

# STATE OF THE TOWN REPORTS – 2009

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**BOARD OF SELECTMEN:** Sarah Cannon Holden (Chair); Sara A. Mattes, Gary A. Taylor

## **The Board of Selectmen's Goals – 2009**

We look forward each year to the State of the Town Meeting and the opportunity it provides for open discussion of the issues that have significant potential to impact Lincoln and our quality of life. We outlined our board's 2009 goals in the report we issued as part of the 2008 State of the Town Meeting:

### **GOALS 2009 –**

- Comprehensive Planning Process - Complete the planning process and work in partnership with the other boards and committees to implement its key recommendations.
- Roadway Rehabilitation Program - Oversee the implementation of the \$5.5 million dollar roadway rehabilitation project and work with the Ad Hoc Traffic and Roadway Design Committee to update roadway design guidelines and other guidance documents and a public review process that will inform future roadway improvements.
- Regional Participation - Continue working with existing regional agencies and seek further opportunities to collaborative w/ stakeholders in out area.
- Pierce House Planning - Finalize Pierce House Facility plan.
- Agricultural Commission - Work with newly appointed Agricultural Commission to create an updated "agricultural Inventory."
- Public Outreach/Engagement - Develop and implement plan for enhanced, citizen notification, outreach and communication.
- Resident Satisfaction Survey - Continue discussion, begun through the CLRP, as to whether the town would benefit from the introduction of a regularly administered professional survey of town opinion.
- Board/Committee Coordination - Expand efforts to facilitate cross-board and committee communication.
- Route 2/Crosby's Corner – Continue to advocate for state funding for acquisition of right of ways and full funding for project construction. The current Mass Highway schedule anticipates that design and right of way acquisition will be completed in time for a construction contract to be awarded in 2011. However, the state is yet to commit sufficient funds.

### **How have we done?**

In assessing our performance, not only over the course of the past year but more generally, it becomes quickly apparent that we enjoy a much higher rate of success when a project does not require that we go outside Lincoln for grants of legal authority or funding. This reality was in evidence again in 2009. We made substantial progress or achieved our objective where the town controlled its own destiny.

### Comprehensive Long Range Plan

The long-range planning process, led by the Planning Board, took a little longer than anticipated. The plan was not ready for the March 2009 annual town meeting and will be presented at the October 17<sup>th</sup> Special Town Meeting. Over 70 town volunteers have worked tirelessly to develop the plan and all deserve our deep gratitude. Development of a long-range plan necessarily involves trade-offs among cherished values and so will involve choices not favored by everyone. We hope the plan reflects a reasonable balance in such areas and urge everyone to read and consider the plan carefully in this light.

The next phase will involve the appointment of the Implementation Committee and the actual integration of the Plan into the work of the various boards and committees.

### Roadway Rehabilitation Program & Ad Hoc Traffic Committee

The Ad Hoc Traffic Committee (AHTC), appointed at the end of 2007, participated in selection of the engineering consulting firm, CEI, for roadway design, and has actively worked with Public Safety, Public Works and CEI in developing plans for the roadway reconstruction project voted at TM. In March 2009 the Town authorized town officials to borrow \$5.5 million to repair and improve South Great Road, Concord Road, Bedford Road North, Lincoln Road, Baker Bridge Road, Sandy Pond Road and Trapelo Road.

The project was divided into two phases. Phase I, now underway, consists of Baker Bridge, Sandy Pond, Trapelo, and Concord Roads and Bedford Road North. We anticipate that Phase I will be completed in early November. Phase II, consisting of South Great and Lincoln Roads, will be constructed in 2010.

We are mindful of the challenges that poor weather presented and offer our gratitude to Highway Superintendent Chris Bibbo for moving this complex project along.

We offer special thanks also to the Ad Hoc Traffic Committee members (Jason Felsch, Buzz Constable, Ken Basset, Rick Wiggin, Beth Reese and John Caswell) for the role they played in developing roadway design plans that appropriately balance town concerns for safety and rural character.

### Regional Participation

Participation in regional organizations and committees has become increasingly important to Lincoln's future. As external pressures increase, it is critical to understand what and where they are, and how we can participate to influence decision making in this larger arena. Our participation takes place in a number of different ways:

Hanscom Area Towns (HATS) ~ The HATS communities, Lexington, Lincoln, Bedford and Concord, continue to monitor development at Hanscom Civilian Airport, and support activities to ensure the continued vitality of Hanscom Air force Base,. HATS also provides a forum for inter-town information sharing and collaboration. In the spring of 2009 the HATS communities held a forum on regionalization in which they discussed ways in which they share resources and form coalitions. Upcoming HATS agendas include forums for Finance Committees, Agricultural Commissions, and others.

MAGIC: ~ MAGIC includes the HATS communities and other communities to our west. MAGIC, like HATS, is a forum for information sharing, but also where TIP/MPO advocacy (e.g., for Crosby's Corner realignment) takes place.

128 Central Corridor Coalition (128 3 C) ~ The 128 Central Corridor Coalition is made up of Weston, Waltham, Lincoln, Lexington and Burlington. This newly formed coalition is seeking mechanisms within our respective jurisdictions that will aid us in addressing traffic congestion along Rt. 128 between the Mass. Pike and Rt.3. We are seeking coordinated mitigation from developers to reduce car trips as well as low-costs

strategies to move traffic more efficiently along 128 such as the addition of dedicated HOV and Express Commuter Bus Lanes. In addition, the Coalition is working with our federal delegation and the MBTA to seek upgrades of the Fitchburg rail line with an ultimate goal of a Multi-Modal Mobility Transit Center at the intersection of Rt.128 and the Fitchburg line. The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) provides critical staffing for this effort.

