

Katie Green

The **Recreation Commission** met on January 5th. The Recreation Director explained that the department decided to pull their CPA applications for the Rail Trail Comfort Station and Jones Playground. They are meeting with CPC to discuss their other proposals later in the week. The Commission discussed the application for the Miracle Field Comfort Station and the potential for private donations to support that project. The Commission also voted to rank the Recreation projects per CPC's request. Their ranking was: Miracle Field Comfort Station; TJ O'Grady Skate Park Expansion; and NARA Parking Control. The Director also discussed the progress they are making on the NARA Master Plan and said they hope to have draft ready for review by the next Commission meeting.

The **Acton Leadership Group** met on January 7th. There weren't any major updates from either the town or the region on FY16. The spreadsheet was updated to include the Town Manager and Superintendent's recommended budgets as well as the preliminary assessment from Minuteman. Currently, the spreadsheet is showing a \$502k positive balance but that includes using \$2.7M in town reserves and capturing all of the unused tax levy. The group discussed the revenue projections currently reflected in the spreadsheet. We are using very conservative numbers for state aid but hope to have more information when the Governor releases his budget in a few weeks. The group discussed whether the \$502k should go towards reducing the use of reserves and/or reducing the use of the unused tax levy. Eventually, we decided to take this question back to our respective boards and have a further discussion at the next ALG meeting.

Franny and I met with a group of Junior and Cadette Girl Scouts in town on January 8th. The group is learning about all levels of government and asked us to speak to them about serving in local government. Franny and I both spoke about how we came to run for the Board of Selectmen and what it's like to serve on the a local board. The girls asked a lot of very interesting and thoughtful questions. We also talked about the importance of being involved in politics and government at all levels and how important it is not only to vote but also to do your research before voting. Prior to our arrival, the girls broke into group and came up with proposals for how to use some unspent town funds. At a mock BOS meeting prior to our meeting on the 25th, each group will present their proposals to the Board and hopefully we'll all learn something about how town government works and about the importance of civil discourse!

The **Board of Health** meeting on January 11th was cancelled as the meeting wasn't properly posted.

The **Acton Nursing Services Task Force** met on January 12th. We discussed the big jump in revenue that ANS was showing for December. Heather York explained that a lot of this was due to catch up from a delay in Medicare billing due to the switch to ICD-10. However, part of it was also due to the fact that admissions were higher in the fall/winter than in the summer. Currently, admissions for this fiscal year are trending higher than last fiscal year. It's hard to tell if any of that is due to the postcard that was recently mailed out to all senior households in

town although Heather noted that she has heard a lot of positive feedback on the postcard. The next three cards are at the printer and scheduled to be sent in January, February, and March. The group is also working on updating their list of referral sources and putting together a letter and packet to send to those sources.

The **Historical Commission** met on January 13th. They discussed what to include their annual town report and noted that it's been a relatively quiet year for the Commission. They also discussed the proposal for the Nagog Pond Water Treatment plant as Mass Historical alerted them to the application. They are planning to provide comments on the application as there was an archaeological survey done of the site in 1994 but the proposed expansion will disturb a larger area of land and so could require a new survey.

The **Morrison Farm Committee** met on the morning of January 14th. Steve Ledoux, Cory York, Tom Tidman, and I attended to discuss the proposal from Habitat for Humanity to use the farm house as a Habitat house. The Committee was concerned with the proposal for a number of reasons including that we would have to sell the house and so the town would no longer have control over that piece of the property, we would likely have to build a new access road for the gardeners, and other concerns. Ultimately, the Committee voted unanimously to send a letter to the Selectmen expressing their disapproval of the plan and recommending instead that the town take down the house.

