

**Looking Ahead:  
Services & Revenues in the Balance  
We Invite Your Input**

2010



Dear Arlington Residents,

Since 1991 Vision 2020 has used an insert to the Town's Annual Census Mailing to inform you about Arlington and to survey your opinions on various aspects of life in our town. This year we encourage you to share your thoughts about our community and to participate not only in the Town's Annual Census but the US 2010 Federal Census as well.

**Arlington's Annual Census** – As mandated by Town/State Law the Town conducts a census of its residents, all residents of the town - citizens or not, every year. We encourage you to complete both your Arlington Census Form and the Vision 2020 Survey contained in this envelope. You can return them together.

**US 2010 Federal Census** – Every ten years since 1790, the Federal Government conducts a national counting of its residents. Each household is required to respond - whether US citizens or not. This census determines the number of Representatives that each state has in the US Congress as well as the size of congressional districts. Redistricting based on census numbers will last for ten years! Further, US Census data are used to apportion about \$400 billion of Federal Aid, to states and municipalities. This data guides planning for transportation, health services, education, housing, safety, emergencies, and many other needs. Arlington receives about \$1.5 million annually to help support programs for seniors, youth, health, recreation, planning and other community needs. *Failure to complete a full and accurate count of residents in the Town of Arlington and Massachusetts as a whole may result in a loss in the number of Representatives we send to Washington, and the amount of Federal funds we receive at the state and local levels.*

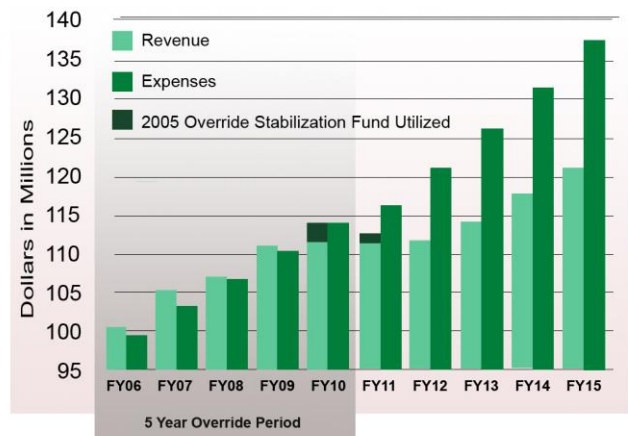
Federal census forms should arrive at your residence in late March. You will be counted where you live on April 1, 2010. All addresses not responding in April will be visited by census takers in May-July. Please take 10 minutes to answer the questions and mail your completed form back.

**Arlington's 2010 Financial Crisis** – The current fiscal year (FY2010) is the final one of a five year financial plan that the Town has been following since the voters approved a Proposition 2 1/2 override in the Spring of 2005. The additional tax revenue provided by the override together with a limit on the town/school employee compensation package has made it possible to fund the Town's services for the full five years of the plan (FY2006 to FY2010).

As presented in the figure to the right, Arlington faces a projected budget deficit of over \$4 million in the coming year (FY2011) despite the use of the remaining funds from the 2005 override. The severity of the problem increases over time. The downturn in our revenue base is primarily the result of the continued reduction in state aid to towns and cities, wherein Arlington continues to be disproportionately affected. In fact local state aid to Arlington has fallen by over 20% since just last year (FY2009) a loss of over \$3.25 million.

As the state continues to provide insufficient local aid to cities and town like Arlington, we are faced with the difficult task of deciding what reductions in expenditures (and thereby reducing the level of services provided), and increases in revenues, can cover the FY2011 deficit and the impending deficits beyond. (See figure to the right.)

**Comparison of Revenue/Expenditures**



**This Vision 2020 survey gives you a chance to weigh in on these critical issues. You will find a series of proposed options covering both Reductions in Expenditures and New/Increased Revenues on the attached pages. So that you can gain a fuller appreciation of the severity of the problem, you may find it helpful to read through all of the options before answering the questions.**

**Please complete the survey so that we can learn your thoughts on these important challenges.**

## Completing the Survey      One survey response per household, please!

You can complete the survey on the attached pages. Or, if you would like to do it online, visit Vision 2020 on the Town Website - [arlingtonma.gov/vision2020](http://arlingtonma.gov/vision2020) - and select "2010 Census Survey".

If you choose to use this paper form for your responses, (the survey is scanned and tabulated electronically), mark your answers with a black ball point pen and fill in the bubbles completely.