Battle Road Scenic Byway (BRSB): Road of Revolutions ~ The BRSB runs from Arlington through Lexington and Lincoln, and terminates in Concord. The MAPC is leading the early planning process to determine how best to protect the unique landscape of this state designated corridor. Public meetings will be held in Lincoln in early December to discuss the landscapes and places in Lincoln for potential inclusion in the corridor.

Hanscom Field Advisory Committee (HFAC) ~ Established by state legislation, this committee is made up of elected officials from Lexington, Lincoln, Concord and Bedford, as well as Massport and stakeholders who use Hanscom Civilian Air Field. HFAC monitors activities at the airport that affect our communities.

Electronic Systems and Software Science and Technology (S&T) Board ~ This newly created board is a collaboration between the Mass High Tech. Council, Hanscom Air Force Base (HAFB) the state and local stakeholders.. HATS has a seat on this board, and Lincoln has been asked to be the representative for HATS. The S & T Board will provide a forum to collaborate, consult and exchange information, and to provide strategic advice to regional, state, and local officials for the purpose of promoting the region's contributions to the electronic systems and software sector. This is an important mechanism to ensure close collaboration and support for HAFB.

### Pierce House

The Pierce House Planning Committee, appointed by the Selectmen in 2008, completed its assessment of Pierce House operations and finances and issued its report earlier this year. The Pierce House management team is working to implement the key recommendations. One of the first tasks will be to repair the drainage system that connects the ponds. In addition, the team plans to re-examine the use of trust fund income.

We were pleased to appoint former finance committee member Walter Salmon to the Pierce House Committee. He is ideally suited to the job of assessing Pierce House finances with an eye toward minimizing the need for general fund subsidization of Pierce House operations.

### Agricultural Commission

The Agricultural Commission is in full operation and an independent Board whose members are appointed by the Board of Selectmen.

### Public Outreach Plan

During the past year we have implemented both the reverse 911 public announcement system and the subscription e-mail meeting notification system. We are in the process of developing an IT Strategic Plan. An IT planning committee has been appointed and a consultant retained. By the time of the SOTT Meeting, the public will have been engaged to provide input and feedback. The hope is that we can improve the town web site and enhance citizen opportunities to communicate with town officials and conduct business on line.

### Board/Committee Coordination

There are always efforts ~ both informal and formal ~ to increase coordination and communication. Each fall at the State of the Town Meeting the boards coordinate efforts leading up to budget and other proposals for the March annual town meeting.

The Board of Selectmen convenes meetings for representatives of the land use permitting agencies to share information and improve coordination. In addition, the BOS participates in the meetings, led by the Town Clerk and Library, to develop protocol for data management and policy for management of archival materials.

Discussions continue on how to do more with thoughts of resuming the Moderator's Team Meetings or Selectmen's Breakfasts. The Town Clerk has been pro-active in her efforts to improve the orientation process for newly elected and appointed officials.

### Route 2/Crosby's Corner

Over the past year we have endured the usual ups and downs with respect to funding for the improvements to Crosby's Corner. As of this writing the work is scheduled to begin in 2011. There have been victories along the way. After a painfully long wait for homeowners, the state has begun the process of taking the houses that fall into the proposed right of way and the 100% design should be finished this fall. We will continue to be vigilant as it seems that there has been nothing certain in this process.

### School Systems

Issues have arisen with regard to Lincoln's relationships with its partners at the high school (LSRHS) and with Hanscom Air Force Base (HAFB), which shares our K-8 system. A group was appointed by Selectmen and Finance Committees of Lincoln and Sudbury to study and assess options for administrative reorganization and cooperation among the school systems of Lincoln and Sudbury that might enhance efficiency and make better use of limited financial resources. The group has held several meetings and met with administrators and school board members from school systems organized differently than L-S to assess the efficacy of alternative organizational and administrative approaches. Administrators from L-S and the Lincoln and Sudbury K-8 systems have also met to discuss opportunities for cooperation and cost savings. The group will report out and provide recommendations with regard to potential efficiency measures by December.

Developments at HAFB, particularly relating to housing privatization on the base, have raised questions regarding responsibility for educating the children of the residents of the housing on the base that are not in the military or otherwise employees of the defense department. The Department of Defense (DoD) has no authority to cover these children under its contract with Lincoln's K-8 system, but Lincoln has no ability to tax residents of the housing on the base to pay education-related costs. Non-military children are being admitted to the Lincoln K-8 school system on an interim basis while school and town officials work with DoD and the state to resolve the situation. Since Bedford educates high school-aged children from HAFB, their interests are affected as well, and they are cooperating with Lincoln to find solutions. The legal issues involved are complex and changing, and the potential impacts on Lincoln could be substantial, so this matter will receive considerable attention over the coming year.

## **Board of Selectmen Goals - 2010**

Over the coming year, we shall pursue the following goals:

Rebalance the Town Budget & Focus on Long-term Financial Plan – Because of reduced state aid we must re-visit the budget passed at the March 2009 town meeting. This will

be the first order of business at the 2009 State of the Town Meeting. We will work with other boards and committees on the long-term financial picture.

Comprehensive Planning Process – We will work with other boards and committees to implement the key recommendations of the Plan.

Roadway Rehabilitation Program – As stated above we will undertake Phase II of the roadway plan in the spring and summer of 2010.

Town Offices Renovation – An analysis of the building needs indicates that town offices need some significant repairs and upgrades. This includes the following: fire code compliance, handicapped accessibility, utility systems upgrades, energy efficiencies, more meeting and storage space. Whether this work is undertaken in the near future is uncertain, but we do want to alert town citizens to these needs.

Regional Participation – We will continue working with existing regional agencies and seek further opportunities to collaborate with stakeholders in our area.

Hanscom & Schools - Town and school officials from Lincoln and Bedford will be working with the DoD and the Commonwealth's Department Education and other administrators to reach a stable, workable solution for addressing the costs of educating students residing on HAFB.

Pierce House Planning – We will monitor the work on the drainage system between ponds at the Pierce House.

