

CAPITAL EXPENDITURES COMMITTEE

TOWN OF LEXINGTON



REPORT TO THE 2019-1 SPECIAL TOWN MEETING (STM) NOVEMBER 12, 2019

Released November 5, 2019

Submitted by:

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2019-1 STM Warrant-Article Explanations and Recommendations

Cites of the “Town Warrant” refer to the 7 Oct 2019 “Town of Lexington Warrant for the Special Town Meeting 2019-1”, November 12, 2019.

<p>Article 3: Appropriate To and From Specified Stabilization Funds (SFs) (Only those actions related to Capital)</p>	Funds Requested	Funding Source	Committee Recommends
	(b) Traffic Mitigation SF		
	Deposit \$280,000	Payment from King Street Properties	Approval (6–0)
	(g) Transportation Management Overlay District SF Information Only. Action will take place under Article 8.		
	Withdraw \$250,000	SF	N/A
	(h) Capital SF		
	Deposit \$732,697	Increase to FY2020 Revenue	Approval (6–0)

“To see if the Town will vote to appropriate sums of money to and from Stabilization Funds in accordance with Section 5B of Chapter 40 of the Massachusetts General Laws for the purposes of: (a) Section 135 Zoning By-Law, (b) Traffic Mitigation, (c) Transportation Demand Management/Public Transportation, (d) Special Education, (e) Center Improvement District, (f) Debt Service, (g) Transportation Management Overlay District, (h) Capital, (i) Payment in Lieu of Parking, (j) Visitor Center Capital Stabilization Fund, (k) Affordable Housing Capital Stabilization Fund, (l) Water System Capital Stabilization Fund, and (m) Ambulance Stabilization Fund; determine whether such sums shall be provided by the tax levy, by transfer from available funds, from fees, charges or gifts or by any combination of these methods; or act in any other manner in relation thereto.

“DESCRIPTION: This Article proposes to fund Stabilization Funds for specific purposes and to appropriate funds there from. Money in those funds may be invested and the interest may then become a part of the particular fund. These funds may later be appropriated for the specific designated purpose, by a two-thirds vote of an Annual or Special Town Meeting, for any lawful purpose.”

(Town Warrant)

For all Stabilization Funds (SFs), deposits (additions) are approved by a simple majority vote of Town Meeting.

General Information Regarding the Traffic Mitigation SF: Additions are generally payments by developers as a condition of a Special Permit; withdrawals are for the purpose of financing traffic-mitigation projects.

General Information Regarding the Transportation Management Overlay District SF: Additions are generally payments by developers as a condition of a project in that District; withdrawals are for the purpose of financing transportation infrastructure improvements.

General Information Regarding the CSF: Available cash would be added to the CSF with the intent that, as has been done in the past, the CSF will have continuing withdrawals to mitigate the tax burden of major capital projects. The withdrawals are expected to be amounts cited for appropriation under the Operating Budget toward debt service; to be an additional source, to the extent funds remain in the CSF,

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toward each year’s projected debt service for projects excluded from the Proposition 2½ property-tax-levy limit, as approved by the voters; and, to a much lesser degree, for debt not excluded from that limit (i.e., funded within the tax-levy limit).

<i>Article 8: Appropriate Funding For 25% Design Of The Route</i>	Funds Requested	Funding Source	Committee Recommends
<i>4/225 Bedford Street-Hartwell Avenue-Wood Street Transportation Improvement Project</i>	\$1,500,000	\$1,250,000 GF (Debt) (multiple Bond Anticipation Notes) + \$250,000 Transportation Management Overlay District SF (both sources require a 2/3rd vote)	Approval (5–1)

“To see if the Town will vote to appropriate a sum of money for the Route 4/225 Bedford Street, Hartwell Avenue, and Wood Street Transportation Improvement Project; and authorize the Selectmen to take by eminent domain, purchase or otherwise acquire any fee, easement or other interests in land necessary therefor; determine whether the money shall be provided by the tax levy, by transfer from available funds, including enterprise funds, by borrowing, or by any combination of these methods; determine if the Town will authorize the Selectmen to apply for, accept, expend and borrow in anticipation of state aid for such capital improvements; or act in any other manner in relation thereto.

