

TOWN MANAGER

For the Town of Concord, the year 2023 continued to be a year of transition and opportunity, and one in which we welcomed several new staff members and bid farewell to a few veterans. The year opened with the usual flurry of activity which surrounds annual budget development and planning for the 2023 Annual Town Meeting. In addition to this activity, the Office was very much involved in the new Non-Union Classification and Compensation Study, a joint effort with the Department of Human Resources and the Personnel Board. As a part of this work, the Town contracted with GovHR USA, LLC, a certified woman-owned business providing human resources consulting and organizational analysis consulting services for local governments. In conjunction with our in-house team, GovHR evaluated all one hundred eighty-five (185) non-union positions, using a Job Analysis Questionnaire which served as the basis for an internal equity hierarchy. It next sought to determine external equity and market competitiveness through an analysis of salaries offered by twenty (20) peer communities for municipal positions, and nine (9) additional peer communities for covered positions at the Concord Municipal Light Plant. The end result was a thoughtful, comprehensive and equitable pay plan, which was adopted by Town Meeting, and even though long overdue, has already proven to be serving the Town of Concord well.

In the Winter, the Town learned that the Commonwealth had contracted with the owners of the Best Western Motel and would be establishing it as a shelter for homeless migrants awaiting permanent housing placement. While the news took us by surprise, we were able to quickly establish lines of communication with our State partners to develop an implementation model that has since been praised by Governor Healey. Staff in our Department of Planning and Land Management (DPLM) and Department of Human Services (DHS), as well as the administration within Concord Public Schools (CPS) were particularly instrumental in aiding the shelter's on-site service provider, particularly in its early days. Through cooperative efforts and the generosity of

Concordians, shelter residents have been provided with basic necessities, clothing, shoes, winter gear, and school supplies. Board of Health and Recreation staff were able to team up with local health care providers to offer health screenings and vaccinations so that school age children living at the shelter could enroll in the Town's summer camp program. Our Recreation Department was also able to offer summer employment to several of the older children who were able to assist campers with any language barriers.

In the spring, we were able to send a contingent of staffers to Washington, DC to attend Congresswoman Lori Trahan's Third District Day, the first one since the Covid Pandemic. This provided an opportunity to meet with the Congresswoman and her DC staff to advocate on behalf of issues of community importance. Throughout 2023, the Town has invested significant time in growing relationships with our state and federal delegation and staff and advocating on behalf of residents. In May, we broke ground on the long-awaited new Concord Middle School, and by the end of the year, the building was "out of the ground." To date, the project is generally running on time and is within budget, despite the continued issues with labor shortages and the supply chain.

In the summer, the Select Board, upon the recommendation of staff decided to withdraw from the Acton-Concord Regional Dispatch District, having determined that participation in the Acton-Concord Regional Emergency Communications Center was no longer in the best interests of the Town, directed the Town Manager to take all necessary actions in consultation with Town Counsel to terminate the Regional 911 Emergency Communications District Agreement with the Town of Action dated May 27, 2021. Notice was provided to the Town of Acton and no response was received.

In the Fall, we received a visit from members of our Sister City- Nanae, Japan. This year's delegation was focused on education, including teachers and students who were able to stay with host families. In addition, the Town was able to hold a joint

meeting with the Nanae Mayor for the purpose of signing a joint Resolution in celebration of the 25th Anniversary of our formal relationship.

As we reflect back upon the year, we are grateful for the process and advancements made in many areas, but specifically:

Affordable Housing: funding that was previously set aside for the withdrawn Junction Village development application was transferred by Town Meeting to the Concord Municipal Affordable Housing Trust, increasing its fund balance to approximately \$2.75M. These funds are now available to support other affordable housing initiatives, including initiatives being undertaken by both the Concord Housing Development Corporation (CHDC) and the Concord Housing Authority (CHA).

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI): continuing the work begun in previous years, the Town strengthened its relationship with the DEI Commission, whose charge is to increase cooperation, understanding, and dialog among residents of diverse cultural, religious, socio-economic, racial and ethnic backgrounds, and to promote inclusion throughout the town. To that end, the Town contracted with a DEI Consultant, committed to complete a strategic action plan, and provide training to board and committee members and for staff in all departments.