Public Outreach/Engagement – We will work to develop and implement a plan such as the e-mail meeting notice service, currently available by subscription, to provide timely notice and updates of key town activities. We will be requesting funds to re-create the town web site to make it a more reliable and dynamic medium for communication and e-commerce. In addition, we remain committed to sustaining the State of the Town Meeting as an opportunity for the residents to help shape the policy and budget decisions of the Town.

Resident Opinion Survey - We will continue discussions, begun through the CLRP, as to mechanisms required and cost of a regularly administered professional survey of town opinion. Such a survey would provide a new technique for citizen communication.

Board/Committee Coordination – We will continue current activities and look for new ways to expand cross-board and committee communication.

Route 2/Crosby's Corner – We will continue to advocate for state funding for acquisition of all rights of way and full funding for project construction. The current MassHighway schedule anticipates that design and right of way acquisition will be completed in the late fall of 2009 and that the construction contract will be awarded in 2011. However, we will remain vigilant as we know that this project has taken some surprising twists and turns.

**BOARD OF ASSESSORS:** Ellen Meadors (Chair); Edward Morgan, John G. Robinson

**Goals**

- To provide fair and equitable assessments based on true market values
- To meet with citizens and citizen groups to discuss their assessment concerns
- To propose and support tax relief measures for those who need them
- To coordinate with and support other departments, boards, and commissions

- To incorporate new technologies to improve assessments, enhance services and reduce costs.

## **Staff**

Patrice Brennan is the helpful person most people see in the Assessors office. The BOA contracts with Regional Resource Group, Inc. to perform the technical tasks involved with assessing. Bruce Morgan, an employee of RRG, is at the office two days a week. Harald Scheid, President of RRG, deals with the most technical aspects, and with the Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR).

## **Recertification**

Every three years the state DOR conducts a recertification which consists of a detailed review of our assessment methodology and values. At the request of our DOR representative we made substantial revisions to the tables underlying our land and building values. We also did a comprehensive review of our neighborhood classifications and simplified our use of property influences (for example, views and traffic). These changes should improve the consistency and understandability of our values. We received preliminary certification from the state in mid-September.

## **Housing Values**

Despite all the gloomy reports in the news about the collapse of the housing bubble, Lincoln values have been relatively stable. Sales in calendar year 2008 (the basis for the FY 2010 values) showed that prices fell about 6 percent on average from the previous year.

## **Split Tax Rate**

As in the past several years, the Board of Assessors will recommend that the Selectmen adopt a 2-tier tax rate structure that levies higher property taxes against commercial and industrial properties. This practice translates into shift in tax burden; lowering the residential tax rate. New tax rates will be set prior to the issuance of fall tax bills, and are expected to be somewhat higher than the fiscal year 2009 tax rates of \$10.82 per \$1,000 valuation for residential properties, and \$14.21 per \$1,000 for non-residential properties.

## **Billing Delay**

Tax bills will be mailed out later than usual this fall because of the adjustments that need to be made at the Special Town Meeting on October 17, 2009. The abatement period will change accordingly. As always, you have thirty days from the date of the actual tax bill to file an abatement.

## **Deferrals and Exemptions**

Fiscal Year 2009 saw a number of qualified taxpayers seek property tax deferrals. Lincoln's property tax deferral program allows seniors 60 years or older with income below \$60,000 to defer all or part of their annual property taxes. Deferred property taxes and interest at 4% are repaid to the Town when the owner dies or sells the home. Ten property owners took advantage of the property tax deferral in fiscal year 2009.

Our office automatically mails property tax exemption and deferral forms to those who have received such a benefit in the prior year. New applicants can call the office at any time to either receive an application or consult with office staff about the various exemption and deferral programs.

## **Re-inspections**

Each year the Assessors conduct periodic re-inspections of about one-fifth of Lincoln properties. The re-inspection consists of measurement of the outside of the house and a quick walk-through of the inside to verify that the data on the Property Record Card is correct. This process helps keep valuations accurate and up to date. You will receive notification in the mail if your property is planned for re-inspection.

**CONSERVATION COMMISSION:** Jim Meadors and Peter Von Mertens (Co-Chairs);  
Jim Henderson, Joyce Hersh, Ben Horne, Ari Kurtz, Sara Lewis

Wetlands permitting is a significant aspect of the work done by the Conservation Commission and the Conservation Department. Over the past year we have been engaged in reviewing projects that include new homes, additions, vegetation management, septic systems, road repairs and more. Our role is to protect wetland and buffer zone resource areas in Lincoln as authorized by the MA Wetlands Protection Act and our local Wetlands Protection Bylaw. We are again working on the privatized housing redevelopment at Hanscom Air Force Base and by the time of this printing we expect the project to be fully permitted. We want to remind residents that prior to undertaking any building or land clearing activity you need to check to see if the proposed work is located in a resource area protected by our wetlands laws. Conservation Department staff members are very willing to come out to your property and advise you on wetlands regulations and vegetation management issues.

The new Conservation dump truck that the Town approved is very helpful and definitely expanded the capabilities of our land management efforts. Our pickup truck was purchased in 1996 and it will need replacing at some point in coming years. However, given the tight budget constraints we are not submitting any new capital budget items for consideration in FY2011. The Community Preservation Committee's allocation of \$20,300, approved by Town Meeting, for a second consecutive year of invasive plant management on conservation land was quite productive. Our Conservation Ranger, Jane Layton, headed up a seasonal crew of two and they achieved significant improvements on many properties around Town. Our Land Manager, Anna Wilkins, also continued to do extensive outreach and field work on invasives control. This past summer included the first Town-wide garlic mustard pulling day. An Ogden Codman Trust grant was received to fund the second year of hemlock woolly adelgid treatment in the Codman Grove stand of magnificent hemlocks. Hopefully this will provide several years of protection and allow the trees to reinvigorate. About the time you read this we should be prepared to go on a restoration project at the Pierce Park ponds.

