

Correspondence received by the Concord Select Board
Week Ending – March 3, 2025

1. Ellen Quackenbush – 206 Prairie Street
2. Tanya Gailus - 62 Prescott Road
3. Alice Shaughnessy - 1796 Main Street
4. Tanya Gailus - 62 Prescott Road
5. Art Schwope - 281 Holden Wood Road

Please Note: 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.

February 28, 2025

To Members of the Selectboard,

I wanted to communicate to the whole board ideas that Cameron McKennitt and I shared in a very productive meeting on APP10.

I suggest the following changes to APP10, especially around recruitment and the positive rationale around citizen appointments to multiple committees.

Title Page

- Change title of APP10 to “Town Committee, Board and Task Force Appointment Policy and add “board” to the paragraph on the title page
- Try to be consistent in using or not using initial caps for Committee, Board and Task Force (sorry, my mother was a teacher....)

Section VII a

- Recruitment—better promotion of opportunities for citizen engagement
 - Focus on high-impact and/or hard-to fill committees. Highlight vacancies.
 - Advertise the committee—what they do, why it matters, what types of people the committee needs
 - Consider a monthly column in the Bridge “Calling All Volunteers” to build awareness and interest
 - Highlight the tangible achievements each committee has made, how these achievement matter to Concord, with quotes from current members (these can be unattributed)
 - Be transparent about the commitment, in terms of amount of pre-read material and time
 - Combat the impression that committee assignments are closed or insular by actively recruiting people who have not participated in a committee before
 - In some organizations, a central group manages recruiting and expanding the pool of potential volunteers

- In businesses, this is an HR function
- Nomination—getting the right people to apply and be nominated
 - Interview to assess fitness
 - Right now, the chair of the committee (or sometimes the nominating authority) conducts an interview. Not sure the volunteer is always prepared with questions to ask or if the nominating authority has defined the key skills that the committee needs.
 - Toe in the water trials
 - Busy folks, especially those working full-time or caring for children, may hesitate to volunteer. Simply because they don't know what they are getting into.
 - For key committees, would it be possible to offer volunteers the opportunity to get to know the committee before submitting a Green Card? This could be as simple as the Chair offering to “host” the volunteers to attend a few meetings and offering to debrief after, say three, meetings.

Section VII c

- Change title to “Multiple Committee Appointments”
 - Rather than positioning appointment to more than one committee as a negative, requiring an “exception” to APP 10, explain that membership in more than one committee improves collaboration, alignment of committee goals, and the speed of decision-making
 - Specifically cite dual committee appointments that are designed into a committee's charter:
 - Warner's Pond TF requires that three of its 16 members be members of another, named committee
 - Junction Village Open Space TF: four of its five members
 - Affordable Housing TF: two of its four members

- This may forestall misunderstanding by members of the public who have interpreted appointments to more than one committee as reflecting an “excessive and intentional pattern of non-compliance”
- In my mind, multiple committee appointments often simply reflect good governance

Respectfully Submitted,

Ellen Quackenbush

206 Prairie St

Dear Members of the Concord Select Board:

Re: Your agenda item IV for your meeting today, which includes the "Legislative Letter of Support to Codify Remote Meeting Options:

Your draft letter asks our State Representatives and State Senator to co-sponsor HD2863 and SD1850 and to make COVID era hybrid meeting provisions permanent by March 31st.

<https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fconcordma.gov%2FDocumentCenter%2FView%2F53970%2FSelect-Board-Meeting-Meeting-Packet---March-3-2025%3FbidId%3Dpage%23%3D42&data=05%7C02%7Cafountain%40concordma.gov%7Ccdd46a61134e4e06262f08dd5a477523%7Cd5259e2c19154f4588b612488019ce3b%7C0%7C0%7C638765985136544570%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIlwLjAuMDAwMCIslIAiOiJXaW4zMilslkFOljoiTWFpbClslldUljoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=akDAiZcnF7a0pxkdThgK0%2FjwZVFHEQocf73zLuZtKJ4%3D&reserved=0>

The current provisions for hybrid meetings are not problem free.

For example, they allow a public body the option to meet in person while allowing only remote attendance to the public.

Check:

<https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.mass.gov%2FInfo-details%2Fupdated-guidance-on-holding-meetings-pursuant-to-the-act-extending-certain-covid-19-measures&data=05%7C02%7Cafountain%40concordma.gov%7Ccdd46a61134e4e06262f08dd5a477523%7Cd5259e2c19154f4588b612488019ce3b%7C0%7C0%7C638765985136563047%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIlwLjAuMDAwMCIslIAiOiJXaW4zMilslkFOljoiTWFpbClslldUljoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=h4yhTqsYpHNoq6%2FCHufwqGrJpuPzLRzmiX0QceAvBro%3D&reserved=0>

This may be a reasonable provision for health reasons in a pandemic crisis. However as a general practice it essentially allows a public body, if meeting in person, to be in a room all by themselves once the remote meeting has ended and the public is no longer watching. Such a situation is very vulnerable to Open Meeting Law violations.

We are fortunate in Concord that our public bodies have so far allowed the same manners of attendance to the public which has been available to them (with the exception that the Zoom webinar format, when used, has given more privileges to the public body than to the members of the public.)

