

# LWVCC OBSERVER CORPS REPORT

## NOVEMBER 2017

The LWVCC has revitalized the Observer Corps. We have twenty-two alert, wise observers attending our Towns' committee meetings. The energy of this Corps is, of course, essential to the League's authentic engagement in Town Government. As well, we gather monthly, as a group, to distill information and support our varied endeavors.

Below you will find the list of observers and several condensed reports by some of our remarkable crew. Each observer has a distinct style. As experienced observers know, meetings can cover a vast number of critical topics, while others may continue one or two essential conversations, started one week but continuing through several meetings. These reports are but a brief glimpse into the important work this Corps has undertaken.

While we have observers for many committees, we still need volunteers for important committees like the Planning Board.

### OBSERVER CORPS

Chair: Janet Rothrock  
Clerk: Diane Proctor

#### Concord

Select Board  
CPS & CCRSD School Committees  
CCHS Campus Advisory Committee  
CCHS Finance Subcommittee  
Community Preservation Act Committee  
Comprehensive Long-Range Plan Committee

Diane Proctor & Louise Haldeman  
Edie Lipinski  
Cynthia Rainey  
Peggy Wargelin  
Mary Sterling  
Judy Zaunbrecher is on the Committee  
Lori Pazaris has served as a citizen observer  
Ingrid Detweiler  
Stephan Bader  
Maureen Kemeza  
Val Tratnyek  
Robert Hilsinger/Jim Pazaris  
Karlen Reed  
Clare Gordon  
David Quimby  
Karlen Reed  
Kitsy Rothermel  
Sue Maciorowski  
Anita Barker

Concord Library Committee  
Concord Housing Development Corporation  
Finance Committee  
Historic Districts Commission  
Minuteman Career & Technical HS  
Municipal Light Board  
Natural Resources Commission  
Planning Board  
Public Works Commission  
Recreation Commission  
West Concord Advisory Committee  
Zoning Board of Appeals

#### Carlisle

Carlisle School Committee  
Carlisle Selectmen

Carol Murphree  
Cindy Nock

#### Substitutes

Lori Gill Pazaris  
Pam Hill (mornings only, starting in February)

# CONCORD COMMITTEES

## **I. SELECT BOARD**

Observers: Louise Haldeman (written report) & Diane Proctor  
Notes for Sept 25, Oct 2, Oct 16, and Oct 30, 2017

These meetings were all conducted properly; there were announced agendas available well in advance of the meetings. All motions were duly made and seconded. The chair (Jane Hotchkiss) was not present for the first 3 as she was recovering from surgery. Two members were missing on the 30<sup>th</sup>. There remains a problem with getting the approved minutes posted. It is to be hoped that with the return from summer of more staff, approved minutes will be posted sooner.

The meeting on the 30<sup>th</sup> contained within it a joint hearing with the Finance Committee and the Regional School Committee on the guidelines for the 2018 budget. There were presentations by the Superintendent of Schools (Laurie Hunter), Town Manager (Chris Whelan), and Town and School Business Managers (Kerry Lafleur & John Flaherty). The Schools have had sudden and unanticipated expenses for Special Education, which will probably have an effect on next year's budget, and the Town may well have some unanticipated legal expenses. There was preliminary discussion of the use of free cash, excess, and deficiency funds.

There were a number of items discussed in all of the meetings, which will certainly have budgetary implications and could result in separate warrant articles. New parking technology and the Long-Range Plan effort have occasioned a great deal of comment from some members of the public. The Town has posted extensive information about the parking meters and is planning an additional public meeting on November 15. In the case of the Long-Range Plan effort, there may still be some misunderstandings; however, the Long-Range Plan Committee has provided many opportunities for public input.

One thing that almost certainly will involve future warrant articles is the matter of Estabrook Woods, public access, and dogs. The Town is initiating legal action in an attempt to clarify the long-standing question of public access. A committee of exceptionally courageous individuals is being appointed to look at the feasibility of establishing an area where dogs can run unleashed.

