

# EXECUTIVE SERVICES

## BOARD OF SELECTMEN

The Board of Selectmen is pleased to submit to the residents of Arlington our annual report for 2008. The Board is composed of five elected individuals who set policy and oversee the management of the municipal functions of local government.

The Board members remained the same with the re-election of Diane Mahon and Annie LaCourt. Mrs. Mahon brings her special talent for constituent services, her love of youth sports, and her strong voice the Town employees to the table. Annie Lacourt brings her financial expertise and constant championing of the Five Year Budget Plan, her interest in sustainable actions by the Town, and her tireless service on the committee that is studying the future of the Town's medical insurance.



Board of Selectmen  
(l-r) Clarissa Rowe, Chairman, John W. Hurd, Vice Chairman, Annie LaCourt,  
Kevin F. Greeley, and Diane Mahon

### Financial Overview

Arlington under the leadership of this Board, the Finance Committee, the School Committee and other Town leaders continued the disciplined budget process during the fourth year of the 5-year strategic plan. With the drastic financial downturn at the end of 2008, the Town remained strong throughout the 2009 year because of cost savings that had been realized in the budget and by the cost reductions made in the fall of 2008. The Town was awarded an AAA bond rating in the summer of 2008, which will allow the Town to borrow money at a reduced rate in the future. Chair Clarissa Rowe continued the tradition of coordinating the Town wide Financial Summit Meetings, bringing to the table Arlington's financial leaders from the Board of Selectmen, Finance Committee, School Committee, Town Manager and Deputy Town Manager, Treasurer, Departments heads, Board of Assessors, and residents. The group met numerous times to review options to keep the Town financially healthy and to prioritize services. This work continues in the Spring of 2009 as we continue to experience dramatic local aid cuts from the Commonwealth, a drop in Town revenues, and a dramatic drop in lottery funds.

### 2008 Selectmen Highlights

#### *Town Day Celebration*

This year's Arlington Town Day was an even bigger success than last year. Resident and vendor participation was tremendous. It was a wonderful day for family activities. There were many highlights of the weekend but Rob Surette, of Amazing Hero Art, remains in our minds as the fastest portrait artist in the world. The Board congratulates and thanks the Town Day Committee and in particular the Co-Chairs, Kathleen Darcy and Marie A. Krepelka. The Board also thanks the many businesses whose loyalty makes this celebration a success. We also want to thank the tireless volunteers who make the event such a success. This celebration is a privately funded Town event.

#### *Five Elections in 18 Months*

With the resignation of State Senator Robert Havern in the summer of 2007, the Town had to have a series of five elections in the space of a year and a half. We thank the Selectmen's office and the many election workers for insuring that these elections went smoothly and efficiently.

#### *Transportation and Parking Update*

Selectman Jack Hurd continued his work with the volunteer group, the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC). They made recommendations for the remaining schools in the Safe Routes to School program, helped initiate a Biking to School pilot program at the Hardy School, and assisted the Town with other parking and transportation issues. Mr. Hurd also lead the efforts on the Massachusetts Avenue Corridor study that is looking at ways to improve the vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycling traffic from the Cambridge line to Pond Lane in the Center of Arlington. Review of the project is ongoing. The project has received state and federal funding for the design work.

Because of the tremendous success of the pilot program of plowing the Minuteman Trail in the winter of 2007, the Trail was plowed again in 2008. There were efforts to expand the trail plowing into Lexington this year.

#### *Restaurant and Package Store Updates*

The Board of Selectmen, their office, and members of the Police and Health Departments received special liquor board training because of their role as the licensers and enforcers of the liquor laws.

Selectmen Kevin Greeley led the charge to update the restaurant and package store guidelines and initiate the vote on four liquor questions on the April ballot. All four liquor questions were passed by the Town. The Selectmen will be looking carefully at the possibility of adding a package store in Arlington Heights, expanding the package store licenses to include all alcohol not just wine and malt, and reviewing the guidelines for food and

# EXECUTIVE SERVICES

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drinks in Arlington's outstanding restaurants.

## *Board of Survey Policies and Procedures*

The new Board of Survey policies and procedures passed by the Town Meeting of 2008 was sent to the Legislative after Town Meeting. As this update is being written, a second House committee is reviewing the legislation and there is a hope that it will be reported out favorably before the Town Meeting of 2009 is completed.

