

Town Manager's Weekly Report

Monday, August 25, 2008

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

Reports are posted on the Town's web page the day following a meeting of the Board of Selectmen. Items with *italicized* headings relate to the Town Manager's Goals for 2008-2009

- 1. *Department of Corrections Land Preservation Bill Signed By Governor.*** The Governor signed on August 16 a bill permanently protecting farmland owned by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Corrections in Concord and Acton. The legislation will take effect on December 31 of this year and will provide constitutional open space protection for the land. The legislation was intended to preserve the rural lands at the entrance to each town along Route 2 at a time when the Department of Corrections is getting away from many of their traditional farming activities. There was concern in Concord that the land might be sold by the Commonwealth to raise one-time revenue, and the appearance of the rural landscape would be dramatically changed as a result. The Sudbury Valley Trustees were critical to the initiation of the preservation effort, and the legislative delegation of Senators Pam Resor and Susan Fargo and State Representatives Cory Atkins and Jamie Eldridge worked diligently to make this a reality. Particularly noteworthy is the spirit of collaboration and good-neighborliness that the Department of Corrections demonstrated throughout the legislative process. The protected area does not impact plans to develop the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail and plans to redesign the Route 2 Rotary.
- 2. *More Commuters Taking the Train.*** High gasoline prices have led many commuters to use mass transit to get to work. This will help the MBTA's bottom-line, but it has also resulted in some overcrowding at the MBTA depot parking lots. Crosby's Market has asked for some assistance with commuters crossing over the line that separates the commuter parking area from the area reserved for shoppers. Crosby's owns the entire lot and has traditionally allowed commuters to park in the lot for free. Many years ago, the former property owner who operated a Stop & Shop at the site, had a lease agreement with the MBTA for commuter use of the lot. That lease expired more than 20 years ago and was not renewed. Given Crosby's courtesy in allowing the public use of his lot, the Police Department will be working with him after Labor Day to discourage unauthorized commuter use of the non-commuter parking stalls.
- 3. *Erosion Problem at Essco Property (photo).*** The Essco property is located in Concord along the town-line with Acton, and between the NStar transmission substation in Acton and the Town's Forest Ridge Road sub-station. It is the site of the proposed Alexan Concord affordable housing development that will result in the creation of 350 affordable rental housing units. The site is 100 feet in elevation above the Assabet River. Heavy rains this summer caused significant erosion down the steep slope, washing a dozen or more trees and hundreds of cubic yards of soil down the steep slope. The erosion came within several feet of exposing the main duct bank carrying all of the Town's electric power from the NStar sub-station underground to Forest Ridge. Fortunately, Lineman Tom Murphy discovered the problem on August 11 while trimming some of the vegetation that had fallen across CMLP's overhead electric wires. He promptly reported the problem to CMLP's operations engineer, Dave Wood, who worked with Concord Public

Works staff and an outside geotechnical consultant to devise temporary slope stabilization measures. The property is privately owned, but the Town holds an easement on the property for power transmission purposes. The property owner granted CMLP approval to make these temporary repairs. The developer of the Alexan project, Trammel Crow Residential, intends at this time to address the need for permanent slope stabilization at the time the Alexan project is under construction. Acton conservation folks were notified that a large amount of soil had washed into a small pond at the foot of the hill, adjacent to the Assabet River. Tom Murphy, Dave Wood, at the staff at CMLP and CPW performed exceedingly well under the stress of an impending storm the day that problem was first discovered. The measures taken have stood up to at least one subsequent heavy rainfall and will be sufficient to protect the Town's power supply until permanent slope stabilization measures are taken.