In other matters, the Select Board heard an interesting presentation on the water quality at White's Pond. They also confirmed a conservation restriction on the Black Birch development which had been offered by the developer and already been approved by the Natural Resources Commission.

There were several new things that will be worth following for the future. The Town is joining a regional transportation agreement that involves several other towns. This is not connected to the MBTA but may be a means of improving interregional transportation. The newly appointed Superintendent of the Minuteman National Park mentioned the possibility of using some park land and buildings for farming and housing.

## **II. CONCORD-CARLISLE REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

Observer: Edie Lipinski...report covering two meetings

### **A. CCRSC on October 14, 2017**

The Concord-Carlisle Regional School Committee held a recent meeting at the New Mission High School in Hyde Park, Boston. About thirty METCO parents attended the meeting. After recognition of two High School seniors for their achievements, the students shared details about their experiences at CCHS. Opportunities included learning about people and having experiences they would not have had in Boston. Their biggest challenge was the long, early ride to school each day and the difficulty in participating in after school sports followed by another long ride home. They love having internet on the bus! The students were enthusiastic about the 'Rivers' program that brought their Concord classmates to Boston, and they appreciated the POWER mentoring program.

When asked "How can we improve the METCO experience," parents responded that the METCO host family program is an important part of their children's experience at CCHS. However, there needs to be an opportunity to revisit the match as students grow and change. The college counseling process students follow, starting in sophomore year, was explained to the audience. Some parents would like more diversity education for HS students. Although the School Committee is beginning a cultural proficiency program, Boston parents agreed the word 'proficiency' did not capture the full meaning of being aware and respectful of all students' experiences and beliefs.

The RSC continued with their regular meeting. The Campus Advisory Committee met and is drafting a time line for their work.

The Calendar working group and a subcommittee on policy have been working on issues around absentee data, academic calendar, and accommodations for missing school.

### **B. CCRSC met on November 7, 2017, to address one item on the agenda.**

Discuss and Vote on CC at Play Proposal: three sets of concrete and crushed gravel stairways to improve access to the tennis courts, upper field, and softball field at the high school.

Dean Banfield, representing himself, questioned the financial status of CC at Play in terms of outstanding projects they have not finalized. See below.

John Boynton presented the problem and plans to solve it. He has observed access to facility by pedestrians, fans, and spectators. All have been using a short cut to access baseball fields, new grass field, and tennis courts. Building three sets of concrete stairs with crushed gravel paths will make access easier and safer for all. He addressed financial questions raised earlier by Mr. Banfield.

Projects questioned:

- Tree planting will include 12/13 trees.
- Donor recognition. Bricks installation and plaques between football field and tennis court. Seven granite posts thanking town groups that donated money.
- Storage shed / maintenance building. Original proposal of pre-fab kit @ \$18,000 was not accepted. Bids came in over \$100,000. Also rejected. Now exploring alternative ways to get the building done. \$50,000 is budgeted.

Proposal approved.  
Meeting adjourned.

### **III. CCRSC FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEE**

Observer: Peggy Wargelin

Date of Report: 10/31/17

Meeting: Finance Committee/SC Budget Subcommittee

SC Budget Subcommittee (to Finance Committee) Meeting, 10/31/17, 8am

**Present:** Bob Grom, Wally Johnston, Superintendent Laurie Hunter, John Flaherty, June Rzepczynski, Linda Miller, John Hickling.

**Absent:** Karle Packard (FC chair), Dean Banfield

I let people see the forms I was filling out and explained I was there as an observer from the LWVCC. I was the only non-member present, so the fact that there were no agendas or handouts and no nameplates or microphones was understandable. The Agenda was available on-line in advance and easily located; it was clear and described the meeting topic. There were no minutes posted from the last meeting. The meeting started on time, people were prepared, and nothing seemed to have been decided in advance. The meeting was well run, courteous, and they let me ask a clarifying question.

