

SELECT BOARD

Five members, elected by the voters at-large to overlapping 3-year terms: Jill I. Hai, Chair, Douglas M. Lucente, Vice-Chair, Joseph N. Pato, Suzanne E. Barry, and Mark D. Sandeen. In March 2022, Mr. Pato and Ms. Barry were re-elected to three-year terms.

While FY2022 continued many of the challenges faced since FY2020, there was a resumption of some pre-pandemic activity, and some significant new activity, including the launch of the Center Streetscape Project and the initial deployment of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. The State of Emergency in the Commonwealth due to the outbreak of COVID-19, which was issued on March 10, 2020 was continued again, through July 15, 2022. Special Town Meeting in the fall of 2021 and the Annual Town Meeting in spring of 2022 were both held virtually. Public meetings continued in a virtual format, accessible by the public using the application Zoom, though some committees chose to begin meeting in person. Town Celebrations and events began to resume, following the lifting of the State of Emergency at the end of FY 21. A full Veterans' Day parade and celebration was held and widely enjoyed. All municipal buildings re-opened to the public. The Town continued to monitor each building for safe and continued operations and services to residents. Initial ARPA funds were used to further the health and safety of the community, and to improve the economic situation of our local businesses and non-profits through direct grant assistance.

The Select Board held its biannual goal setting retreat, establishing five goals for the coming years: Community Compass, Livable Lexington, Quality Services, Fiscal Stewardship and Thriving Local Economy. The full report can be found at <https://www.lexingtonma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/4497/Select-Board-Goals-FY2022---FY2023>. These goals continue to guide the work of the Board as FY22 comes to a close.

Select Board Priorities for American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Spending

The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) was passed by the federal government to support communities across the country in responding to and recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic. Federal funds from ARPA are intended to address the negative health and economic impacts caused by the pandemic. Lexington is receiving \$9,903,381 in ARPA funding. The allocation for Lexington, which is distributed through the Massachusetts Department of Revenue, is based on the Town population.

ARPA funding must be obligated by the end of 2024 and fully expended by the end of 2026. The federal government has outlined the primary objectives for the use of these funds:

- Support urgent COVID-19 response efforts to continue to decrease spread of the virus and bring the pandemic under control

- Replace lost revenue for eligible state, local, territorial, and Tribal governments to strengthen support for vital public services and help retain jobs
- Support immediate economic stabilization for households and businesses
- Address systemic public health and economic challenges that have contributed to the unequal impact of the pandemic.
- Provide premium pay for essential workers - offering additional support to those who have and will bear the greatest health risks because of their service in critical infrastructure sectors
- Invest in water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure - making necessary investments to improve access to clean drinking water, support vital wastewater and stormwater infrastructure, and to expand access to broadband internet:

The federal government specifically noted uses of funds that are NOT eligible such as: contributions to Pension Fund; contributions or replenishment of reserves or 'rainy day' funds; direct or indirect application of funds to reduce tax revenues/tax rate; Payments for legal settlements; payments for debt service; general infrastructure spending (above amount identified as lost revenue).

The Select Board set priorities for ARPA spending in the following areas that address the immediate needs of our residents and businesses: housing, food insecurity, public health and safety and economic stimulus and resiliency for our community.

As of June 30, 2022, the Select Board has approved using \$3,156,388 in ARPA funds in the following areas:

- Public Health \$567,200: \$100,000 for ongoing support for the Public Health Office; \$175,000 for community COVID Testing Events; \$25,000 for purchasing of rapid at home tests; \$36,000 six replacement bottle filling stations on the bikeway; \$22,200 AED Devices for the Lexington Police Department; \$24,000 bottle filling stations for Recreation Department; \$160,000 outdoor shelters for programming-Recreation Department; \$25,000 for N95 masks.
- Affordable Housing \$475,000: \$115,000 for design work on the LexHAB Vine Street project; \$315,000 for down payment on affordable housing units; \$20,000 to assist in the development of an Affordable Housing Trust; \$25,000 to assist in the development of the Special Permit Residential By-Law.
- Economic Development \$1,374,000: Grants for small businesses that have been impacted by COVID \$900,000; Grants for cultural (music/arts) organizations that have been impacted by COVID \$50,000; Picnic tables for Center \$24,000; Pop up business incubator \$100,000; Accessibility ramp \$25,000; Visitors Center website \$75,000; Grants for non-profits that have been impacted by COVID \$50,000; Lexington Retailer's Association for Center programming \$50,000; Store back/store front improvement plan \$100,000.
- Human Services \$140,000; mental health clinician services \$90,000; local food insecurity programs \$50,000.