The **Acton Boxborough Regional School Committee** met on January 14th. They had a presentation from their independent auditor on their FY15 audit. The auditor said there was a \$500k net balance at the end of the fiscal year, raising the region's reserve level to \$1.8M. The Committee also heard a presentation on the district's Ready to Learn committee which looked at how young children learn best. They also had a presentation on the proposed FY17 budget including presentations from three of the departments ahead of their upcoming Budget Saturday. The Finance Director explained a few changes in the budget since the last presentation. Mainly, they've changed how they are presenting the choice and charter assessments so that they are listed as expenditures instead of revenue offsets. This doesn't change the bottom line or the assessments to the two towns at all but just brings the accounting in line with what they have to report to the state. They also made \$179k in reductions to the budget including factoring in final notifications of retirements for the coming year, reducing the substitute and overtime budgets, reducing workers' comp line item based on recent trends, including some telephone maintenance savings, and reducing the debt payment for the Lower Fields project. Overall, the budget is now a 3.9% increase over FY16 and the assessment to Acton is up 5% over FY16. The Committee heard detailed presentations from the Facilities and Transportation, EdTech, Teaching and Learning, and Community Education departments. The Facilities and Transportation budget is up 10.1% over FY16 mainly due to capital and an increase in the utility line item. The region continues to see reductions in energy consumption however the increase and volatility in the electricity prices caused them to increase that budget line item. The EdTech line item actually is showing some savings for FY17 including getting rid of redundant support contracts at Blanchard and reducing printing costs. The Teaching and Learning department has a slight increase over FY16 but they are showing no

increase to the substitute or stipend line items, or to the supplies and learning materials. Community Ed is a self sustaining program but they discussed their budget and the various programs they offer. After these presentations, the Superintendent discussed his proposal to reallocate \$70k of fringe benefit savings in the FY16 budget to start Phase II of the existing conditions study in this fiscal year instead of waiting until the start of FY17. The remaining \$50k for Phase II would come out of the FY17 budget. The committee voted to approve the plan. The committee also voted to approve a solar net metering agreement which differs from the town's as the solar will not be on site like ours is at the transfer station.

I attended the **League of Women Voters' Forum on Changes and Challenges in Suburban Policing**. The Police Chiefs from Acton, Boxborough, Maynard, Littleton, and Stow discussed how policing and their communities have changed and about the new challenges they face. Some of the common themes were the introduction of technology and social media, the increase in domestic violence cases and how the police departments are addressing those cases, the rise in opioid addiction, and the increasing mental health issues that the departments deal with. The chiefs all noted that the police are becoming more like social service agents and they have dramatically changed how they address issues over the years including working with agencies and organizations like the Domestic Violence Services Network and Communities for Restorative Justice. There is also an increase in the communication and collaboration between police departments. It was a very interesting and very well attended forum and there were a number of thoughtful questions and comments from the audience.

Peter J. Berry

Green Advisory Board: Is working on finishing project work funded under the Green Communities Act in time to reapply for this year's grants. Projects funded in prior year must be complete in order to be eligible to compete for new funding. Funds may be left over from school projects that could be used to fund more streetlight replacements. GAB has updated their charge and will be requesting the Selectmen to approve an expanded scope to advise the town on a wider array of environmental issues, as opposed to just energy savings.

Kelley's Corner Steering Committee: Finalizing proposed zoning amendments. On Feb. 4 will be rolling out campaign to introduce and gather support for Town Meeting articles to adopt zoning changes for Kelley's Corner and funding for infrastructure improvements.

CPC: Continuing to review applications for funding. Will be voting on Jan. 21 and Feb. 4 on which projects to propose funding for 2016 ATM warrant.

CPA Study Committee: Has been meeting since Nov. with interested parties to gather information about the history of the CPA in Acton and possible changes in the future. Will be submitting a report to the Selectmen early in Feb.

Site Plan Special Permit Study Committee: Has been meeting since Oct. to study the process for review and approval of Site Plan Special Permits. Will submit a report to the Selectmen by Feb.

Health Insurance Trust: Approved FY 2015 audit. Spending is on track for FY '16. Will be setting rates for FY '17.

