

Precinct 2 Town Meeting Member

7 for 3 years

Question for Town Meeting Member candidates:

What Lexington issues do you think are most important? What does Lexington do well? What could be improved? How do you view the role of Town Meeting in implementing improvements?

Incumbents

Marian A. O. Cohen

E-mail address: mcohen@framingham.edu

Phone number: 781-862-7122

Community Activities:

I have been an active member of our community since moving here in 1979. My activities include:

- Service to the schools as a regular room parent, PTA President and Chair of three School Councils, and Chair of a system-wide Cultural Diversity committee.
- Service to the community as Chair, for several years, of the Council on Aging; member of the Permanent Building Committee; member of the 2020 Committee (where I chaired a Task Force on Forging Constructive Community Discourse; with one colleague, created the Citizens' Academy; served on the Demographic Change Task Force and conducted data collection and analysis of subsequent studies of Asian Americans in Lexington; was a member of working groups charged with developing three Town-wide surveys; and served on the Enhancing Communication in Lexington Task Force). I was Principal Investigator of the 2017 Town-wide survey. I am currently assisting our Public Information Officer in the development of a communications survey and working with the Director of Human Services to conduct a study of mental health among Lexington residents. I am also participating on a Task Force within the Lexington Human Rights Committee to study effects of race on health in Lexington.
- Service in Town Meeting as a representative of my precinct since 1994, having also represented my fellow Precinct 2 Town Meeting members as Chair of that group.

Questions for Town Meeting candidates:

There are many issues facing Lexington at this time. Among the most important are:

- Diversity, equity and inclusion. This is not just a Lexington issue but it does affect our relationships in this community and the lives of all of us who live and work here. Our attention to this issue is critical, as is the nature of our discourse about it. As part of this, we need to examine our relationships with our police officers, as some recent events have placed a strain on those relations.

- Sustainability: Climate change and the environment are existential issues. How we handle things such as recycling, trees, and development of land and space in our community is critical to our health, well-being and the future.
- Economic development: There are several projects underway that aim to address economic issues in Lexington. These include new developments, new industry and/or business, and a redesign of our Town Center.
- Housing: For many years we have heard concerns about the dearth of affordable housing in Lexington. This is an important issue as it affects the ability of our Town employees to live in the community in which they work; the ability of young people to remain in or move back into Town; and the ability of our seniors to remain in the community in which many have lived their adult lives and in which they have friends and community relationships. This is important for diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Communication: One of the findings of our 2017 Town-wide survey (for which I was Principal Investigator) was that Lexingtonians are concerned about their ability to receive timely and relevant information about our community. We now have a Public Information Officer who has been tasked with developing and implementing an integrated communications strategy for Lexington. This is an ongoing and vital function of the Town.
- Budget: There are many projects under discussion that will incur considerable costs. It is important that decisions made about which projects to move forward and which to postpone are made with up-to-date information and with acknowledgement of the effect expenses associated with these projects will have on taxpayers. Some of these projects have been deferred for several years and cannot afford delays; other projects can be prioritized but put on hold. It will be important to have the community weigh in on these decisions.
- COVID-19 pandemic consequences: The pandemic has necessitated changes in our children's educations. We will need to consider when to fully reopen schools, how our current teaching pattern may have effected what and how much children have learned over this past year, and what changes may still need to be made to ensure the high level of education we traditionally provide. We also need to consider food and housing insecurity that may have resulted from the pandemic among our residents and the economic impact of lost or downsized jobs.

Lexington does many things well, including responding to citizens' concerns (e.g., hiring a Public Information Officer and constructing a Community Center); providing good fire, police, and human services; maintaining a well-respected and highly ranked educational system; and engaging citizens in Town affairs and functioning. There is always room for improvement, but Lexington has a record of being responsive to citizen needs and concerns.

Areas in need of our attention include those mentioned above: focusing on diversity, equity and inclusion; continuing our efforts at sustainability; addressing the economic situation by encouraging more commercial tax revenue to offset the burden felt by many home owners and by being aware of financial problems caused by COVID-19; providing more housing options; carefully considering our budget so that we continue to provide excellent services in our fire, police, human services and schools; addressing educational issues created by the pandemic; and

continuing the communication improvements we have made to ensure that all Lexingtonians are as informed as possible on important and relevant matters. We have been fortunate to have so many dedicated people willing to volunteer their services and talents to take responsibility for our continued improvement.

