

Precinct 5 Town Meeting Members 2021

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

Anil A. Ahuja

Precinct 5

anil_ahuja@yahoo.com

781-652-0555

Community Activities

Town Liaison - Indian Americans of Lexington

Organizing Committee - Festival of Colors, attended by over 700 people

Organizing Committee - Navratri, attended by about 500 people

Member of the Town Executive Committee

What Lexington issues do you think are the most important?

I believe the most important issue that Lexington faces is fiscal. We have major expenses coming up, such as the High School. COVID has impacted businesses adversely, people have lost jobs, residents are faced with higher real estate taxes. We need to increase the commercial footprint in town to generate revenue. Affordable housing needs to be addressed.

What does Lexington do well?

Lexington is very inclusive and welcoming of people from different cultures.

What could be improved?

The residential tax burden has been growing significantly and we need to control expenses. We have major capital expenditures coming down the road such as the High School. We need to increase affordable housing.

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

As a TMM, we need to be pass laws that are fiscally prudent, encourage the commercial footprint in town with minimum inconvenience to the residents. Town Meeting can pass laws to encourage affordable housing.

Robert Balaban

Precinct 5
E-mail address bbalaban@gmail.com
Phone number 617 851 2508

* Community Activities

Lexington Citizen’s Academy, Class of 2020
Election poll worker since 2015
Elected to Town Meeting (1 year replacement term) March, 2020

* Question for Town Meeting candidates:

I think the biggest priorities facing our Town government over the next few years include:

- a) Growing the stock of affordable housing in town. I think it’s terrible that almost none of our town employees can actually afford to live here.
- b) Promoting intelligent and appropriate commercial growth to leaven the tax base
- c) Dismantling structural racism wherever we find it. Even though Lexington is better at this than many other places, there is always room for improvement.
- d) Beating the Covid-19 pandemic
- e) Continuing to adopt green energy policies and incentives to combat climate change
- f) We are going to have to find a way to pay for a new High School in the next couple of years.

In listing a bunch of major problems which the town confronts, let me also emphasize that I am hugely impressed by the skill and professionalism of the leaders of all of our town departments (Public Works, Schools, Health, Town Clerk, Development, Planning and so on). Town Meeting’s role is to set overall priorities for town government, primarily through debating and approving (or not) budgetary, zoning and other topics. Town Meeting, together with the Select Board, School Committee and the various appointed and elected Boards work together to evolve and implement the plans and policies that make Lexington the wonderful place to live and work that it is.

Aneesha Karody

Richard L. Neumeier.

Rita Panday

As a Lexington resident since 1988, I am invested in serving and contributing to Lexington. As a committed Town Meeting Member for four years, I have never missed a single session and I always make certain to immediately respond to any constituents who reach out to me. I have also served as an officer in the Town Meeting Members' Association Executive Committee. Town Meeting is one of the oldest forms of direct democracy in the world, and I feel privileged to be a part of this democratic tradition and help move Lexington forward.

When voting, I carefully analyze every article and bring in perspectives from my life experiences. The 4 major issues which I feel most strongly about are protecting the environment, serving the aging population, preserving social justice, and enhancing education.

For environmental issues, although we have considerable conservation land in the town, we can do more to preserve our wildlife and biodiversity by having pollinator gardens, planting trees and avoiding harmful chemicals. To bring more awareness, I am a board member for both the "Lexington Living Landscapes" and "Citizens for Lexington Conservation". I grow many native plants and have a composting area and an apiary in my yard.

I realized the issues surrounding the aging population when I was a nursing home Ombudsman in Lexington. This made me acutely aware of the condition of some of our seniors. Our community center organizes wonderful workshops and trips for seniors. I was able to lead many of them before the pandemic. I think more should and could be done to improve the quality of life for our seniors who have contributed so much to this town.

As an Indian American, I believe there should be more opportunities to share and understand different cultures. In 2018, I co-chaired - "Dance Around the World" through the Town Celebrations Committee. This event brought many different cultures together to perform. In the Town Celebrations Committee, we are trying to create more of these events to increase multicultural awareness. I have also been teaching the course "Beginning Hindi- a Language and Culture Sampler" at the Lexington Community Education to share language and Indian culture with the community.

Lexington does a great job of educating our children. All three of my children are successful products of the Lexington School system. Recently, I retired as the Assistant Director of the Harvard Secondary School Program after 26 years where I worked on projects to make education equitable and accessible. I hope to provide more educational opportunities to the students of Lexington.

Marc Saint Louis

Precinct 5
E-mail address marcsaintlouis@yahoo.com
Phone number 703-623-7042 m

* Community Activities

Member, Lexington Town Meeting (Precinct 6 – 2012), (Precinct 5 – 2013-Present);
Vice-Chair, Lexington Town Meeting Association (2019-Present);
Gov't Committee Chair & Member, Association of Black Citizens of Lexington (2018–Present);
Co-Chair (2016 – Present) and Member (2012–Present), Lexington Democratic Town
Committee
Board Member, Cary Library Foundation (2018–Present);
Member, Lexington Education Foundation (2018–Present);
Coach, Lexington Youth Lacrosse (2012–Present);
Coach, Lexington Youth Basketball (2015-Present).

* Question for Town Meeting candidates:

What Lexington issues do you think are most important?

