

## Precinct 6 Town Meeting Members 2021

7 for 3 years

1 for 2 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**

**Mark V. Andersen**

**Edmund C. Grant**

Precinct 6  
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Phone 781-861-1348

Community Activities: Town Meeting Member 1985-present; Planning Board Member 1991-96; Current Board of Assessors Member and Select Board Fund For Lexington Committee; Lexington At Large Columnist for Lexington Minuteman, 1997-present; Current Member Lexington Golf Club and Rotary Club of Lexington; Past President Lexington Historical Society

Answer to Question: I think the most important issue right now is to make sure we have enough money and revenue to sustain our first-rate schools and municipal budget and the debt exclusion votes for our new schools construction, restored Police and Fire Stations and other needed capital improvements. The Town is doing well in acquiring land and open space which I have supported. Our affordable housing record of at least 10% affordable since 2004 has prevented any new 40B developments since that time and is exemplary compared to other suburban communities throughout Massachusetts. All of the above results from good planning and execution and has enabled Lexington's reputation for some time as a prestigious and desired suburb; and as a Town Meeting Member I will continue to work toward that end.

**Jyotsna Kakullavarapu**

Precinct: 6 Incumbent  
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Phone number: 978-387-9461

\* Community Activities

- Volunteer as Town Meeting Member, Represented Precinct 6 at fall 2020 Special Town Meeting
- Council on aging board member, community liaison at Vision 20/20 committee, Mental Health Task force, and Medical Reserve Corps. VP at Indian Americans Getting Involved group (iGIG).
- COVID-19 Frontline work, serving patients in unprecedented times with home health Care in the comfort of their own home cutting the hospital stay days.

\* Question for Town Meeting candidates:

Affordable housing is been a big issue in Lexington. Creative ideas and implementing the new ideas is much needed to utilize the land not just build big single family homes. Leading in Education and the programs that help middle and high school students to prepare them well where the college seems to be piece of cake is been done well at Lexington. There is cultural diversity from student population but, the diversity from teachers is much needed improvement to make all the student population open for diversity. It is a team effort with good funding and citizens bringing initiative makes Town Meeting certainly put effort into evaluating the need and whether or not it is doable in implementing the creative ideas for improvements. Citizens' participation and bringing issues to the town meeting need to be much encouraged.

**Brian P. Kelley**

Precinct 6

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Community Activities

Father of 3 boys (2, 6 and 7) - Yes I consider that a community activity!

Lifetime Lexington Resident

Local Business and Property Owner

Precinct 6 Town Meeting Member since 2007

Lincoln Park Committee member (Subcommittee of Recreation)

Lexington Youth Lacrosse Coach 2006-2012 and 2019-2021

Lexington Little League coach

Answer to Question

The most important issues are subjective depending on the constituent. There are many to list but we rightfully always come back to the school systems and right now I think the most

important issue facing Lexington is how to safely get our students back to in-person school and achieving the educational opportunities that all Lexington students have benefited from in years past. Covid is a tremendous challenge and we all have made large and small adjustments to our daily lives but it is my belief that all leaders in Lexington should strive to implement a safe fully in person learning environment as soon as possible, preferably before the end of this academic year. As Town Meeting members it is our duty to represent our constituents and offer perspective to the School Committee and staff as advocates of those who reside in our precincts. I would also mention that the looming planning and construction of a new High School space should be a community wide discussion starting now. We are fortunate to live in an amazing community and we all do better when we work together and discuss openly and honestly our ideas and perspective.

**.Deepika Sawhney**

Precinct 6

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Important Lexington issues:

- A plan including funds for vaccination of all Lexington residents if they are made available at the town level.
- Sustained improvement and trust in relations between different groups in town
- Make living in Lexington affordable for young adults, families and senior citizens
- Managing the budget if there are any shortfalls from expected state revenues, and continued shortfalls from in town departments due to the pandemic.
- Managing the total debt burden for existing debt and new debt to be taken on for construction projects such as the police station and high school.
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What Lexington does well:

- Govern rationally and ethically
- Celebrate its history and embrace its residents' diversity
- Raise its children with care

What can Lexington improve?

- Question and reflect on who we are as a community (as a continuous process)
- Improve certain traffic accident prone street junctions! (Example: Hancock, Harrington and Bedford street triangle).