Partnership with the business community: the Town and business community were able to work collaboratively to document the need for and to hire the community's first Economic Vitality Manager who is charged with providing professional, technical, and administrative work in support of economic development efforts for the Town of Concord by promoting the preservation and growth of Concord's business districts and tourism-related development opportunities. This work includes research and analysis related to the attraction, recruitment, and retention of new businesses, commercial entities, and related activities. The Economic Vitality Manager, along with both the Town Manager and Deputy Town Manager regularly attend the monthly meetings of the Concord Business Partnership and meet quarterly with the leadership of the Concord Chamber.

We are grateful for the many community events that we were able to host this past year, including two first ever events, in the spring. In April, neighbors and friends came together to celebrate the birthday of Concord's own Ellen Garrison, an African American educator, abolitionist, and early Civil Rights activist. Later in June, the community again joined in force to raise the Juneteenth flag on the flagpole in the center. In addition to these "firsts," throughout the year, we were able to participate in many other treasured community events including: the Patriots Day Parade, a time honored tradition; the Holocaust Remembrance Ceremony; a modified "Drop-off, Swap-off," Porchfest, Egg Hunt, Shamrock Ball, Trunk or Treat, Turkey Trot, and finally our very popular holiday events- the Holiday Stroll and Chanukah Celebration. Due to inclement weather, our Tree Lighting was cancelled, but fortunately since Santa was already enroute, he was able to make a special appearance at the Hunt Gymnasium which served as the host for a modified indoor celebration.

From a staffing perspective, we welcomed the following new staff members:

Town Manager's Office:

- Eileen Blanchette, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager;
- Mimi Graney, Economic Vitality Manager;
- Jessica Porter, Assistant Town Manager/ Director of Human Services; and
- Megan Zammuto, Deputy Town Manager/ Director of Planning & Land Management.

Senior Management Team:

- Anthony Ansaldi, Chief Financial Officer

We also bid a fond farewell to Amy Foley, Human Resources Director, and Marcia Rasmussen, Director of Planning and Land Management, who retired from service in April and May respectfully. We thank both for their dedicated service to the Concord community and wish both much success in their future endeavors.

In 2023, and in accordance with the previously adopted plan, the Town made the following FY24 allocations from the approximately \$5.6M in grant funding received through the American Rescue Plan Act, funding to aid in the recovery from the pandemic.

A total of \$1,320,000 was committed for the following items:

FY24 Target:	\$	1,320,000		
Amount	Description	Justification	Town Priorities	
\$ 500,000	250th Celebration: To pay for expenses of the 250th Anniversary Celebration Commemorating the historic battles of Concord and Lexington.	To pay for expenses of the 250th Anniversary Celebration Commemorating the historic battles of Concord and Lexington.		
\$ 150,000	Level 3 Charging, Public Safety: Installation is needed to make efficient use of the department's electric fleet. In accordance with the Fleet Electrification Study.	Installation is needed to make efficient use of the department's electric fleet. In accordance with the Fleet Electrification Study.		Sustainability
\$ 150,000	Facilities Study: Town appropriated \$150,000 in 2014 for a CPW Feasibility Study, and is now positioning itself to move forward. On a parallel path, the Town would also like to explore options for Public Safety. Project funding will be combined to explore all options relative to both facilities.	Town appropriated \$150,000 in 2014 for a CPW Feasibility Study, and is now positioning itself to move forward. On a parallel path, the Town would also like to explore options for Public Safety. Project funding will be combined to explore all options relative to both facilities.		Capital
\$ 130,000	Park Improvements: Emerson Basketball & tennis court rehabilitation; Rideout Basketball & tennis court rehabilitation. Projects eliminated from CIP due to lack of resources.	Emerson Basketball & tennis court rehabilitation; Rideout Basketball & tennis court rehabilitation. Projects eliminated from CIP due to lack of resources.		Capital
\$ 100,000	Stormwater Management Fund: Evaluate feasibility of creation of fund. Revenue to fund future stormwater infrastructure maintenance and improvements.	Evaluate feasibility of creation of fund. Revenue to fund future stormwater infrastructure maintenance and improvements.		Sustainability; Capital
\$ 100,000	Municipal Buildings Energy Audit: Working with a vendor, explore options for energy efficiency and implement recommendations. This funding to be combined with the remaining Sawyer Trust Funds (approximately \$75,000)	Working with a vendor, explore options for energy efficiency and implement recommendations. This funding to be combined with the remaining Sawyer Trust Funds (approximately \$75,000)		Sustainability
\$ 75,000	DEI Initiatives: Advancing initiatives identified by the DEI Commission & the Town's DEI Consultant	Advancing initiatives identified by the DEI Commission		SB: C1-3; TM 2
\$ 50,000	Water Due Diligence: Town is investigating the feasibility of joining MWRA, the cost of which would be borne by the Water Enterprise Fund. Approximately 95% of residents are served by municipal water, but 5% are not for a variety of reasons. Funds would be used to determine the feasibility of providing municipal water to remaining residents.	Town is investigating the feasibility of joining MWRA, the cost of which would be borne by the Water Enterprise Fund. Approximately 95% of residents are served by municipal water, but 5% are not for a variety of reasons. Funds would be used to determine the feasibility of providing municipal water to remaining residents.		Sustainability; Capital
\$ 40,000	GIS: Additional data gathering and development.	Additional data gathering and development.		Sustainability; Capital: Economic Vitality
\$ 25,000	Municipal, Strategic Planning: Demand for increase in municipal services is tremendous. The organization has grown fast; segments are disconnected and sometimes siloed. Continued review of organization structure to better position for success. Collaboration building and development of common/ shared goals.	Demand for increase in municipal services is tremendous. The organization has grown fast; segments are disconnected and sometimes siloed. Continued review of organization structure to better position for success. Collaboration building and development of common/ shared goals.		SB: A; TM 1
\$ 1,320,000	Total			

As we look forward to 2024, we are encouraged and inspired by Concord's continued resilience and our collective commitment to working together to ensure that our community remains one that is responsive, inclusive, healthy and safe.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Jason Bulger,

The Technology department's mission is to:

1. Provide strategic technology vision and leadership to the Town of Concord
2. Provide secure, reliable information systems and technology to support all Town entities
3. Work with all departments and enterprises to support and improve business functions through the adoption and advancement of technology

IT Operations

In 2023, the Department continued to expand the services offered to Town Departments and Divisions by enhancing partnerships and setting up dedicated on-site resources. This allowed staff to have point-people where they could turn when they needed assistance and get speedier resolutions to their issues. While we continue to have a third-party Managed Service Provider to assist the Town with helpdesk tickets, internal staff played a larger role in performing adds, moves, and changes throughout the year.

Despite a steady move toward cloud operations, the Town of Concord maintains approximately 46 on-premises servers and 400 end-user devices in support of operations. We saw the replacement or retirement of 7 servers in the last year, and the deployment of over 80 workstations (laptops, desktops, or all-in-one computers). The Information Systems Technicians have done a tremendous job supporting end users by providing equipment in a timely manner and supporting these devices throughout their lifecycle and when issues arise. Around 5,000 tickets were managed by internal staff and our managed service provider partner, with the Town maintaining its own service board to track work by staff.

The vacant Business Systems Analyst position was filled by an internal candidate who has done a fantastic job assisting with Office 365 and Munis migrations along with helping multiple departments streamline and improve workflows.

Security continues to be an area of concern as malicious actors increasingly see state and local governments as easy targets for network penetration and ransomware. Concord received a third year of a grant for cybersecurity awareness training, which both lowered our insurance liability and helped end users better identify threats they face. The Town has worked to increase compliance through its use of Microsoft's data loss prevention tools and other security policies.

GIS

Concord GIS (Geographic Information Systems) hired two GIS Analysts, which were existing, vacant positions this year. Tristan Boyd joined the team in January, and Heather Bhowmick in March. Both Tristan and Heather have settled in very nicely with the team and are supporting projects from public works to public safety.