Wally chaired the meeting. He summarized the results of the last meeting, at which they had made a first cut at identifying "comparable" towns to benchmark against CPS and CCRSD and taken a look at what information is currently available to use in comparisons. RADAR and DESI appear to be the two existing databases with a lot of info. It's difficult to get to an "apples to apples" cost comparison between towns for each category because different towns put expenses into different categories and there's no way to be sure what is where for each town.

The town of Concord is purchasing a professional tool, Cleargov, to use in its benchmarking efforts. It may or may not be a good investment for the SC, as its educational information is a bit limited and there doesn't seem to be a way to handle regional school districts. Nonetheless, the plan is to make a first pass at getting desired information that is free and then see if a purchased product makes sense and can be made to handle regions after all.

The goal for the next meeting is to develop data for the benchmark process that is valuable, repeatable, compatible, and reasonably efficient to produce. Also, they will finalize the first-cut at towns to use.

#### **IV. COMMUNITY PRESERVATION ACT COMMITTEE (CPC)**

Observer: Mary Sterling

Dates: Sept-Oct 2017

The CPC has followed their standard guidelines in advertising, receiving, and reviewing applications for the CPA funding allocated by the town for the 2018 year: \$1,676,340. By the Sept. 29 deadline, 11 project proposals were submitted for a total of \$2,627,768. The applicant requests focused on the four areas designated for CPA funding: Open Space, Land for Recreational Use, Community Housing, and Historical Preservation. Site visits and public presentations are now underway. CPC meetings always include “Project Updates” in order to track the progress and distribution of resources to previously funded projects.

The CPC web page on the Town website has all meetings and deadlines posted; agendas are available, but minutes since July have yet to be posted. Also on the website are CPC application guidelines and a comprehensive report of projects and processes since initial CPA funding was adopted by Concord in 2004.

The CPC has undertaken an open discussion of the current surcharge (1.5%) and the possibility of adjusting that surcharge if state funding declines. Committee members have reached out to the Finance Committee and the Assessors to learn their perspective. At this time, there seems to be little interest in pursuing any change in the surcharge.

Topics discussed included:

- CHDC Project Status Update offered by Liz Russ; CPC members asked Qs; learned that a previous project – Peter Buckley—will probably return 250K because unable to get more federal funds. Some discussion about when Buckley funds would become available; need clarification about how such funds could be re-appropriated.
- 11 applications submitted by 9-29-17; CPC liaisons assigned
- Set schedule for applicant site visits and public presentations
- Surcharge discussion: CPC members heard info from visits to Assessors (Barbara Pike reported) and Finance Committee (Terri Ackerman reported) that might be relevant to the question of raising the level of the surcharge for CPA. Extensive discussion ensued. Little indication that Finance Committee is interested in raising the level; two Finance Committee members questioned whether the CPC should continue to exist. Greg Higgins raised questions about whether it is an appropriate role for CPC to seek a change in the surcharge.
- Envision Concord discussion: CPC has responded to survey items; discussion focused on three issues: 1) lack of funding or insufficient amounts given application demands; 2) striking a balance between town vs. non-town projects; 3) coordination of numerous groups in town who focus on affordable housing.
- Staffer Heather Lamplough, gave project report update (circulated to CPC members but not available to public). Discussed status of each project, payments, available funds. CPC directed Heather to request status updates from several projects.

Minutes for July, September corrected and approved.

All voted in favor of allocation of extra, available funds from previous years for a “field study.”

As in the past, committee members were friendly to each other and public; open in discussion of surcharge and LRP topics.

## **V. COMPREHENSIVE LONG-RANGE PLAN (CLRPC)**

Observer: Lori Pazaris

Dates: a summary of many meetings this fall

The CLRPC has been meeting for over a year. It began the process of preparing Envision Concord – Bridge to 2030, Concord's 2018 long-range plan, by conducting a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) analysis based on the six principles for sustaining places that the American Planning Association (APA) recommends for consideration in long-range planning. The APA's Sustaining Places initiative addresses the fact that "planning for sustainability is the defining challenge of the 21st century" and recognizes the need to overcome "deeply ingrained economic and cultural patterns that result in resource depletion, climate instability, and economic and social stress."

