



Town of Lexington

PLANNING BOARD

1625 Massachusetts Avenue
Lexington, MA 02420
Tel (781) 698-4560
planning@lexingtonma.gov
www.lexingtonma.gov/planning

Richard L. Canale, Chair
Ginna Johnson, Vice Chair
Bob Creech, Clerk
Nancy Corcoran-Ronchetti
Charles Hornig
Michael Leon, Associate

ARTICLE 2 REPORT

TO THE

2018 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

The Planning Board engages in both short- and long-term planning regarding all growth and development issues and proposals. Specific responsibilities of the Planning Board include: to administer subdivision regulations in accordance with Commonwealth law; to review special permit applications for residential developments and unaccepted street applications; to conduct commercial site plan reviews; to represent the Town in inter-town land use projects; to provide technical support and hearing functions for rezoning and development proposals and on citizen and owner-generated zoning amendments; to prepare and implement the Comprehensive Plan; and to develop zoning initiatives and changes which are proposed to Town Meeting. The Board met over 30 times in in FY 2017.

The Board's current roster consists of Richard Canale (chair), Ginna Johnson (vice chair), Bob Creech (clerk), Nancy Corcoran-Ronchetti, and Charles Hornig. Planning Board members are elected for 3-year terms. The Board's Associate Member position, an annual appointment made by the Board, is currently held by Michael Leon.

The Planning Office provides support primarily to the Planning Board, but also to the Board of Selectmen, the Town Manager, other Town departments and committees, and supplies technical expertise in analyzing economic, demographic, and development trends in Lexington and the region. It also responds to requests for help and information from citizens and other parties.

The Planning Office, appointed by the Town Manager, is staffed by Planning Director Aaron Henry, Assistant Planning Director David Kucharsky, Planner David Fields, and Department Assistant Lori Kaufman.

Comprehensive Plan and 2018 Town Meeting

Unlike the past several years in which we expected to bring up to ten Articles for your consideration, this year we are not initiating any Articles for the 2018 Town Meeting. But, as a result of neighborhood-initiated petitions, we are co-sponsoring two Neighborhood Conservation District Articles along with the Historical Commission. There are three citizen petitions for zoning bylaw changes, for which we have administered public hearings and have written Reports

to you. They are on yellow paper and are available in hard copy and on-line. We will report on each of them when they come up at Town Meeting.

Thanks to your support at last year's Town Meeting, the Planning Board and Staff have been concentrating on taking initial steps towards updating Lexington's Comprehensive Plan. We decided not to sponsor any articles this year because we want staff and the Board to focus on this major effort. Our staff has been doing excellent work during this past year and have accomplished much behind the scenes as well as introducing public panel discussions. The first panel was on Transportation. Last week we had a second Panel Discussion on Economic Development. The one on Housing was postponed due to snow, and it will be re-scheduled. Please participate in the remaining four discussions this Spring by attending or watching replays through LexMedia. We want every person to feel that their views are listened to and considered, and we hope that thousands of Lexingtonians will feel that their fingerprints are somewhere on the Final Plan.

We understand that Lexington is not going to be placed "on hold" during this process. We wish to make clear that we are not instituting a moratorium on zoning or other changes, just that we want to focus on Lexington's future. Much has been made of the 2002/2003 "outdated" Plan. We believe that the majority of what is in that Plan is still sound. Lexington, however, is in a very different place than it was back then. We have grown in many ways. Residents believed we had enough business and industry 15 years ago, and now a majority believe we need substantially more, new commercial growth. Our residential demographics have changed substantially. We have many more affluent residents and not enough housing for mid-range income earners or for older persons. Many residents are facing burdensome real estate taxes. We face many economic challenges today that we could not have dreamt about 15 years ago. The list goes on and on.

The Planning Board views the Comprehensive Plan as a reference guide and we modify our views in context of the changes we see. We constantly do outreach as evidenced in our activities such as the Residential Policy Committee, and bring zoning changes to you. We look for ways to re-vitalize our commercial sector, and we bring those to Town Meeting for changes. Our colleagues on the 2020 Committee complement our efforts with their studies including last year's Town-Wide Survey.

Any proposals that come before us are addressed through our understanding of current thinking through outreach, as well as looking ahead to ensure any changes that are adopted in the interim don't jeopardize what may be overriding goals and objectives of the "new" 2020 Comprehensive Plan.

The Planning Board needs to be mindful of what the 2020 Committee's 2017 Town-Wide survey showed:

- Areas in need of improvement, according to respondents, are: vibrancy and physical environment of the Town Center; physical character issues pertaining to traffic, parking, and the Center; providing housing for a diverse population; planning for the long-term future; making information easily available to residents; staying within the limits of Proposition 2 1/2; and limiting residential property taxes.

