



# CITY OF CONCORD

## REPORT TO THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** Thomas J. Aspell, Jr., City Manager

**DATE:** January 14, 2022

**SUBJECT:** 2020 – 2021 City Council Priorities

### **Recommendation**

Accept this report as to the current status of the City Council priorities established on February 18, 2020.

### **Background**

Members of the City Council met on February 18, 2020 to discuss and set priorities for the remainder of Calendar Year 2020, as well as for Calendar Year 2021.

### **Discussion**

Listed below, in ranked order, are the accepted priorities, projects and ongoing initiatives; and their respective statuses as of December 31, 2021.

#### **GOAL 1. BALANCED BUDGET ISSUES: FY 2021 and 2022**

##### **a) Collective Bargaining/Contract Issues**

**Status:** The City is currently under a collective bargaining agreement with all of its unions. The City's six unions now feature high deductible health insurance plans as the premium driver.

##### **b) Health Insurance Costs**

**Status:** The City received a renewal rate of 3% from Harvard Pilgrim for FY 2022. The City's FY 2023 Not-to-Exceed (NTE) number is 14.9%, driven by high cost claimants and the impact of COVID on the industry as a whole. The City will work with its consultant and Harvard Pilgrim to secure a renewal that is lower than the NTE amount.

##### **c) Capital Financing Alternatives/Storm Water Utility**

**Status:** The Engineering Division, with consultants from Tighe & Bond, gave a presentation to the Fiscal Policy Advisory Committee on their evaluation of the City's potential creation of a storm water utility fund. The committee recommended staff return in the fall of 2020 after conducting public outreach and meetings with

stakeholders in the community. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this project has been put on hold until such time as in-person community meetings can occur safely.

## **GOAL 2. COMMUNITY-WIDE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES TO EXPAND TAX BASE**

### **a) Employment Security**

**Status:** On November 4, 2020, John J. Flatley Company submitted a proposal to acquire and redevelop the property. This led to the parties entering into a Letter of Intent on January 8, 2021. On May 10, 2021, the City Council approved Resolution #9375, which authorized the City Manager to enter into a Purchase and Sales Agreement with the John J. Flatley Company concerning sale and redevelopment of the premises. The Purchase and Sales Agreement was executed on May 17, 2021. On September 13, 2021, the City Council approved Resolution #9402, which authorized the City Manager to enter into Purchase and Sales Agreement Amendment #1 with the Developer concerning additional asbestos containing materials discovered at the property. Under the agreement, the City shall abate certain asbestos containing materials located on the interior of the building at the property prior to closing. The City's budget for interior abatement is \$400,000, 50% of which is being provided by a Brownfields Grant from the NH Department of Environmental Services. The Developer shall abate all exterior asbestos-containing materials on the building once it takes ownership of the property. To support this effort, the City shall provide the Developer with a \$150,000 payment at the time of closing to support the Developer's abatement efforts. The \$150,000 payment is funded by contributions from Nobis Engineering and Beazley Services USA. The City's asbestos abatement project was substantially complete on December 22, 2021. Closing with the Developer is tentatively scheduled for March 31, 2022. Construction of the Developer's project will commence immediately thereafter. The Developer's project will be completed in summer 2023.

### **b) Opportunity Corridor**

**Status:** Storrs Street North Extension (CIP #18): Discussions are ongoing with Pan Am railways and the NH Department of Transportation (NHDOT) concerning this project. The project was included in the FY 2021 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) as an "asterisked" project; meaning that it was not appropriated as part of the FY 2021 budget adoption process. City Administration will bring forward the required resolutions to advance this project once negotiations with Pan Am and NHDOT are concluded.

Dakota Partners, an affordable housing developer, secured Planning Board approval on July 21, 2021, for a mixed-use development at the Langdon Avenue/South End Marsh property. The project will add 192 units of housing, along with office space.

### **c) Exit 17/Whitney Road**

**Status:** On July 13, 2020, the City Council passed Resolution #9302, which appropriated the sum of \$456,000 of General Fund supported bonds and notes to design and permit a roundabout as part of CIP #30, Hoit Road (US Route 4)/Whitney Road Intersection Improvement Project. The City Council subsequently directed City Administration to enter into negotiations with Interchange Development LLC, concerning a public-private partnership to facilitate development of a proposed regional

shopping center and associated improvements to the Hoit Road/Whitney Road intersection. Phase I of the proposed development will include a 13,500 SF NH Liquor and Wine Outlet and an 80,000 SF Market Basket supermarket, with potential for a 20,000 SF attached retail tenant.

On December 16, 2020, Interchange Development LLC secured conditional Planning Board condominium subdivision and site plan approvals for their proposed development.

On April 12, 2021, the City Council approved Resolution #9360, which authorized the City Manager to enter into a Development Agreement between the City and Interchange Development concerning design, permitting, and construction of CIP #30 Hoit Road/Whitney Road Intersection Improvement Project. On April 12, 2021, the City Council approved Resolution #9362 and #9363, which amended the Penacook Village Tax Increment Finance District Development Program and Financing Plan concerning CIP #30 and the Developer's project, and appropriated \$4.78 million to construct improvements to Hoit Road and Whitney Road related thereto.