- Salaries \$80,188 for increase in Fire Department overtime due to COVID related illness.
- Participatory Budgeting (PB) \$520,000 - a democratic process through which community members directly decide how to spend public funds, aimed to increase equity and access, foster civic engagement and community spirit, and ensure that public money targets real community needs.

The Select Board will continue to prioritize addressing the urgent needs of the community and will work with the Town Manager to determine how the remainder of the Town's ARPA funds should be allocated.

Fiscal Resiliency

FY22 closed with the Town continuing in a strong financial position. Real-estate tax collections and other revenue sources remain strong. Residential real-estate growth continues, and new commercial projects are progressing on Hartwell Avenue and Hayden Avenue commercial districts. While the Select Board remains committed to avoiding the need for proposition 2½ operating budget overrides, the continuing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the need for major capital investment in obsolete buildings present a continuing challenge for the community.

New Capital Stabilization Funding Framework

In November 2021, the Select Board approved a new Capital Stabilization Funding Framework. In anticipation of the need for a Lexington High School construction project, the largest capital project the Town of Lexington has ever seen, we sought a long-term, financially sustainable funding mechanism to provide dedicated funding for the Capital Stabilization Fund (CSF). This is meant to ensure that larger capital projects and future debt service do not place an unmanageable burden on taxpayers.

The framework recognizes the effort by the Town of Lexington to simultaneously identify and attract opportunities for commercial development and accommodate the substantial need for capital project funding. Rather than having "New Growth," from significant commercial developments be allocated between the Town and School departments via the Revenue Allocation Model, any additional incremental property tax revenue generated from certain new commercial developments shall be dedicated and annually appropriated to the CSF. Projects affected will be commercial developments which:

- Go through the Preliminary Site Development and Use Plan (PSDUP) process and have an approved project Memorandum of Understanding to create a Planned Development District;
- Are developed through the zoning changes approved at the 2020 Special Annual Town Meeting for the Hartwell Avenue area.

Economic Development and Commercial Growth

The Select Board has continued to prioritize economic development and commercial growth in an effort to enhance our commercial tax base, and take advantage of opportunities for growth. With the passage of zoning changes in the Hartwell Avenue/ Bedford Street corridor in both 2020 and 2021, the Town is beginning to see new development projects brought forth.

Commercial growth is not limited to the Hartwell Avenue/ Bedford Street corridor. At Annual Town Meeting 2022, Article 38 passed by a vote of 169-6-2 which proposed changes to the existing zoning and zoning district at 128 Spring Street and 95 Hayden to expand the existing lab / office campus by razing and modernizing existing buildings and adding an additional 314,812 square feet of lab / office space with structured parking. The proposed project brings additional jobs and tax revenue and bolster's Lexington's reputation as a biolab hub.

Tourism remains an important component of our Lexington economy. The Lexington Visitors Center's Official Grand Opening and Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony took place on October 7, 2021. The new Visitors Center is an inviting, inclusive and accessible modern facility which helps to inform visitors and residents with a wide range of interests on where to spend their time while visiting Lexington. Further, at Annual Town Meeting 2022, Article 12n passed by a vote of 167-2-4 which sought \$4,975,000 to fund design, construction and project management for the roadways and intersections around the Lexington Battle Green, known as the Battle Green Streetscape Improvements. This project will allow for any construction to be completed in advance of the 250th Anniversary of the Battle of Lexington in the year 2025. This project includes improvements to the sidewalks and roadway infrastructure with a focus on safety, accessibility and improved connectivity to our tourist attractions.