- Increasing the affordable housing stock
- Focus on Business Development / Suburban Planning: To increase tax base and attract more diverse businesses
- Increase mental health resources for our population, especially youth and elderly
- Increase Covid-19 vaccinations and resources during this ongoing pandemic, so children can return to school full-time asap
- Alleviate overcrowding in our school system, particularly in our high school
- Increase space for both outdoor and indoor athletic pursuits, including a community swimming pool

What does Lexington do well?

Lexington is a welcoming and safe community with a rich history and culture

I feel fortunate to live in a community where so many citizens are interested in and devote themselves to helping make their community a better place to live, work and play, mainly

through their volunteerism. Further, Lexington does a great job in balancing its historical roots with its

What could be improved?

While Lexington is great at bringing issues to the attention of town officials and community stakeholders, Lexington has trouble coming to a consensus around many issues which can lead to them languishing unresolved for many years. Also, while Lexington is home to a rich staple of volunteers, many times I see the same people offering their time and wish that Lexington would do a better job with its outreach to the community at large. Further, while I do feel that Lexington is inclusive and welcoming to a variety of ethnicities, I wish the workforce including town staff, teachers, police and fire, etc., was more diverse and reflected the broad mosaic of its population.

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

Town Meeting plays an important role in implementing improvements. In addition to voting on various proposals and articles at Annual Town Meeting, Town meeting members are representatives of the population at large and should keep in contact with residents in their precincts to keep them informed of the process, and help gauge the pulse of their precinct and bring issues of importance to their residents to the debate when Town Meeting meets.

David G. Williams

New Candidates

Sarah E. Higginbotham

Precinct 5

shigginbo@gmail.com

617-633-3187

Community Activities

- Student Health Advisory Council, 2020-present
- Harrington School Green Team, 2016-2020
- Byron-Lockwood Area Neighborhood Group (BLANG), 2015-2016, organizing for the Pierce-Lockwood Neighborhood Conservation District (NCD), established 2016/17.

Question for Town Meeting candidates

I believe that the most important issues facing Lexington today include:

Addressing issues of systemic racism, implicit bias, and other injustices in all areas of town life, including employment, housing, education, and policing. I support the hiring of a full-time town director of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) to guide these efforts, just as the Lexington Public Schools did two years ago.

Improving economic and environmental sustainability through smart development. We should consider commercial development projects that benefit and support the town through taxes and civic involvement, while upholding a commitment to high standards of environmental protection and historic preservation. We must also address residential development laws that permit overbuilt lots and the loss of the town's tree canopy.

Maintaining and improving safe routes for walking, biking, and other forms of transport around town that reduce our reliance on cars, including sidewalks, bike lanes, and public transit. The redesign and repair of sidewalks in all neighborhoods can keep us safe and improve the health and well-being of residents by providing more locations for exercise and neighborhood connection.

I believe that Lexington does a good job of listening to voices representing a diversity of perspectives and experiences. There are many interest groups, committees, and other organizations that work to bring a town-wide focus to important issues and ideas. From official meetings of town committees to forums on cultural, environmental, educational, and other issues to public celebrations of our rich town history, there is no shortage of opportunity to engage and to be heard.

I see Town Meeting as an excellent forum for hearing diverse views and engaging in thoughtful discussion about articles brought by various groups and committees. Town Meeting Members need to stay informed and, in turn, inform their neighbors about issues that impact our town.

Salvador A. Jaramillo

Precinct: 5

Email Address: sjaramillo@college.harvard.edu

Phone Number: (781) 266-7464

Community Activities:

- Lexington High School Town Award Recipient
- Former Class President of the Class of 2020
- Former Captain of LHS Track and Field Team
- Town Soccer Referee
- Student Tutor

The Lexington issues that I think are most important are the ones that help preserve and protect the history and values of our town. I deeply care about our schools and want them to have the best resources to help make our students successful. As a student who recently graduated from

LHS, I understand the challenges that the COVID-19 has had on both our students and educators, and I want to make sure that we help them eventually return to a post-COVID world.

I also want to make sure that our town helps make Lexington more affordable for our low-income seniors, families, and disabled, all of whom have struggled through the pandemic and who help make Lexington a more diverse and inclusive community. Alongside these issues, I am a fierce advocate for protecting our conservation land and tree initiatives that not only preserve the historical sites of our town but also help protect our environment. As a former athlete and town soccer referee, I also want to make sure that our recreational sites and fields are well-maintained and improved for all residents.

Lexington does a lot of things well. We are a community that believes in the importance of education and supports the future of the next generation. We strive to promote a diverse community and help those in need, and I truly believe that our town serves as a model that many towns in Massachusetts and across the country try to strive to be. Throughout my life, I have held to the adage that there is always room for improvement and the same remains true for our town, especially as the world around us changes so drastically.

As a Town Meeting member, I feel that we need to make sure that we maintain a healthy and balanced budget that will help us invest in the future, while also preparing us for any unexpected challenges along the way. From affordable housing to basic town maintenance, there is a lot that we can do to better our town and make sure it listens and serves all residents. Town Meeting is the heart and soul of our town government and community, and as a candidate for Town Meeting, I see it as an opportunity to help voice out specific concerns or suggestions that may be overlooked. Although I may be young, I know I can bring a valuable perspective to Town Meeting and help advocate on behalf of all generations of Lexington, both young and old. Every time I vote and participate in Town Meetings I promise to keep in mind the views and opinions of my constituents on every issue and act accordingly. Together we can continue to make Lexington a better place and help prepare it for the ever-changing future.