



Lex-Wiki.Org is a local Wikipedia for Lexington, MA. Lex-wiki.Org covers Arts and Entertainment, Local Flora and Fauna, Local History, City Life as well as Town Government and other issues of public interest in Lexington.

Name: Joseph Pato

Web Site Address: <http://joepato.com>

Phone: (781) 325-8631

Email: selectman@joepato.org

Submission Date: Jan 31,2016

Biographical Question

1. *Please include a brief biography outlining your relevant experience, including public offices held and other volunteer service.*

- Elected Selectman in 2013 (chair since July 2014)
- Appointed to Appropriation Committee (2009-2012) co-vice chair (2010-2012)
- Elected Town Meeting Member (2008-2013)

Active participant on the following committees: Commission on Disability, Sustainable Lexington, Hanscom Area Towns (HATS), Economic Advisory, Center, 2020 Vision, Communication Advisory, Cary Memorial Library Trustees Executive Committee.

Professional: Visiting Scientist at MIT Computer Science and AI Lab

(<http://www.csail.mit.edu/user/1975>)

Policy Questions

2. *Is Lexington on the right track regarding school construction plans to address overcrowding? Would you like to see any changes to the current school capital construction plan?*

In general, yes we are on the right track, but the plan is not complete. The plan includes some growth in capacity for elementary and middle school student populations and will have to be

completed to provide for growth at the high school, creation of space for the State mandated pre-K program (Lexington Children’s Place), and additional elementary capacity over time.

This is the most complicated issue facing Lexington over the next decade – does the school system continue to deliver the educational programs the community has grown to expect, or do we make changes in how these programs are delivered including changing how students are assigned to schools and increasing class sizes to accommodate burgeoning growth in student enrollment? These are educational policy questions that are the domain of the School Committee but which directly result in the demand for capital projects.

I am thankful that the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) has invited Lexington into its program for addressing the renovation or reconstruction of the Hastings School. I am also pleased that we have instituted an *Integrated Design Process* which introduces analysis of environmental and health questions earlier in building design. This process should lead to more efficient, healthier, and sustainable buildings. We are and should be pursuing new and renovated facilities that are designed to minimize our environmental footprint and built to last.

Finally, I believe it is essential we pursue the acquisition of the Pelham Rd property. This facility will provide us with critical flexibility that is missing from the existing inventory of school properties.

3. *What measures would you consider to offset the anticipated increase in property tax needed to pay for school spending?*

The expected increases in property tax are significant and there is no single measure that will make this painless.

I would recommend use of the Capital Stabilization Fund balance over the next 5 years to reduce the rate of increase in excluded debt payments by taxpayers. In addition, I would re-examine our reliance on the 3% CPA surcharge. This is the least-regressive property tax and comes with a significant state match – but we should have a public debate to see if we want to reduce the surcharge amount.

All new projects need to be considered in light of the increased demand imposed by increasing student enrollments – and some may need to be deferred or scaled back. My priority will be to continue with public safety projects like those that improve the safety of pedestrian crossings, sidewalks, and road infrastructure.

Finally, I will continue working with our state legislators to explore new and more equitable revenue sources for municipalities – in particular those that reduce municipal reliance on regressive sources like property taxes and shift more to taxpayer income-based revenue sources.

Information on existing property tax relief programs can be found at:

<http://www.lexingtonma.gov/sites/lexingtonma/files/uploads/fy2016propertytaxreliefbrochurefinal10-13-15.pdf>

4. *What is the appropriate trade-off between retaining an historic aesthetic and safety and accessibility for the disabled, pedestrians and cyclists when it comes to choice of sidewalk materials and traffic lights at the Woburn Street intersection?*

Lexington's character, both physical and moral, is a jewel to be cherished and protected. In our earliest days, the community was motivated to "[Sacrifice our Estates and everything dear in Life, Yea & life itself, in support of the common cause](#)" and driven to "*the care of the public to prevail over individual wishes: for the welfare of all.*"

The Center Streetscape design aims to honor these sentiments and balance the sense of place integral to Lexington Center with the community's values of welcoming and integrating individuals of all abilities. As a result the design calls for concrete for the primary travel paths and channels to gathering points but retains much more brick than would otherwise be used.