Town Meeting Use of Virtual Technology

With the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic, most public meetings continued to be held virtually. Both the fall 2021 special town meeting and the 2022 annual town meeting, including two special town meetings held during the spring annual meeting, were successfully conducted as fully remote meetings. Town Meeting members were polled by the Town Meeting Member Association to determine preferences for holding meetings remotely and a large majority favored having remote attendance option for future meetings. Based on that preference, and reflecting on the substantially increased participation rate in remote meetings, the Select Board recommended instituting a permanent remote attendance option. Town Meeting passed Article 3, to amend our bylaws to permanently allow remote participation at town meeting, at the Special Town Meeting 2022-3 by a vote of 166 in favor and 10 opposed with 5 abstaining. This article included a home rule petition to the legislature to request permission to hold these hybrid meetings without statewide emergency legislation as had been provided for since the onset of COVID-19. As of the end of FY22 the amended bylaw has not yet been approved by the Attorney General's Office, as the home rule petition awaits action by the legislature.

Housing Options

One element the Select Board defined as part of its goal to further a “Livable Lexington” was ‘Actively seeking development of affordable and accessible housing’. In furtherance of that goal, in September 2021, the Select Board created the Affordable Housing Trust Study Committee. The committee was charged with creating proposals for both an Affordable Housing Trust and a non-profit Housing or Community Development Corporation. The former can hold and deploy funds from sources beyond municipal funds and the latter would be eligible for participation in community investment tax credit programs. Together, the two-prong approach is aimed to improve the opportunity for and creation of affordable housing in Lexington.

The Select Board’s Special Permit Residential Development (SPRD) Zoning Bylaw Amendment Ad Hoc Committee continued its work to create incentives for creation of more diverse housing stock. The nine- member committee was charged with gathering stakeholder input, reviewing housing data and drafting a statement of values, to inform the drafting of a zoning bylaw amendment and warrant article to either revise or replace the current Special Permit Residential Development Zoning Bylaw. Data, drafts and other documents are all available on the webpage at <https://www.lexingtonma.gov/special-permit-residential-development-zoning-bylaw-amendment-committee-sprd-ad-hoc> and the meetings are available on LexMedia on demand. The committee has begun workshops on target proposals, drafting actual plans and visual representations and has worked to review the proposals with a variety of stakeholders

Center Streetscape and Battle Green Streetscape Projects

The Center Streetscape project broke ground in the spring of 2021 and is focused on: improving pedestrian safety, accommodating bicycle traffic, making sidewalks and crosswalks more accessible and safer for people with disabilities and renewal of the mid-century modern landscape. In the summer and fall of 2021 work was focused on the easterly end of the project near the post office and the Town Office Building. In the spring and summer of 2022, the work shifted more to the west and the core of the center as sidewalks were dug up, a modular suspended planting system was installed to allow for proper tree planting, new lighting was installed and amenities such as benches, bike racks and some trees were planted prior to the drought. Communication with direct abutters and the community continues to take place through a variety of means including: weekly project emails, updates in Town e-newsletters, a dedicated page and updates on the Town’s website, a dedicated email and phone number and direct one on one outreach. It is anticipated that the project will be substantially complete in the Fall of 2022 with a few items being held over to the spring of 2023.

The Battle Green Streetscape project advanced as the Select Board gave their support for a roundabout to be located at the Harrington Road/Bedford Street/Hancock Street intersection. The project was then brought to the 2022 Annual Town Meeting under Article 12n-Appropriate for Municipal Capital Projects and Equipment-Battle Green Streetscape Improvements where it received a vote of 167-2-4 for \$4,975,000 in funding.

It is anticipated the project will start in 2023 and be completed by fall 2024 in anticipation of the 2025 Town Celebration.

Bedford Street/Hartwell Avenue Update

Traffic issues in the Hartwell Avenue corridor are one of the key concerns cited by residents and business owners. 2019 Special Town Meeting appropriated \$1.5 million for the 25% design of the Bedford Street/Hartwell Avenue/Wood Street Corridor. The Town formed a 25% design working group in November 2020, and hired an engineering and planning firm in January 2021 to develop 25% design level plans for complete streets reconstruction that addresses safety, traffic flow and pedestrian, bicycle, transit, and alternative modes of transportation.