This past spring, the town hired a consultant, Civic Moxie, to assist with the plan. The consultant was tasked with gathering information from many different sources, including public input at workshops, surveys, focus groups, town committee and board feedback, and online comments. The results were presented at a public workshop on October 21. Envision Concord survey respondents indicated that the most important issue supporting quality of life and health in Concord, as well as making the town a desirable place to live and work in the future, is open space and natural resources, followed by schools and mobility.

The next step in preparing the 2018 long-range plan will be analysis of the data to draft recommendations. A public hearing will be held November 16. The CLRPC committee meets approximately bi-weekly. Details are available on the CLRPC website, <http://www.concordnet.org/1067/Comprehensive-Long-Range-Plan-Comm>.

The committee hopes to finalize the new plan by June, 2018. All Concord residents should take this opportunity to engage in the process and express views on Concord's future.

## **VI. CONCORD LIBRARY COMMITTEE**

Observer: Ingrid Detweiler

Date: 10-17-2017

The majority of the meeting focused on a docent talk by Special Collections curator Leslie Wilson explaining the special Thoreau exhibit at the library. The committee was also informed about the collaboration with LWVCC on the town meeting initiative. The committee received copies of changes to the Open Meeting law. There was no discussion about the Long Range Plan. The committee asked for an update on the Corporation's library expansion plans.

Some Special Collections Video Recordings are now available on the library's YouTube channel.

**VII. MINUTEMAN REGIONAL TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL**

Observer: Robert A. Hilsinger, Observer going forward: Jim Pazaris

Date: September 19, 2017

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM at the Minuteman Regional Vocational Technical School building at 758 Marrett Road, Lexington. This was the first meeting of the new school committee after the departure of the six towns that voted to withdraw. The departing towns are Boxboro, Carlisle, Lincoln, Sudbury, Wayland, and Weston. The remaining towns are listed below with the corresponding town representative.

Acton – Pam Nourse	Secretary
Arlington – Susan Sheffler	Vice-Chair
Belmont – James Gammill	
Bolton – David O’Connor	
Concord – Carrie Flood	
Dover – Ford Spaulding	
Lancaster - Jennifer Leone	
Lexington – Dave Horton	Chair
Needham - Jeff Stulin	Former Chair
Stow – Alice Deluca	

Reports by the Chairman, David Horton, appeared to be routine. Edward Bouquillon, Superintendent, gave a review of school-wide goals and professional development opportunities. The School Building Committee appears to be the most active with ongoing meetings with the design firm (Kaestle Boos) along with students and faculty for input.

Previous meetings have included numerous issues in the process of obtaining approvals from both Lexington and Lincoln. These issues revolve around wetlands and building height. Site work of clearing and staging of material is well underway. The current concern is about the cost of the Building Permit from Lincoln. Using the posted cost for the new building, efforts are underway to negotiate a fee more in line with other communities in the area with fees charged by other municipalities for facilities of similar type.

Jack Dillon, Principal, stated Minuteman had 539 students at the beginning of the school year in September. Kevin Mahoney, Assistant Superintendent, reported that Minuteman has received an AA bond rating by Standard & Poor. This rating directly impacts the interest rate for financing of the new facility.

The open meeting adjourned at 8:30 PM to go into executive session and did not return to Open Meeting.

All board members have microphones as well as tent cards with names.

## **VIII. MUNICIPAL LIGHT BOARD for the Concord Municipal Light Plant (CMLP)**

Observer: Karlen Reed

Date: November 8, 2017, 7:30 a.m.

**Present:** Board members Lynn Salinger (Chair), Peggy Briggs, Gordon Grockway, Wendy Rovelli, and Dan Gainsboro.

**Also present:** CMLP Director David Wood, staff, 10+ members of the public.

Started on time, name cards visible, voices are audible. Minutes for October 2017 meeting were approved as revised (5-0).

