

Precinct 8 Town Meeting Member

7 for 3 years

2 for 1 year

Question for Town Meeting Member candidates:

Do you favor more commercial development in Lexington to offset residential development? If so, where would you choose to locate it?

Incumbents

Margaret S. Enders

peggyenders@gmail.com

781-863-0474

Community Activities: Precinct 8 Town Meeting Member, since 2010, Chair, Lexington Bicycle Advisory Committee, Member, Greenways Corridor Committee, Member, Friends of Lexington Bikeways,

Co-Founder, Lexington's annual Bike Walk 'n Bus Week, Co-Chair, 2018 Minuteman Bikeway 25th Anniversary celebration, Member, ad hoc Center Streetscape Committee & ad hoc Grain Mill Alley Committee, Member, League of Women Voters (LWV Board Member for 3 years)

Lexington needs to reverse the dramatic loss of commercial revenue experienced in the last several decades to relieve the increasing burden on residential taxpayers. Some seniors and middle- and lower-income residents are being forced out of the community; the cycle continues as their homes are torn down to make way for larger, more expensive homes.

Mixed-use developments — also known as Live-Work Spaces — are working well in other communities, and in general bring vitality to an area in ways that are lacking in older commercial developments. Hartwell Avenue is one of Lexington's largest commercial areas, and the prospect of upgrading the zoning, along with the vision for a mixed-use area that includes small-scale residential and retail, is exciting. That area needs to be made more people- and walking-friendly to add to its commercial appeal and to create an area that attracts folks to spend time there for reasons other than work. Hayden Avenue would be a more attractive commercial area if it, too, introduced small-scale retail (think cafes and shops), apartments, and walking paths to make the area more people-friendly.

The proposal for a mixed-use development at 186 Bedford Street, however, is an example of a re-zoning proposal missing an overall vision for that section of Bedford Street, given its proximity to a thriving neighborhood. In addition to the problem of proposing such a large development on a small footprint, there are questions about what the owners plan for their commercial space across the street, the future of the strip mall abutting the 186 Bedford property, and for the land purchased by the Town as swing space for the fire and police

departments. The town needs to develop a plan for that whole area of Bedford Street before Town Meeting considers this proposal.

East Lexington — the area along Mass Ave between Pleasant Street and the town line — has some of Lexington's more appealing shops and eateries, but the area has little aesthetic appeal, and its infrastructure has been neglected. Given its proximity to the Minuteman Bikeway and to Arlington and other areas east of Lexington, East Lexington is an area that would profit from some investment and attention — it would almost certainly pay off in terms of bringing more business to Lexington.

David C. Horton

E-mail address: paulrevereroad@aol.com

Phone number: 781-862-3293

Community Activities: Town Meeting Representative from Precinct 8: 2002 – present, Member, Community Preservation Committee, Chair, School Committee of Minuteman Regional Vocational Technical High School District, Chair, former Busa Land Use Proposal Committee (BLUPC)

Charter member former No Place for Hate Steering committee (NPFH)

Increasing commercial development in Lexington has the potential to reduce taxes for residents and to provide employment opportunities as well, but, if the intent is for "more commercial development to offset residential development" whereby land is rezoned from residential use to commercial use, I have difficulty with that, one example being a plot of land on Bedford Street. If the intent is to increase commercial development in appropriate areas to reduce residential taxes and to provide/increase employment opportunities, I can support it. For example, Hartwell Avenue has the potential to be a much more valuable asset than it is, but concerns I have about it relate to increased traffic in the area, impact on surrounding land and neighborhoods, and the sustainability of any structures erected. In some sense, the discussion of commercial development vs. residential development centers on the nature of what the present and future residents of Lexington would like our town to be.

Alan Mayer Levine

levfam4@rcn.com

781-862-8127

Community Activities: Town Meeting Member since 1989, Member and former chair, Town of Lexington Appropriation Committee, Appropriation Committee liaison to School Master Planning Advisory Committee, Former president, Citizens for Lexington Conservation

More intensive commercial development is proposed to generate property tax revenue. It would do that, but it would come with other consequences, especially increases in traffic, that would not be welcome because heavy traffic volumes are already a serious problem during rush hours in and around Lexington. In addition, more intensive development is just not appropriate in many areas of town. For any proposal, one must ask whether the proposed location is appropriate and whether the likely increases in traffic will be acceptable in light of the positive aspects of the proposal. I would be in favor of further development of the Hartwell Avenue area only if sufficiently effective traffic mitigation measures are part of the plan and realistic traffic studies provide common-sense-based assurance that traffic volume increases will be limited. Such measures might include increased reliance on shuttle buses, e.g., to and from Alewife Station, Riverside Station, or other transportation centers. Better public transportation would also help, but, as I am a regular MBTA commuter and experience the poor condition of the MBTA, I am skeptical that this has any chance of happening.