On May 11, 2021, the City received bids for construction of CIP #30. The low bidder was F.L. Merrill Construction, Inc. of Pembroke, New Hampshire, with a bid of \$3,795,485. F.L. Merrill was engaged on July 9, 2021; however, construction was delayed pending receipt of Alteration of Terrain ("AoT") and Driveway Permits from the State of New Hampshire. The AoT Permit was received on August 16, 2021. The Driveway Permits were received on September 16, 2021. Physical construction of the public improvements began in late September 2021. The small roundabout located at the intersection of Whitney Road, Concord Crossing, and Merchants Way was base paved on November 23, 2021. Per F.L. Merrill's comprehensive project schedule, dated October 14, 2021, the City's roadway improvements are scheduled to be completed on September 5, 2022.

Construction of the 80,000 SF Demoulas Supermarket and associated attached retail tenant, as well as the State of New Hampshire Liquor and Wine Outlet, began in spring 2021.

The Liquor and Wine Outlet is slated for substantial completion in early 2022. The Demoulas Supermarket will be completed in late spring/early summer of 2022.

A Wendy's Restaurant was recently approved by the Planning Board for the site. Construction is expected in spring/summer 2022. The Developer reports receiving strong interest from other potential tenants for the property.

**d) Exit 13**

**Status:** The developer has submitted a comprehensive development plan for Planning Board review. The project, as currently presented, would include multifamily residential, assisted living, townhomes and retail.

**e) Housing**

**Status:** Prior to the economic impact of COVID-19, new market rate housing construction was proceeding at a steady pace. New single-family homes in Concord were selling for \$350,000-\$400,000 in the active developments in the north Concord and

Penacook areas. Since the State's gradual re-opening, the City has not observed any significant drop-off in terms of housing transaction volume or price point.

In terms of multifamily housing construction, Phase 1 of the Penacook Landing project (34 units) located at 33 Canal Street was completed in October 2020 and is fully occupied. Phase 2 will feature 20 housing units, two of which shall be market rate.

In the fall of 2020, Caleb was awarded \$324,827 of tax credits from the NH Housing Finance Authority for Phase 2 of the Penacook Landing Project. However, this allocation of credits was insufficient to finance the project and Phase 2 did not move forward at that time.

In October 2021, Caleb was awarded \$467,844 in tax credits from the NH Housing Finance Authority for Phase 2 of the Penacook Landing Project. When monetized, the credits will generate approximately \$3.6 million of funding to finance the project. The estimated total development cost of Phase 2 is \$4.8 million. Construction of Phase 2 is scheduled to begin in summer 2022 and will take approximately 10 months to complete.

In December 2020, the City closed with CATCH Neighborhood Housing on the sale of the Village Street property, which, in conjunction with other adjacent properties, was developed into a 42-unit housing development featuring affordable and market rate rental units. The project was completed in December 2021.

Dakota Partners, an affordable housing developer, secured Planning Board approval on July 21, 2021 for a mixed-use development at the Langdon Avenue/South End Marsh property. The project will add 192 units of housing, along with office space.

A 123-unit workforce housing development for the eastern end of Pembroke Road was approved by the Planning Board at its December 15, 2021 meeting.

Several other developers are currently completing due diligence for potential market rate multi-family projects in Concord.

#### **f) Integra Drive**

**Status:** At its September meeting, the Planning Board approved the site plan for a 356,000 square foot manufacturing facility. The company, Pitco, will be consolidating operations in Concord and plans to employ around 400 workers. This would be the largest single-building development in Concord since the Steeplegate Mall.

### **GOAL 3. PUBLIC SAFETY WORK**

#### **a) Opioid/Substance Abuse**

**Status:** The Police Department continues to take an aggressive stance in combatting illegal drug issues facing the City. The Department works closely on this effort with stakeholders in the community and throughout the State to include other police agencies, service providers, City Departments and the court system. The Police Department continues its involvement with the Merrimack County Drug Court Initiative. As part of this initiative, the Department has a member assigned to the Drug Court Team. The Team regularly evaluates the status of each individual in the program and makes recommendations based upon the individual's performance. The

Department conducts curfew checks on each participant that resides in the City of Concord.

During the fall of 2019, the Police Department received a grant award in the amount of \$50,000 through the Law Enforcement Opioid Abuse Reduction Initiative (Project Granite Shield). These funds were utilized by the Department to cover overtime costs associated with conducting illegal drug investigations in the City and surrounding towns. The Department also recently received another grant award through the same initiative in the amount of \$55,000. This funding will allow Project Granite Shield initiatives to continue into 2022. The Department will continue these efforts and regularly assess personnel assignments and initiatives to most effectively address illegal drug usage in the city. During 2020, the Department arrested 195 individuals on illegal drug related charges. Additionally, during 2021, another 181 individuals were arrested on illegal drug related charges.

The Department also maintains a prescription drug drop box in the lobby of the police station. This drug drop box allows people to drop off their unused or unwanted prescription medications that otherwise could be available for abuse or unauthorized consumption. During 2020, over 189 pounds of prescription drugs were turned in by members of the community, and an additional 167 pounds of prescription drugs were turned in during 2021. The Department also continues to participate in the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration's National Drug Take Back Days. It should be noted that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department restricted access to the lobby beginning in mid-March of 2020, and thus, prescription drugs have only infrequently been disposed of in the drop box since that time.