Town meeting role:

- Lead by example
- To represent all Lexington residents
- Continue to be an avenue for concerned residents to seek solutions
- Govern for the health and happiness of Lexington’s people and the environment

**Vinita Verma** Precinct: Precinct 6

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**Community Activities:**

- Last year in April, at the onset of COVID-19, when masks were in limited availability for healthcare workers, I handmade over 250 masks and provided them to multiple neighborhood hospitals.
- I took the initiative of implementing a sidewalk in my neighborhood for the safety of our pedestrians and collected 130 signatures from surrounding households.
- I have spent numerous hours as a Lead Science Coach for Science Olympiad for Diamond Middle School and my students have won many prizes. I was actively involved in Big Backyard and other science and arts related school activities.
- When my children were members of Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, I was actively involved in hosting camp activities.
- I have always volunteered for different Town-wide local events such as Dance around the world at LHS etc. I enjoy giving my time to the Lexington community that has done so much for me and my family.

**Question for Town Meeting candidates:**

**What Lexington issues do you think are most important?**

- First and foremost, we need to address the fiscal issues such as lowering taxes, by attracting more businesses to the area, revising zoning by-laws and Hartwell Ave. rezoning initiatives that may fiscally help our town.
- I also believe that the High School building needs to be updated to keep up with the changing population-this building was constructed at a time when Lexington population/demographic was different. In order to maintain the competitiveness and phenomenal ranking of LHS, we need to upgrade the building.
- I am a big proponent of taking care of elders who have guided us every step of the way. I want to fight on their behalf to ensure – affordable housing for them, more community activities and better transportation access, so that their quality of life is maintained.
- Affordability for small businesses as many businesses closed due to impact of COVID shutdown.

### **What does Lexington do well?**

Lexington is an amazing community, which is why my husband and I decided to establish our roots here over 10 years ago to ensure that our two children got the opportunity to take advantage of this incredible town.

- Lexington has such incredibly diverse and supportive culture. Children of Lexington get the opportunity to learn from a diverse population every day that prepares them for a better future.
- This diversity has developed a world class, marvelous school system that is highly ranked not just in the state but in the country.
- Varied range of community activities that benefit people of all ages.

### **What could be improved?**

I love the Lexington community and truly believe that this town offers the best that a community has to offer. However, I feel that we can make Lexington even better if we improve in the following areas:

- Whole town should be made walkable. The town should survey and construct sidewalks in areas where they are needed. I have seen pedestrians put themselves at risk because of this lack of sidewalks.
- I believe that public transportation should be made more accessible to Lexington residents and non-residents. I propose more funding should be provided to the local transportation sector so that the Lexpress can cater to all areas of Lexington, thus reducing pollution and traffic-congestion. This will also allow Lexington residents and non-residents (but essential workers) to get access to Lexpress and continue to provide essential services much needed in the community.
- I also feel that as a community we can do more to maintain the health of our residents (elderly and others). To that end, I would like to propose an indoor swimming pool facility for all Lexington residents that would be free of charge.
- More town staff should be hired to efficiently take care of town related issues in timely manner.

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

- I believe, Town Meeting Members who run for this volunteer position do so because they love the community and want to make Lexington a better place to live for current and future residents. I would like to acknowledge and thank all TMM for their dedication and sacrifice.

- This also defines my membership and involvement in TMM every single day. As a Town Meeting Member, I want to make this town the best town that current and future generations would want to live in and enjoy the quality of life that we create. I am so proud to say that because of what we have developed so far, my daughter, who is a high schooler at LHS, has stated that she would love to come back to Lexington after college because of its progressive thoughts and values. I can proudly state that I have been part of those progressive thoughts and values for the past three years as a TMM and I hope to continue that for the next three years with your support.
- Lexington is a one-of-a-kind community and I, as your TMM, would like to maintain that so that we can become an envy of all communities, not just in Massachusetts but across this country.

## New Candidates

### Jodie L. Finnigan

Precinct 6

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#### \* Community Activities

- Team member on Special Town Meeting 2020-2, Article 8: Systemic Racism Resolution,
- Chair the ABCL Education Committee (Association of Black Citizens of Lexington)
- Volunteered as a local poll worker
- Helped organize the MLK Conversation on Race
- Helped organize a community wide film screening for “I’m Not Racist ... Am I?”
- Supported Race Amity Day
- Volunteer on the Housing working group
- Volunteered on LHS PTO - Board Recruiting Team and Forums

#### \* What Lexington issues do you think are most important?

I believe I can bring a uniquely important perspective and ability to make change on a range of issues. The ones that are most important to me are:

- **Education:** We have dedicated teachers and administrators who work hard to make sure our children have outstanding services and education. Lexington needs to make sure that we keep providing the resources necessary to keep our schools at this world class level.
- **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI):** Lexington has begun to work hard to address issues around DEI, but there is more that will need to be done: we need to ensure minorities of all backgrounds are represented in town government; schools must continue their work addressing racial inequalities; we must work with our police

department to ensure they have a diverse group of officers; and we must take steps to make sure that minorities feel welcome in all aspects of town life.