I will oppose any rezoning at or close to 186 Bedford St. that expands the area of commercial development or allows highly intensive residential uses. At present, there is a large amount of commercially developed area around this site; much of it is underutilized or even vacant, old, and very unattractive, and traffic backups regularly occur on Bedford St. I would prefer to confine or even shrink the land devoted to commercial uses in this neighborhood.

I would likewise oppose rezoning of other areas close to residential neighborhoods if it would lead to development that would inappropriately encroach into the residential parts of the neighborhood or would be likely to have other significant negative effects. I have supported rezoning articles that have made minor changes to lists of permitted uses in the Zoning Bylaw but did not increase the sizes of the affected commercial zones. These changes can help maintain the usefulness of our present commercial zones. The bottom line is that I will only support further development that is good overall for the town in terms of tax revenue, traffic, compatibility with neighborhoods, housing choices, esthetics, storm water management, effects on conservation land, etc.

Andrei Radulescu-Banu

bitdribble@gmail.com

781-862-5854

Community activities: Town Meeting member since 2013, Served on the Appropriation Committee for five years, Maintainer of lex-wiki.org, a local wiki for Lexington

Small commercial zones exist but many are decayed and could use a refresh. A practical solution is to upzone selective commercial zones; this is likely to be opposed by Town Meeting,

however, because along with the refresh and the new construction we get increased car traffic, taller buildings, larger parking lots with less space for trees, shrubs and nature. The town is unlikely to get increased town revenue from larger commercial buildings. The question, then, becomes if the advantage of a commercial refresh exceeds the other disadvantages.

Industrial buildings, on the other hand, could bring additional tax revenue. Industrial and manufacturing buildings are zoned differently from commercial buildings. The town has two large industrial areas, one along Spring St, doing quite well, and one along Hartwell Ave, not doing very well. The town has increased the floor-to-area ratio permitted for construction at Hartwell almost a decade ago, but this has not triggered much new construction.

One solution, for Hartwell, would be allowing mixed residential and commercial construction, along with permission to build higher structures - seeking to replicate the success of Assembly Sq and of the nearby Burlington mixed use development around Wegman's. This is a solution I prefer, however, it would result in an increase in residential apartments, which would negate the tax benefit from industrial construction.

A second solution, for Hartwell, would be to simply up-zone the existing industrial buildings, allowing a larger number of floors. A third solution is to re-start using Tax Incentive Financing to attract new development around Hartwell.

William A. Ribich

wcribich@comcast.net

617-775-6113

Community Activities: Town Meeting Member Member since 2013, Water and Sewer Board

I do not favor more commercial development except on Hartwell Avenue

Melinda M. Walker

melinda.walker@rcn.com

781-863-2024

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

I do favor more commercial development in Lexington. With the many expensive capital projects on the horizon, including a new high school, the new police station, and the plans for the center streetscape, it is imperative the town be welcoming to new commercial tax revenue.

When I think of opportunities for commercial development, several things come to mind. First of all, it certainly would be beneficial if there were more opportunities for shopping in the Center. The problem of 'empty storefronts' has been a topic of conversation in Lexington for a long time, and I know there has been a great deal of effort on the part of the Center Committee and Town staff to find solutions to the problem. My guess is that rents are too high, and I wish there were more avenues for discussion with commercial landlords about the issue. I also wonder whether there would be interest to re-examine the 'allowable uses' for businesses in the center (and beyond).

Secondly, I think about the "Hartwell North Rezoning Initiative," which was commissioned by the Board of Selectmen in 2016 with the hope that new zoning will attract vibrant commercial development to the Hartwell Avenue area of town. I know that there have been several community forums and preliminary hearings about the ramifications of rezoning Hartwell Avenue and I know that there has been a lot of concern expressed by neighbors about the impact of development on their neighborhood. Town leaders will need to continue to work with the neighbors of Hartwell Avenue to reach consensus on zoning changes that will bring in more commercial tax revenue and provide improvements to the neighborhood. Hopefully, we will be able to capitalize on the things that the Hartwell Avenue has in its favor: access to public transportation, access to the bike path, and possibilities for green space around commercial buildings.

Teresa L. Wright

e-mail address Teresa.wright@lexingtontmma.org

phone number 617-270-9567

Community Activities: Big Backyard

I do favor additional commercial development. If existing commercial zones can be considered for additional uses, or expansion, I believe that will benefit the town without changing the character of the town. If we do need to rezone residential lots, it should be done with a great deal of consideration for the affected neighborhoods. Factors such as traffic, setbacks, density, and overall size of buildings should be considered. I believe that we should try and maintain the historical, residential feel of Lexington.