The Police Department also works closely with Riverbend's Choices program in helping individuals suffering from drug and other substance abuse issues to find treatment.

The grant funding of the Fire Department for the Project FIRST program expired in September 2021. The grant-funded full-time coordinator resigned in December of 2020 after accepting employment with another agency. Between December of 2020 and September of 2021, a Fire Department Captain performed the coordinator functions as a collateral duty. During this time, the Fire Department offered training to as many current employees as possible on the interaction with and treatment of patients that are suffering the effects of substance abuse. The Deputy Chief of Operations now maintains communication with community stakeholders in the efforts to reduce opioid and substance abuse.

## **b) Community Policing**

**Status:** Prior to the restrictions put in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Police Department was involved in a number of initiatives designed to further its relationship with the community. As part of these initiatives, the Department hosted and participated in several community meetings with multiple organizations throughout the city. When the restrictions were put in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department shifted to virtual meetings with many of these community groups. The Department actively stayed involved with the New American community, and the Department continues to work with the Refugee Advisory Council. The Department also participated in the Multicultural Festival in September of 2021. This event was very successful and had over 2,000 attendees.

The Police Department has participated in several other programs to help promote community interaction with both children and adults. During 2020, with the assistance of several local businesses, the Department hosted two “Coffee with a Cop” events in the city. Additionally, in October 2021, with the assistance of White Mountain Coffee, the Department hosted its most recent “Coffee with a Cop” event. This event was well attended and supported. This highly successful program offers an opportunity for community members to interact with the City’s police officers in a relaxed atmosphere. Officers are available to answer any questions that residents may have and are able to foster a positive collaborative relationship between the Department and the community. The Department also participated in a Family Winter Fun Day held at Keach Park. This event was sponsored by Waypoint, which encouraged families to get out and get together as a community. The Department also participated in the Community Policing Recognition Night sponsored by McDonald’s and the Napoli Group. This event is held throughout the entire State of New Hampshire where McDonald’s restaurants honor community committee officers throughout the state. Additionally, the Department participated in several honor parades throughout the community to recognize birthdays, veterans, and other special events that were hindered due to the pandemic. The Department continues to participate with the Concord Safe Communities Coalition of the National Safety Council of New England. This organization monitors issues and concerns facing the Concord community.

In October 2021, the Police Department took part in a new community initiative called Faith and Blue. This initiative encouraged officers to attend several religious/church events throughout the City. Officers attended services of different denominations and met with the congregation afterwards to socialize and answer police related questions.

The Police Department continues to participate in Rape Aggression Defense (RAD) classes, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in person classes had to be suspended. RAD is a comprehensive self-defense course for women and includes situational awareness, prevention, risk reduction and avoidance, and progresses to the basics of hands-on defense training. The RAD system is dedicated to teaching women defensive concepts and techniques against various types of assault by utilizing easy, effective, and proven self-defense tactics. The system of realistic defense provides women with the knowledge to make an educated decision about resistance. With the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions having been lifted, RAD classes are being planned for the upcoming months. We currently have six certified instructors for the RAD Program.

Due to the unfortunate trend of mass shootings occurring in businesses and schools throughout the country, the Police Department has been offering active shooter training seminars, both in-person and virtually. Since the start of 2021, the Department has participated in seven active shooter trainings with over 225 attendees. Four of these trainings were conducted on a virtual platform. The Department also conducted seven safety presentations for local businesses, visiting nurses, elder care providers, and the New Hampshire Technical Institute, as well as two fraud educational presentations for seniors.

The Police Department continues to successfully utilize its Comfort Dog, Liberty, a two-year old female Labrador retriever. Liberty has been instrumental in interacting with community members and members of the Police Department. She has been deployed to numerous scenes and locations where violent or traumatic events have occurred to help lend relief to those suffering or affected by the incident. Liberty has also engaged those suffering from mental health issues, and has also made appearances at schools,

hospitals and other venues. She has participated in many social and community events throughout the city and has a large following of supporters. Liberty has also assisted during interviews of traumatized children at the Merrimack County Advocacy Center. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, Liberty had to curtail many appearances. In the last several months, however, she has been able to make appearances at more and more events and increase interactions with the public and those who could benefit from her services. Liberty has also been requested to appear at several recent tragic events that have occurred outside of Concord. In 2021, Liberty became an official ambassador of the “Choose Love” movement and went on tour with Choose Love New Hampshire, making several stops around the state to interact with schools and communities.

Since December 2019, the Police Department was very fortunate to receive donations totaling \$100,000 from an anonymous community member. The donor requested that members of the Police Department identify persons and families in need and make monetary disbursements or use the funds to obtain goods and services for the recipients as appropriate. This mission has been known as *Operation Blue Elf*. *Operation Blue Elf* was a community policing success and has continued through 2021.