### **Topics Discussed:**

**Director's update:** Mr. Wood briefed the Board that the Town's solar panels on the landfill are operating at 8% capacity and the WR Grace property at 11% capacity. He confirmed that the Town can sell excess electricity back to the grid, but the Town will lose money. He also announced that CMLP and the Board will host a roundtable discussion on November 14, Harvey Wheeler Center, 7:00 p.m., to discuss the CMLP's Strategic Plan, and that CMLP would speak at the LWVCC's First Friday program on Dec. 1, 9:15 – 11:00am, on the Strategic Plan and the electric surcharge.

Wood led the Board's discussions about the Cambridge Turnpike, Verizon's underground surcharge, storm damage repairs, and mutual aid (where CMLP sends repair trucks and crew to help other municipalities) to Reading and St. Thomas. He announced the new Sustainability Director, Kate Hanley, would start November 27 and may speak to the Board at the December 13 meeting.

**Strategic Plan:** Wood reviewed the updated Strategic Plan, Version 2 which is in text and now on the CMLP's website. On page 12 of Version 2, the Plan states: "In the strategic modeling tool, we assumed a gradual increase in the fixed charge from \$9 per month for residential and G1 Small General Service customers to \$30 per month by 2021."

**Commercial Net Metering:** John Boynton and Brian Foulds described their proposal for a revised commercial net metering payment schedule for Boynton's businesses (G-1 tier) with solar panels.

**Berkshire Wind II:** Wood provided an update on CMLP's involvement with this wind generation facility, located in the Berkshires.

### **Additional information:**

The meeting was recorded. Next meetings are Dec. 13 and Jan. 10, 7:30 a.m.

CMLP website: <http://www.concordma.gov/464/Municipal-Light-Plant>.

Light Board web page: <http://www.concordma.gov/1106/Municipal-Light-Board>.

## **IX. NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION (NRC)**

Observer: Clare Gordon

Date: summary covering several meetings

The Natural Resources Commission continues twice monthly hearings on applications to build, re-build, cut trees, or make other changes to the extensive protected areas of wetlands and bordering areas in Concord. Most applications require submission of detailed materials beforehand and more than one appearance at Commission meetings before permission, with specific conditions, is granted. Some applicants request delineation of wetland classifications on their property.

The Commission has been discussing issues of dogs on conservation land for many months, starting with significant complaints at Punkatasset/Estabrook Woods and planning for better parking arrangements in that area. Three Subcommittees were formed to study Dogs on Conservation Land (Effective Control, Dog Waste, and Education); each held special meetings inviting public comment. They plan to wrap up these issues with a report in November. Citizens have asked for designation of a “dog park,” a space that would allow dogs to be unleashed, but this is an issue beyond NRC jurisdiction and belongs with the Select Board.

## **X. PUBLIC WORKS COMMISSION for Concord Public Works**

Observer: Karlen Reed

Date: Nov. 8, 2017, 7:15 p.m.

**Present:** Commission members Andrew Boardman (Chair), K. C. Winslow, and Arthur Fulman

**Absent:** Pete Wallis.

CPW Water Dept. CPW Director Richard Reine (Reine) led the discussion.

Name placards in place; audible. Started on time, ended 8:45 p.m.

### **Topics Discussed:**

Monsen Road Street Acceptance – The Commission voted to approve the “layout” and preliminary acceptance of Monsen Road Extension, which is the first step to the Town agreeing to take over responsibility for maintaining the road. Final approval will occur at Town Meeting in April.

Capital Budget Review – Reine reviewed the CPW’s anticipated capital expense needs for 2019-2023, along with their replacement schedules. These anticipated capital expenses include building improvements to 133/135 Keyes Road, guardrail replacement, public shade trees, turf improvements, snow removal vehicles, road reconstruction (\$1.4M debt authorization – for Town Meeting), sidewalks, drains, street signs, etc.

Reine also presented the Planning Report for 2017 and 2018, done every 6 months. This report shows what CPW has accomplished in the first half of the year and what CPW expects to accomplish in the second half of the year. This report covers the administration, recycling and disposal, engineering, highway and grounds, and water and sewer divisions’ activities.