New Candidates

Laureen Deems Black

E-mail address: deems77@gmail.com

Phone number: 617-620-4597

Community Activities: I'm a graduate of the 2018 class of the Lexington Citizen's Academy, a past participant in the LHS Visioning Process (2017), an involved member of the Lexington SEPAC and a Den Leader in Cub Scout Pack 160 in Lexington.

As a method to increase the tax base for the town and potentially limit or reduce future increases in homeowner taxes to our residents, I am generally in favor of increasing commercial development. However, I also value both the charming residential neighborhoods we have in the town as well as our vast conservation areas for public use and so, would seek to have any new commercial developments placed in areas of the town that are already heavier with commercial and industrial development (e.g. Hartwell Ave to the West, Spring St/ Hayden St to the South, portions of Massachusetts Ave throughout the center of town, etc.).

David E. Burns

Betty J. Gau

bgaulex@gmail.com

617-633-1984

Community Activities: I Worked on several town debt-exclusion campaigns to support the new First Station, Department of Public Works building, and several school capital projects, Hastings PTA President, Diamond PTA Treasurer, LHS Backers of Lexington Debate (BOLD) past President and current Board member, LHS All Night Graduation Party committee, Lexington 300th Celebration Incorporation Weekend Committee Chair, Boy Scout Troop 160 volunteer, Lexington Education Foundation (LEF) I have served on the Board of LEF and worked as the Co-Chair of the Trivia Bee. I'm currently the chair of the Trivia Bee Questions Committee (and Judge!), Destination Imagination Team Coach

I believe a balanced approach to development is important. Every project needs to be assessed for its value and impact. However, taking one project at a time is not an efficient or effective way for our town to plan neighborhoods or its overall development. I would like to see the town thoughtfully plan and develop commercial business on Hartwell Avenue, Hayden Avenue, and Lexington Center. My primary concern is over building without improving the infrastructure. Our town is experiencing increased traffic and a strain on services. I believe there are already many existing areas and buildings in town that could be further developed to bring in commercial businesses that would enhance our thriving town and increase our tax revenue.

Li Huang

Ting Wang

William A. Ward, Jr.

Email address: ww@billward.net

Phone number: 781-861-0237

Community Activities: Hastings and Diamond Big Back Yard Volunteer, Math/Science tutor, daily user of the Minuteman Bikeway, Former Altadena, CA Town Council member, Board Member Charles River Conservancy

It is a privilege to live in a historic town like Lexington, and I regard all of us to be stewards of Lexington's historic legacy.

I grew up on Long Island and lived in many varied places around the country including Albany, Schaumburg (IL.), Los Angeles, Southeastern Connecticut, Alaska, Vermont and others, and I have observed first hand the differences that result from thoughtful long term comprehensive Land Use management versus short term, piecemeal-so-that-the-present-owner-may-profit driven Land Use Management.

The comparative results are clear: the former is vastly superior to the latter. I have seen so much natural beauty bulldozed, so many cultural qualities abandoned for the "Geography of Nowhere," so many lovely communities lost, so that real estate developers could make a quick buck. Their gains might last a lifetime, but their marks last longer. I have also seen the redemptive effects of comprehensive planning, development and preservation when I worked as a Land Use consultant in southern California, and it is a power perspective.

Chasing tax dollars is almost always an illusory effort-with all the variety of places I have live in, I never recall tax bills going down after a burst of development. Indeed, the cost of services often goes up faster than the tax gains-commercial development requires more fire, police, sanitation, etc.; residential development often brings in more school age children, ratcheting up school budgets. I don't oppose policemen, firemen or school children, I just point out that there is no free lunch, and I have generally paid less in property tax when I lived in less developed places.

That's why I favor smart development focusing on integrated uses and comprehensive improvement rather than just growth. Present day Lexingtonians should be very careful where and how we expand commercial activity. We have an existing area of commercial activity, and we should be optimizing its use for the community's benefit before replacing residences with businesses. No expansion makes sense until we consider how quality of life, traffic, noise, mass transit, parking, and the sense of community will be impacted, among other things. In addition, valuable synergy is lost when commercial development expands geographically to reflect sprawl, it is gained when implemented wisely and made dense.

Specifically, before development expands on Bedford Road between Revere and Hancock, we should figure out how to make the zone between Woburn and Worthen a more thriving commercial center. There is no reason to be in town many hours a day and on weekend mornings. Do we want a situation where people are drawn "away" from downtown for their commercial needs? No.