## *Board of Selectmen Meetings with the School Committee and the Arlington Redevelopment Board*

The Board of Selectmen met twice with the School Committee and twice with the Arlington Redevelopment Board to discuss issues of mutual interest. This kind of cooperation will need to continue with the anticipated budget cuts for the fiscal year 2010 and because of the stopping of the Symmes Redevelopment Project last summer.

## *Green Dog Program*

Selectman Clarissa Rowe, with Leslie Mayer, Chair of the Park and Recreation Commission, and Joe Connelly, Director of Recreation, worked for another year on the Green Dog program, which is modeled after the Town of Brookline's successful program in its seventh year. They held another seven public meetings on the program and met again with the Town's committees and commission in order to ready the warrant article vote that will occur during the Town Meeting of 2009.

## Recognitions

The Board of Selectmen would like to thank the Town Manager, the Department Heads, and the entire staff of the Selectmen's office for their tireless and intelligent work on our behalf. We wish a happy retirement to Jean Devereaux. We thank Marie Krepelka, Board Administrator, Mary Ann Sullivan, Frances Reidy, and Jean Burg for their outstanding dedication and service to the Town of Arlington.

# EXECUTIVE SERVICES

## TOWN MANAGER

The year 2008 will long be remembered as the year in which the country's, indeed the global, economy suffered its worst meltdown since the great depression. Banking and real estate institutions were at the heart of the collapse which ultimately affected nearly every sector of the economy. With major banks, financial institutions, major car manufacturers, and numerous other businesses on the verge of bankruptcy, and with unemployment approaching 10%, people were and are losing their homes and jobs at an alarming rate. Consumer spending was also plummeting, and the economy was coming to a standstill.

One of the many consequences of this economic collapse is that government tax revenues plummeted at a time when people need more help from government, not less. Arlington has still not recovered from the last economic downturn in 2003 when it lost 20% of its state aid, or a loss of \$3 million. In FY2009 Arlington's state aid in real dollars was still lower than it was in FY2002. As you can see from the chart below, state aid for other communities has risen an average 20% above the amount in FY2002 while Arlington's is 2.6% below FY2002. The projection for FY2010 continues this disparity.

The current global financial crisis will have a profound impact on state and local government revenues. State revenues in FY2010 could be more than \$3 billion below revenues for FY2008. In FY2009, the current year, state revenues are down \$1.5 billion forcing the government to cut state aid to cities and towns in the middle of FY2009. Arlington's cut is nearly \$1 million