Lincoln is fortunate to have considerable protected open space acreage and this land needs ongoing stewardship. A key aspect of this stewardship is the annual monitoring program of all the conservation land owned by the Town and by the Lincoln Land Conservation Trust and the land protected through Conservation Restrictions. This summer the LLCT again hired two seasonal interns to work out of the Conservation office to do this monitoring. This is an intensive effort and we hope this partnership between the Town and the Land Trust continues.

As with all Departments, the tight budget situation has the potential to affect our ability to provide services to the residents of Lincoln. In FY2010 our budget for supplies, maintenance etc. decreased but we should be able to function with no significant drop in services. We had planned to add four additional hours a week to our Conservation Ranger position to go from 20 to 24 hours/week but this did not get approved. Going forward into FY2011 will be difficult if similar decreases need to be made.

A community resource we encourage everyone to use is a web-based Geographic Information System (GIS) that has been in place for just over a year. From your home computer you can access a variety of data layers for the Town, ranging from lot lines to aerial photos to wetlands. Go to [www.mapsonline.net/lincolnma](http://www.mapsonline.net/lincolnma) to access this program. You can also link to it from the Town's website [www.lincolntown.org](http://www.lincolntown.org).

We look forward to doing our best in 2010 and encourage any resident with questions or concerns to contact the Conservation Department at 259-2612.

**COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE:** Bill Stason and Susie Collins (Co-chairs);  
 Craig Donaldson, Pam Gallup, Ken Hurd, Peter Von Mertens, Colin Smith, John Valpey

The mandate of the Community Preservation Committee is to study the needs of the town in consultation with other municipal boards and committees; to solicit input from the town as to its community preservation needs, possibilities, and resources; and to make recommendations to the town for expenditures in four areas of community interest: open space, preservation of historic structures, community housing (defined as low to moderate income housing), and recreation.

Over the last seven years, the committee has recommended, and the town has approved, funding for the following projects:

<b>Project</b>	<b>Amount Allocated</b>
Repairs at the Pierce House	\$316,800
Sunnyside Lane acquisition and construction	\$792,500
Greenridge condominium "buy down"	\$150,000
Funding the Conservation Fund	\$225,585
Repairs and improvements to the Lincoln Library	\$956,750
Update Library's fire suppression system	\$131,542
Construction of archival vault at the Library	\$489,097
Inventory of the Town's historic properties	\$23,250
Model historic preservation restriction easement	\$5,000
Purchase of conservation land	\$600,000
Harrington Row property	\$350,000
Booth property	\$250,000
Tot Lot at Codman Pool	\$50,000
Funding of Affordable Housing Trust	\$1,453,500
Consultant to update the Consolidated Housing Plan	\$12,000
Repairs to historic cemetery monument	\$4,300
Historic records archive and preservation	\$14,645
Historic Town buildings needs assessment	\$25,000
Control invasive species on conservation land	\$51,300
Codman Barn A restoration	\$112,000
Bemis Hall roof replacement	\$150,000
CPC administrative expenses	\$14,000
Fund debt service on borrowing for CPC project	\$395,530
 Total	 \$5,972,799

The goals of the Community Preservation Act coincide closely with Lincoln's Vision Statement: open space, historical legacy, economic diversity, and citizens' convenience. Acquiring open land that comes onto the market, preserving our numerous historical structures, providing affordable housing and ensuring adequate recreation facilities are each priorities under the CPA. To sustain Lincoln's vision, the committee meets with town boards and organizations to develop a comprehensive understanding of the town's present and future needs, priorities, and objectives in the areas of CPA concern. The committee evaluates funding proposals in light of these needs and priorities.

CPA funding has helped create affordable housing, purchase conservation land, and preserve key historic properties. Each of these projects has been determined by the committee and other town boards to be necessary or advisable. They have been funded by a 3% surcharge on our property taxes, which surcharge is then supplemented by a state match. Until 2008, the funds raised by the town surcharge were matched 100% by the state. This year, the state match was decreased to an

estimated 35%. Even at this level of matching, however, savings to the Town are substantial in purchasing key parcels of open space for conservation, the preservation of the town's historic buildings including Town Hall, Bemis Hall, the Library, the Pierce House, and the Codman Community Farms. Moreover, Lincoln still needs more affordable housing. As long as the state match continues at any level, the town can undertake these projects at a reduced cost.

The committee is now reviewing proposals for funding to be considered at the 2010 Town Meeting. In evaluating proposals, it considers the following factors:

- consistency with Lincoln's vision, its housing, open space and recreation plans, and other planning documents that have received town-wide review and input;
- whether the project has the support of relevant town committees or organizations (e.g. Conservation Commission, Recreation Committee, Historic Commission, Housing Commission, etc.);
- the extent to which the project helps to preserve threatened resources or town-owned assets;
- the extent to which the project serves multiple needs and populations or a population that is currently underserved;
- whether the project can realistically be accomplished within the proposed time frame and budget;
- the impact of a delay in initiating this project; and
- the breadth of support for the project as indicated by additional fundraising through grants or private donations.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE:** John Koenig, Chair, Peter Braun, Karl Geiger, Sanj Kharb and, Ellen Meyer Shorb, Laura Sander, Robert Steinbrook

The Finance Committee is charged with advising and making recommendations to Town Meeting on the budget and other areas of finance and administering the reserve fund. The committee seeks to develop an overall budget that is fiscally prudent, that reflects the Town's values, and that meets the needs of residents. It also seeks to obtain broad public understanding and support for the budget that is ultimately recommended at Town Meeting.