Janet Adachi

Acton Community Housing Corporation, Monday, 1/11 – Discussion with Iron Work Farm representatives of potential for affordable housing unit at Faulkner House, and with developers about potential 8-residence, "friendly" Chapter 40B project with open space at 248 High Street.

Conservation Commission, Wednesday, 1/6 – Continued hearing on Concord Water Treatment Plant proposal; extended discussion with many Quail Ridge residents present to voice objections to project; Commissioners noted the limited scope of their authority under wetlands-protection laws and voted to approve project, with some conditions.

Finance Committee, Tuesday, 1/12 – Update on Kelley's Corner project. Discussion of Acton Leadership Group tentative budget for FY17, which most recently was 500K to the positive, but with proposed use of unused levy capacity and reserves; concern about over-reliance on reserves but also reluctance to avoid using reserves and instead tax to 2.5% maximum, and also include full unused levy capacity; discussion deferred until committee has more information about increases and other numbers in ALG plan including perhaps FY15 actuals, which committee would like ALG plan to include. Discussion of Acton-Boxborough School Committee proposal, in lieu of quarterly reports to FinComms in both towns, to have FinComms hear quarterly reports at School Committee meetings. Discussion of various concerns pertaining to annual Town Meeting process, including need for warrant article information to be available earlier to inform not only FinComm and its recommendations, but to inform public.

Minuteman Regional Vocational District

1) Ms. Adachi working with Minuteman School Committee representative to set up and prepare for

- public information session on Wednesday, 1/27, about proposed amended regional agreement that will be the sole article at Acton's 2/2 Special Town Meeting, and
- 2/2 STM itself.

2) Thursday, 1/21 – Breakfast meeting for member-town representatives. Town Manager Steve Ledoux, Minuteman School Committee representative Pam Nourse and Ms. Adachi attended. Discussion, questions about upcoming member-town Special Town Meetings on proposed amended regional agreement, as well as process for subsequent member-town consideration of school-building financing proposal.

495/Metrowest Board of Directors, Wednesday, 1/6 – Various updates. 21 Partnership communities have committed in past year to paying annual \$500 stipends to augment corporate and state funding); 11/17 employer transportation conference with T4MASS that highlighted Acton's CrossTownConnect; Economic Development summit for the "Boroughs" (Westborough, etc.), 1/26, sponsored by Mirick O'Connell, featuring Lt.

Governor and Northeastern University's Barry Bluestone, and focusing on "last-mile" issue for employers; long-awaited Environmental Protection Agency final stormwater regulations still not released (12/2015 was prior estimated release date).

Acton and Boxborough Diversity Coalition – assisted with organization of MLK Breakfast, Congregation Beth Elohim, Monday, 1/18 – Record-breaking attendance of over 100 people, drawn by guest speaker Phillip Martin, investigative reporter for WGBH, as well as the excellent breakfast buffet.

Acton-Area League of Women Voters forum on suburban policing, Wednesday, 1/20 – Panel consisting of police chiefs from Acton, Boxborough, Littleton, Stow, Maynard. Ms. Green, Ms. Osman and Ms. Adachi attended. Room 204 full. Opioids, mental health issues, domestic violence common themes in all towns.

Franny Osman

Council on Aging (COA), Jan. 4, 2016

A grant was approved to have a regional bereavement group. The COA will run an evidence-based fall prevention program. Sharon Mercurio mentioned some upcoming events: Coffee and Conversation about the new Senior Center proposal, the Senior Center Study Committee Public Forum, Real Estate Assessor tax presentation, and Chess Classes. She reported that a new Social Worker was hired under a grant requested by the Police Departments of eight towns. The goal of the program is to keep mental health patients out of prisons. The Social Worker will be available to assist residents of all ages.

There was discussion of the upcoming presentation to the Board of Selectmen (BOS) on Jan. 4.