Other communities might not be so lucky.

The bills you ask our Representatives and Senator to co-sponsor do not seem to remedy this weakness that is present in the emergency provisions.

There are also wording ambiguities in these bills which do not make it clear whether a public body "may" or "shall" require remote access to the public for its hybrid meetings.

Providing options of remote attendance to members of a public body and members of the public are indeed important.

However making the current provisions permanent may not be the best solution, and the bills you mention have their own weaknesses. Any new provision needs to make the same options of attendance available at all times to the public body and the public attendees.

The matter might need more deliberation before asking our Representatives and Senator to co-sponsor the bills in question and to help make existing provisions permanent in a hurry. The issues I point out are only an example.

Respectfully,

Tanya B. Gailus

62 Prescott Road

Hello,

I am writing to express my hope that you will continue to keep public libraries open on Sundays in Concord. The public library is an important public space available to children, especially in the winter months. There are few other free places for families to gather, read, chat, and play.

Having a library that is open seven days a week indicates that our town is a family-friendly community.

Concord already feels unaffordable to many families; getting rid of a free public resource on one of the two days a week working parents can visit seems like a sad way to save only \$44,000 while sending a strong message that working families are not a priority here.

Thank you for your consideration.

Alice Shaughnessy

1796 Main St, Concord, MA 01742

Dear Members of the Select Board,

To clarify: I am not requesting that you suggest any revisions to existing State bill proposals.

Rather, I am asking that you do not submit a blanket endorsement of these bills or of the permanence of the existing measures per se. As written, they combine the desired benefits of remote participation with measures more restrictive than the old version of the Open Meeting Law (presumably for health emergency reasons at the time) such as the option for limiting public attendance to remote, even when a committee is meeting in person.

Please instead consider writing a letter that more simply asks that hybrid /remote attendance options be kept and encouraged, and that the current measures be "extended" until an improved permanent amendment to the laws.

Thank you again,
Tanya B. Gailus
62 Prescott Road

On Monday, March 3, 2025 at 06:35:06 AM EST, tbarveyan <tbarveyan@yahoo.com> wrote:

Dear Members of the Concord Select Board:

Re: Your agenda item IV for your meeting today, which includes the "Legislative Letter of Support to Codify Remote Meeting Options:

Your draft letter asks our State Representatives and State Senator to co-sponsor HD2863 and SD1850 and to make COVID era hybrid meeting provisions permanent by March 31st.

<https://concordma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/53970/Select-Board-Meeting-Meeting-Packet---March-3-2025?bidId=page#=42>

The current provisions for hybrid meetings are not problem free.

For example, they allow a public body the option to meet in person while allowing only remote attendance to the public.

Check: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/updated-guidance-on-holding-meetings-pursuant-to-the-act-extending-certain-covid-19-measures>

This may be a reasonable provision for health reasons in a pandemic crisis. However as a general practice it essentially allows a public body, if meeting in person, to be in a room all by themselves once the remote meeting has ended and the public is no longer watching. Such a situation is very vulnerable to Open Meeting Law violations.

We are fortunate in Concord that our public bodies have so far allowed the same manners of attendance to the public which has been available to them (with the exception that the Zoom webinar format, when used, has given more privileges to the public body than to the members of the public.)

Other communities might not be so lucky.

The bills you ask our Representatives and Senator to co-sponsor do not seem to remedy this weakness that is present in the emergency provisions.

There are also wording ambiguities in these bills which do not make it clear whether a public body "may" or "shall" require remote access to the public for its hybrid meetings.

Providing options of remote attendance to members of a public body and members of the public are indeed important.

However making the current provisions permanent may not be the best solution, and the bills you mention have their own weaknesses. Any new provision needs to make the same options of attendance available at all times to the public body and the public attendees.

The matter might need more deliberation before asking our Representatives and Senator to co-sponsor the bills in question and to help make existing provisions permanent in a hurry. The issues I point out are only an example.

Respectfully,

Tanya B. Gailus

62 Prescott Road

February 19, 2025

To: Town of Concord School Committee, Finance Committee, Select Board

From: Art Schwope, 281 Holden Wood Rd, Concord, MA

Subject: Amenities Building (aka Community Bathroom)

According to the February 14, 2025 issue of The Concord Bridge, the question of the Amenities Building will be taken to Town Meeting. I support this decision because, as School Committee Member Tracey Marano is reported to have said, it is a building for the community not for our sports teams. Following that logic, the Amenities Building issue should be reassigned from the School Committee to the more appropriate town committee.

I ask that the "more appropriate town committee" include in its motion to Town Meeting the total cost of ownership of the Amenities Building. So far, we have seen only the cost of the building itself. Absent have been projections of maintenance and repair costs over the building's life. Also, in view of the current crunch for funds in Concord, I ask that discussion for the motion include the near-term financial and long-term practical implications of a \$1.6 to 1.8 million, 50-year building versus lower initial cost, shorter-life buildings. I ask that the discussion for the motion provide the rationale for why the town would want or be pleased with a 30-, 40-, or 50-year-old public restroom. 50 years is 2075: 2-3 generations from now! Finally, I ask that the discussion address the issue of vandalism of the free-standing, isolated building during games and throughout the year.

Respectfully submitted.