Two circumstances which occurred after Town Meeting in March 2009 require that we re-address the current year (FY '10) budget. In setting the FY '10 budget the Finance Committee estimated that state aid would decrease by 10% from FY '09. When the state budget was finally signed, Lincoln's share of state aid decreased by approximately 18%, for a \$175,845 shortfall. The FY '10 budget also assumed an increase in property taxes from the Deaconess Senior Living Community (The Groves) of approximately \$350,000. A delay in outside financing resulted in a cessation of construction on that project in March, 2009. As a result, the value of the built-in improvements at June 30, 2009 was less than projected, resulting in a shortfall of \$269,000 in property tax revenues. At the Special Town Meeting on October 17, the Finance Committee will submit to the town a number of warrant articles to balance the resulting \$444,845 total shortfall.

Lincoln's budget cycle runs from July to June. In the prior and current fiscal years (FY '09 and '10), the Town funded its operating budget without a Proposition 2 ½ override. In September 2009, the time of this writing, it is too early in the budget cycle to know whether the FY '11 operating budget can be funded at a level that provides the desired level of services without a Proposition 2 ½ override. According to the Finance Committee's emergency reserve policy, an amount equal to 3 % of the prior year's operating budget should be set aside as emergency reserves. Currently, the emergency reserves are at this level. As in prior years, the committee will consider budget requests in the context of maintaining adequate reserves.

For 2009-10, the Finance Committee will continue to focus on the financial impact of long-term infrastructure needs. Among the projects that may be proposed for funding in the next several years are expenditures for Town buildings and facilities, conservation land acquisition, and school construction. Such capital expenditures are paid for by issuing bonds, which are typically repaid over

a 10 to 20 year period. They require approval at both Town Meeting and the Town Election. Approved expenditures are debt excluded, which means that they are outside the limits on Town spending imposed by Proposition 2 ½.

The tax payments required to fund large capital projects are substantial. It should be recognized, however, that timely capital expenditures are an important part of maintaining and improving the infrastructure and environment of the Town. In addition, the existing debt service--principal and interest payments on the Town's outstanding loan obligations--is declining. The Finance Committee will work with other boards and committees to coordinate the various projects that may be proposed, to help boards and committees to understand the potential financial impacts of the proposals, and to minimize year-to-year changes in the amount of excluded debt.

The Finance Committee will also focus on the financial situation of the Lincoln-Sudbury Regional School District, for which Lincoln and Sudbury share responsibility. For several years, the committee has been concerned that the regional high school has received inadequate funding to meet the educational needs of students at a time when the enrollment is increasing. The committee will continue to work with the Lincoln-Sudbury Regional School District School Committee, the Sudbury Finance Committee, the Towns of Lincoln and Sudbury, and the K-8 public schools in both towns and advocate for appropriate funding for the high school.

**PLANNING BOARD:** Bryce Wolf (Chair); Robert Domnitz, Ken Hurd, James Craig, Dan Boynton

### **Comprehensive Long Range Plan**

The main news this year is completion of work on the Comprehensive Long Range Plan, which is being presented for approval at the Special Town Meeting. Under Ken Hurd's chairmanship of the CLRP Committee, the work produced by the topic-based subcommittees was discussed, integrated and adjusted for consistency. Key issues were discussed at an All Boards meeting in Bemis Hall in February and an interim report was made to Town Meeting in March. The Selectmen hosted a discussion in June and provided some comments and additional material. The Planning Board's public hearing was held in July and Board members also provided some editorial changes. Prioritization of the recommendations, as summarized in the Implementation section of the Plan, was discussed in the summer while the consultants, Community Opportunities Group, worked on the layout of the Plan document. The Board's staff has provided useful support with coordination and documentation of discussions.

Assuming the Plan is approved, there will be follow-on work for many Town boards and departments to implement its recommendations. For the Planning Board, the main items are likely to be a development study focusing on the area around Lincoln Station, a selective review of the Zoning Bylaw, and expansion of site plan review activity and design guidance materials.

### **Development Review and Permitting**

#### **Activity**

No large developments or multi-house subdivisions have been reviewed in the past year but there has been a steady flow of applications for site plan review of single family houses - two new ones in approved cluster subdivisions and seven partial or complete reconstructions of existing homes. Preliminary discussions are now mandatory in more cases through a change to the zoning bylaw in 2008. This gives the Board an opportunity to guide projects at an early stage, prior to development of detailed plans by the applicant. Height has been an issue in a few cases and the Board has made it clear that it will only allow height to be calculated from 'average natural grade' rather than from the lowest point on the structure if the additional height does not adversely affect the neighborhood (as per the bylaw). The Board has written a policy on exterior lighting which is being issued to applicants as guidance.

Several special permits have been granted for new or renewed wireless communication facilities at established locations, including three for a new service provider, Metro PCS. Progress has been made with requiring shields to be fitted to the aircraft warning lights that exist on some cell towers, to cut off downward light and thereby minimize nuisance to neighbors. Sprint has installed a shield on one of the towers near Crosby's Corner. Another operator filed a court appeal against the requirement but it is hoped that the issue will be resolved.

In June the Board held a joint hearing with the Tree Warden to consider the selective removal of trees on several town roads, proposed in connection with the Town's repaving project and NSTAR's wire maintenance. Most of these trees were in poor condition and there was a sense of a need to catch up with cyclical management. The Board granted scenic road approval for the majority of the trees but withheld it for some that it felt merited protection. A hearing into a proposed addition to the First Parish Church on Bedford Road was begun (under the provision for limited site plan review for religious or educational non-profits) but has been continued at the request of the applicant. Other miscellaneous applications to the Board have included a few small-scale subdivision or 'Approval Not Required' plans, signs for businesses at the Lincoln Station mall, house additions and accessory structures.