The Department’s Adverse Childhood Experience Response Team (ACERT) launched in October of 2019. This team is made up of a member of the Concord Police Department, a member from Riverbend Community Mental Health, and a member from Merrimack County Human Services. The team deploys to residences where children have been exposed to violence. At the residences, the team meets with the families and assesses the situation to determine next steps that can be taken for the child, such as support groups, mental health counseling, early childhood education, or child-parent psychotherapy. ACERT made 285 home visits during 2020. However, home visits were put on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The team continued to follow up with families by phone. The team was able to reinstitute home visits in August, but had to suspend them in December once again. During 2020, the team contacted over 505 families either by phone or in person to assist with services that may be needed. Home visits were once again reinitiated in May of 2021, and the team has contacted over 254 families in-person and an additional 400 families by phone to assist with services that may be needed.

The Police Department continued to assist citizens with installing child safety seats into their vehicles. Safety checks were also conducted to ensure that previously installed seats were properly and safely installed.

Police Department staff presented at the IMPACCT (Mastery of Post-Secondary Achievement in College, Careers, and Training) Academy. This group is made up of at-risk kids with disabilities. Presentations covered roles of the police, good decision making, and alcohol and drug prevention.

The Police Department has been working with the Concord Coalition to End Homelessness to assist those that are homeless and trying to find a permanent home. The Department has been actively involved in assisting in cleaning up homeless sites that have been left in disrepair.

In September of 2021, the Department partnered with the NH Food Bank, along with the generous assistance of Hannaford’s, Market Basket, and Shaw’s supermarkets, to collect food and donations for those less fortunate. The Concord Police Department has

been involved in this event, referred to as Stuff a Cruiser, for several years. This event is highly successful and this year benefitted the Salvation Army, Friends of Forgotten Children, and the Concord Food Pantry.

This year, the Department was able to bring back the National Night Out event. The yearly event was held at Rollins Park and is one of Concord's largest community events. During this event, the Department partnered with the National Guard, State Police, NH Fish and Game, and multiple organizations and businesses throughout the city. It is estimated that several thousand people attend this event each year.

The Police Department also hosted its annual Bicycle Auction where many unclaimed found or lost bikes are auctioned off. This allows members of the community to purchase bicycles at a low cost.

In October 2021, Chief Osgood and Lisa Madden, President and CEO of Riverbend, taped an episode of Community Conversations with Concord TV. The group discussed the critical partnership between the Concord Police Department and Riverbend Community Mental Health, and their efforts to improve their collaborative response to those suffering from a mental health crisis.

In December 2021, the Department conducted a toy drive entitled, "Stuff a Cruiser with Toys" during the Christmas Tree lighting ceremony. Citizens donated toys which then benefitted the Friends of Forgotten Children.

The Police Department continued its tradition of participating in the Boys and Girls Club Annual Auction. Officers manned the phone bank and other officers presented auction items for sale.

The Police Department is committed to participating in these types of initiatives and continuing to foster the relationship between the Department and the community. All officers are encouraged to participate in community engagement activities. The success of the Police Department in providing the safest community possible is dependent upon a cooperative effort between the Department and the community as a whole.

c) **Working with School Districts**

**Status:** The Police Department has three officers assigned as School Resource Officers (SRO). Officers are assigned to Concord High School, Merrimack Valley High School, and Merrimack Valley Middle School. Each of these officers is responsible for the safety and security of the schools' campuses, to act as mentors and educators, to be community policing liaisons, and to be problem solvers. The SRO's are also expected to help guide students through personal, educational, and social pressures that are part of being an adolescent.

In the fall of 2021, former Concord High School SRO Brendan Ryder, and current Merrimack Valley Middle School SRO Daniel White, taped an episode of the Talk Concord podcast with the City's Public Information Officer discussing their roles in their respective schools.

During both 2020 and 2021, the Department was extremely active in all of the schools throughout the City to include both public and private schools. The Department currently has seven officers trained in teaching the D.A.R.E. Program. The D.A.R.E.

Program is designed to teach students at an early age the dangers of drug and alcohol use. This program has been widely successful and appreciated throughout the schools. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic shutting down the schools, several of our D.A.R.E. officers video recorded their lesson plans, with the help of Concord TV. Some of these lesson plans were played by the schools through their on-line learning platforms. Currently, D.A.R.E. classes are taught in the Penacook Elementary School and St. John's Regional School. A presentation was conducted before the Concord School Board to bring D.A.R.E. classes back to the Concord schools. The School Board approved the reinstatement of the D.A.R.E. Program and classes will begin in the Concord School District this year.

In January and November of 2021, officers from the Community Resource Unit and Patrol Division met with Concord High School's Criminal Justice Program at their CRTC program to discuss the hiring process and requirements to become a Concord Police Officer. Officers discussed multiple topics to include the police academy, job training, and other job assignments at the Department. Officers also participated in mock interviews for those students interested in following a career in law enforcement.

Since the beginning of 2020, officers have participated in "Police Readers" throughout the schools in the Concord and Merrimack Valley School Districts. Officers went into first and second grade classes where they read the class a book and answered any questions the children might have. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, officers made video recordings of themselves reading books. These videos were then shared with the schools where the videos were played over their on-line learning platforms.

Since the beginning of 2020, members of the Police Department have presented two internet safety talks in the Concord and Merrimack Valley School Districts to help educate students about the dangers of the internet and social media and how to avoid being victimized. Officers provided suggestions to students on how to protect themselves from becoming victims.