The role of a Town Meeting member is to learn about each of these issues (and others that arise) so as to be able to make the most informed decisions possible. It is important to balance conflicting needs and make decisions that will benefit the greatest number of members of our community, while also protecting the needs of the minority who may disagree or are at risk of being left out or behind. To do this, Town Meeting members must be receptive to input from constituents and must respond to constituent concerns. I have made it a practice to reach out to those in my precinct and to provide detailed responses to those who have reached out to me. As a Town Meeting member, I have been proud to be able to represent the concerns of my fellow precinct residents in a wider forum and I hope to continue to be able to do so.

Peter B. Lee

Syed A. Rizvi

973-220-2713

The Town of Lexington is full of highly qualified residents and vibrant with people of diverse backgrounds. We all chose Lexington for the many excellent benefits that it offers – an awesome school system; a safe town, caring neighbors, a professionally run township, a remarkably diverse community and above all a wonderful set of residents. Our families are enjoying the richness of this historic town.

Luckily, town residents who offer to volunteer as Town Meeting Members, have proven credentials, unwavering commitment, strong vision, and leadership, and firmly endorse the view that each one of us can contribute in some positive way. I have served as a town meeting member for two terms and have enjoyed working with everyone. **I humbly present myself yet once again to serve on the Lexington Town Committee from precinct 2.**

My wife Deeba and I moved to Lexington from Cambridge in 2005 with two small girls, Alia and Asrah (5 & 3 respectively) and since then we have enjoyed every single day. Our daughters Alia and Asrah have tremendously benefited from the Lexington Public School System.

My Education: BSc Hons (Chemistry), MBA

Occupation: Founder/President: SPS Alfachem Inc.,

Founder/President: Resolv Corporation.

NON PROFITS:

President (Volunteer): www.visionaid.org, (Empowering the visually impaired to live with Independence and dignity)

President (Volunteer): www.omane.us, (My School Alumni Association)

President: Resolv Education & Training programs (Offer mentorship and guidance to underprivileged and needy students)

FOCUS:

Social Justice, Community Service, Health, Education

For the last 20 years I have continued to volunteer in various non-profit organizations.

PLEASE VOTE FOR ME.

To vote early by mail, request an absentee ballot by clicking on the link. Last Date is 23rd February.

https://www.lexingtonma.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlf3351/f/uploads/ev_application_form_2021.pdf

Kenneth J. Shine

Precinct 2

E-mail address Kenneth.Shine@lexingtonmma.org

Phone number 781.862.2908

* Community Activities

Active Sacred Heart parishioner

Lexington Minute Men

Town Meeting Member for 7 years

* Question for Town Meeting candidates:

Lexington has a well-deserved reputation for (among other things) being a welcoming, inclusive community, for having a great school system, for leading on clean energy initiatives and for preserving our history. As a town meeting member, I will work to keep and support these values. I will continue to support funding our school system to maintain its high quality. I will continue to support clean energy initiatives in town building projects.

At a local level (as opposed to a national or global level), the main problems facing Lexington include cost of living and the related issue of affordable housing. I want Lexington to be available to a broad income range families including middle -income families. Lexington is hurt when, due the cost of living, young families cannot move into town and when senior residents leave. I do not want Lexington to be a town where families move in when their children enter school but leave when the children graduate.

For housing, a good way to address the problem is changing zoning laws so that it easier to build new and varied housing.

It is important for town meeting to be cognizant of the cost pressures on residents. Many residents, but especially senior citizens, have complained to me about the burden of their property taxes. Town government should work to keep the tax burden down. We do live in a high cost area, but one thing that town government can do to lower the living cost is to keep the taxes as low as possible.

In addition to prudently watching our town spending, our town financials are improved by increased commercial tax revenue. I will support initiatives that support local commercial development. Since there are also trade-offs in such development, I will always listen to the opinions of the residents most affected by such changes.

To improve the ability of senior citizens to remain in town, I supported the expansion of senior living units at Brookhaven as well as the new senior housing complexes on Concord Ave and Watertown Street and will continue to be open to further projects.

Another issue of concern is the livability of our downtown and other areas of town. The center is a great place for walking, dining, etc. I have often enjoyed biking there with my family. As the town proceeds with its redevelopment plans, Town Meeting Members need to ensure that the center remains a vibrant, accessible place.

I became a Town Meeting Member because I wanted to give back to this that town I love. Lexington has a long, proud history of participatory democracy. I wanted to both be part of that important tradition as well as work to keep that tradition alive, both in our town and in our country.

New Candidates

Ira Bernstein

Charles Hornig

Barbara Katzenberg

Precinct: 2

E-mail address: barbara.katzenberg@gmail.com

Phone number 781.718.6618

Community Activities: Lexington Land Stewards, Lexington Field & Garden Club, Lexington Living Landscapes, Citizens for Lexington Conservation; Participant in Racial Equity Focus Group; Current president of neighborhood (Moon Hill) association.