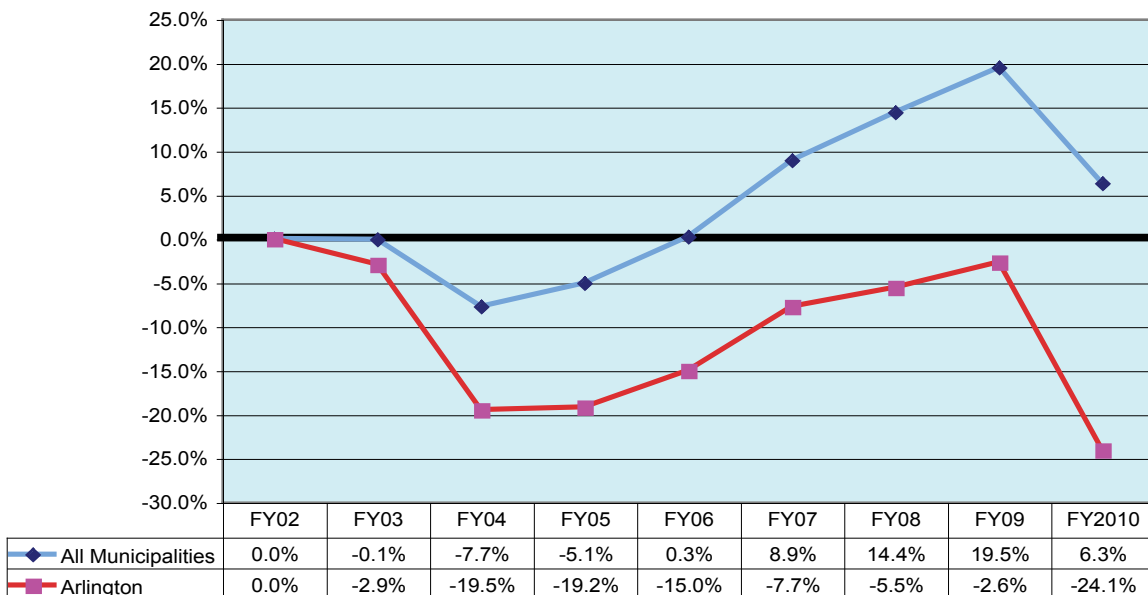
Town Manager Brian F. Sullivan

which means the Town will have to have a Special Town Meeting and cut \$1 million in the current budget before the end of FY2009.

Local revenues from motor vehicle excise taxes, building permits, and interest income are down sharply and are expected to result in a revenue deficit in FY2009 of approximately \$500,000. A strict hiring freeze was instituted in early FY2009 as well as a tightening of all expenditures. With all the collective bargaining agreements with the Town's employee unions expiring at the end of FY2009, discussions are underway for a wage freeze in FY2010.

### State Aid Cumulative Percentage Change Since Fiscal Year 2002

(Numbers exclude School Construction and METCO reimbursements)



# EXECUTIVE SERVICES

For FY2010 state aid may be cut by as much as \$4 million, or 25%, for Arlington. The latest information has the Senate proposing a budget that includes a local aid cut of \$3.7 million, or 22%, not including significant cuts to funding for special education and community policing. For all municipalities, the cut is \$560 million or 11.18%. For Arlington, these local aid cuts would result in the town receiving less state aid (in real dollars) than it did in 1987. If you adjusted for inflation, you would have to go back much further.

Needless to say these reductions in both state aid and local revenues will have a devastating impact on the Town's financial plan and ultimately services. While the Town will be in a better position to weather this new financial crisis as a result of its fiscal discipline and five year plan, it still must exercise fiscal prudence and adjust its financial plan to the realities of today. Just like every other municipality and like most businesses and citizens, the Town must curtail its expenditures and make prudent use of its reserves.

The five year financial plan that the Town has been operating under has provided the Town with several years of fiscal stability. FY2010 will be the last year of the five year plan. During the last four years the Town has exercised considerable fiscal discipline and has followed the plan closely including the commitments made as part of the Proposition 2 ½ override in 2005 which are summarized as follows:

1) Override funds will be made to last at least five years (FY2006-FY2010). No general override will be sought during this period.

2) Healthcare and pension costs will be limited to increases of no more than 7% and 4% respectively.

3) Town and school operating budgets will be limited to increases of no more than 4%. Should healthcare costs exceed the 7% limitation, operating budget increases shall be reduced below 4% accordingly.

Prior to this financial crisis, it looked as though the Town might be able to stretch the five year plan to a six year plan and make the revenues last that long. Losing over \$4 million in state and local revenue, however, no longer makes that possible. Because of the fiscal discipline exercised over the last four years, the Town will have available \$2.7 million in reserves to mitigate budget cuts in FY2010 and \$1 million available in FY2011. All these numbers are still in flux as the Legislature debates the budget and finalizes the state aid numbers over the next several months..

## Commercial Development

A vibrant commercial district is at the heart of any healthy community. Arlington is lucky to have three active commercial districts: East Arlington, Arlington Center, and Arlington Heights. Most residents can easily

walk to a hardware store and pick up that hard-to-find plumbing part, or stop by the pharmacy to grab a prescription, or grab a quick bite to eat, or indulge in a more formal dining experience. We're fortunate to have such choices in our neighborhoods. I'm sure it contributes to Arlington maintaining a robust real estate market while other communities are struggling. A survey conducted by the Arlington Department of Planning and Community Development (Planning Department) a couple years ago found overwhelmingly that residents like commercial uses to be available to them nearby when such uses enhance the quality of life. I have to agree.

I also know that we can't take for granted that Arlington will always have appealing businesses. Attracting and maintaining vibrancy in Arlington's commercial centers requires active cultivation and management. The Town is constantly working to keep its business districts healthy. It's one of the top priority goals set by the Board of Selectmen.

