

EXECUTIVE SERVICES

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

The Arlington Board of Selectmen is pleased to submit to the residents of Arlington its annual report for 2005. The Arlington Board of Selectmen is composed of five elected individuals who are entrusted with the responsibilities of setting policy and overseeing the management of the municipal functions of local government.

The Board of Selectmen underwent a Selectman change with the exit of Charlie Lyons, a Selectman for twenty-four years in the town. Charlie's commitment to the town, historical knowledge of the town and its people, and connections to information and people at both the state and federal levels has proven to be most beneficial to Arlington. The Board thanks him for his contributions and will miss his effervescent personality.

At the same time, the Board of Selectmen welcomes Annie LaCourt. For the first time in Arlington history, a majority of women comprise the Board of Selectmen. Ms. LaCourt is passionate about creating a long-term strategic plan for the town to ensure that it gets the most value for its tax dollars and maintains its services. The transition has been smooth. She brings a fresh new approach to the Board.

The current members of the Board of Selectmen are John W. Hurd, Chairman, Kathleen Kiely Dias, Vice Chairman, Kevin F. Greeley, Diane M. Mahon, and Annie LaCourt.

Financial Overview

In June of 2005, the residents of Arlington voted to allow for an additional \$6 million dollars to be assessed in real estate and personal property taxes for the purpose of funding the Town and School budgets for the fiscal year beginning July 2005. By the end of 2004, it was very apparent that, without an override, predicted budget deficits would force drastic cuts in both town and school services. Arlington, under the leadership of this Board, the School Committee, the Finance Committee and other town leaders overcame the financial hurdles of the last couple of years through a disciplined program that included reductions in Town and School services, use of the Town's financial reserves to augment revenues, and reductions in operating costs achieved through flexible collective bargaining and increased benefit cost sharing by Town and School employees at all levels.



Board of Selectmen

Standing (l to r) Annie LaCourt, Kevin F. Greeley and Diane Mahon, Vice Chairman. Seated (l to r) John W. Hurd, Chairman; and Kathleen Kiely Dias

It was the Board of Selectmen's immediate task to set the strategy and implement a responsible plan that both balanced the current budget and allowed carefully planned service growth and replenishment of fiscal reserves during the fiscal years 2007 and beyond. The Selectman and School Committee adopted "The Lyons Plan" outlining this fiscal platform: 1) efficient management of Town and School operations that commit to four percent growth over the following five years, 2) disciplined employee and retiree benefit growth that commits to growth in health benefits at seven percent, 3) increased state aid recouping all or most of the \$3.3 million of state aid cuts to Arlington, and 4) an equitable override in 2005 with the promise to not seek another general-purpose override for five years.

Symmes Development

In March, 2001 the Board of Selectmen adopted a policy statement on the acquisition and development of the former Symmes Hospital site. That year, through a successful override the Town purchased the site from Lahey Clinic. The Board set out five (5) commitments to the project it wished to obtain:

- A balanced mixed-use redevelopment of predominately general office and some medical uses, with a limited residential component that includes affordable housing.
- A redevelopment that is at least self-supporting, generating income (after a three to four year startup period) sufficient to offset the costs of acquisition, renovation and maintenance.
- To maintain the parcel's present proportion of open space and to increase its density of development only to gain limited affordable housing.
- To promote expanded health care services on the site.

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- And to an open planning process in which citizens and neighbors can participate in a visioning process, working with the Arlington Redevelopment Board (as the statutory “owner” of the parcel), the Town’s Planning Department, and real estate management consultants to develop a final plan to be recommended to Town Meeting in Spring of 2002.

Most, if not all, of these goals have been attained. There will be a medical office building of 26,100 square feet and a residential component of 245 units that includes 15% affordable housing units and 5% middle-income housing units. There will be a seven and three quarters acres of open space protected with a conservation easement. There were extensive public meetings through the Symmes Advisory Committee over a two year period which shaped the project components. At the time of this writing the project is under appeal and may jeopardize the financial neutrality of the project. Every effort is being made for an agreement to be reached prior to resolution through court proceedings. Further detail on the project may be found in the Planning and Redevelopment Board’s report in this Annual Report.

Town Day

This year Arlington Town Day was postponed for the first time due to hurricane rains and was held on September 24, 2005. The Town Day Committee worked many months to ensure the events on September 24th would be enjoyable for the 30,000 participants. The Board congratulates the committee, and in particular it’s Co-Chairmen, Kathleen Darcy, Marie A. Krepelka and Mary Ann Sullivan. The Committee looks forward to continuing its service to the community in 2006. We greatly thank the many businesses and residents who contributed to make this day a success.

Selectmen Goals

The Board of Selectmen worked throughout the Fall to develop goals for the upcoming year. Those goals are:

- Review policy on water/sewer debt shift
- Oversee Cable License renewal process and transition to Peg Access
- Work with ITAC to establish infrastructure to accommodate a 2 tier tax rate
- Develop budget prioritizing process
- Develop electronic system to distribute Selectmen’s correspondence
- Explore alternative energy sources
 - -look for alternate sources to protect environment, reduce costs, and encourage conservation
- Develop strategy to mitigate Alewife flooding and CSO issues

- Establish a formal process for employee recognition program
 - -possibly include town awards
- Work with ARB & SNMC to complete sale of Symmes property in accordance with the goals set by the Selectmen
- Monitor Home rule legislation progress through legislature
- Work with TAC to encourage public support for the Mass Ave corridor project
- Review voting location accessibility issues
- Establish a committee to explore long term cemetery space needs and expansion
- Communicate Arlington’s emergency preparedness plans to the citizens
- Ensure the budget is developed in accordance with 5 year financial plan
- Develop Board of Selectmen mission statement
- Monitor implementation of Symmes Neighborhood Protection Plan
- Initiate a comprehensive review of the Zoning By-law and identify funding therefore.
- Review policies and procedures then publish on the website

Dedicated Team / Staff Changes

Arlington extends many thanks to Marie Krepelka, an integral part of the Selectmen’s administrative office, for her perseverance in her ability to work under the challenges of her illness. Marie, also known as “Mother Town”, had the community at large sending an abundance of well wishes. The Board thanks them all.

The Board of Selectmen would also like to thank Jean Devereaux, Fran Reidy and Mary Ann Sullivan. Fran Reidy took over the part-time position in the Selectmen’s Office. Fran made a smooth transition into the administrative staff bringing with her more than twenty years of skills in customer service and office experience. They are exceptional employees dedicated to providing the best possible service to every person interacting with the Selectmen’s Office.