- The most important issue identified by respondents within the broad category of Economic Development was having a vibrant downtown.
- The most important issues identified by respondents within the broad category of Town Government were Town officials and staff acting with integrity; balancing short-term needs with long-term issues; and acting in a fiscally responsible manner.
- Broad areas of concern included: public education, housing, environment, Town Center, traffic, taxes, financial issues, government, and diversity.
- Planning for the long-term future
93% of respondents said they felt this item was either ‘extremely’ or ‘very’ important.
- Having a vibrant downtown that attracts residents and visitors
87.6% of respondents said they felt this item was either ‘extremely’ or ‘very’ important.
- Managing the flow of traffic through Town
76.6% of respondents said they felt this item was either ‘extremely’ or ‘very’ important.
- Preserving the physical character of residential neighborhoods
70.7% of respondents said they felt this item was either ‘extremely’ or ‘very’ important.
- Most important Economic Development item
65.3% of respondents said having a vibrant downtown was the most important item within this broad category. 11.9% said expanding the commercial tax base was most important.
- Attracting additional business development
55.7% of respondents said they felt this item was either ‘extremely’ or ‘very’ important.
- Expanding the commercial tax base
53.9% of respondents said they felt this item was either ‘extremely’ or ‘very’ important.
- Survey comments on the Planning Board
“some felt the Board is too ‘generous’ to builders/developers, who aren’t held sufficiently accountable to following rules (‘no teeth in the bylaws’); some wanted to see a master plan and were skeptical that one exists; some wanted preservation of open space a ... some proposed that the guiding principle for the Board should be to focus on quality of life issues (housing sizes, traffic, infrastructure, effects on schools and the environment).”

Our recommendations to this Town Meeting are reflective of this as we considered the content of what was presented and discussed during all public hearings. The Planning Board recommends referring the article 38 matter to the Planning Board. The Planning Board recommends approval of articles 39, 40, 42, and 44. The Planning Board recommends disapproval of Article 43. We will address each when they are on the floor.

Fiscal Year 2017 Highlights:

Early in the fiscal year, the Board met with proponents of several projects in their conceptual phase, including land off of Concord Ave and the potential development of a portion of the Belmont Country Club property. The Planning Board updated its development regulations, separating the rules relating to subdivisions from those governing special permitting. The Board spent much of the second part of the fiscal year reviewing several permit applications for a property on Grove Street, which drew incredible interest from the community.

The Board held a community outreach event in October to take in comments on a wide range of topics, including housing, transportation, and economic development. This meeting was helpful in shaping the proposal the Board was considering bringing to the 2018 Annual Town Meeting. Many of the comments and ideas discussed that evening became the basis for proposals brought to Town Meeting later in the fiscal year, including economic development, special permit residential developments, updates to definitions related to measuring square footages, scenic roads, blasting, wetland protections, retaining walls, and two-family homes. These concepts were discussed again with the public in January when the Board held an informational meeting to share their progress.

The Planning Board and the Planning Office represented the Town in regional planning efforts, including the ongoing Minuteman Advisory Group on Inter-local Coordination (MAGIC), Battle Road Scenic Byway, and the Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization.

2017 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING ARTICLES

The following articles passed the 2017 Annual Town Meeting:

- Neighborhood Conservation District, Technical Changes, Article 35 (General Bylaw)
- Revised Definitions, Article 41
- Economic Development Refinements, Article 43
- Amend Brookhaven (Convert RD-6 to PD-1), Article 44
- Medical Marijuana, Article 46

DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Approval Not Required Plan Endorsements

- Belmont Country Club
- 241 Grove Street
- 30 Oakmont Circle
- 75 & 81 Westview Street

Conventional Subdivisions

- 0 Grove Street (Vera Lane) – preliminary subdivision plan, definitive subdivision plan
- Lexington Hills – modification request
- 167-177 Cedar Street – preliminary subdivision, definitive subdivision plan

Site Sensitive Development

- 8 Adams Street – sketch plan (#2)
- 85 Pleasant Street – sketch plan
- 3 Mulberry Street – major modification to a site-sensitive development plan

Balanced Housing Development

- 331 Concord Avenue – sketch plan
- 0 Grove Street (Liberty Ridge) – sketch plan (#2)

- 9 Bushnell Street (287 Waltham St) – sketch plan
- 497 Concord Avenue – sketch plan
- 443 Lincoln Street – sketch plan

Public Benefit Development

- 0 Grove Street (Liberty Ridge) – special permit

Determination of Adequacy of Grade and Construction

- 7 Rangeway
- 48 Summit Road
- 2 Rolling Lane
- 22 Deering Avenue
- 29 Hayes Lane

Site Plan Review

- 113-115 Hartwell Avenue – minor modification

Thank you,

Richard Canale

Richard Canale, Chair