

Housing Authority

1 for 5 years

Incumbent

Melinda Walker

Precinct 8

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COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES:

Community Preservation Committee 2016 to Present
Town Meeting Member 2004 to Present
Lexington Housing Authority 2004 to Present, Current Chair
Lexington Housing Partnership 2007 to Present, Former Chair
League of Women Voters of Lexington, Membership Chair
Metro West Collaborative Development, Planning and Development Committee
Founding Member, PATHS (Anti-Bias Initiatives), Lexington Public Schools
FOLMADS, Lexington High School
ACT (Arts Created Together), Joseph Estabrook Elementary School
Diamond Middle School Site-Based Council

League Question

WHAT ROLE CAN THE HOUSING AUTHORITY PLAY IN CREATING ADDITIONAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING?

This is a difficult question to answer because there is very little direct federal or state funding for the construction of new units of public housing. Almost all of the new affordable (moderate, low-income, and very low-income housing) housing in Massachusetts has been built by partnerships of public and private entities. Given the high cost of construction in Massachusetts, it is often necessary for non-profit community development corporations to stitch together funding from various sources. These sources can include the utilization of "Low Income Housing Tax Credits," DHCD (Mass Department of Housing and Community Development) grants, and project-based vouchers.

Such was the case in 2016, when the Lexington Housing Authority completed the construction of four new ADA apartments at Greeley Village. There were three funding sources for the project: a DHCD Formula Funding award of \$350,000.00, a DHCD Special Grant of \$230,000.00, and a VERY generous appropriation from the Community Preservation Committee of \$810,673.00. This new energy-efficient building for persons with disabilities would not have been built without the generosity of the taxpayers of Lexington.

There is another avenue for creating additional affordable housing in Lexington, which is the preservation of deed-restricted 'affordable' rental units. As mortgage expiration dates come close on units with affordability deed restrictions, developers may consider converting the units to market-rate homes. Through MassHousing and other funding sources, the state of Massachusetts provides assistance so that non-profits and housing authorities may be able to finance the preservation of low and moderate-income housing. This opportunity presented itself in Lexington in 2016, when the financing for a low-income

cooperative, Pine Grove, was about to expire; the owners were considering a conversion to a market-rate condominium association. Through the concerted efforts of the Town Manager, MassHousing, the Lexington Housing Authority and the Regional Housing Services Office, new funding was put in place and the Pine Grove development was preserved as a low and moderate-income association. Part of the transaction included the conveyance of five low-income units to the Lexington Housing Authority. As was the case with the ADA units at Greeley Village, a generous appropriation from the CPA was part of the funding package for the conversion.

In conclusion, as Caileen Foley, the Executive Director of the Lexington Housing Authority, said, "Housing Authorities have to be very creative to build more housing."