The Police Department has assisted the Concord School Board by participating as a member of a task force focused on developing a strategic plan for improving student safety and wellbeing. This task force involves a variety of stakeholders from within the Concord community, and is facilitated by Gerri King, Ph.D., a nationally recognized organizational facilitator.

The Fire Department continues its relationship with the Concord High School CRTC Emergency Services Program. There are 26 students currently enrolled in the program. The program had six students achieve Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) credentials, and four students achieve Firefighter I certification. One student has achieved Advanced EMT (AEMT) certification. At this time, there are five students in the Firefighter I program and there are three students in AEMT class. The Concord Fire Department maintains a close relationship with the students in the program, with several staff members providing mentorship and serving as instructors. The program periodically utilizes the Fire Department training grounds for realistic training opportunities. The Concord Fire Department donates expired and non-serviceable gear and equipment to the program to be used for training purposes. The CRTC is working with Lakes Region Community College to establish a process for students to obtain college credits while attending CRTC.

The Fire Prevention Bureau continues to find innovative ways to reach the community despite the challenges of the COVID environment. School visits for Fire Prevention Week were reinstated in 2021 after being cancelled in 2020 due to COVID. Social distancing and other measures are being utilized to ensure that the fire prevention message can be delivered as safely as possible. The use of social media has been a critical component of this effort.

The Parks and Recreation Department continues to have an excellent working relationship with the Concord School District. Both groups continue to follow the City/School Joint Use Recreation Agreement for all sports. The Concord School District uses the Memorial Field complex for many of their outdoor sports, while the Parks and Recreation Department uses all the elementary school gyms during the winter months. The Department also maintains a good working relationship with the Merrimack Valley School District, as they use Rolfe Park for many of their spring and fall sports.

d) **Recruitment**

**Status:** During both calendar year 2020 and 2021, the Police Department has aggressively worked to recruit staff. Staffing and training continue to be one of the Department's main priorities and will remain so until our agency stabilizes our work force.

During 2020, the Police Department hired 16 new police officers; and during 2021, the Department hired an additional nine new police officers. Currently, the Department has seven officers in field training, with three of those officers scheduled to attend the Police Academy beginning in January 2022. The Department currently has no vacant police officer positions; however, it is anticipated that there will be several retirements occurring in the Department during the first six months of 2022.

All of the above-mentioned police officers that were hired were the result of targeted recruitments. Department staff put in countless hours to identify, meet, and recruit these candidates one on one. We worked to educate them on our hiring process and the transition to become a police officer.

The Department currently has one vacant dispatcher position due to a recent retirement. A hiring process is currently underway and it is anticipated that this position will be filled during the first several months of 2022. Additionally, the Department has recently hired a Fiscal Supervisor who is replacing a Fiscal Technician III position who resigned in July of 2021; and the Department saw the retirement of its long-standing Records Supervisor during September 2021. This individual left with over 35 years of experience. An acting Records Supervisor has been appointed and it is anticipated that this position will be permanently filled in the near future. Filling other vacancies in Records will be a priority following the appointment of the new Records Supervisor.

It is critically important to understand that in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, many of our fellow police agencies have postponed their hiring and recruitments. The Concord Police Department has not stopped efforts with regards to recruitment or hiring. We have found creative ways to connect with applicants and conduct interviews in a responsible and safe manner. We have continued to push forward despite these challenging times. Overall, the Department has hired 35 new employees since the

beginning of 2020, which includes 25 new police officers, five dispatchers, two administrative technicians, one fiscal supervisor, and one fleet mechanic.

The Parking Division continues to recruit for Parking Officer and Equipment Technicians (POETs) in accordance with the staffing changes set forth in Ordinance #3098, as approved by City Council on July 12, 2021. Of the seven POET positions in the organization, five were funded in FY 2022. At the start of FY 2022, only three of the five positions were filled. Currently, four of the five funded positions are staffed and recruitment is ongoing for the remaining funded vacancy. The current vacancy, as well as the two other unfunded positions, are negatively impacting parking enforcement capabilities, especially with regard to neighborhood enforcement.

The Fire Department has experienced an unprecedented decline in the number of applicants for open positions. This challenge is not unique to Concord and has been the subject of several recent news articles across the state. A revised hiring process has expedited our ability to hire and on-board new personnel to ensure that we do not lose talented applicants to other organizations. We continue to work with our internal Recruitment and Retention Committee to find ways to attract and retain the best employees.

#### **GOAL 4. PUBLIC INFORMATION, MARKETING, AND COMMUNICATIONS**

##### **a) Overall Economic Development**

**Status:** In 2020, the City worked with the community's restauranteurs to allow for flexibility during the COVID-19 re-opening. Efforts included temporarily waiving requirements for site plan compliance for parking spaces used for outdoor dining in private parking lots, and expanded permitting for outdoor dining on public sidewalks and in public parking spaces. At its October 2020 meeting, City Council authorized the expenditure of \$15,000 to provide financial relief for restaurants in Concord as they prepared themselves for the upcoming winter season in the pandemic. The City Council also renewed its temporary expanded outdoor dining program in 2021.