The Town's consultant has substantially completed the data collection task, the environmental permitting task, the land use & development build out analysis, and has made significant progress on the transportation analysis, concept development, and public outreach tasks.

The Town's consultant has identified that the roadway capacity will begin to be exceeded at approximately 60% of the "likely" redevelopment as properties within the project area are redeveloped to current zoning limits. The Town's consultant has recommended several options to address this concern. Based on input from the Select Board, the consultant will be revising the build out and traffic analysis to include future residential development. In addition, Town staff and the consultant are coordinating with MassDOT to acquire state funding to expand the study limits to include the I-95 northbound half of the interchange.

The project is expected to culminate in a formal Massachusetts Department of Transportation public hearing targeted for FY24.

Municipal and School Buildings

The Board continues to address the issues of maintaining and improving our municipal and school building infrastructure.

- Lexington High School - With severe overcrowding, outdated building systems, and spaces that do not adequately support the academic program, Lexington High School needs replacement or renovation and expansion. To that end, the Superintendent, with the support of the School Committee and Select Board, submitted a Statement of Interest to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) requesting state support for a future high school building project.

The MSBA invited the Lexington High School Project into the MSBA's eligibility period, which started on June 1, 2022 and will conclude on February 27, 2023. During this time, the Town must complete the preliminary requirements defined by the MSBA.

In April 2022, Lexington Special Town Meeting 2022-2 appropriated \$1,825,000 for a Lexington High School Feasibility Study. Moving forward in the MSBA's process requires collaboration with the MSBA, and an invitation to Feasibility Study will require a further vote of the MSBA Board of Directors.

- The Westview Cemetery Building replacement project was approved at 2020 Annual Town Meeting with an appropriation of \$3,290,000. The initial Westview Cemetery construction bids came in higher than the appropriated amount. As a result, Special Town Meeting 2021-1 approved additional construction funding of \$770,000. The second round of construction bids came in within the updated project budget. The Westview Cemetery Building construction work started in April 2022 and is expected to be complete in early 2023.
- The Lexington Police Station building project is in the construction phase. Special Town Meeting 2022-1 approved an appropriation of \$32,400,000 for the design and construction of a new Police Station building to be located at 1575 Massachusetts Avenue. On June 6, 2022 in a Special Town election, Lexington voters approved a Proposition 2 ½ debt exclusion for the borrowing for the Police Station Project. Town staff expects construction to start in September 2022 and be complete by June 2024. (see more detail below)
- The Select Board and School Committee authorized the installation of 2.6 MW of solar energy systems at Hastings Elementary School, Lexington Children's Place, Diamond Middle School, Clarke Middle School, Harrington Elementary School, Bridge Elementary and Bowman Elementary School. Final interconnection approval from the utility is expected by the end of 2022. When fully operational, the solar installations will enable Hastings School and Lexington Children's Place to be net zero schools. When combined with the Town's previous solar installations, they will generate approximately 64% of the Town's municipal and school electricity.
- 2020 Annual Town Meeting approved \$100K in design funds for the Center Recreation Bathroom complex. At the 2021 Annual Town Meeting, the Select Board recommended indefinite postponement of a warrant article requesting \$915K in construction funding. 2022 Annual Town Meeting approved \$680,000 in construction funds appropriated from the Community Preservation Fund. Town staff expects to open construction bids in September 2022.
- The Old Reservoir Bathhouse renovation project was approved at 2019 Annual Town Meeting with an appropriation of \$610,000. The bathhouse construction bids came in higher than expected and over the appropriated amount. Town staff was in the redesign and rebidding stage for this project as of June 2022.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

The Select Board recognizes that social and racial injustice has deep roots. The Select Board has adopted Diversity, Equity & Inclusion as one of the Town's top priority goals, including a commitment to develop and implement a comprehensive racial equity plan, consider racial and other equity impacts in all decisions and planning processes, and incorporate the goals of Town Meeting's systemic racism resolution in each department's goals and objectives. The Select Board recognizes that accomplishing these goals will require an ongoing staffing and budgetary commitment to continuous improvement.

