



June 7, 2020

Michael Lawson, Chair, Concord Select Board
Linda Escobedo, Clerk, Concord Select Board
Jane Hotchkiss, Terri Ackerman and Susan Bates, Members, Concord Select Board
Stephen Crane, Town Manager

Subject: Pause of Discretionary Capital Projects including Gerow Land

Dear Mr. Lawson, Mr. Crane and Members of the Concord Select Board

The League of Women Voters of Concord-Carlisle spoke at the 2019 Annual Town Meeting urging the Town to establish a collaborative and comprehensive fiscal planning process for long term capital spending. This process would evaluate and prioritize Town and School projects and spending over time to minimize peaks and mitigate the financial impact of capital projects on taxpayers. The need for this approach is all the more evident in light of the current situation. We write now, as we are experiencing a life-changing pandemic, to express our concern about the Town's financial capacity in a time of fiscal uncertainty for the Town, the State, our residents and our business community. Indeed, it is not only fiscal uncertainty; it is likely that the pandemic will change our lives in ways we cannot begin to predict and this change may alter the needs of our Town.

The Middle School Building Committee has taken the lead by voting to pause the Middle School Building project. We suggest a similar pause with other discretionary Town capital projects. A prime example is the Gerow project, which has evolved over the past two years in ways which may have addressed the pre-pandemic interests of many Town residents. However, it is no longer clear that the latest iteration of this project (as presented at the May 14 Select Board and the May 20 Natural Resources Commission meetings) deserves priority at this time or that the current scope of the project is still appropriate

The League is not taking a position on the scope of the Gerow project or its desirability. Rather, we would welcome further public discussion of the short and long-term financial impact and operational costs associated with the project. Moreover, we need to determine where this project stands in respect to other capital projects and the financial situation of the Town and its needs. And until this analysis can occur, we would suggest delaying the early August bidding of Phase 1A.

Similarly, we ask that you consider pausing or delaying other discretionary capital projects until the short and long-term financial impact of the pandemic on our Town and its residents is better understood.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Julie Rohwein
President
League of Women Voters of Concord-Carlisle