Throughout 2023, the GIS Team has worked on expanding the GIS services provided to the Town. We have worked with several different departments to assist with field data collection applications, which can help teams to record and visualize where their assets are throughout the Town and collect important data points from the field. We have also created dashboards based on the collected field data to allow staff to quickly process and understand the data being recorded. The GIS Team has continued to support our Town departments with their regular mapping and data requests and projects throughout this time as well, of course.

The GIS Team has also been exploring some advanced geospatial products for various Town initiatives, such as automating iterative processes, using GPS location tracking to create new layers, and working with 3D data and analyses. We hope to use these advanced applications of GIS more frequently in the future!

GIS staff held several staff and public workshops and training sessions to help people better understand and utilize these resources, and they responded to many requests for maps and data in a timely manner. The work of the GIS staff is hugely appreciated by the Technology Department and other Town staff.

MINUTEMAN MEDIA NETWORK

Minuteman Media Network (MMN), which was formally rolled into the Technology Department in 2022, consists of a Media Manager, a Production Manager, a Senior Producer/Education Coordinator, and 5 part-time videographers. In October 2023, MMN welcomed a new Media Manager, Julie Manoogian. Julie is a seasoned public access professional, having previously worked in the towns of Lexington and Bedford.

As a municipal cable access or PEG station (Public, Education, Government) our mission is to provide media coverage of Town meetings and events to keep residents informed, educated and entertained.

1. On television, public programs are broadcasted on Comcast channel 8; government programs are broadcasted Comcast channel 9; and education programs are broadcasted on Comcast channel 22. In total, these PEG channels broadcasted over 700 programs in 2023.
2. Online, the Minuteman Media YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/MinutemanMediaNetwork>) streamed over 8,000 hours of content, with the number of subscribers growing to over 1,200.

A majority of our media coverage is government meetings, requested by Town departments, boards and committees. This includes in-person meetings and Zoom recordings.

Outside of government meetings, we produced original videos about our Town. This year's programming highlights included CCHS Graduation, Concord Library's 150th Celebration, Concord 250th Stand Up for Ellen Garrison, Honor for George Washington Dugan, Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Grand Opening, Concord Middle School Topping Off Ceremony, and the CCHS Prism Concert. We continued our "Open for the Season" series with a feature on Scimone Farms. In our MMN studio, we created new episodes of our original show "Local Look," which focuses on Town governance. We also filmed events for our community partners, such as the League of Women Voters and the Concord Museum.

In October, Minuteman Media won an industry award from The Alliance for Community Media. Our original video called "Carlisle Castle Park Playground Build" took home an award in the Educational Program Category. You can watch the award-winning video here: minuteman.media/castlepark

We also finished upgrading our camera and production equipment in the Ripley Building, which is used to record Concord-Carlisle Joint School Committees twice a month. This results in a much higher video quality for those watching meetings and events filmed there.

At year's end, we initiated collaboration with the Concord-Carlisle High School principals and the Superintendent. We look forward to opening our doors to high school students as a hub to learn about video production, editing, and podcasting. Similar to the high school radio station, our media center will become part of the Flex Block system where students can work on their creative projects during regular school hours.

Conclusion

In addition to supporting operations and staff, we always welcome collaboration, input, and feedback from citizens. Use the Town website to get in touch. <https://concordma.gov/2335/Minuteman-Media-Network-MMN>



SUSTAINABILITY

Eric Simms, Sustainability Director

The Town of Concord has a long history of progressive thought and action regarding sustainability, resulting in the ambitious goals found in Sustainable Concord, the Town's first comprehensive climate action and resilience plan launched in 2020. The Town is committed to reducing community-wide greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 80% by 2050 based on a 2008 baseline in alignment with the Paris Climate Accord and the Massachusetts Global Warming Solutions Act. Working in partnership with a broad spectrum of Town departments, committees, residents, businesses, and other stakeholders, Concord's Sustainability Division is responsible for developing and implementing programs, policies, and initiatives to achieve the Town's climate and sustainability goals.