### **Procedural guidance and records**

The Land Use Permitting Guide was developed in 2007 to give guidance on permitting procedures by all town departments and is updated annually. Prospective applicants needing coordinated advice are directed to the Town Planner. Most forms are available on the website. Our Administrative Assistant developed and maintains a database for tracking applications to the Planning Board, which is available to other departments and which generates reports for the Board and for the Town Clerk. She is involved in discussions on increasing the level of data linkage between departments. The need for storage of paper records (including plans) continues to expand, however, and is creating problems which are hard to overcome without an investment in more space or in electronic storage and retrieval.

### **An upcoming issue: green technology**

The Board previously discussed how permitting applies to green energy technology facilities, thinking primarily of householder equipment. So far it has not taken any action to change or clarify the interpretation of the zoning bylaws that apply. The Green Communities Act which was passed by the state has created a set of tests for towns to be designated as Green Communities and thereby qualify for grants. One of the tests relates to permitting for larger green technology facilities. The Board intends to have a discussion later in the year with the Green Energy Technology Committee.

## **Route 2**

Efforts have continued to keep the Crosby's Corner project alive and advancing towards construction, with input from the Town and project neighbors. John Snell and town staff reviewed the 75% plans with the project team in February, putting forward many questions and reminders of commitments on details. John retired from the Planning Board in March but in June Dan Boynton, a Route 2 veteran, was appointed to take his place. Mass Highway and the design engineers gave an update to the neighbors in June and invited them to discuss design details as the 100% plans are finalized. Takings of the properties that are fully needed for the expanded right of way went ahead in June. Despite its advanced stage, the project attracted some discussion at the Boston MPO TIP meetings but it retained its scheduling in the draft FFY 2010-2013 program that went out for public consultation prior to a vote.

## **LINCOLN SCHOOL COMMITTEE'S STATE OF THE TOWN REPORT:**

Julie Dobrow (Chair); Tom Sander, Vice Chair , Jennifer Glass, Rob Orgel, Al Schmertzler

This year the Lincoln School Committee will focus its efforts on overseeing the continuing progress toward our goals of educational excellence, maintaining the excellent fiscal management we have enjoyed the past several years, and ensuring that we attract and retain a highly trained, creative and motivated faculty. Our State of the Town message this year focuses on our collective progress from this past year, and an outline of our goals for the year to come.

### **SUMMARY OF FY 09 ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

#### **Goal Category 1: Curriculum Instruction and Assessment**

This category addresses our central educational mission, refers to our ongoing efforts to extend and strengthen the learning experiences and academic accomplishments of our students.

##### **Highlights:**

- Implemented new mathematics curriculum in grades kindergarten to five and completed a program review with recommendations for new middle school math curriculum for the 2009-2010 school year.
- Increased instructional time in K-5 math classes to support more rigorous learning expectations and to provide the time necessary to deliver quality instruction.
- Redesigned the middle school schedule to increase instructional time in core subjects.
- Implemented foreign language instruction (Spanish) beginning in grade 4 for all students.
- Increased opportunities for advanced learning opportunities for students in all grades and began participation in the Virtual High School Program, which allows middle school students to complete high school classes on-line.
- Completed and posted Lincoln's Learning Expectations for all subjects and all grades on the district's website.
- Established common assessments based on Lincoln's Learning Expectations in most subjects and grades.
- Continued efforts to narrow achievement gaps and to ensure that all students are able to demonstrate proficiency in mathematics and language arts.
- Realigned science curriculum grades K-8 to include earth, physical and life science topics every year.
- Developed plans to expand engineering program to grades 7 and 8.

#### **GOAL CATEGORY 2: TEACHER EXCELLENCE AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

This category refers to ensuring that the Lincoln Public Schools attract and retain top flight teachers and administrators in an increasingly competitive market, and that our faculty continue their own training in best educational practices.

##### **Highlights:**

- Continued efforts to improve teacher evaluation system and procedures.
- Ensured that all professional development activities were aligned with school and district goals and met teachers' own professional goals.
- Completed planned 17 curriculum and professional development projects involving 170 teachers during the summer of 2009. (completed)
- Continued mentoring and induction program for newly hired teachers.

### **GOAL CATEGORY 3: LEADERSHIP AND SCHOOL CULTURE**

This goal refers to the development and maintenance of strong and effective leadership for the district, and to the continuing improvement of a collaborative, supportive and safe environment for learning for all students.

#### Highlights:

- Hosted Education and Leadership for a Nonviolent Age (ELNA) Middle School Leadership Conference with 300 middle school students from 10 school districts participating.
- Completed Responsive Classroom training for approximately 20 teachers to support the district's goal of building a strong and cohesive school culture.
- Began process to redesign the district's website and anticipate a launch on October 15<sup>th</sup>.
- Celebrated the achievement and accomplishments of students in all educational realms – academic, the arts, sports, civic engagement - at community meetings in each school.

### **GOAL CATEGORY 4: FACILITIES, OPERATIONS, HEALTH AND SAFETY**

This category refers to the necessary activities required for the district to be in compliance with both state and federal regulations (such as No Child Left Behind), and also to all those activities necessary to operate the schools in an efficient manner, to improve facilities, and to deliver our educational program (e.g. – contract negotiations, etc.).

#### Highlights:

- Completed technology upgrades and renovated third computer lab at Lincoln School.
- Opened the recently approved Emergency Access Road from the school campus to Sandy Pond Road.
- Submitted Statement of Interest to the Massachusetts School Building Authority to seek resources for possible school building or renovation project.
- Negotiated successor agreement with Secretaries' Union.
- Developed program to improve food service lunch program using more locally grown produce, whole grains and more nutritious food products.
- Finished FY09 with small surplus and allocated funds to offset anticipated FY10 Budget shortfall.

The following are the goals we have established for the coming year for both the School Committee and the district. They were written with key components and activities and a timeline; the district goals were also developed with specific activities for this academic year and outlines of how each goal would be operationalized in two subsequent years in an effort to do some long-term and strategic planning for the district.

