



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.

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Biographical Question

1. *What can you tell us about yourself? Please include a brief outline of your relevant experience, including public offices held and volunteer service.*

- A. Town of Lexington Planning Board, 1993-1998 & 2005-present
Town of Lexington elected to representative Town Meeting Member 1987-present
- B. The Battle Road Scenic Byway Project (Initiator, Co-Chair and Lexington Representative, Chair, Battle Road Scenic Byway Committee) 2005 – present
- C. Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), 1997-present, Town of Lexington Representative 2001-present, Executive Committee, 2005-present
- D. Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization (Boston MPO) 2001-2003 and 2011 – present, elected by the 101 cities and towns and representing the Town of Lexington to the 21 member entity.
- E. Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (MAGIC) subregion of MAPC, Lexington Representative 1997-present
- F. Freedom's Way Heritage Association, INC. Devens, MA 1993-2004
Founding Member (1993), Board Member (1993 – 2003) & President (1999 – 2002)

Candidate Platform

2. *Why are you running for Planning Board?*

To continue the service to Lexington that I have been providing and especially to contribute to planning priorities discussed in this questionnaire.

3. *What do you believe are the planning priorities for Lexington in the short-term and long-term?*

Short term – Ensure that Cubist/Merck rezoning sets clear benchmarks regarding parking/density/impacts/mitigation. This is an opportunity to stake out the preference for encouraging lower impact lab space vs. higher impact first class office space along Hayden/Spring Commercial area. We need to set high standards that will minimize increases in auto traffic and provide incentives for non-single occupant vehicles.

Long term – To help Lexington adopt zoning measures and set a balance of smart new growth that enables Lexington to provide a quality of living that does not proportionally disadvantage the more vulnerable of our residents.

Policy Questions

4. *What should the Planning Board do to ensure affordability of housing in the low and medium income brackets in Lexington?*

- A. Educate residents on the nature and relationship of zoning and “social engineering”. Residents need to understand that all zoning is meant to engineer social ends. We need to help decision-makers reach consensus on social priorities and help enumerate the subsequent costs to segments of our residents to get us there.
- B. Keep evaluating potential zoning measures that Town Meeting might/will pass that will increase the likelihood of ensuring affordability. For example, this year the Concord Planning Board expects to be proposing a zoning article for a residential floor area ratio limit. Lexington has not yet considered this approach.
- C. Push our state legislators and Governor to pass a statewide zoning reform bill that allows more flexibility for local and regional control.
- D. Encourage Selectmen, state legislators and Governor to consider ways to effect change in Massachusetts taxation policy that would make taxation less regressive on our more vulnerable residents, and especially find ways to minimize Town’s over-reliance on the most regressive tax – real estate taxes.

5. *Recent years have seen an increase in the number of small houses being torn down and replaced with larger homes, which are often built at the limit of the setback rules. What can the Planning Board do to address this phenomenon?*

See items in # 4, and help residents and officials better understand the relationship between land values and house values as well as assessment practices that provide economic decisions to tear down smaller structures. From that understanding, residents and officials should be in a better position to decide whether this phenomenon is acceptable or not and whether the Town should be providing incentives to encourage or discourage certain housing choices.

6. *What would be your criteria, as a Planning Board member, to approve a residential zoning special permit?*

The criteria is simply, will a special permit development be “better” than a by-right subdivision (the Zoning bylaw and Regulations spell out what “better” means). The “new” zoning passed by Town Meeting recently was necessary due to Massachusetts court rulings. The interpretation of state law by courts, means that developers have economic incentives to go with by right developments rather than subject themselves to more controlling conditions allowed on special permit developments. In general, special permit developments can be conditioned to fit in better within the neighborhood and also the larger Town as a whole. We need to ensure that developers have incentives to seek special permit developments where appropriate.

7. *What role can the Planning Board play in addressing the capacity issues in our schools?*

- A. Help stakeholders understand demographic trends and implications.
- B. See item #4 for structural changes.
- C. Encourage diversity in our population in economic and demographic terms.

8. *What role can the Planning Board play in ensuring a diversity of commercial activity in the center? Specifically, how would you address the number of banks and other financial service businesses in the center?*
- A. Advocate for the one year moratorium.
 B. Don't limit the number of banks/financial service businesses, instead limit their storefront impact through controls such as reduction of frontage width.
9. *Hartwell is the largest commercial district in Lexington, and on average the area generates \$8M in tax revenue annually. Yet Hartwell Ave area office space vacancies have been approximately 22% in 2014, compared with 4% for Hayden Ave and Spring St area office spaces. What should Lexington do, in your opinion, to build up the infrastructure and amenities around Hartwell Ave?*

Advocate for state/federal funding for roadway improvements to Bedford/Hartwell and commit to Town funding its design.

Make Town funded capital improvements such as sidewalks and more bicycle lanes.

Advocate for better transit and transportation options.

10. *Over the last year, can you describe one issue which the Planning Board handled very effectively? And one issue that could have been addressed better?*

The Planning Board presented a well thought out set of recommendations to Town Meeting on Medical Marijuana siting/zoning. They provided a grounded base from which Town Meeting members were able to discuss passionately and come to a vote, even though it differed from our proposed changes. What was effective is that the Board stuck to planning principles and incorporated fact-based public comments into changes to our proposal. Town Meeting was then able to set its own priorities on siting based on concerns from residents and public safety officials as well as on the planning analysis we provided.

The Board was not able to adequately address issues of mansionization and related affordability and equity issues this past year. This should be on this coming year's priority listing along with complete streets/transportation and livability issues.

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 Saturday, 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 coordinator: Andrei Radulescu-Banu (bitdribble@gmail.com, 617-216-8509).