The arrival of 2023 brought with it a new Sustainability Director for Concord. Eric Simms began his role as Director in December of 2022, and spent 2023 advancing continuing projects and initiatives, as well as exploring new opportunities to support Concord's greenhouse gas emission reduction and sustainability goals. Eric leverages his background in the natural sciences, and 20 years of experience building cross-disciplinary relationships in higher education, to work with various stakeholders in Concord and the greater Boston region to keep Concord at the forefront of creative solutions to climate-related energy and environmental challenges.

Committees are an important resource for supporting Town sustainability efforts, and 2023 included some noteworthy events regarding sustainability-related committees. Early in the year, the former Climate Action Advisory Committee (CAAB) and the Comprehensive Sustainability and Energy Committee (CSEC) merged to form the single Climate Action Committee (CAC) to more efficiently advance the goals of the Climate Action and Resilience Plan. The responsibilities of the CAC include reporting on progress towards reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions;



A Concord resident prepares for an electric vehicle test drive.

developing tools, programs, and policies to educate and engage residents and businesses about sustainable best practices; and identifying climate vulnerabilities and adaptation strategies. An important task that the CAC began in coordination with the Sustainability Director this year was creating an updated inventory of Concord's greenhouse gas emissions that is expected to be completed in Spring 2024. Also of note was the creation of the Municipal Solar Implementation Task Force (STF) at 2023 Annual Town Meeting, which supports and accelerates CMLP efforts to increase municipal solar energy production and storage to achieve the Town goal of 20MW of solar production by 2030. The STF has worked to identify both short- and long-term opportunities for solar projects and intends to seek funding for one or two short-term projects at 2024 Town Meeting.

Important progress was made in 2023 regarding policies for the electrification of buildings in Concord, a key strategy to reducing the use of fossil fuels and greenhouse gas emissions. At 2023 Annual Town Meeting residents voted in favor of Concord adopting the new MA Specialized Stretch Building Code, which sets higher energy efficiency standards for new residential and commercial building construction and encourages building electrification instead of using fossil fuels. Perhaps most notable for building policies was the formal acceptance of Concord as a pilot community in the MA Dept. of Energy Resources (DOER) Fossil Fuel Free Building Demonstration Program in December 2023. As a participant, Concord will be one of only ten MA communities that will prohibit the use of fossil

fuels in new residential and commercial building construction, superseding the new MA Specialized Stretch Building Code. The impacts of this policy will be both immediate and long-term, given that 1) buildings constructed now using fossil fuels for energy will likely be in service and generating greenhouse gases for decades to come, and 2) currently 99% of the electricity CMLP purchases is carbon-free, so the energy used for electrified buildings in Concord is also not contributing to fossil fuel use. Based on feedback from DOER during the approval process, an article has been submitted for 2024 Town Meeting to amend the program bylaw to include major renovations and affordable housing, which would more closely align the bylaw with DOER regulations and the bylaws of other participating communities. The process to participate in this program was initiated in 2021 and the Town is excited to finally see this effort realized. Additional efforts supporting building electrification included hosting two building code training workshops in partnership with Lexington and Acton for area building inspectors and other stakeholders, hosting an energy efficiency forum for commercial property owners with the Concord Business Partnership, and starting the process of conducting deep energy audits for municipal buildings.

Electrifying transportation is another top priority for reducing Concord's greenhouse gas emissions. At the close of 2023 the Town had the second highest percentage (13.8%) of zero-emission and hybrid vehicles registered in the Commonwealth, according to the MassDOT Vehicle Census. In partnership with CMLP and Energy New England, the Sustainability Division hosted a Concord Drives Electric EV event in October 2023 that featured over a dozen EV dealers and an owners showcase, resulting in 128 test drives and several dozen different EV models represented. The Town continues to add BEV and PHEV vehicles to the municipal fleet via our 'EV First' policy as existing vehicles are replaced, and to look for opportunities to expand our growing fleet of electric school buses. Public EV charging was taken to the next 'level' with the installation of two Level 3 rapid charging stations at Rideout Park to replace the existing Level 2 chargers, and a University of New Hampshire Sustainability Fellow is expected to focus

on developing strategies for enhancing public and municipal charging in Summer 2024.