4. ***Alexan Concord Project.*** The 350-unit affordable housing project was approved by the Concord Board of Appeals in June. The Acton Board of Appeals continued its hearing on the project until September 3, and perhaps a subsequent meeting on September 17, if necessary. The Acton Board of Selectmen agreed to support the project by a 2-1 vote after the developer agreed to provide \$900,000 in mitigation funds, in addition to road and infrastructure improvements.
5. ***New Playing Fields in Use this Week (photo).*** A check was received this week from the Friends of CC Fields to cover the cost of annual maintenance for FY2008-2009. This was a follow through on their commitment to provide for the maintenance of the fields. The Friends will also be paying, beginning in June 2009, \$50,000 per year into a fund that will be reserved for the future replacement of the turf and other capital items included in the fields project. New sod will be installed on the former "JV Field" adjacent to the tennis courts, next week. This will be a 3-day installation process, which will require 6-8 weeks of "rest" to allow the new grass to set properly before it is used. So this field may be available for use at the end of this fall's sports season. The bathroom and storage building is also expected to be completed later this fall.
6. ***Community Services Coordinator – Job Offer Made.*** Concord's first Community Services Coordinator, Sadie Simone, left Concord to pursue other opportunities after four years of service assisting residents with financial needs connect with service agencies offering assistance. This twenty-hour per week position has been generously funded by the Concord-Carlisle Community Chest since its inception. Several other communities have contacted Assistant Town Manager Doug Meagher to learn more about the position since it was created. The job offer is pending and hopefully Concord will have another caring and committed person to assist residents with needs in the very near future.
7. ***Waste Water Task Force Meeting August 26.*** The Waste Water Task Force has invited large property owners and institutions with a likely need for wastewater capacity in the future to a meeting on Tuesday, August 26 at 7:30 p.m. in the Town House. The purpose of this session is to learn from owners of larger parcels of property how their development plans might be affected by the availability of waste water treatment capacity. The Town's Waste Water Treatment Facility on Bedford Road is current at capacity, and several restaurant owners connected to the sewer system have had to modify or abandon their plans to add seating due to the lack of sewer capacity. This lack of capacity is likely to begin to dramatically impact the kinds of development that are possible in the village centers, where many properties are connected to the sewer system. About 30% of the town's total commercial and residential parcels are connected to the sewers system. Properties using septic systems would not be impacted by this limitation.
8. ***Hubbard Brook Conservation Restriction Recorded.*** This week, Gordon Bell, representing the Concord Land Conservation Trust, provided a recorded copy of the Conservation Restriction granted to the Town by CLCT on the 18-acre Hubbard Brook property on Sudbury Road. That

completes a transaction that was authorized by the 2008 Annual Town Meeting in which \$750,000 in Community Preservation Act funds were appropriated to purchase the CR and help preserve the property.

9. *Route 62 Reconstruction Project to be Advertised.* Mass Highway reported to the Town Engineer that it is intending to advertise the reconstruction of Route 62, from the Damon Mill to the Acton Town line, on Saturday August 23. That officially starts the bidding process to solicit bids from General Contractors to perform the work. This section of Main Street has deteriorated rapidly in recent years, and it is critical that this \$3.6 million project stay on track for construction during the summer of 2009. This section of Route 62, like the section near the Bedford Town line that was reconstructed following the installation of new sewer lines, does not have easy alternative access points and detour routes. Every effort will be made to keep at least one travel lane open for traffic; but there will still likely be considerable traffic delays if commuters don't seek alternate routes.

10. *Mass Highway Interested in Scheduling Second "Open House" on Route 2 Rotary Project.* Mass Highway called the Selectmen's office this week to request reserving a hearing room in Concord to present a second "open house" presentation of alternatives for the reconstruction of the Route 2 Rotary. Mass Highway was pleased with the first Open House, held at the Sanborn School last spring because it gave Highway officials and staff an opportunity to present their concepts to multiple small groups and to answer specific questions. MHD is currently thinking about a date in late September, either at the Town House or the Harvey Wheeler Community Center.