Cross-Town Connect Jan. 7, 2016

Discussed FY17 budget, needs of companies, and shared dispatch for the senior vans. There is always this duality to the topics discussed at CTC meetings, because part of CTC's work is in support of businesses and part is the shared paratransit dispatch. Richard Ellert of Associated Environmental Systems visited. The availability of transit from the train was instrumental in helping them hire someone for the Acton location.

Minuteman Advisory Group for Interlocal Coordination (MAGIC) Jan. 7, 2016

We heard an update on District Local Technical Assistance grants. It is helpful that Acton is part of a Community Compact; it gives us priority in applying for technical assistance. I brought a letter back from Marc Draisen, Executive Director of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) about "Professional Technical and Planning Assistance to MAPC Municipalities," to various Town staff.

We also heard a discussion of how the MBTA came to choose the proposed new schedule for the Fitchburg Rail, for which comments are being solicited. It is very complex to plan a schedule, having to do with reducing interlining (trains moving from one line to another), preventing cascading delays, creating fast turnaround at North Station. When a train has to slow down for a curve anyway, then a stop doesn't delay the train too much. But when the line is straight in an area and a stop is added, it makes a bigger difference in total time because it takes longer to slow the train down and speed it up to the speed it could have been at. Mohammed Khan and George Kahales from Montachusett area, Fitchburg, commented that they like the new schedule very much but are requesting an additional, earlier morning outbound from Boston. There will be a series of public meetings to comment on the schedule. You can see the new schedule, to comment, at [http://www.mbta.com/uploadedfiles/About the T/Board Meetings/1.8%20Fitchburg%20Comparison.pdf](http://www.mbta.com/uploadedfiles/About_the_T/Board_Meetings/1.8%20Fitchburg%20Comparison.pdf) . It was no easy feat finding this url! I followed links from www.mbta.com . There will be a meeting in Concord on January 28 for feedback. 6 to 8 pm, Concord Town Hall Hearing Room, Second Floor, 22 Monument Sq., Concord.

The community exchange was interesting as always. Concord is bringing a proposed new formula to their Town Meeting for calculating the Floor Area Ratio, with the goal of decreasing “mansionization,” or teardowns. The formula is that Floor Area Ratio will be $1200/\text{Lot Size} + 0.24$. On Feb. 9 is their Planning Board’s public hearing on this. Carlisle has some new senior housing and group homes. Littleton has crossed some hurdles to becoming a Green Community.

Senior Center Study Committee Jan. 7, 2016

Review of Jan. 4 BOS meeting and what will happen after Town Meeting if the proposal passes. Discussion of ways to reach out—publicity, forums, focus groups.

Visit to Girl Scout Troop meeting Jan. 8, 2016

Heartwarming event where Katie Green and I answered questions about being Selectmen and we all discussed the upcoming Presidential election and did a mock election. This troop will come for a mock BOS meeting on Jan. 25.

Budget Saturday Jan. 9, 2016

Visited Acton Chinese Language School Senior Club Jan. 10, 2016

I visited the Senior Club of the Acton Chinese Language School. It was a small crowd because of the rain. Usually there are many more attendees and more activities. There were about 13 people, 8 of whom live in Acton and one who lives in Boxborough. I took pictures of them playing cards and mahjong, and of the leaders Xia Man, the Dean of Culture; Xianghai Liu, Chair of the Board of Directors; and Min Zhang, the Principal. Happy to share these photos.

We talked a little about participation in the present and future Senior Centers. The biggest barrier is language. Activities they mentioned that would interest them are: exercise machines, tai chi, mahjong, pingpong, playing cards. They had questions about meal availability, transportation, and whether citizenship mattered. They mentioned an English curriculum they just finished and that they are in search of a second-year curriculum or books, so they can move on. I shared information from the Council on Aging website with the leaders and they will translate it and pass it on. I also gathered telephone numbers and emails as Marion is interested in making more connections. Finally, I offered rides to anyone who wants to come Wed. to the forum but doesn't have a way to get there. However, language will be difficult.