Several efforts to support the Town's preparedness for the impacts of climate change were undertaken this year. As an extension of the 2022 Town Hazard Mitigation Plan update, a workshop was conducted with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) to use the Envision sustainability framework and rating system to help identify criteria for potential new site locations for a Concord Fire/Police facility through a sustainability lens.

Sustainability also coordinated with Concord Public Works on launching two key elements of climate resiliency for the Town: 1) the development of a stormwater utility, which is designed to provide dedicated funding for required stormwater management infrastructure, and 2) the development of an Integrated Water Resources Plan, which will result in a comprehensive set of strategies to effectively manage drinking water, stormwater, and wastewater for Concord. The latter effort included organizing a Water Resources Public Forum in December 2023 to share the current state of water resources with residents and discuss current and anticipated challenges and solutions.

Interest in food composting continued to grow over the past year. Use of the two public food waste composting drop-off locations supported by the Town increased, resulting in the addition of an extra bin at each location to accommodate increasing volume, and food composting also continues to occur in municipal and school buildings. As of the close of 2023, 500 Concord residents are employing private curbside food compost pick-up, with an average of 2 tons collected per week and an estimated 353 tons collected since 2019 (source: Black Earth Composting). The Town will continue to explore additional models to increase residential and commercial food composting and significantly reduce the amount of solid waste sent to landfills.

FACILITIES DEPARTMENT

Ryan Orr, Director

The Facilities Division is responsible for maintaining, preserving, and improving twenty-four Town-owned buildings, totaling 600,000 square feet, while also maintaining open spaces, public bathing beaches, and recreational playgrounds. This includes custodial services, building maintenance and repairs, landscaping, support of capital projects and day-to-day project management for new construction and major renovations. The Division manages funding for the operation and maintenance of many of the Town's aging facilities.

The goal of the Division is to maintain healthy, comfortable buildings and productive environments for all who work in and use these facilities. These include Town offices, parks and playgrounds, park facilities, the Town Visitor Center, and more. In 2023, the Facilities Department transitioned from being managed within the Town Manager's Office to becoming an important division within Concord Public Works.

Accomplishments

The Facilities Division was once again able to provide a high level of service to all Town departments in 2023. Facilities staff responded to and completed 785 routine and preventative maintenance work orders. The Division has completed over 2000 service calls since the work order system was implemented in 2019. A diverse and multi-faceted maintenance crew performed ongoing repair work in Town facilities including electrical, HVAC and plumbing systems, as well as carpentry, drywall repair, painting, roofing, and window repair. Other services provided include snow and ice removal at building entrances, grounds maintenance and set up for Town Meeting. The staff responded to emergency calls and coordinated all annual state elevator, boiler, and compressor inspections, and fire alarm and sprinkler testing.

In 2023, the Facilities Custodial staff created a regular schedule for carpet cleaning and waxing floors and provided daily routine maintenance including floor care, dusting, restroom cleaning/sanitation, trash

removal, and recycling for Town buildings.

Renovations and Improvements

The Facilities team took the lead on relocating the Human Resources Department from the Town House to new offices established at 55 Church Street. In April of 2023, immediately prior to this relocation, the new office area received finish upgrades to the flooring and furniture upgrades. The former Human Resources space and kitchen on the second floor of the Town House was renovated, creating four new offices and a kitchenette in May of 2023. Facilities staff also designed and constructed the build-out of two offices at the Hunt Recreation Center and completed the White Pond Improvements project in June of 2023.

Maintenance

The maintenance crew performed ongoing repair work on facility electrical, HVAC and plumbing systems, and completed carpentry, drywall repair, painting, roofing, and window repair projects. Facilities staff oversaw the installation of a new modified roof system on CPW's administrative building located at 133 Keyes Road while also installing a new retractable reel system for the industrial air compressor system and made lighting system upgrades in the Mechanic Shop located in the operations garage in this same facility. Crews also installed new condensers and air source heat pumps and upgraded lighting at Facilities building located 37 Knox Trail. Staff also provided time-sensitive support on various mechanical systems associated with the Beede Swim & Fitness Center, including the replacement of heat exchangers and associated pumps.