The City, via the Revolving Loan Fund Program, partnered with Provident Bank and the Capital Regional Development Council on a \$4.1 million financing package to support the construction of a new corporate headquarters for Eastern Analytical, Inc., a Concord-based environmental testing agency and laboratory, to be relocated to 51 Antrim Avenue in the Airport Industrial Park. This undeveloped property has been vacant since the development of the Henniker Street and Antrim Avenue project, approximately 15 years ago. The City's share of the financing package was \$287,000. The project has tangible economic development and financial benefits for the City. Specifically, it will retain a Concord-based employer which has been located in the City for 25 years. The project also retains 32 full-time jobs and will spur the creation of another 3-4 full-time positions in the near future. Lastly, property tax revenues from the new development will be approximately \$43,000-\$55,000 annually. The project recently completed construction.

In February 2021, as part of an overall reorganization of the City's economic development activities, the City Council authorized the creation of a Local Government Management Fellowship (LGMF), in partnership with the International City/County Management Association, to provide much-needed support for a variety of City and

economic development projects, and to assist with staff succession planning. The LGMF began with the City on July 6, 2021, and has since worked on a wide variety of projects.

b) **Concord TV**

**Status:** The City of Concord works closely with Concord TV on a variety of initiatives including informational videos, public service announcements, event promotion and coverage, and monthly podcasts. This partnership remains strong and collaborative. Communications include National Night Out promotions, Fire Department awards and promotion ceremonies, and Stuff a Cruiser with the Concord Police Department.

Concord TV continues to assist the Fire Department with filming its awards and promotional ceremonies, and recently participated in filming live fire training to get footage for a future production. Concord TV's ability to continue to live stream City meetings on YouTube during the return to in-person meetings has been very valuable.

c) **Concord / Merrimack Valley School District**

**Status:** The City has been working with the Concord and Merrimack Valley School Districts to enhance their presence on the City website and added educational resource pages in September 2021. The City and School Districts have been exploring other ways to collaborate; however, the COVID-19 pandemic temporarily suspended some collaborative opportunities and events.

d) **General City Communications: SeeClickFix**

The City transitioned from its current Citizen Request Tracker module to SeeClickFix in late 2020. This new reporting tool launched in January 2021. The City is partnering with SeeClickFix to make it easier than ever for the community to report a concern using either the online request portal or the MyConcordNH app, available on iPhone and Android phones. The MyConcordNH app also features important City services and information, making it easier to stay informed.

## **GOAL 5. WORKING WITH STATE AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENT**

a) **Transportation with NHDOT**

**Status:** The City and NHDOT have worked collaboratively to advance the U.S. Route 4/Whitney Road intersection improvement project. Construction began in late July.

The NHDOT also supported including additional funding in the State's 10 Year Plan to fund widening of the Loudon Road bridge to allow for the inclusion of a 14' multi-use path and a 6' sidewalk on the structure.

In December 2021, senior NHDOT and City staff met to review the status of the I-93 Bow-Concord project and discuss alternatives for Concord.

b) **Department of Justice / Garages**

**Status:** The General Court of New Hampshire, in coordination with the NH Department of Administrative Services, sought proposals for the preliminary study of constructing a new office building to house the New Hampshire Department of Justice,

certain Legislative space, and a new parking garage. The work was scheduled to be undertaken in the fall of 2019 and deliverables completed by calendar year end. The City now understands that this project has been tabled in light of the anticipated financial impact on the State from the COVID-19 shutdown.

c) **Stickney Avenue**

**Status:** On June 30, 2020, the NH Department of Transportation (NHDOT) informed the City that it was listing the property for sale. In accordance with RSA 4:39-c:1, the City has a right of first refusal to acquire the property.

On October 21, 2020, the NHDOT notified the City that its bid process had concluded and that one offer to purchase the property, in the amount of \$1 million, was received from Brady Sullivan. Brady Sullivan indicated that it would redevelop the property for “residential” purposes, but provided no specific details to the NHDOT or the City.

In its October 21, 2020 notice, the State also inquired as to whether the City would have interest in matching the bidder’s offer.

On December 14, 2020, the City Council approved Resolution #9336, which authorized the City Manager to enter into negotiations with the NHDOT concerning a Purchase and Sales Agreement to acquire the former NHDOT Maintenance Facility located at 11 Stickney Avenue in accordance with RSA 4:36-c:1. The NHDOT, at their request, took the initial lead on drafting the Purchase and Sales Agreement. The initial draft was received on February 15, 2021.

Negotiations continued during March, April and May; and various drafts of a Purchase and Sales Agreement were exchanged between the parties. On May 21, 2021, the NHDOT informed the City that they were terminating negotiations, as they had entered into a Purchase and Sales Agreement with Brady Sullivan. Brady Sullivan has closed in escrow with the State of New Hampshire, pending completion of the development permitting process.

At its November 2021 meeting, City Council tabled a request from Brady Sullivan to discontinue the public right of way in a portion of Stickney Avenue.

## **GOAL 6. ENHANCED COMMUNITY EVENTS/ARTS**

a) **Promote Community Events with Community Partners**

**Status:** With greater vaccination numbers, more events are starting to re-materialize. In August, Concord hosted Market Days, and the Capital Arts Fest was held in September.