Arlington's Commercial Revitalization Initiative, presented by the Arlington Redevelopment Board (ARB) and Planning Department, includes several programs to improve the Town's overall business environment. The Storefront Improvement Program launched last year is helping business owners by providing free architectural assistance for storefront design and signage; this program is funded by a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). The response by businesses has been excellent, so much so that the funds have been exhausted. Because of this great response we hope to offer the program again in 2009. To complement this program, a number of local banks have made commitments to provide loans at favorable terms to businesses to help upgrade their façades.

The Public Space Improvement Program focuses on East Arlington and Arlington Center, looking at ways to improve streetscape, lighting, landscape, and the overall aesthetics of these areas. The recent replanting and clean-up of Broadway Plaza in Arlington Center grew out of the planning dialog between business owners, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Town. The collaboration of these groups and residents has noticeably improved the aesthetics of the Plaza, resulting in an immediate impact on the vibrancy of the Center. The Town is also looking into other cooperative initiatives with the Chamber of Commerce, such as a Local First Program and Business Improvement Districts.

The Massachusetts Avenue Corridor Project involves the redesign and reconstruction of Massachusetts Avenue from Cambridge through Arlington Center. Phase 1 extends from Cambridge to Pond Lane. It is funded with federal and state funds. These efforts are just a few examples of the Commercial Revitalization Initiative.

The Commercial Revitalization Initiative is an ongoing process leading, thus far, to incremental

# EXECUTIVE SERVICES

improvements. However, these efforts need to go beyond improving storefronts and the public spaces of the Town. Our efforts need to look at the broader vision such as what businesses serve the community? What businesses do we lack? How do we attract these businesses?

A proactive approach to understanding our commercial inventory and residents' needs will help us maintain - and even improve - the quality of life in Arlington. To understand this relationship and the opportunities it presents, the Town is launching a study of its commercial districts. The ARB, working with the Chamber of Commerce, Board of Selectmen, a consultant, and the public will create a Commercial Development Plan. In broad strokes, the study will assess existing businesses, identify Arlington's competitive advantages, and analyze the infrastructure supporting Arlington's three main commercial districts. The study will gather resident demographics and commercial needs to identify the right business mix to complement each district and the community. The study will also compile a list of the types of businesses the Town should recruit and include strategies on how to recruit them.

We need to have a commercial development plan in place so that when key parcels become available we will be ready to engage those businesses that will *enhance* our community. Over the last two years the Board of Selectmen has accumulated enough federal funds to fund the development of the plan.

To ensure that Arlington is a desirable place to live and conduct business, we must constantly work at understanding what our business mix is and the people they serve and be ready to act strategically when opportunities present themselves. Taking a proactive approach to planning Arlington's future ensures that we make the best decisions for the future of Arlington.

## **Cost Savings/Performance Strategies**

The Town has continuously pursued numerous strategies for reducing costs and becoming more productive.

Recently the Town has participated in a consortium of about a dozen area communities to pursue regionalization opportunities. Many service and purchasing contracts are being implemented regionally. Additional regionalizing opportunities are being evaluated at the ongoing monthly meetings of this consortium. The Public Works department is utilizing joint purchasing of supplies and service contracts with several area communities. The Health department was awarded a technical assistance grant to evaluate the feasibility of combining the Health departments of Arlington, Lexington, and Belmont. The Town is also evaluating the current service delivery methods for various services to determine the most cost effective way to deliver the services. Maintenance of cemetery grounds was recently

studied and it was determined that it was more cost effective to contract out this work. The work is now being done by contract.

The Town has also joined a consortium of six other communities, under the auspices of the International City Manager's Association (ICMA), to gather and compare performance data for various services. It is helpful to not only measure and compare performance data with comparable communities but to also compare the year to year progress made by the Town itself in these service areas. The three service areas selected to initiate this process were Public Works, Police, and Library.

Though the next five-year plan (which begins with FY2011) is over a year off, we started planning for it in 2007. The Board of Selectmen held a series of public forums (summits) to gather input from interested citizens on additional ideas for cutting costs and raising revenues. A number of ideas came out of those forums, all of which are currently being evaluated / pursued.

In order to increase productivity in the long run, the Town has to make better and more effective use of technology. This certainly is not unique to Arlington as any organization worldwide that does not keep up with the productivity enhancements to be gained through the effective use of technology will not be able to compete. A strategic IT plan is now being developed. The implementation of this plan will be a priority in the coming years.

