



# Town of Lexington

## Special Town Meeting 2020-2

### **Article 16: Amend Zoning Bylaw and Map –Hartwell Ave (Citizen Petition)**

The Select Board recognizes and appreciates that there have been strong opinions expressed on Article 16 and we understand and appreciate that everyone has the best interests of the Town at heart.

It has been a long standing priority of the Select Board in upholding our fiduciary responsibility to the residents while also balancing the needs of the Town to seek ways to help alleviate the property tax burden on residents. One such way is to expand the Town's commercial tax base. Increased commercial tax dollars will help the Town to continue to balance our budget without the potential of an operating override and also help mitigate our current debt from our recent building projects and finance our future major capital infrastructure projects including a new High School and a new Police Station.

Lexington has long been an attractive location for companies to call home due to its proximity to Cambridge/Boston, and its access to Route 95 and Route 2. Several years ago, Lexington started showing up on the radar of commercial developers as a more cost effective location to develop lab space than locations in and around the Cambridge area. During that time Lexington attracted a wide variety of lab related businesses from the young/early start ups to the more established international corporations. We saw projects built with no tenants signed up at the time of groundbreaking yet prior to the certificate of occupancy being issued, the building was fully leased. Our neighboring cities and towns noticed our early success with lab space and have now positioned themselves to compete actively with Lexington and against Lexington at a much higher level to attract commercial business. Lexington no longer exists in a bubble when it comes to lab space outside of the Cambridge area. Recent articles in the Boston Business Journal and the Boston Globe indicate that the pandemic is shifting the type of commercial space developers are looking to engage in; the market for and use of office space is changing as companies reevaluate how to cost effectively deploy their work force, yet the market for lab space in the greater Boston area is in higher demand and does not show signs of slowing down anytime soon. Our current commercial zoning in the Hartwell Avenue/Bedford Street area simply does not keep up with the changing market conditions and a failure to act to update our Zoning will leave Lexington behind.

It should be noted that the proponent of Article 16 has worked with the Planning Staff, the Economic Development Advisory Committee, the Sustainable Lexington Committee and several residents on this article, having heard their concerns which are now incorporated into the language of this article including specific sustainability components in acknowledgement of Lexington's Getting to Net Zero plan. This article does not contain a housing component at this time. Housing will be brought forward as part of the Hartwell Initiative Project at Annual Town Meeting in Spring of 2022.

Madam Moderator, The Select Board is comfortable with the assurances we have received from our Town Manager, Mr. Malloy and the Planning Staff that they are not in opposition to any of the proposed Zoning Bylaw and Map changes contained in Article 16 and the Board feels Article 16 will not have a negative impact on the current work being done by the Planning and Economic Development Staff to bring the larger Hartwell Avenue Initiative Plan forward at the 2021 Annual Town Meeting. The Select Board feels strongly that the time to act on rezoning the Hartwell Avenue/Bedford Street area has arrived and should not be delayed or further "kicked down the road"

Madam Moderator by a vote of 5-0 The Select Board Unanimously supports passage of Article 16.

Madam Moderator, would you please recognize our Town Manager Mr. Jim Malloy .