DESCRIPTION: This Article will appropriate funding to develop 25% design for a major transportation improvement project which includes minor improvements on Wood Street, four travel lanes in most of the project corridor with three travel lanes in southern portion of Hartwell Avenue, a sidewalk or multi-modal path and bike lanes on both sides of the roadways; raised center medians; safe pedestrian accommodations and crossings; and reconstruction of major intersections: Bedford Street and Hartwell Avenue intersection as well the intersection of the on and off ramps to I-95. A future request for the Town to fund through 100% design and Plans, Specifications, and Estimates would follow at a later Town Meeting. This critical funding of 25% design plans will enable the Town to stay on the state's Long Range Transportation Plan to eventually obtain external resources to fund construction costs to bring the project through completion of the on and off ramps to I-95.”

(Town Warrant)

For more than 30 years, the intersection of Hartwell Avenue and Bedford Street, extending along the Bedford Street (State Route 4/225) corridor to the Route 128 ramps and along the length of Hartwell Avenue to Hanscom Air Force Base and Wood Street, has been identified by the Town as a problem traffic area. Increasing traffic between Bedford and Lexington, as well as more drivers accessing the Air Force Base and the Lincoln Laboratory facility on Wood Street, have contributed to ever greater congestion with unsafe conditions for pedestrians and cyclists. Previous efforts to ameliorate the problem, most recently with a 2011 study of alternative configurations of the Route 128/Route 4/225 connection and the Bedford Street and Hartwell Avenue intersection, did not progress, in part because of no consensus between the State and the Town of Lexington on feasible improvements.

Lexington has held a place on the State Long Range Transportation Plan, administered by the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), for State aid in the 2030–2034 time band. Given the increasing urgency of the situation, our Town Manager and Planning Department, with the support of State Representative Michelle Ciccolo, have requested the MPO to move Lexington up to the 2024–2029 time band. However, the Town is required to fund a Functional Design Report (“Report”) to the 25% design level to be eligible for aid and will risk being dropped from the Long Range Transportation Plan and therefore be ineligible for inclusion in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) in 2024 if this work has not been undertaken. Completion of the Report improves Lexington’s chances of receiving funding in the 2024–2029 time band.

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This request is for \$1.5 million for the services of transportation engineers and a public-engagement specialist to develop that Report for the Hartwell Avenue/Bedford Street area. It will be based on a review of present and future conditions, including current and projected traffic volumes, traffic management, safety requirements, signal warrants, and a general operational analysis. Proposed preliminary designs are expected to include dimensions and cross-sections, horizontal and vertical alignments, and identified easements and/or land takings. It will explore alternatives for multimodal transportation in the area. The Report will review previous plans and proposals and examine the feasibility of roundabouts and/or improved traffic signals and slip lanes at the Bedford/Route 128 and Bedford/Hartwell junctions. The Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) has indicated support for investigating these concepts.

Hartwell Avenue is Lexington's largest commercial zone, serving as a town and regional hub in an area of 20,000 employees. Its buildings are generally outdated and limited by dimensional and density restrictions imposed in past years. It presents the best opportunity to grow the Town's commercial tax base by increasing the density of its development. The Planning Board and staff have been working on an updated zoning plan for Hartwell for several years and anticipate bringing it to Town Meeting in the future. However, Town residents, particularly those in the immediate area whose lives are most affected by the growing congestion, have indicated that any support for such a rezoning initiative would be contingent on a genuine effort to address the existing and projected traffic problems. Preparation of the Report would include continuing public input, including formal hearings, before MassDOT considers approval of a design.

If the 25% Design is approved, the Town will seek additional funding approval from Town Meeting to bring the design to the 100% level and to prepare applications for Federal monies (to be allocated by the State) for construction. Because Bedford Street (Route 4/225) is a State road, funding of up to \$48 million may be available. Lexington has already invested almost \$9 million in anticipation of this project, including \$7 million for the Hartwell Avenue/Maguire Road intersection and bridge replacement; \$1 million for the ongoing replacement of Hartwell Avenue water mains; and \$1 million for safety improvements to the Bedford Street/Eldred Street pedestrian crossing, a bus shelter, a mixed-use path and landscaping.