## **Communications**

### *Town Report*

The Board of Selectmen and I have made improving communications with the public one of our priority goals. This annual report is one such communication vehicle in which we put a great deal of effort to make it informative and attractive. Last year the Town's 2007 Annual Town Report won the first place award for the best Town Report among all the cities and towns in the Commonwealth in our population.

### *Online Communications*

As part of our effort to improve communications with the public and to make information available whenever residents need to access it, the Town has made significant enhancements to the Town website, [arlingtonma.gov](http://arlingtonma.gov), and invested in community outreach via the Town of Arlington Notices.

In January 2008, there was a redesign of the Town's website, [arlingtonma.gov](http://arlingtonma.gov), to update the look and feel of the site, improve navigation, and install reporting tools to allow the Town to understand what content residents are interested in as well as monitor the effectiveness of our community outreach, via the Town of Arlington Notices, an opt-in email distribution list.

Town Notices are sent, via email, 2-4 times per

# EXECUTIVE SERVICES

week and deliver information on Town activities including; public health and public works alerts, election information, and special Town related events. Our web reports can measure the impact of Notices and how (and if) citizens are engaged by driving them back to the Town site. At the start of 2008 we had approx 900 subscribers. At the end of 2008, we had 1,400. We are pleased with the growth, but would like to see every resident subscribed as this is a timely and cost-effective communications mechanism. Residents can subscribe online at [arlingtonma.gov/subscriber](http://arlingtonma.gov/subscriber). Additional email lists are available for specific Town activities, including Recreation, Selectmen and School Committee Agendas.

In February 2008, the Request/Answer Center was launched. The Request/Answer Center is an online customer service center where residents can make requests of Town services (and track them), ask questions, and search an extensive knowledge base, 24 hours a day. In its inaugural year, 700 customers registered, 1,602 Requests were made, and 57,124 Answers were viewed. However, only 256 Questions were asked. This illustrates that users are overwhelmingly getting the information they seek before having to Ask A Question or make a call to Town Hall. Answers Viewed are phone calls not made to Town Hall. According to leading industry analysts such as Gartner, phone inquiries cost an estimated \$4.50 each. Using this model, the Town saved an estimated \$257,000 in 2008 or the Town provided services valued at \$257,000 for this one feature. It's difficult to tally the total value of all our online services without investing more resources, but these preliminary numbers do show the services are being utilized by many and have some significant value.

Last year, [arlingtonma.gov](http://arlingtonma.gov) was again presented with an E-Government Award from Common Cause. The award recognizes municipalities for their efforts in 'open government' for posting all key governance records on their website. In 2008, Arlington was one of 26 municipalities who received the "Superstar" honor, the first year Common Cause awarded this distinction.

Our award-winning website strives to improve communications and customer service with residents and to maximize technology for efficiencies, but none of this can be realized without skillful human intervention. Much of the execution of these initiatives was directed by our dedicated and hard working Web Content Manager, Joan Roman. She continues to manage these initiatives as well as coordinate the many daily contributions from staff, boards and committees, and residents to ensure we have the most accurate and helpful Town information, online, whenever our residents need it, at [arlingtonma.gov](http://arlingtonma.gov).

## Retirements and New Hires

Steve Mazzola, Director of Information Technology for the Town and Schools resigned to accept a job as the Director of Information Technology for the Belmont Schools. In November 2008, David Good, a resident of Arlington, was hired to replace Steve.

After twenty three years of outstanding service with the Town, and seven plus years as Executive Secretary/Administrative Assistant to the Town Manager, Gloria Turkall retired in August of 2008. Eileen Messina, who has fourteen years of service with the Town, was hired on June 23, 2008 to take on this very demanding role.

## Dedicated Team

Arlington is very fortunate to have so many talented citizens willing to volunteer their time to serve the Town in various capacities including Town Meeting and Boards and Commissions. Together with our elected leaders, management team, and employees, they make Arlington the special community that it is.

My thanks to the Board of Selectmen for its leadership and support this past year. Special thanks also to the Town's department heads who are truly top notch. Deputy Town Manager Nancy Galkowski has been an invaluable asset to me and the Town. I would also like to thank my office staff, Eileen Messina and Domenic Lanzillotti. They are exceptional public employees dedicated to providing the best possible service to each and every person interacting with the Town Manager's Office.