11. *Bridge Projects:*

- a. **Old Stow Road Bridge (photo).** The final section of the bridge deck was poured this week. Mass Highway is working diligently to get the bridge open for the first day of school. Contractor on-site and active this week.
- b. **Heath's Bridge -Sudbury Rd (photo).** Open to one lane of traffic only due to sand-blasting and painting of steel. Completion of this work expect in mid-October. Contractor on-site and active this week.
- c. **Pine Street Bridge (photo).** Former bridge completely removed. Work has begun on setting footings for the east side (Upland Rd) abutment. Contractor is on-site and active.
- d. **Flint Bridge (Monument St).** Work suspended pending further instruction from Mass Highway concerning how to modify bridge approaches following steel reinforcement of the bridge. Town Engineering staff will begin pressing for work to resume in order to limit the duration of the project to one year, rather than the two years currently scheduled.
- e. **Nashawtuc Road Bridge.** Repair of the historic, granite superstructure will likely be delayed until spring. Jersey barriers will remain in-place until repairs are complete. Portions of the granite side walls had fallen off the deck creating a hazard for motorists and pedestrians.

12. *Boston Bark/Marabello Farm.* Building Commissioner John Minty expects to meet in the next week or so with the attorney from Boston Bark and company representatives to discuss the orderly dismantling of the mulching operation which does not comply with zoning. The Natural Resources Commission at its August 13 meeting, planned to conduct a site inspection in the next two weeks, before discussing enforcement actions Wetlands Protection Act enforcement measures at the Commission's September 17th meeting.

13. *Recreation Department Golf Tournament.* Concord Open Golf Tournament was held today (Aug 25) after the event was postponed due to rain on August 11. The tournament was successful and raised more than \$30,000 for camp scholarships for needy youngsters

14. **Warner's Pond Dam.** Installation of the redundant downstream PortaDam has been completed allowing for back flooding of the Phase II work area. This provided the necessary pressure equalization which allowed repairs to the Main PortaDam structure to occur. Beginning during the week of August 25th the contractor has scheduled dewatering of the Phase II area and resumption of construction improvements to the main spillway. Weather permitting CPW expects completion of the Warner's Pond Dam Project to take place late fall.
15. **Town Wide Traffic Signalization Project** – Near-term or immediate improvements have been completed including repair of Loop detectors on Pine Street and Fitchburg Turnpike, replacement of pedestrian bulbs, signal lamps, access panels and wiring covers along with controller upgrades. Mid- and long-term improvement plans, specifications and cost estimates for all signalized intersections are being developed through the Town Engineer's office, including the Sudbury Road and Thoreau Street intersection lane reconfiguration and curb line adjustments to allow for turning lanes and continued Thoreau Street traffic flow when railroad mast arms are actuated.
16. **2008 Road and Sidewalk Program.** Progress continues in this program with sidewalk replacement and repairs beginning on Lexington Road sidewalk last week. Drainage and pavement reclaim is scheduled to begin on sections of Old Road to Nine Acre Corner (ORNAC) on September 2. This project will have binder course in place at the end of this construction season with mill and overlay to occur next season to allow for settlement of excavations around trenches, manholes and catch basins.
17. **Winter Maintenance Planning.** New England communities are once again experiencing substantial increases in the cost of sodium chloride or winter salt supplies. Recent regional bid pricing has been in the \$64 - \$70 range, an increase of over \$11/ton for Concord. Concord uses approximately 3,000 - 3,500 tons of salt in a typical winter.
18. **New Willard School Construction Project (photo).** The erection of steel for the new building is progressing smoothly and nearing 50% completion. The parking lot has been reconfigured and re-paved to provide suitable parking and a bus drop off location for the 2008-2009 school year. The project is still on-schedule for completion in the summer of 2009, despite higher than normal rainfall this summer, and demolition of the old Willard building is scheduled to take place in the fall of 2009.



Erosion At Essco Site



Concrete Deck Has Been Poured on Old Stow Road Bridge



The Pine Bridge Has Been Demolished and Removed. The Upland Road approach is being prepared.



Steel Erection Progressing at New Willard School



New Playing Fields in use this week



Work on Flint Bridge (Monument St) Suspended Pending further instructions from Mass Highway



Work on Milldam Culvert under Main St Suspended due to high water levels