

# TOWN MANAGER



*Town Manager Christopher Whelan*

2011 was another busy year for the Town of Concord. We experienced a very snowy winter, putting expenditures for snow and ice removal at nearly \$1 million. The cold start of the year provided a great opportunity for Concord Public Works to create outdoor skating rinks at both Emerson and Rideout Playgrounds, which brought people of all ages out for some fun.

## **General Business**

Spring brought with it an active Town Meeting season. The Town voted to authorize the purchase of a new aerial ladder truck for the Fire Department, replacing a 25-year old vehicle which had served the Town well. The Town also voted to authorize the Selectmen to purchase the Rogers Farm property on Harrington Avenue in collaboration with the Concord Land Conservation Trust – the acquisition was completed in August. The Town voted to restore 500 streetlights – and the Municipal Light Plant staff was able to complete the installation of energy-efficient fixtures by the end of October. And funding was provided for the replacement of playground equipment at Rideout, which was installed in the fall with a particular emphasis on accommodating those with special needs.

## **Fire Department**

On the Human Resources side, we were sorry to see the retirement of two very dedicated and caring firefighters, Captains Don Prentiss and Ken O'Donnell. But we were pleased to welcome new Chief Information Officer and former Finance Committee member Mark Howell, who will bring more than 30 years of IT experience to bear in maintaining and advancing the Town's communications infrastructure. Susan Rask was appointed the new Public Health Director bringing with her more than 20 years of service in Barnstable County. We were fortunate to hire Lane Partridge as our new Town Assessor, Ginger Quarles began her service as Concord's new Council on Aging Director, and Sergeant Roy Mulcahy and Inspector Tom Mulcahy were promoted to the position of Lieutenant in the Police Department.

## **Staff Changes**

There was excitement with the opening of the expanded Fowler Branch Library in May, and Town Meeting voted a significant capital investment in a radio frequency identification system (RFID) for both libraries to help handle increased circulation activity.

## **Library**

<b>Public Works</b>	The Public Works Department had a busy year. They managed the completion of the Lowell Road sidewalk extension and several small sidewalk projects.
<b>Concord Light</b>	<p>The Concord Municipal Light Plant showed the great value of owning a municipal utility when it responded with extraordinary skill and commitment to restoring power during two major windstorms in June and October. In October 1,700 customers lost power; most had power restored within a few hours and all had power back within twenty-four hours.</p> <p>In the meantime, the Light Plant also completed the construction of a Town-wide “Smart-Grid” telecommunications network that will enable customers to use energy more wisely and will also open the door for other telecommunications opportunities. The Light Plant also took delivery of the first energy coming from a solar wind farm at Spruce Mountain, Maine, a renewable energy source expected to provide about 3% of the Town’s energy needs at an excellent price. Work continues to try to develop utility-scale solar energy facilities within the Town boundaries. Staff are also designing an up-grade of the Forest Ridge Substation, increasing the Town’s capacity from 50 megawatts to 70.</p>
<b>Development</b>	<p>Concord achieved a major milestone in affordable housing in 2011. The first occupancy permit for the 350-unit Concord Mews property was issued in December putting the Town over the goal of 10% affordable housing. Achieving this status will enable Town planners to reject any MGL chapter 40B housing proposal that is believed to be too dense or poorly designed for the neighborhood in which it will be located.</p> <p>In December, the Town was recognized by the Massachusetts Municipal Association when it received the “Municipal Innovation Award” for the new five-town affordable housing collaborative that was established earlier in the year.</p>
<b>Awards and Recognitions</b>	<p>Concord was recognized once again by Common Cause for openness and transparency in government. More documents and information have been posted on-line, and nearly 900 residents have signed up for automatic e-messages through the Town’s website News &amp; Notices section and weekly Town Manager’s report.</p> <p>It was encouraging to see Moody’s Investor Service confirm the Town’s triple-A credit rating, and have the “negative outlook” caveat removed from the rating. The Selectmen’s adoption of “Sustainability Guidelines” will encourage the conservation of resources and protection of the environment. And the U.S. EPA’s commitment to spend \$71 million over the next three years to clean-up the property at 2229 Main Street are all encouraging signals for a bright future.</p>
<b>Challenges</b>	There are significant challenges ahead in the coming year: our wastewater treatment plant is at full capacity and relief is needed if we wish to have continued redevelopment of commercial and residential properties in Concord. The State’s Route 2/Crosby’s Corner project will likely be very disruptive for our area for at least a few years. And considerable coordination and cooperation will be needed to successfully complete the new Regional High School.

# WHAT IS ASK CONCORD?

**Ask Concord** is a searchable, dynamic database designed by the Town to address the Town Manager’s and Board of Selectmen’s interest in continuing to utilize the Town’s Web presence to provide more timely and accurate information related to a wide variety of operations-related questions from residents and others. Ask Concord is a repository of questions and answers related to any and all areas of municipal operations.

## HOW TO USE ASK CONCORD

- Go to the Town website: [www.Concordma.gov](http://www.Concordma.gov)
- Choose Ask Concord from the choices in the green box at the left of the page.
- You will come to a page that looks very like the information below.

Question	Answer
<p><b>Enter your question here.</b> You can enter your entire question much the same way you would ask in person, i.e. Where Do I Go To Pay My Parking Ticket? Or, you can simplify your entry to just the key words, i.e. Parking Ticket. The system will match these key words to questions that have been asked before and their respective answers, and provide matches for you to review</p>	
<p>If you do not find your question already answered, write your question and send it off. You may provide your address for notification that an answer has been posted.</p>	
<p><b>Example:</b> How do I obtain a resident parking permit for the West Concord commuter rail lot? On the sign in the lot in West Concord it says permit required.</p>	<p>Parking Permits for the West Concord MBTA commuter parking lot are available to Concord residents wh. . .</p>

**Ask Concord** is a dynamic, growing resource, but it is NOT a blog and it is not designed to be a resource for answers of a direct, personal nature. Our goal is to have answers to new questions appear in a timely manner (generally within three business days where possible, and even sooner if related to an emerging matter of immediate interest and benefit to the community). Questioners may expect that questions of a personal nature will be answered in more general terms which hopefully will be helpful in directing the questioner to a specific resource for a more personal response. Above all, questioners are reminded that **Ask Concord** is not intended to substitute for the direct, personal assistance that may be expected via telephone or in person at the Town’s various departments. **Ask Concord** is simply another resource for gathering accurate and timely information – frequently related to questions that have been asked and answered many times - from Town staff in various departments.