### **FY 10 GOALS**

- To expand student assessment tracking project and begin design of a standards based reporting system.
- Focus curriculum development on language arts and literacy programs, K-8.
- Implement *Impact Math* in grades 6-8 and begin Advanced Algebra course for students who are ready for this level of math instruction.
- Implement Engineering program for students in grades 7 and 8 to enhance science and mathematics instruction and to build on their 6<sup>th</sup> grade engineering experience.
- Sustain and develop additional advanced learning opportunities.
- Implement a redesigned Instructional Support Team process to support student learning.

- Begin Action Research Projects focused on narrowing achievement gaps.
- Expand opportunities for teachers to develop skills and strategies to differentiate instruction.
- Sustain professional development in all subjects and with particular focus on elementary mathematics.
- Sustain and expand opportunities for student leadership and begin initiatives in community service learning and civic engagement.
- Sustain and expand all school meetings to affirm achievement, celebrate academic excellence and provide opportunities for student leadership.
- Replace the Reed Field House Roof. (completed)
- Remove asbestos tiles in auditorium wing and surrounding classrooms and replaced vinyl composition tile. (completed)
- Continue efforts to improve school facilities.
- Develop strategies to increase community awareness and involvement in our schools.
- Continue discussions with surrounding communities to seek opportunities for collaboration and resource sharing.
- Continue to work with Hanscom Base leadership to sustain contract with Department of Defense.
- Will implement recommendations from Evaluation of Food Service Program.
- Develop FY11 Budget proposals aligned with district goals and consideration for potential revenue shortfalls.
- Increase instructional time for core subjects in middle school classes. (completed)
- Plan and implement website redesign and improve communication strategies.
- Negotiate with custodians' union for successor labor agreement.

**OFFICE OF TOWN CLERK:** Susan F. Brooks, Town Clerk

Chances are, if you run a home business; or need a special permit to modify your home; or want to license your dog; or seek to avoid door-to-door salesmen, you'll contact the Town Clerk's Office (TCO). If you want to conduct a charitable raffle; or renew your permit to store flammable liquids; or need your child's birth certificate to enroll him in school or obtain a passport; or want to see the terms of the regional school agreement, you'll come to the TCO. And if you need to bury a family member, or have your pre-deployment residency certified for your Welcome Home bonus, or to register to vote, you'll do it through the Office of the Town Clerk.

The TCO, as the Comprehensive Long Range Plan observes, is the portal for information about town government affairs for both residents and other officials. The Office serves as the "real time" historian of certain milestone private events (vital records) and municipal actions (Town Meeting appropriations, by-laws, land use decisions), and creates and maintains a myriad of other official records. In fact, many of the records created by the TCO are what historians regard as "primary source" materials.

**PUBLIC RECORDS**

It is not surprising, then, that the TCO is, under Massachusetts law, responsible for ensuring that the town's system for creating, preserving, and providing access to all (not just TCO's) public records is in good working order. Toward that end we have:

- worked with Ellen Meadors to create an electronic **zoning permit tracking program**, easing administration, automating its many legal deadlines, and facilitating public access to the ZBA decision-making process;
- worked with the Town Administrator's office to move the **Board of Appeals support function** upstairs with the other Land Use boards where it more appropriately belongs, assisting in the hiring and creating an Administrator's Manual for the new assistant;

- with a modest **Community Preservation grant**, overseen the cataloging of Town Clerk records in the town hall vault by professional archivist, Bill Carroll;
- collaborated with the public Library to build a unified **Town Archives** program with an on-going service function, integrating the town's historic cultural, private and public documents into a single inventoried collection, housed at both Town Hall and the re-furbished Library vault;
- organized, again with Ellen M., a monthly **users group** with "record makers" from the land use offices (i.e., the Building Department, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, TCO and Assessors), honing our individual computer skills and developing and deploying inter-departmental (shared) databases;
- with IT Director Chuck Miller and Assistant Town Administrator Anita Scheipers, presented a series of **staff workshops**, identifying existing and best practices concerning the management of public records in each department and focusing on the challenges of moving from a mostly paper to a mostly electronic records management system;
- with the support of the Town Administrator, and as part of the above troika, convened a **Records Management Day** at Town Offices to assess our storage and disposition needs; and
- while the **town hall vault** is nowhere near archival quality, with the support of the Town Administrator's office, made it a clean, safe, orderly space for those public records deemed of permanent value.

## ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

The TCO is also charged under state and federal law with responsibility for the administration of both our local and state elections. With enactment of the "motor voter" law, the Commonwealth has moved to consolidate all voter registration information into a single secure statewide database (**CVR**), where voter activity is recorded and updated year-round by local election officials.

With passage of the Help America Vote Act in 2002, Massachusetts residents (even unregistered ones) are now guaranteed the right to vote absentee in any one of four different ways in any state election; overseas voters are given particular protection under the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA). The presence of Hanscom AFB and the relatively high incidence of students and residents living abroad means that high turnout elections can generate an inordinate number of **Absentee Voters** (AVs) in Lincoln, as was the case in last year's Presidential (550+ AVs) and perhaps this year's Special Election. Compliance with UOCAVA is rigorously enforced.

The TCO is likewise responsible for the conduct of local elections, administering the oath to and tracking terms of all local officials, and ensuring and tracking compliance with Massachusetts **Campaign Finance, Open Meeting, and Conflict of Interest** law. Significant revisions to the Conflict law became effective last month; additional revisions to Campaign Finance and Open Meeting law will go into effect next July 1. Twenty-five pieces of election legislation are currently pending at the State House; two of them call for random audits of all state elections.