The majority of this Committee supports this funding request as a necessary step to address a significant problem that has been in discussion for decades. Funding design work to the 25% level is necessary to understand what level of traffic-congestion mitigation might be achieved and to remain in the queue for State and Federal funding, hopefully advancing a future project to 2024–2029. However, even if Lexington were not to receive outside funding going forward, the need to address the traffic problem remains. The results of this study should be important input to the discussion of potential zoning changes on Hartwell Avenue, and thus are needed as soon as possible. In short, this study is important to undertake now to address a problem of long standing, hopefully to advance the timeline for a construction project to the near-future, and to provide critical information to help guide zoning change discussions

The minority of this Committee is opposed to funding at this time the 25% Design Report. It is deemed premature because (without priority order):

(1) Nothing has been identified to indicate whether any of the potential changes to be addressed by the 25% Design Report have been shown in prior applications meaningfully to mitigate an already severe traffic situation as is Lexington's instant case—especially considered that it is agreed that even with the current zoning of that area the traffic volume will increase over time. \$1.5 million is far too much to appropriate—even if justified (which hasn't been shown)—without having a reasonable expectation that the current traffic could be mitigated. Just rearranging the traffic pattern might only reposition the “parking-lot” situation.

(2) It appears that little can be done to materially enhance the safety of the area without further aggravating the severe traffic problem.

(3) The proposed Project will be addressing future, unspecified, conditions; however, the current, underway, “Hartwell District Zoning Initiative” proposes a wide range of re-zoning-related,

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potential changes without having yet done reporting on the increases in traffic accompanying those changes.

(4) There is no common agreement as to what, or even when, results of that Initiative would be proposed to a future Town Meeting—including whatever land taking would be needed not only temporarily during construction, but permanently. With the existing long-term leases, the judgment will be difficult, if even practical, to define a timeline for the proposed changes to be implemented, the further traffic aggravation to occur, or a reasonable estimate when any material, enhanced, tax payments would be achieved.

(5) While a 5-year advance in the State’s Long Range Transportation Plan would be welcomed, nothing has been presented that the Town’s funding of the proposed 25% Design Report needs to be at this STM—rather than a later Town Meeting. Resolving the above-cited deficiencies and a further, thorough, education of our residents are appropriate before advancing this proposed Project to Town Meeting.

Article 9: LED Streetlight Conversion	Funds Requested	Funding Source	Committee Recommends
	\$875,858	GF (Cash)	Approve (6–0)

“To see if the Town will vote to appropriate a sum of money for the purposes of acquiring and installing light emitting diode (LED) streetlights to replace existing streetlights in the Town, and for other costs incidental or related thereto; determine whether the money will be provided by the tax levy, by transfer from available funds, by borrowing, grants, donations, gifts, or other available monies or by any combination of these methods; determine if the Town will authorize the Selectmen to apply for, accept, expend and borrow in anticipation of state aid for such capital improvements; or act in any other manner in relation thereto.

“DESCRIPTION: This Article is to fund replacement of the 3000 plus streetlights in Town from induction lights to the more energy efficient LED lights. The Town is eligible for a state grant to pay a portion of this conversion cost (approximately 30%).”

(Town Warrant)

The Town intends to replace 3,167 streetlights, mostly 2010-era electromagnetic induction type lights, with newer LED technology. This includes all the lights in Town except about 60 lights in Town Center that are either ornamental lights not eligible for this program or lights that will be replaced under the Center Streetscape project. The total cost includes parts, labor, and disposal for all bulbs and fixtures, and the Town has received a grant from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) that will reimburse \$194,764 of that cost if the project is completed by the end of May 2020. The Town also expects another \$96,813 in incentive rebates from Eversource, making the net cost to the Town \$584,281. The MAPC solicits bids and selects contractors for this program. The expected payback on the net project costs is 5.4 years.

Our current induction lights, which have previously replaced older incandescent, mercury vapor, and metal halide lights, have caused expensive maintenance of about \$130,000 a year, due in large part to the New England weather. LED technology, which has matured greatly in the past few years, is expected to cut these maintenance costs to about \$76,000 a year (still requiring inspections, realignment, sensor replacement, and accidental damage repair). A warranty will cover the LED bulbs and fixtures for 20 years; the installation will come with the standard one-year warranty.

An expected reduction in annual energy costs from about \$122,000 to about \$68,000 will be achieved by replacing 150W, 80W, and 40W bulbs (depending on location on main roads, collectors, or neighborhood streets) with 70–85W, 30–40W, and 18–24W bulbs, depending on location, number of lights, and obstructions, which should provide the same or better amounts of light output in all locations. The color temperature of the induction lights is 4100K–5000K; the LED lights will be in the range of 2500K–3000K. (As an example, 5000K and above is considered daylight; 2700K is considered the color of incandescent light.)