without substantial contributions from elsewhere.

Local farms provide both seasonal and year-round employment to individuals from a variety of backgrounds—area high school and college students are commonly seen working seasonal positions on local farms, while non-profit farms can often attract a significant volunteer labor force from the surrounding community. These groups have less need for housing or housing

assistance as they tend to already live in the area and are not necessarily economically dependent on their farm income.

A more difficult challenge for Concord farms is providing nearby housing or adequate resources to live in such housing for more experienced or career-minded members of the farm staff. These folks tend to be older than student age, no longer living with parents, with agricultural aspirations. They form the experienced backbone of the farm operation, often committing to work on farms for several to many years, learning the land and the operation, the equipment, and training and managing groups of seasonal workers. These are the current and future farmers of Concord and they can't afford to live here.

The median salary of a farmer in Massachusetts hovers near the \$43,000 mark (U.S. Dept. of Labor, May 2024), while the median household income of a Concord resident is close to five times that at \$212,000 (US Census 2023 American Community Survey). Those who are willing and eager to take up working the land are in no position to live anywhere near it. In a brief survey this fall of ten Concord farms, there are many longtime employees, and a few farm owners, with tenuous housing situations and/or very long commutes that make it difficult or impossible to commit to farm in Concord for the long term. Based on our survey, there are 40-45 career farm employees or farmers in town who would like to continue farming in Concord, but feel unable to make the commitment because of difficulties with their current housing situation.

Having spent the last half century successfully protecting farmland in Concord, the town now faces the prospect of having no farmers able to cultivate that farmland, and a shuttering of many of the diverse, vibrant operations that make up the special character of the town. Farms are important to the quality of life in town, providing fresh produce and the rural quality that sets the town apart from its numerous, more suburban neighbors. Farmland lost, whether through development or through difficult economic realities, is very difficult to reclaim. It is, in our opinion, in the public interest to try and maintain this tradition and resource so important to Concord's identity.

Housing needs vary among the many farms in Concord—at one end of the spectrum is the relatively large Verrill Farm, where Steve Verrill has made significant investments to provide housing for his staff, and has demonstrated the immense value that having a stable, experienced, long-term workforce can have for a farm. Smaller and less established farms would also benefit greatly from a stable, consistent workforce, but are (generally) not economically able to undertake such projects. Stumbling blocks include lack of adequate acreage suitable for building, land use regulations (ironically often designed to protect farmland), not enough capital to build, and not enough stable income to pay the increased property taxes on the new housing. These barriers to affordable farm housing are formidable, and it seems the Concord community

must seek other solutions to solve our broader housing problem, rather than expecting farms to somehow overcome them.

There are two examples of farms in Concord where the town has included housing in the farmland lease—Barrett’s Mill Farm, and Marshall Farm. While each of these leases have their own unique challenges, they provide some precedent to ways in which town-owned housing could benefit the farming community. Town-owned low-income housing earmarked for farmers or farm workers who work at least nine months of the year on a Concord farm could be step towards easing the current housing crisis. The recent report by the Economic Vitality Division in September of 2024 titled “Concord’s Agricultural Business Landscape” listed housing as an important priority to ensure that farms continue to exist and thrive in Concord. The people of Concord have repeatedly demonstrated their strong attachment both to specific farms and the rural, agricultural character that the town has managed to retain. Although specific solutions have yet to be determined, given the importance of the long-term survival of diverse agricultural enterprises in town, this is an issue which deserves serious consideration by Town officials and Concord organizations involved in housing issues, and some resources should be allocated to assist with this challenge. Helping new farmers and farm workers with their housing needs will give them opportunities to learn from the experienced folks currently running farms, providing the next generation of farmers and managers necessary for the continuation of Concord’s farming tradition.

Thank you,

-Concord Agriculture Committee