



## 2013 CONCORD ANNUAL TOWN REPORT

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### Town Manager

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2013 brought more change, particularly to West Concord. The year began with the closing of the West Concord Supermarket, which had been operated by the Mandrioli family since 1919. The family store will be missed, but there is hope that the new restaurant expected to occupy the space on Commonwealth Avenue will also contribute to the wonderful “feel” of the village. The renovated Junction Park, the area between Mandrioli’s and the West Concord Plaza, was opened to wide acclaim as a place where citizens and visitors can congregate outside to enjoy some quiet moments in heart of the village. Finally, permits were granted for a mixed commercial and residential use on Beharrell Street which will include the creation of a new exit from Beharrell Street onto Commonwealth Avenue to relieve some of the congestion at the existing intersection.

The new year also brought the implementation of the Town’s vote to prohibit the sale of single serve disposable plastic water bottles. All sellers of bottled water came into compliance with the new bylaw except one who paid fines in excess of \$1,000, until the April Annual Town Meeting failed to approve a proposed rescission of the bylaw. Since that time, all vendors have complied with the bylaw.

### Town Meeting

Town Meeting voted in April to acquire the property at 449 Barrett’s Mill Road from the estate of Patrick McGrath, and purchase was completed on July 31. Two generous donations were accepted which funded the conversion of the farmhouse into two affordable housing units. In December, a Request for Proposals was issued seeking farmers interested in occupying the

farmhouse for an affordable monthly rent and farming 17 acres of adjoining conservation land. There has been considerable interest in the RFP, and it is expected that the land will be under cultivation in the spring of 2014. Concord has shown a keen interest in promoting local agriculture and having locally-grown food.

In addition to providing a portion of the funding for the McGrath Farmhouse purchase, the Community Preservation Act also provided funds for the restoration of the exterior of the Concord Town House. The Town House was built in 1850 and has been a focal point of community activity since that time. Repair of the brownstone, repointing of brickwork, and resetting some of the granite stairs was successfully completed in December. The project was so successful, the Selectmen have nominated the project for an historical preservation award. The project was completed more than ten-percent below the estimated budget.

#### High School building project

A building permit was issued in August for the new Concord-Carlisle Regional High School, the largest single local government investment made in Concord. The project is within budget and on-time for completion in the spring of 2015. A non-profit organization, CC At Play, is undertaking a fund-raising campaign intended to leverage \$2.00 of private money for every \$1.00 of public money to build new tennis courts and rehabilitate the playing fields at the high school, work which was not included in the project budget for the new high school.

Town Meeting did not approve the proposed sale of a conservation restriction on the former Landfill site, but also did not agree to locate a new school bus storage and repair facility on the site. At a special Town Meeting held on December 4, the Selectmen were authorized by the Town to purchase 5.5 acres of a commercial condominium on Knox Trail in Acton as a possible site for a new school transportation facility.

#### Power and Energy

The Concord Municipal Light Plant undertook several major capital improvement projects in 2013, including providing an expanded warehouse space to safely store costly transformers and other equipment out of the elements; and the up-grading of the system's two primary transformers from 50 megawatts capacity to 70 megawatts, allowing for future growth in the community. CMLP also began construction in the fall of 2013 on a 1.74 megawatt photovoltaic installation at the former Landfill site, which is expected to come on-line in April 2014. Finally, the Light Plant was authorized by Town Meeting to begin offering broadband services to residents and businesses, providing high speed internet access to customers. That service is expected to begin in early 2014.

The Comprehensive Sustainable Energy Committee was successful in two key areas this year. The “Concord Solar Challenge” far exceeded expectations by assisting 160 residential and business customers to install rooftop solar electric generation capacity in excess of 1 megawatt of power. This continues the Town’s efforts to promote renewable energy. CSEC also provided major support for the Town’s application to be designated by the Commonwealth as a “Green Community”. That designation was received in November and provides Concord access to significant grant funding for on-going energy conservation measures.

The retirement of the baby-boomer generation is beginning to be felt in Concord. Several long-time employees of the Town retired in 2013 and several more announced plans to retire in 2014. The retirement of Police Chief Barry Neal led to the appointment of interim Chief William Chase in October, with appointment of a permanent Chief of Police expected in late spring of 2014.

#### Fiscal Matters

Concord continues to be in excellent fiscal health as we emerge from the recent economic contraction in a very good position. The Building Commissioner reported a record number and value of building permits in 2013, providing further evidence that the regional economy is recovering. Conservative budgeting and revenue-estimating has left us with very strong financial reserves as well something which is very unusual among Massachusetts municipalities: a significant amount of unused levy capacity. This capacity provides an opportunity to allow growth in services to meet increasing demand, without the need for a Proposition 2-1/2 override in the near term.

#### Local Government Participation

Concord town government continues to strive to provide high quality services in an efficient manner and at reasonable cost. Citizens are encouraged to get involved in self-governance by serving on a committee or speaking up at public hearings and events. Continued public involvement, cooperation and transparency in government decision-making will help Concord preserve that which is most treasured in the town while improving those things that we agree as a community need some attention.