The Parks and Recreation Department continues to work with community partners to host events around the city. Despite COVID19, the Department held the regular free outdoor community summer concerts in 2020 and 2021. Many private special events were canceled in 2020; however, most returned beginning in the spring of 2021. This year, the City parks hosted the Concord Arts Market, National Night Out, the Annual Bike Race Around White Park, the Multi-Cultural Festival, and several more special events. The New England Patriots Alumni Club brought back its free football clinic and the Department also hosted several large sporting events that attracted teams from all

over New England. Department staff also worked with Intown Concord, Friends of White Park and the Concord Public Library to co-sponsor several events for fall and winter 2021/2022.

Working with the Friends of the Audi, the City reopened the Audi in September 2021. The majority of renters and events have returned and a full schedule is currently booked for the 2021/2022 season.

## **GOAL 7. SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES**

### **a) Form Based Code**

**Status:** Community Development staff and City legal counsel met regularly to ensure that the document, which will have significant consequences for the future of our community, has the essential fundamentals to ensure compliance and defensibility. The comprehensive legal review of the current Phase 1 draft has now been completed. Staff hopes to present the revised draft to the community, Planning Board, and City Council in the first half of 2022, while concurrently working on Phase 2. The goal would be to present both phases to City Council for formal adoption in the fall of 2022.

### **b) Street Light Re-lamping**

**Status:** It is anticipated that the City's LED Street Light Re-lamping Project will be completed in January 2022. Unitil received approval from the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) to expand their on-bill financing program to accommodate a higher amount than currently allowed for the City of Concord. The City Council held a public hearing and approved the LED Street Light Re-lamping Project at its January 2021 meeting. The City awarded a contract for this project to RealTerm Energy. RealTerm has been working since November 2021 on the LED streetlight installation and, as of the end of December, approximately 1,800 of the anticipated 2,100 street lights have been replaced. Unitil is currently in the process of completing the 2021 Lighting Incentive application with the PUC. The City anticipates that it will start to realize the billing savings and on-bill financing charges on its April 2022 electricity bills from Unitil.

### **c) Renewable Energy & Conservation**

**Status:** The City of Concord and Revision Energy have abandoned discussions on a renewable solar energy project on City property.

The City plans to enter into a net metering agreement with Briar Hydro to provide for a term of 18 years, which is anticipated to produce a net metering credit payment to the City of Concord of approximately \$1.8 million over the term, or approximately \$100,000 annually. This amount will fluctuate over the years and is based on 15% of the revenue generated by Briar Hydro from net metering for the approximately nine million kilowatt hours of electricity under agreement.

A detailed report regarding the Briar Hydro agreement was provided to the City Council at its December 13, 2021 regular City Council meeting.

**d) Recycling**

**Status:** The General Services Department worked with property management firms and condominium associations to address significant contamination in the multi-family recycling stream, making changes to programs as needed. Some multi-family properties have suspended recycling programs as a means by which to address persistent contamination. Others have opted for dumpster modifications that prevent large items from being deposited in the dumpsters.

**GOAL 8. RECREATION AND PARKS****a) Athletic Fields**

**Status:** The Parks and Recreation Department coordinates the reservations and maintenance of the City's parks and athletic fields. During the course of the year, the following fields are maintained and reserved for numerous user groups: four baseball fields, three lacrosse fields, seven softball fields, two flag football fields, two football fields, one field hockey field, and 19 soccer fields.

Parks and Recreation staff worked with the three high schools, and youth and adult leagues, to ensure a successful 2021 season. As of the end of March 2021, all regular spring and fall sports resumed, following all State COVID guidelines. Youth participation levels for the Department's fall sports season was the highest it's been in five years.

During the spring and summer of 2021, the Department hosted several softball, soccer and baseball tournaments which attracted teams from all over New England and the State of New York.

During January through March 2021, the Department managed to have the two outdoor ice-skating ponds (White Park and Beaver Meadow) open for 40 days (the highest number of days in many years). Community use of the outdoor skating areas and the cross-country ski trails at Beaver Meadow was extremely high.

**b) Citywide Community Center**

The Citywide Community Center has remained open during the pandemic, while following all COVID guidelines. The Parks and Recreation Department offered summer camps during the summers of 2020 and 2021, and continued offering programs and classes during the fall and winter of 2020 and 2021. Department staff managed to rearrange class times to ensure good cleaning of the facility. Since early February 2021, the Department has seen a steady increase in participation in all program age groups, from youth to adult programs. Registered participant levels have been at pre-COVID numbers for programs since March 2021.

The Heights Branch of the Concord Public Library reopened in June 2021 and is open on Wednesdays from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM, and Saturdays from 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM. In January 2022, the Heights Branch Library will be adding additional hours.

**c) Terrill Park**

**Status:** The new Master Plan for Terrill Park has been approved and is fully permitted. Phase 1 of the project, completed in the fall of 2020, includes a new upper parking lot, a new dog park, the paved Merrimack River Greenway Trail, and related site improvements. Phase 1 was funded in partnership with the Friends of the Merrimack River Greenway Trail, a grant from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and the City of Concord. The new dog park at Terrill Park is maintained by volunteers from the Pope Memorial SPCA. The Terrill Park Master Plan has several additional phases scheduled in the City's Capital budget.