I believe as a Town Meeting member I can add the most value by investing attention into the subset of issues that particularly concern me, i.e., those that impact sustainability and conservation.

Lexington has shown leadership in:

- Building the Hartwell Solar Installation that provides power to Town buildings, lowering our usage of fossil fuels;
- Implementing a program to enable residents to purchase electric power solely from renewable resources (Community Choice);
- Building with the expectation of net-zero energy usage (e.g., Hastings Elementary School);
- Incorporating sustainability criteria in the planning of the Hartwell Innovation Project
- Maintaining over 1300 acres of conservation land

Lexington should consider more strictly regulating the characteristics of new domestic construction. While new houses built in Lexington are typically more energy-efficient than older houses, that advantage is diluted by a great increase in size. In addition, when a large house replaces a small one on the same lot there is less room for trees and other plantings which might mitigate--in a small way--the effects of climate change.

Lexington Town Meeting is a historic, elected body whose members invest their time in understanding, questioning, and voting upon decisions facing the Town. Of necessity, the detailed work of creating policies and budgets occurs elsewhere; and implementing decisions is the responsibility of other parts of the government. Town Meeting's importance is in its ability to broadly represent the concerns of the Town's citizens which in turn can result in government that is a good reflection of the community's values.

Nathan R. Schnidman

Rita Vachani

Precinct: 2

E-mail address: rita.vachani@gmail.com

Phone number: 781-861-6195

- Community Activities

Member, Town Communications Advisory Committee since 2016. (The Committee advises the Select Board and other Town officials on wired and wireless communications services)

My husband and I have been Lexington residents for 30 years; we have 2 children, both educated in Lexington Public Schools

* Question for Town Meeting candidates:

The factors that make Lexington a great place to live include the diverse community, the quality of our schools, our neighborhoods and the feeling of community, the public open spaces, and the high quality of services such as Cary Library and the Community Center. In my view, we have to focus on issues related to these factors. We need to enhance the diversity of the community, making it more inclusive in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age and ability. We need to protect our environment. And we need to maintain the quality of our schools while ensuring they are inclusive.

How do you view the role of Town Meeting in implementing improvements?

The Town Meeting is the forum to discuss and decide on local matters that affect the quality of our lives. Town Meeting Members can encourage residents to engage on matters and to solicit input on issues that are important to them. Town Meeting Members can also drive and balance priorities by approving (or not) appropriation requests and by their votes on other Articles.

Emilie Rinard Webster

Precinct: 2

E-mail address: erinard@yahoo.com

Phone number: 617-686-2750

* Community Activities

Bowman School Room Parent, PTA

Lexington Conservation Steward/Volunteer for Junior Ranger Program

LUSC elementary school coach

* Question for Town Meeting candidates:

There are numerous issues in Lexington that are important. As a mother of children ages 6, 9 & 11 who wants to raise children with an appreciation of all people and respect of the world around them, I am particularly interested on issues that include education, conservation & environmental issues, inclusion & diversity. I moved to Lexington for its excellent public schools, proximity to Boston/Cambridge for commuting, and the ability to enjoy daily walks through conservation land. There are looming challenges to each of these areas, including near-term discussions on costly upgrades to school infrastructure and zoning considerations along Hartwell Ave. As a mother and taxpayer these areas are of particular importance to me. The events of this past year have driven me to pursue a more active role in town governance. I want to run for Town Meeting to better represent the voice of working parents.

Amy Weinstock

Precinct 2

amykweinstock@gmail.com

781-861-0985

* Community Activities

Massachusetts Autism Commission Member (Governor Appointee)

Chair, Insurance Committee, Advocates for Autism of Massachusetts

Past President, Friends of MGH Lurie Center for Autism

Former Bowman PTA Volunteer

30+ year resident of Lexington

What Lexington issues do you think are most important?

- Education – Continued strong investment in maintaining excellence. Providing equal opportunities for all learners. Addressing social-emotional needs, particularly stress at the middle school and high school level.
- The Environment. Address global warming and adopt measures to mitigate climate change effects

What does Lexington do well?

- Lexington is a well-managed town, with good schools, excellent town services, respect for open spaces and the environment.

What could be improved?

- Housing affordability.

How do you view the role of Town Meeting in implementing improvements?

- I view the role of Town Meeting to bring together a cross-section of citizens to thoughtfully consider important issues affecting the town.