This plan is consistent with the overwhelming support expressed at Town Meeting last year for a resolution that called for the Town to endeavor at all times to use smooth, safe and aesthetically appropriate materials when constructing sidewalks and other passageways on town-owned walkways.

The intersection at Mass Ave, Woburn St, Winthrop Rd, and Fletcher Ave is problematic from a safety perspective and backups during morning and evening rush hours. [In 2014, 6 injury accidents occurred here](#). This was over one third (6 of 16) of all [2014 injury accidents in Lexington Center](#).

The geometry of this intersection creates confusion and leads to a disproportionate number of accidents. I believe it needs to be changed and a traffic signal is appropriate. The proposed change at this intersection increases the size of Fletcher Park and creates a welcoming and aesthetically appealing addition to Lexington Center. The changes proposed for the intersection and for the sidewalk treatments throughout honor Lexington's deepest traditions and character.

5. *After the school overcrowding issues and road projects are resolved, what should be, in your view, Lexington's next priority?*

There are many issues that arise in Lexington – but 2 that are of key importance to me:

- 1) That we come together as an inclusive community and continue to encourage all members of the community to participate fully. That we continue to have vigorous debate in exploring issues with strongly held beliefs, but that we continue to seek the best welfare for all.
- 2) We address the needs of our aging and crumbling public safety facilities – that we replace or renovate the central fire station and police headquarters.

6. *The Planning Board is bringing forward a number of proposals that address the issues of new construction size, housing affordability and neighborhood preservation. What are your views on these proposals?*

I applaud the Planning Board for creating the Residential Policy Sub-Committee to look at these thorny questions. Change is difficult and many in town are unhappy with the effects of extensive residential reconstruction through tear-downs around town.

These proposals, however, are not simple and will have a real economic effect on existing property owners. I believe that the number of proposals emerging from the Planning Board at this time is large and makes it difficult for the community to absorb their collective effect.

7. *Could you describe one issue that the Board of Selectmen handled very effectively over the last year? And one issue that could have been addressed better?*

I believe that the every member of the Board works for what they see as the best interests of the Town and strives to collaboratively find workable and constructive solutions. Two examples come to mind that illustrate both what the Board has done very effectively and what could have been addressed better.

- 1) Traffic Signals for various intersections on Mass Ave.

Here the Board did not recognize the depth of concern by residents both in favor and opposed to the various projects. In response to these concerns, the Board actively engaged in additional dialog, scheduled several public sessions to allow residents to voice their concerns, hired additional engineering firms to evaluate alternate designs and traffic mitigation for neighborhoods surrounding the project area. While it is impossible to satisfy all residents, the Board proceeded with a respectful and caring hearing of resident concerns and then has acted on the East Lexington project and is in the process of coming to conclusions on the Center Streetscape project.

- 2) Parking rates in Lexington Center.

Again, there was more controversy surrounding preliminary plans produced by the Parking Management Group than the Board had anticipated. This led to a series of meetings where all stakeholders had the opportunity to provide feedback on the emerging proposal. Ultimately, the Board hammered out a compromise plan and unanimously approved it.

8. *What is your vision of Lexington ten years from now, or even beyond?*

I envision a warm, engaged, sustainable community, one that is welcoming, inclusive, and vibrant.

All candidates are asked to limit the response to each question to at most two or three paragraphs, and to provide the questionnaire responses by Sunday, Feb 7th, 2015. Responses will not be edited, and will run as submitted. They will be posted on lex-wiki.org in PDF format and announced through other town media. Questionnaire reviewer Vicki Blier. Questionnaire coordinator Andrei Radulescu-Banu (bitdribble@gmail.com, 617-216-8509).