**d) Merrimack River Greenway Trail (MRGT)**

**Status:** The City is engaged in ongoing discussions with property owners, stakeholders, and potential partners concerning the possible acquisition of private property to support future development of the MRGT. The Parks and Recreation Department is working on the next phase of this project, which will bring the trail from Loudon Road south to the wetland north of Phase 1 of Terrill Park.

In March 2021, the City filed an application for TAP grant funds to support the development of a rail trail on a 1.9-mile section of the Northern Line between Sewalls Falls Road and the Town of Boscawen. Pan Am Systems, owner of the rail line, provided a letter of support for the City's application.

On June 14, 2021, the City Council approved Resolutions #9379 and #9380 concerning the acquisition of a 5.5 acre, 0.5-mile-long portion of the Concord-Claremont Line for the Concord-Lake Sunapee Rail Trail, as well as a 72.5 acre, 5.6-mile-long section of the Northern Rail Line to facilitate CIP #543, the Merrimack River Greenway Trail. Purchase and Sales Agreements were executed with Pan Am Systems on July 7, 2021.

On October 18, 2021, the NH Department of Transportation (NHDOT) invoked the State's Right-of-First-Refusal (ROFR) for the Northern Line, in accordance with RSA 228:60-b. As such, the City's Purchase and Sales Agreement with Pan Am automatically terminated upon the State's enactment of its ROFR. The State enacted its ROFR, as the Northern Line has been designated for a potential future high-speed rail corridor to connect Boston to Montreal. Discussions are ongoing with the NHDOT concerning a potential partnership between the City and the State which would allow the Merrimack River Greenway Trail to move forward while simultaneously protecting the State's interests relative to the high-speed rail corridor.

Following completion of due diligence, the City terminated the Purchase and Sales Agreement for the Concord-Claremont Line on October 25, 2021 due to title concerns.

The City was awarded a Land and Water Conservation Grant to build a section of the trail from Loudon Road south along the river that will ultimately connect with Terrill Park. This section of trail (approx. 4,000 feet) is currently under design and permitting. The LWCF grant does require a 50% match and the Friends of Merrimack River Greenway Trail has indicated they will help raise the required match.

**e) City Trail System**

**Status:** The City's trails continue to be extremely popular and, with their increased use, there is a greater need for maintenance and oversight. The Council approved the creation of a part-time 20-hour/week Trails Ranger position to help address these issues proactively. Melina "Mel" Caron was brought on as the new Trails Ranger. In the fall of 2021, a City Trails Instagram account was created to focus on trail-related content.

**ONGOING INITIATIVE 1. FORMER TANNERY SITE/PARK (CIP #567)**

**Status:** In 2004, the City held a design charrette for the purposes of soliciting public input concerning redevelopment of the former Allied Leather Tannery complex at 23-25 Canal Street. As part of that exercise, the community expressed a strong desire to develop a new public riverfront park at the Tannery property to support future redevelopment of the site, as well as revitalization of Penacook Village.

In 2012, the City acquired additional property at 5-11 Canal Street to support future development of the park. As part of marketing efforts conducted for the Tannery site in 2008 and in 2015, the City commissioned various conceptual site plans for the former Tannery complex, which included a new riverfront park.

In conjunction with the sale of the portion of the Tannery site located at 35 Canal Street to the Caleb Development Corporation for the Penacook Landing housing project in September 2019, the City retained a 1.53-acre parcel with approximately 500 feet of frontage on the Contoocook River, located at 11 Canal Street, for the future riverfront park.

The current park concept plan was commissioned by the City in 2015 and had an estimated total cost of \$950,000. The concept included full reconstruction and expansion of the Canal Street Public Parking Lot. Adjusting for inflation, the estimated total cost of the project is \$1.35 million. It is anticipated that the total cost of the park will be supported by the Penacook Village Tax Increment Finance (PVTIF) District, recreational impact fees, and grants. The Parking Fund may also support reconstruction and expansion of the Canal Street Municipal Parking Lot, which is included in the project scope.

On April 12, 2021, the City Council approved Resolution #9362, which amended the Penacook Village Tax Increment Finance District's Development Program and Financing Plan to include the new riverfront park.

The project is included in the City's Capital Improvement Program as CIP #567. The FY 2022 budget appropriated \$110,000 of Recreation Impact Fees to design and permit the new riverfront park. On November 5, 2021, a request for qualifications was issued to engage a design team for the project. Responses from design teams were received on December 10, 2021. Interviews are tentatively scheduled for the week of January 17, 2022. Construction is tentatively programmed in the FY 2023 CIP budget.

**ON-GOING INITIATIVE 2. ENHANCED NEIGHBORHOOD STREET PROGRAMS**

**Status:** The FY 2021 Paving Project was completed by GMI Asphalt as of November 19, 2021. The FY 2022 Paving Project opened for bid on December 14, 2021. Continental Paving, Inc. was the low bidder, within budget, and has been awarded the contract. The project will start as soon as practical in late March or early April.