



Town of Concord
Finance Committee
22 Monument Square
P.O. Box 535
Concord, Massachusetts 01742

October 3, 2017

Comprehensive Long Range Plan Committee
Town of Concord
c/o Department of Planning and Land Management
141 Keyes Road
Concord, MA 01742

Attn: Gary Kleiman, Co-Chair
Elise Woodward, Co-Chair

Dear Mr. Kleiman and Ms. Woodward:

On behalf of the Concord Finance Committee I would like to thank you for your letter of August 7, 2017, and for this opportunity to comment on the SWOT Analysis done by the Concord Comprehensive Long Range Plan Committee (CLRPC) and how it may bear on the Finance Committee's areas of concern. We commend you on this impressive effort.

Having reviewed the six Principles and the Best Practice elements within them we find a number that will have an impact, ranging from minimal to significant, on Town finances. In particular we note the synopsis of elements putting forth objectives related to infrastructure improvement, subsidizing affordable housing, protection of land, assistance for those at-risk, use of renewable energy, and a balanced mix of land use, among others, that will have a fiscal impact one way or the other. At this preliminary stage it is very difficult to adequately assess the magnitude of that impact. We do expect that achieving some of the Town's goals will come at a financial cost. It is of absolute importance that these costs be carefully planned for, analyzed in detail, and managed.

Otherwise there does not seem to be much material in the SWOT Analysis that directly relates to Town finances. The previous 2005 Comprehensive Long Range Plan contained a Chapter 11(!) on Fiscal Resources that, though it was not specifically required by Mass. Law (MGL Ch 41, S. 81D Master Plans) or, apparently, APA Principles, has been very useful in the establishment of our Town's Financial Policies. Further efforts suggested at that time, particularly in the area of Long Range Capital Planning, are still necessary.

For several years, the Finance Committee has been carrying on a conversation about "Fiscal Sustainability." In general, we see this in terms of maintaining our Town's economic soundness, financial strength, and flexibility through keeping a level of excess levy limit capacity so that general overrides are not necessary, a "free cash" balance, and continual investment in on-going capital needs, as well as avoiding burdening taxpayers beyond normal expectations of income growth or undermining the diversity of our population. We would welcome the opportunity to broaden this conversation beyond our individual committee.

As an accomplishment, we would point out that, for the past six years, our committee has issued a five-year projection of the expected range of taxes. This is a useful tool to assess the impacts of different levels of expenditure especially relative avoiding depletion of excess levy limit capacity. We are also engaging in an effort, in co-operation with the Concord Public School and Concord Carlisle Regional School Committees, to create a set of benchmarks that we can use to measure our costs and outcomes, both year-to-year and relative to other districts.

We look forward to further engagement with the CLRP process and, perhaps, to arranging a meeting with the Finance Committee and the CLRP Committee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Packard', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Karle Packard, Chair
Concord Finance Committee