CPA Application for Emerson Field – Reine explained the CPW’s filing for \$600K of CPA funds to upgrade and renovate Emerson field, including irrigation systems, baseball fields, softball field, wells, pathways, ADA upgrades, fencing, backstops, and ice skating rink, over a 2-year period. The last time such renovations took place was 15 years ago. CPW is contributing \$212K from its budget, and sports groups will contribute \$50K, for a total construction cost of \$862K. The Commission approved a letter in support (3/0).

CPW Wastewater Report – Reine reviewed the monthly operating report (Sept. 2017) for the wastewater treatment facility, including recent repairs, capacity, alarms, and septage gallons received.

Director’s Report – Reine led the discussion, with the Commissioners, on the new Rideout Park detention ponds, the Bus Depot at Knox Trail, Cambridge Turnpike, Lexington Road, Whits End, Nagog Pond, and Sleepy Hollow. He noted that he has assumed the duties as the new Tree Warden, with Dan Rowley, Highway Superintendent, as his assistant tree warden. Reine said water rate hearings would be held in May.

LWVCC Tour of CPW - Reine agreed to lead a tour for the LWVCC in spring (May or June) of the wastewater treatment plant and/or other CPW facilities, to be determined later.

Next meetings are December 13 and January 10, 7:15 p.m.

CPW website: <http://www.concordma.gov/157/Public-Works>.

Commission website: <http://www.concordma.gov/529/Public-Works-Commission>.

## **XI. RECREATION COMMISSION**

Observer: Kitsy Rothermel

Date: 9-26-17, 7:00 pm

Regular meeting was held at Beede Center due to space issues at Hunt Gym -- I was welcomed warmly and encouraged to sit with the Board at their table.

All members were present -- I was the only observer and additional person there; no liaisons. There were no name plates, and the meeting was not recorded or broadcast – it was, however, held right out in the open so anyone in the vicinity could have listened and/or observed.

The agenda was available; handouts were also available for all present. The agenda was clear; the meeting started and ended promptly; minutes were distributed and reflected their last meeting (July).

The meeting included lengthy, well prepared and documented reports by the following:

Ryan Kane – Recreation Director

Anna Wood – Assistant Recreation Director

Jon Straggas – Beede Center General Manager

The Board was very comfortable making comments, adding details, asking questions

Major topics discussed included: financial info; facility updates; summer programs; trial classes fitness/yoga; Beede membership changes; future events and goals; visitor center.

Facility Updates:

- Rideout Playground changes are completed and a well-attended dedication was held on October 30. Due to a strong interest in Pickleball, the tennis courts have had additional lining.
- The Ripley project is underway, and the Emerson track was completed over the summer.
- The Rec. Dept. is supporting Public Works in its request for a CPC grant for planned Emerson Field work and is supporting Public Works in its CPC grant for a land purchase of the former Gerow land on Commonwealth Avenue, along the rail trail, abutting Warner's Pond.
- The Rec. Committee voted to submit a letter of recommendation to the CPC.
- Work at 55 Church Street is moving forward, and the Rec. Committee expects to be using the third floor for fitness activities, hopefully by winter.
- The Beede Center marketing outreach has been reasonably successful — 19 new members out of 91 responses to the offer of a weekly free pass – more to be done. Postcards were sent to all residents, and information was in the local papers.
- Beede Center evaluation: A friend of Ryan's from Connecticut who runs several independent fitness centers visited Beede anonymously, interviewed several trainers, viewed the entire situation and will submit his comments and reactions for our next meeting.
- Various community events sponsored by the Recreation Dept. were well attended – Sleepy Hollow 5K and Trunk or Treat.
- Visitor's Center: Rec. Dept. is tracking the number of visitors and will be running a bike share program (Minuteman Bike Share) in conjunction with Lexington, starting spring 2018.

I was asked for outside comments at the end so mentioned the lack of minutes on Town website, as well as name tags and some identifications – they will check into what appears but did say things are sent in regularly.