The Board has made a proactive and ongoing commitment to engage in comprehensive and ongoing community conversations to better understand community needs and to consider diversity, equity, and inclusion in policies and plans, all with the goal of making Lexington a truly safe, equitable, and just community for all.

The following steps were taken toward furthering that goal:

The Town of Lexington hired a Chief Equity Officer (CEO) reporting to the Deputy Town Manager to lead the Town in achieving these goals while prioritizing community engagement.

The CEO has focused on expanding the applicant pool for Town staff positions, with the goal of hiring and retaining staff of diverse backgrounds and identities. The Town has adopted a diversity hiring policy and enhanced the existing hiring process to include an equity lens. The CEO published the results of an employee demographics survey based on race, gender, age, salary and length of service and compared that data to historical hiring trends.

The CEO initiated a series of community engagement and communication programs including:

- Forming the Strategic Equity Advisory Team (SEAT) with representatives from as many communities within Lexington as possible,
- Participating on the COVID-19 Effects on Persons with Disabilities working group, in consultation with the Human Rights Committee and the Commission on Disability, and
- Launching the Coffee with the [Police] Chief program to foster better understanding and communications between the community and the Police Department.
- Created a centralized resource page on the Town website for links to all equity-related resources, discussion, and learning opportunities: [LexingtonMA.gov/DEI](https://lexingtonma.gov/DEI)

The Police Department has completed the implementation of 30 of the 32 policy change recommendations to remove any unintended bias or discriminatory policies presented in Lexington's Town Counsel (Anderson & Kreiger LLP) report on Lexington Police Department policies. The Police Department is in the process of implementing the remaining 2 policy change recommendations. The Police Chief has expressed the department's commitment to implementing the recommendations of the report and to continuous and ongoing improvement in this area.

Police Station Project

The Lexington Police Station, originally built in 1955, became inadequate in both size and condition to serve the needs of the Police Department and Lexington residents. Project planning to replace the building began in 2011. Town Meeting appropriated funding for a feasibility study in 2016, and design in 2018. In the wake of a national debate on policing in 2020, the Select Board paused further funding and design development to allow the Lexington community to have additional comprehensive conversations about the future of policing.

Select Board Members Joe Pato and Doug Lucente presented the “Report on Community Feedback on Police Station Project and Policing in Lexington”. The report was initially presented in two parts. Part one (July 2021) focused on community feedback specific to the construction of a replacement police station. Part two (October 2021) examined feedback focused on how the police operate in Lexington. The report represented the compilation of comments by Lexington community members collected over a three-month period. While some direct concerns were addressed, generally, community members were very supportive of our Police Department and of proceeding with replacing the Police Station. Feedback specific to replacing the Police Station was varied, however, participants were clear that they wanted a Police Station that serves both the Police Department and the entire community.

In light of the findings in the report, and the specifics of the first presentation in July 2021, the Select Board voted to authorize the Town Manager to re-engaged the architectural firm, Tecton Architects, to proceed into the Design Development Phase of the project. In October 2021, the Select Board stated its preference for proceeding with a building designed that is flexible, inclusive and welcoming.

In March 2022 Town Meeting passed Article 2 of the 2022-1 Special Town Meeting for construction of a new police station. On June 6, 2022, 12.5% of Lexington’s voters turned out for a Debt Exclusion override vote to construct a new police station. 56.7% of the voters supported the project. Construction is expected to start in late summer of 2022, and will likely continue for about 18 months. The Lexington Police Department will operate out of temporary headquarters at 173 Bedford St. during demolition and construction.

Several attempts were made to relocate the Hosmer House from its current location because it is in the way of the new Police Station construction. In the Spring of 2022, the Town issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the sale and move of the Hosmer House. In May 2022, the Town opened the one bid from the RFP issued to move the Hosmer House offsite. The bid proposed to move the house to a property located on Waltham Street adjacent to Route 2 and for the house to be renovated with an 800 square foot addition. The Select Board unanimously supported the proposal. The final project plan for the Hosmer House is expected to be reviewed by the Historic District Commission, the Historical Commission, the Zoning Board of Appeals and the Planning Board for further approvals.