Justly proud of the town's still hearty **volunteer election workforce**, we need nonetheless to continually refine our election practices to accord with this growing and increasingly complex body of election law. Toward that end we have:

- computerized the **scheduling of our election workers**, which is now managed electronically;
- created, with the support of the Moderator and the Town Administrator, bi-annual **Induction events**, featuring in-person briefings on Open Meeting, Public Records and Conflict law for new officials (Not to mention fabulous refreshments!);

- developed and conducted, with Lynn Spaeth, an **election milestones civic education project** for fifth grade Girl Scouts;
- sponsored with the Board of Registrars of Voter a **workshop** by (Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth) Elections Division General Counsel, Michelle Tassinari, attended by over 45 election workers;
- recruited eligible LSRHS **students as election workers**;
- with the support of the Board of Registrars, recruited and trained a cadre of Election Officers as **Deputy Wardens**; and
- begun, again with Ellen M., to develop an **OathMaster** database which could ultimately provide real-time information on all local offices (names of current and past members, contact information, terms of office, etc.) and serve, inter alia, as an electronic registry for customized volunteer inquiries, matching times, interests, etc. with present or potential openings.

Preparation and follow-up to each state election generally commands from 6-8 weeks of the TCO's attention. Over the next six months, the TCO will record and process two Town Meetings, and will conduct three elections, with two more in the fall.

The TCO is obliged by statute and local by-law to keep, and does keep, many other balls in the air, not the least of which is its work with the Cemetery Commission and DPW in administering Lincoln's four cemeteries. But the TCO's core functions in Public Records management and Election Administration outlined above are the most timely as we begin building next year's budget.

## CONTENT and TECHNOLOGY

The Comprehensive Long Range Plan reveals a great appetite by residents for more, better, faster communication with and among town officials about town business. And the Information Technology initiative, which will be presented as part of the FY 11 proposed budget, presents a great opportunity to advance that yearning for greater openness and participation. But as the town contemplates a long deferred investment in its Information Technology, a corresponding investment in the human resources needed to create content for that information system is crucial to its success.

If the town's intent is to provide better information, not just more technology, attention will also have to be paid to those "content creators." We will need, in other words, to balance our Information Expectations with the staff resources necessary to meet them. This will mean assessing and, where necessary, enhancing the capacity of those departments charged with creating and maintaining certain types of information. It will mean providing adequate staff support through an on-site or remote Help Desk or perhaps with some variation on the existing User Group mentoring program. And it will mean that we will need to continue to pay close attention to our Public Records obligations as we transition from a paper based to a more robust electronic records management system.

**WATER DEPARTMENT:** Gregory A. Woods, Superintendent

### **Treatment Plant Retrofit**

The filter replacement project at the micro-filtration plant continues to make progress toward completion. The manufacturer, Siemens Water Technologies Corporation, will be replacing the 240 filter cartridges and will oversee piping and programming changes associated with the filter's chemical cleaning process. Work is anticipated to start in October and be completed by the end of November, 2009. There will be no interruption of service to Lincoln water customers.

## **Water Management Act Permit**

Lincoln's Water Management Act (WMA) permit, as well as all other WMA permits in the Charles River watershed, has not yet been issued by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MaDEP). The Water Department anticipates the MaDEP will finalize the permits this Fall. The new permit will include stricter water conservation guidelines and a compliance time line for achieving those conservation benchmarks.

**ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS:** John Kimball (Chair); Steve Daigle, Joel Freedman, Jeff Macklin, Win Quayle (full members); Margaret Olson, Megan Stride, David Sumner (associate members)

This statement provides some detail on the role and functioning of the Zoning Board. The principal function of the Board is to apply the Zoning Bylaw to construction projects on nonconforming structures, that is, on structures on lots that do not comply with current two acre zoning, and on structures that do not comply with current setback requirements and the like. This covers about 1/3 of the residential lots in town. The Zoning Act requires the owner to obtain a special permit from the Board for such construction projects, and requires the Board, before issuing such a permit, to determine, among other things, that the proposed structure will not be "substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the prior existing nonconforming structure." This standard focuses on the degree of the existing and proposed nonconformities in the context of the neighborhood. The Board must determine whether the proposed structure extends further into a setback area, and whether the structure would be too large, or otherwise incompatible with the neighborhood. If so, the owner must redesign his proposal to satisfy the Board, sometimes several times. The Board may weigh various factors, and may require screening or conditions to mitigate the effect of the change. When an owner proposes to "tear down" a nonconforming structure and reconstruct another one, the Board requires that the existing structure be used in the proposed structure. If the owner demonstrates, through engineers' opinions, that this is not feasible because the existing structure is extremely unsafe or unsound, the Board may allow a complete teardown, and reconstruction overlapping the existing location.

The Board coordinates its reviews with the Planning Board, the Conservation Commission, the Historical Commission, the Historic District Commission, and other Town boards, but generally the Board does not attempt to replicate the very different roles of those other Boards. Zoning has been in effect for many years in Massachusetts, and the Zoning Board's role is circumscribed by many rules protecting various parties in interest, including both owners and neighbors. The legal textbook covering zoning law in Massachusetts is an inch and a half thick. The Planning Board has different functions under the Zoning Act, and other Boards' roles are established under laws that are generally less detailed than the Zoning Act.

Another important function of the Zoning Board is to decide appeals by persons aggrieved by decisions of the Building Inspector, who is charged by statute with enforcement of the Zoning Bylaw and the decisions of various Boards. These appeals often involve disputes among neighbors. In addition, the Zoning Board is responsible for issuing special permits for accessory apartments, for nonresidential activities in residential zones, and for activities in the business districts. There are now about 65 accessory apartment permits in effect, most of them now for a term of 7 years. In rare cases, the Board is also allowed to grant variances from the dimensional requirements of the Zoning Bylaw, and the Board also considers applications by wireless companies for variances from the cell tower requirements of the bylaw.

The Board has a full complement of members (five full and three associate members). Each hearing requires a panel of 5 members, and 4 of the 5 must concur in any affirmative decision. The Board has acted on about 30 cases a year in the last few years. We continue to rely on the able assistance of our part time clerk, Dorothy Blakeley.