Minuteman Regional Transportation Coordinating Committee Jan. 11, 2016

Thanks to Mathias Rosenfeld for allowing us to meet at West Acton Villageworks. Good exchange of information about employment transportation. Doug Halley shared about Acton’s transit. Seventy-three percent of our on-demand trips are senior trips. We heard about companies in this area wanting to hire from the city and needing that last mile transportation from the train to the company. Representatives from the state

Career Centers north and south of us were there as well as someone from the North Suburban Employment Collaborative who was grateful to learn about Acton's CAT bus so she could refer clients to jobs in Acton, knowing they had a way to get there from the train. Veterans reps from the Career Center in Framingham and from Acton (James MacRae) participated. A team came from Ware, MA: from the Community Development Corporation, from the Town, and from the Ware Business Association, as they want to learn from work we have done in our area.

Senior Center Study Committee Forum Jan. 13, 2016

There was a good turnout for this forum where Dean Charter presented about the plans so far, including the Arlington St. site and the Human Services element included in the building. There seemed to be support of the concept of the senior center but concerns about the Arlington St. site and the cost.

Martin Luther King Breakfast Jan. 18, 2016

Speaker: Phillip Martin, Investigative Reporter for WGBH Radio.

Commission on Disability Jan. 19, 2016

I did not attend this meeting and await the minutes. I hear that they are pursuing the 2016 goal of focusing on the needs of people with mental illness. They plan to invite someone from the Independent Living Council to speak on this topic.

North South Rail Link Working Group Jan. 19, 2014

The working group is growing, with recent additions of the mayors of Haverhill, Fitchburg, and Weymouth, and the co-founder of Instinct Health Science, Inc. Michael Dukakis beamed in from California for the meeting. He is seeking rail experts who might have ideas about cheaper ways to increase the capacity of South Station without the high cost of the South Station Expansion project. The Rail Link would preclude that need to make a big ending point in South Station but in the meanwhile, South Station has a real space crunch. We saw photos and heard encouraging reasonable cost figures for some connection projects in other areas, as well as dual mode trains (diesel and electric).

Cemetery Commission Jan. 20, 2016

Clarified the policy about the number of markers allowed on family graves. Removed the distinction of the "Baby" section of the cemetery which is not used. The story Henry Louis piqued my interest; according to Bill Klauer, Louis was a black man who died in an agricultural accident at the poor farm in 1911 (now 251 Nagog Hill Rd.) and is oddly buried in the section marked "Baby." I would like to look into this.

League of Women Voters Police Chief Forum Jan. 20, 2016

Made me feel proud of our police departments in the area as well as the programs valued by the Chiefs, including the Communities for Restorative Justice (www.c4rj.com), the Domestic Violence Services Network (www.dvsn.org), and the new courthouse-connected social worker mentioned above in the COA report: Alia Toran-Burrell. her email is atoran@eliotchs.org. Maynard, Stow, Boxborough, Acton, and Littleton Chiefs presented. Topics included changes in suburban policing over time, as this area has grown from a farming community, mental illness, opioids, domestic violence, human trafficking, race issues, social media, and safety of police officers.

Senior Center Study Committee, January 21, 2016

The committee voted unanimously (after much discussion) to re-review the Walker Property as a potential site for the proposed Senior Center, during the next 6 weeks, in response to enough concerns about the Arlington St. site at the Jan. 13 forum. There is concern on the committee that switching from the Arlington St. site would delay the project for another year. The Board of Selectmen need to follow through with our indication at Town Meeting that a committee will be formed to look at uses for the Walker site. Meanwhile, moving along with the Arlington St. site, Tom Tidman came and reported on a walk of the site he took with Selby. Tom identified wetlands on the map, that have a 75 foot buffer before structures can be built, and vernal pools, which have a 100 foot buffer. Still, it looked like enough space for the building and that the building would be about 400 feet from abutters.