# EXECUTIVE SERVICES

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## 2008 STATE OF THE TOWN ADDRESS

APRIL 28, 2008

CLARISSA ROWE, CHAIRMAN, BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Good evening. I want to thank Vision 2020 for making this evening possible and especially Jane Howard for her usual careful preparation for the event. I also want to welcome Town Meeting members back into this beautiful chamber for the Town Meeting of 2008. It is a momentous occasion for all of us town meeting members because we welcome our new Moderator, John Leone, to take the reins after 19 years of John Worden being our Leader.

As every Selectman before me, I would not be standing here tonight without the every day help of the wonderful women in the Selectmen's office, Marie Krepelka, MaryAnna Sullivan, Fran Reidy and Jean Devereaux. They make our work easy and enjoyable.

And now to the State of Our Town:

The State of Town of Arlington is fiscally sound. We are entering the fourth year of the Five Year Plan. Our novel, five-year budgeting process is working, and we have kept our promise of not going back to the voters for another override. The budget numbers have not been met without strain however. The rising cost of healthcare has not stayed within the 7% limit. This means that our balanced budget has been funded by paying our employees less.

Our long-term pension liabilities remain unmet but we have begun to plan and put aside money for the important obligation.

I personally want to thank Town Manger, Brian Sullivan, Deputy Town Manager, Nancy Galkowski, the entire Finance Committee and the past chair of the BoS, Annie LaCourt, for their attention to the finances of the Town. I have asked Annie to continue to lead the Budget and Revenue Task Force as we begin our planning for the next five-year plan. We welcome our School Committee counterparts and ask them to continue to be actively involved in this planning process.

This past year, the School budget was especially tight because of their mandates, and working in partnership, the town transferred approximately \$70,000 to help out the situation. We must think of the two budgets as one budget for the entire town. Education and Public Safety are what keeps and attracts people to our Town. Arlington's children must come first as we budget for the future.

In the midst of a recession and a housing slump, Arlington is selling houses at a fast clip this spring. Our For Sale signs stay up for the second shortest time in the Commonwealth. That is because Arlington is such a desirable place to live.

Looking to the future, I ask that our town employees look favorably at joining the GIC. The GIC is the Group Insurance Commission of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. As you know, this decision is made through coalition bargaining with our town unions. While this kind of bargaining is new to the town, I firmly believe that this is the time to engage in it. We have the possibility of saving the Town two to three million dollars a year if the Town joins the state's group.

In these times of fiscal uncertainty and constraint, it is time for us to look at ways to save the town money that go beyond our borders. We need to work with our town employees in this effort because they will have good ideas of where to save money. A recent example is the spring clean up at Mt. Pleasant Cemetery. It was done by a private company and was the idea of Brian Sullivan and Jim Dodge, the DPW Operations Manager, a hard-working man with lots of titles but too little help.

Arlington is well served by its delegation on Beacon Hill

With the state's budget problems, it is paramount that we have close communication with our representatives on Beacon Hill, and we do. We are being ably served by our new but veteran State Senator Jim Marzilli, and our house represenatives, Rep. Jay Kaufman, Rep. Will Brownsberger and newly elected Rep. Sean Garballey. I am also glad to see my friend, former State Representative Anne Paulsen in our audience. Her no nonsense style on the Hill was

# EXECUTIVE SERVICES

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an important example for me to see.

While chiefs of staff don't often get mentioned, I want to recognize the fine work that Arlington's own Cindy Friedman and Thompson School's own Mike McCabe are doing on our behalf as well. Their recent work on Summer Street is just one example of their dedication and commitment to the Town.

Beyond the fiscal condition of the Town, there are some accomplishments and some challenges that I would like to mention:

## Arlington's Cultural Institutions are Thriving

We recently celebrated the Arlington Center for the Arts' 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, and we are busy planning for the tenth anniversary of the Dallin Art Museum on the weekend of October 17, 18 and 19<sup>th</sup>. Our children, like my son Nicholas, the sculptor, are inspired by Dallin's beautiful pieces of sculpture.

## Arlington's Focus on Energy

In the next two months, Arlington will join the Town of Medford and the City of Cambridge in a year-long contest, called the Energy Smackdown. The contest will see which ten families can lower their carbon footprint the most. We look forward to watching this contest. It will educate all of us about how we can help our planet.