Further, we should not stand by wringing our hands as trees are bulldozed and lots subdivided so that every square foot of town holds a house. We all moved here because we were drawn by what Lexington was and what it is-we need to guard against what the profit motive will force it to become. Those who want to live in a town as densely populated as Cambridge are free to move there. Those who want commercial development of Woburn close to their homes are free to move there as well.

I don't just say this, I live this. My family lives in a 19th Century house that has not been preserved as it should have been and has severe and fundamental issues. As a result, my family stands to gain if we bulldoze it and replace it with a large, modern home. But we came to recognize that these old buildings are what Lexington is about, and so instead of demolishing and replacing, this year we are engaging in a costlier improvement and preservation of our home.

So to be clear, I feel a duty to oppose both the density and scale of commercial development in Lexington that would cost the town its historic character.

Rebecca Anne Weiler

Hogey1919@yahoo.com

[508/397-2035](tel:5083972035)

Community Activities: Parent Volunteer at Maria Hastings Elementary School since 2013 in various volunteer roles, Parent Volunteer at Hancock Nursery School, Regularly attend Lexington Planning Board Meetings

As residents of this town, I think one important question that we need to ask ourselves is, "What is our long term vision for our town? Do we need more commercial/retail development?" I am open to the concept of reusing already commercially defined space like Hartwell Ave for the Hartwell Ave North Rezoning Initiative. I am not in favor of changing zoning on small 1.3 acre residential lots to large mixed use PD/Planned Development in a neighborhood like the proposed 186 Bedford Street Rezoning Initiative.

At some point this year the Hartwell North Rezoning Initiative will make its way to Town Meeting. Town officials asked for zoning change recommendations for the Board of Selectmen to consider which would enhance local revenues through commercial investment. As a resident of Lexington for the last 12 years, I am painfully aware of the increasing tax burden placed on residential property owners here. I think it's important to try and find a balance between Lexington's commercial and residential property tax base which can help offset the growing tax burden on residential property owners. That being said, I feel that we have to be very measured in our approach to achieving this goal. I have read the Hartwell Ave North Rezoning initiative and while I can see the possibility of long term benefits to our town, I believe we also need to be rigorous and comprehensive as we move forward. We owe it to our neighbors to consider all possible benefits and impacts this proposal may have on our environment, our neighborhoods, our infrastructure and town. I am not opposed to this proposal, and I would like to continue the discussion on this initiative further.

This Spring, Town meeting will vote on the 186 Bedford Street Rezoning article (formally the Eliot Community Human Services building). In this warrant the developers are requesting that a residential zoned 1.3 acre property, in a very active residential neighborhood, be rezoned to Planned Development (PD) which has no predetermined standard or restrictions like other zoning. Although the possibility of a mixed use development with apartments and retail space is appealing from a town revenue aspect it is not appealing to the local abutters and local neighborhood it would directly impact. If this article passes it will set a precedent; effectively paving the way for other developers to buy up small lots throughout Lexington, urbanizing and commercializing our neighborhoods bit by bit through Planned Developments. Is that what we want in our historic town? I moved to Lexington to live in a small town rich in history and a sense of community. I did not move here to live in a hustling metropolis designed by developers who are more concerned with their bottom line than the neighborhoods they will impact.

The character of Lexington is one of our greatest attributes. Are the benefits that we might enjoy from additional commercial development worth the cost in terms of what we may lose and how the character of our unique and historic town may change? I think that we need to be very sure that they are before we move forward.

YuWu

e-mail address: yuwu58@gmail.com

phone number: 617-795-6036

Community Activities: Room parent and enthusiastic volunteer in school activities of Hastings, including big back yard, class activities, math night and multi-culture potluck PTA auditor in previous school district, Regional Leader for Super Joey Foundation (superjoey.org), serving families affected by childhood cancer while mentoring young volunteers, Board Member of Chinese Americans of Lexington (CALex, calexma.org/)

Many Lexington residences are trying very hard to find the creative ways to balancing between protecting the character of our neighborhoods and creating commercial income base in order to keep taxpayer burden at a minimal. To build an inclusive, senior-friendly community with affordability for diversified population is also an issue I will work hard on as a TMM candidate.

I would like to support well-planned commercial development in Lexington. A good commercial development will not only expand the town fiscal income, but also create a pleasant place for our residences to relax and entertain. Linden Square in Wellesley, our neighborhood town, is a great example as a combination of stores, restaurants and services set in an inviting suburban location.

In our Lexington, renovation of current commercial buildings in Hartwell Ave might be a solution. This area has already established commercial setting and it is off residential area. With

carefully planning and renovating, this area could be a potential Hartwell Square in Lexington, a mixed shopping and dining center with no hassle of parking like traditional downtown center.