- **Housing:** There is a lack of affordable housing in Lexington, which harms our community in numerous ways. It makes it more difficult for town employees, systemically disadvantaged minorities, young people, seniors who have spent their lives here, and more to be able to live here. Addressing this will create a more diverse and vibrant town.

### **What does Lexington do well?**

Our Town is a great place to live and we do many things well, including:

- An active and engaged citizenry with a high level of community activism and involvement
- Beautiful walking paths and tree canopy
- Outstanding public services, including roads, the fire department, schools, and more
- Our library provides wonderful services including a wide selection of books and media to public events
- Schools in Lexington are as good as any in the nation
- We have a town full of good people and we live in a peaceful and quiet community that provides an extremely high quality of life

### **What could be improved?**

There are steps that Lexington can take to make life better for all of our residents:

- I want to promote racial equity not only for Black people. Our town has a significant Asian population who also face racial bias and trauma. I want to promote equity for ALL.
- Increased representation of minorities of all backgrounds in Town government in both the municipal, staff and committee/board appointees.
- Create a more welcoming environment for minorities of all backgrounds in Lexington.

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

Town Meeting members must strive to ensure that the needs of all their constituents are heard and addressed. This means they need to work hard to both magnify the voices of groups whose opinions and needs are not always heard while also ensuring the needs of the majority are met. Town Meeting members must learn everything they can about the issues before us and be available to our constituents and open to new ideas. I can bring an important voice to Town Meeting, one that is uniquely positioned to do all of this. By questioning, clarifying and voting on things like zoning bylaws expenditures, at our best in Town Meeting we help the town to not only articulate values but reflect them by putting our money where our mouth is. I am a Black woman who has faced discrimination and seen the best of our great Town. I have been heavily

engaged in working to make our Town an even better place and my experience will help me to heal divisions and enhance equity for all minorities.

**Ramesh Nallavolu**

**Taylor Carroll Singh**

Precinct 6

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- Appointed Special Permit Residential Development Zoning Bylaw Amendment Committee Member
- Lexington Says #ENOUGH Board Member
- LexFUN! Board Member
- Lexington League of Women Voters Board Member
- Lexington Kids PMC Ride Board Member
- Estabrook Parent and Volunteer
- Graduate of Lexington's Citizens Academy

For the past four years as an elected Town Meeting member, I have seen the role of Town Meeting in implementing improvements manifest itself in multiple ways. Town Meeting can bolster the success of a Capital Improvement, such as the support of the Debt Exclusion to build the new Maria Hastings Elementary School, Lexington Children's Place and Fire Station Headquarters. Town Meeting can also be the last backstop against a proposed solution that isn't the best idea, such as moving the Hosmer House to Vine Street.

From my experience, most motions arrive nearly fully baked from committees or boards and are seeking our legislative body's final stamp before becoming a permanent change. However, Town Meeting is also the place where a proposed change can receive a potpourri of feedback, can be altered on the floor through the amendment process, and/or be sent back to the board or committee for more work. I view the role of Town Meeting as being true representatives to the entirety of our 33,000+ person community. Elected members need to engage with and speak on behalf of our neighbors in order to account for the spectrum of viewpoints Lexingtonians contribute to shared adaptive challenges. This is an area where our town can improve. Citizen engagement goes through highs and lows across age groups and we would best served if we all made ourselves educated and accountable. As TMMs, we can feel confident we have implemented the correct improvements correctly if they reflect the needs and wants of our treasured neighbors.

In response to the question “What Lexington issues do you think are most important?” I have to set the basis that the global climate crisis underlies everything, everywhere. From the Lexington Minuteman this past week, you can find the headline “Climate Change is still the greatest crisis of our time.” Every issue that comes before our local legislative body has to be seen through the lens of this crisis. Luckily, Lexington excels at understanding the gravity of this crisis and in my experience has supported environmental articles throughout my time as an elected member. This is the area where Lexington does very well.

Two items are currently always standing on the Select Board’s agenda: “Strategies, Implementation, Community Response Actions and Reopening Efforts Related to COVID-19 Guidelines and Directives” and “Update on Next Steps for Social and Racial Equity Initiatives.” Therefore, those are the two items it appears our Select Board and Town Manager view as most important. From there, we know building (and funding!) the new Lexington High School and Police Station take very high priority and were of the highest priority before COVID hit. Further, Hartwell revitalization and the positive and negative effects of housing restrictions are of high importance to our town as well.

**Ramin Taraz**