The Board of Selectmen adopted Sustainable Arlington's Sustainability Action Plan last fall.

The Town has also joined the New England EPA to commit to being an Energy Star partner which means that we will

- Assess the energy performance of all municipal buildings and schools
- Set a goal to reduce energy use in buildings by 10% or more
- Promote energy renewables to the town's companies and organizations

Saving on energy costs will save taxpayers' money.

## Arlington's Focus on the Environment

The new Open Space Plan for 2007 to 2012 will be formerly presented to Town Meeting later this spring. The plan is excellent and we thank the Open Space Committee for making it the best plan yet.

Arlington is blessed with wonderful parks, playgrounds, natural open spaces and water bodies. In the last decade, the Open Space Committee and the Parks Commission have done a comprehensive catalogue of these town assets and prepared excellent maintenance plans for the spaces.

Unfortunately, not all our open space goals can be met because our funds are limited. Despite this, the town wide stewardship or public private partnerships of our parks, playgrounds and conservation areas has grown tremendously.

This spring, the Arlington Friends of Parks will be formally introduced and will serve as town wide group to discuss the budgets and management of our parks and playgrounds, and raise money for special items. Anyone wanting to contribute to this effort, which will augment the DPW budget, not replace it, should talk to Park Commission Chair, Leslie Mayer, or our fine Recreation Director, Joe Connelly. Frankly, I think that our parks and playgrounds are in the best shape now than in the past thirty years that I have lived in town. Thank you, Open Space Committee, Parks and Recreation Commission and the many volunteers who have built the new Bishop School playground, or cleaned up Spy Pond Park, Robbins Farm or Menotomy Rocks Park.

In the future, we hope to have plans to turn Cooke's Hollow into a beautiful, passive open space that might also become Arlington's first cremations area. It could be our own Mt. Auburn Cemetery.

The Open Space Committee has been talking about a family trail and linear park along Mill Brook.

And who knew that the most popular vote the Board of Selectmen made last fall would be the plowing of the Bike Path during the winter! It has been a fabulous success, and cost the town less than \$3,000.



# EXECUTIVE SERVICES

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Our land conservation efforts have great enthusiasm behind them – whether it is Elizabeth Island, the Mugar Property, or Great Meadows. Through the work of the Arlington Land Trust and the Arlington Conservation Commission, we hope to see these important areas protected for future generations.

## Arlington's Planning and Development

As you all know, we are beginning a redesign of Massachusetts Avenue from the Cambridge line to just before the Center.

The Arlington Redevelopment Board has begun a signage design program to aid businesses with their signage. The program is funded by some of our local banks. The Redevelopment Board is also going to be installing some new streetlights, new benches and an energy saving trash barrel, called the Big Belly.

We are working towards a redesign of Broadway Plaza and as a first step; the Chamber of Commerce, the Garden Club, Derby Farm and some area landscape architects are working to put some new summer flowers in the four planters. Anyone who wants to help with this planting on the morning of Saturday, May 17<sup>th</sup>, should talk to me.

## What kind of businesses do we want in Town?

A major initiative this year is the undertaking of a business study for our downtown. The study will help us decide what kind of businesses we want in Arlington.

Because of the work of Town Meeting members, Sheri Baron and former TM member, Roger Barnaby, we sit in the midst of one of greatest restaurant zones in eastern Massachusetts. Now we need to figure out what else we need. What businesses would enliven Mass Avenue, and Broadway, and the Gold's Gym area? If you have ideas, please talk to Andy West, our ARB head, and the other members of the ARB board. The Board of Selectmen will be working closely with the ARB during the RFP stage of the work and throughout its progress.

## Historic Assets

We need to make more of our historic resources, whether it is the Jason Russell House, the Town Gardens that were designed by Frederick Law Olmsted's sons, or our wonderful Dallin sculptures. Let's get the tour buses to come to Arlington, and Lexington and Concord.

## Subdivision Control

Also, a particular interest of mine is making sure that future development in Arlington happens in a responsible way, not only for the developers but also for the neighbors of the development. We live in one of the densest municipalities in the state so every development needs to carefully weight for its impact on its neighbors. We have an excellent environmental review process for developments that are more than six units but we need to seriously consider how we handle smaller developments.

I ask Town Meeting members to seriously consider adopting the Subdivision Control warrant article later in the meeting. The Board of Survey, which was initiated in the late 1890s, was a tool for that era, not this one.

Arlington also has serious challenges:

## Summer Street and Symmes

Besides our obvious fiscal challenges, the Town has two mega construction projects underway and we need to assist the neighbors that are affected by these projects and bring the projects to a quick and successful finish.

The Summer Street project has been a nightmare for five years. We must continue to work with Mass Highway and the contractors to make sure that the Town is left with a roadway that we can maintain and benefit. We would like to reach out to our Disabilities Commission to try to work out a compromise that allows our residents to get some peace and quiet while also assisting those with disabilities. I would also like to single out the head of the Summer Street neighborhood group, Jeanne Leary, for her proactive and intelligent leadership on this issue. She is a new Town meeting member so I ask that Town Meeting welcome her.

Also, today is the first day of blasting at the Symmes site. We are bound to have a tough time this summer with the blasting and the rock crushing that will follow. The Board of Selectmen stands ready to help the neighbors get

# EXECUTIVE SERVICES

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through this and we ask the Town Meeting members to be especially open to communicating with the neighbors and town officials about any construction problems.

During the last year or so, the Town has hired two terrific people who are helping the town with these projects and other new ones, our new DPW head, John Bean, and our new Town Engineer, Mike Rademacher. We thank them for their current work and hope that next year we don't see their hair completely white.

## Green Dog

The Green Dog program is also a challenge. After several dozen meetings, we have found that we need money for more enforcement to make the program successful. We will be working for another year to tailor a program that will work for all the areas where people currently walk their dogs.

## Affordable Housing

We need to bring our percentage of affordable housing to the magic 10% number, and to assist in this we need to establish the Affordable Housing Trust. While the warrant article was not ready for this Town Meeting, it is my promise that it will be on next year's warrant.

## Flooding

Arlington continues to struggle with flooding problems, especially in East Arlington. The TriCommunity Working Group is having some success in looking at the flooding problems and getting solutions funded. The Environmental Bond Bill has money in it for the study and acquisition of another pump at the Amelia Earhardt Dam. The pump could help alleviate the downstream flooding. While we remain frustrated by the lack of maintenance of the Alewife Brook channel, we were also stunned to hear one of the DCR engineer's saying that dredging the brook was a possibility. We will continue to push these issues.

Later this spring, we will be having a public meeting for the homeowners in East Arlington who will be affected by the changes in the FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, maps that show flooding in the area. The floodplain and floodway have expanded dramatically, and we want to make sure that the newly affected households buy the necessary flood insurance before the new maps are accepted by the Town at the Town Meeting in 2009.

## Too Many Elections

Last August, when I was on vacation, I heard that our State Senator was resigning. His sudden resignation has cost the town tens of thousands of dollars. The five elections, with two more to come this fall, have continued to divide the town. The town was just beginning to rebound after a difficult year when the elections happened. Elections, by their nature, polarize people and these elections have continued this polarization.

That is a shame because we now have a new vibrant group of representatives on Beacon Hill. We are well served by them. I just hope that the two elections in the fall can be positive ones with the personal issues left in the background. Let's have arguments about substance and not whether a candidate is "new" or "old" or "young".

## Board of Selectmen and School Committee Working Together

And finally I want to reach out to the School Committee to ask them to work with us on next year's budget now, and on the next five-year plan now and at the Summits. I called Denise Burns, the new School Committee head, and we are discussing having joint meeting soon after Town Meeting to discuss our mutual problems and issues. I know that we can solve, or at least try to solve the town's budget shortfalls if we work together.

Over the weekend, these hate pamphlets were dropped in several of our neighborhoods. Our police department is monitoring the situation, and our organizations, the Human Rights Commission and Common Threads, are well aware of these disgraceful acts. This kind of hate, whether it is paper or electronic, is unacceptable in our Town. Let everyone know, this kind of hate is not tolerated in Arlington.

Finally in closing, I want to welcome two people back to the body of Town Meeting, John Worden and John Maher, who have served us ably in their positions as Town Moderator and Town Counsel. I know that they will enjoy the spring as they represent their precincts of 8 and 14 as well as they represented the whole town. John Maher is only allowed to relax after the Selectmen's articles, however. Thank you both for your service on our behalf.