**Return your completed survey in the same envelope with your Census form, or hand deliver or mail it to:**

**Vision 2020 Census Survey 2009, Town Clerk's Office, Town Hall,  
730 Massachusetts Ave., Arlington, MA 02476**

Comments may be e-mailed to [Vision2020@town.arlington.ma.us](mailto:Vision2020@town.arlington.ma.us) or, submitted on a separate paper with your survey. Comments written on the paper survey can not be processed. If you choose to complete the survey online, space will be provided for comments.

When all responses are reviewed, results will be reported to Town leadership, Town Meeting and the public.

All responses received by March 15, 2010 will be included in the report.

Vision 2020 is a Committee of the Town working in partnership with townspeople, Town employees and Town leaders in a joint planning process where active task groups of volunteers help to bring the Town closer to goals established by Town Meeting in 1993.

### ***Town Goals, Task Groups and Current Vision 2020 Projects***

For more information on Vision 2020 or any Task Group:

Contact the Arlington Planning Department at (781) 316-3090, Jane Howard at (781) 648-1936

or e-mail [jglushko@Town.arlington.ma.us](mailto:jglushko@Town.arlington.ma.us);

Visit Arlington's Town website at [www.arlingtonma.gov](http://www.arlingtonma.gov) and Vision 2020 at [arlingtonma.gov/Vision2020](http://arlingtonma.gov/Vision2020)

#### **BUSINESS**

*Town Goal: "We value Arlington's diverse and accessible mix of merchants and service providers..."*

- Researching the issue of high unemployment tax and its effect on local businesses

#### **COMMUNICATION**

*Town Goal: "We value public dialogue..."*

- Seeking assistance with developing Vision 2020's web & media presence

#### **COMMUNITY AND CITIZEN SERVICE**

*Town Goal: "We value Arlington's geographic neighborhoods, common interest groups, and the sense of community in our Town..."*

- Involving townspeople in emerging town issues

#### **CULTURE AND RECREATION**

*Town Goal: "We value the many opportunities to meet, play, and grow in Arlington while treasuring and preserving our unique historical resources..."*

- Focusing an appreciation of our Cultural/Recreational resources

#### **DIVERSITY**

*Town Goal: "We value the diversity of our population..."*

- Promoting increased diversity among Town Meeting members

#### **EDUCATION**

*Town Goal: "We value learning for all Arlington citizens..."*

- Finding ways to enhance school activity funds

#### **ENVIRONMENT**

*Town Goal: "We value the physical beauty and natural habitats of our Town – parks, ponds and wetlands, dramatic vistas and tree-lined streets – as they contribute to the well-being of our community..."*

- Spy Pond: Improving stewardship for this urban pond
- Reservoir: Monitoring the purchase of Busa Farm property
- Sustainable Arlington: Working with Town, businesses and individuals on energy efficiency

#### **FISCAL RESOURCES**

*Town Goal: "We value Arlington's efficient delivery of public services providing for the common good..."*

- Investigating regionalization options for providing Town services economically

#### **GOVERNANCE**

*Town Goal: "We value our representative Town Meeting system and the community spirit it fosters..."*

- Publishing a new edition of *Settling In*, Arlington's welcoming brochure

### ***Vision 2020 Standing Committee and Task Group Co-Chairs***

*Gregory Ames, Nancy Barry, Paul Bayer, Kathleen Bodie, John Budzyna, Joe Connelly, Andrew Fischer, Bruce Fitzsimmons, Jacob Friis, Joey Glushko, Clarice Gordon, Jane Howard, Gordon Jamieson, Elizabeth Karpati, Satish Katpally, Shannon Koenig, Annie LaCourt, John Leone, Leslie Mayer, Angela Olszewski, Stephen Ricci, William Shea, Ronald Spangler, Brian Sullivan*

**IMPORTANT:** Use only a black ballpoint pen to complete the survey. **Thanks!**  
**Survey Instructions** Fill in the bubbles completely! Like this: ● ○

Please respond by filling in the appropriate bubble

What is your precinct number? (This can be obtained from your census form.)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

<b>Please tell us about yourself and your household:</b>	0	1	2	3	4	> 4		
Number of adults aged 65 or older	○	○	○	○	○	○		
Number of adults aged 18 to 64	○	○	○	○	○	○		
Number of children aged 17 and under	○	○	○	○	○	○		
Number of years you have lived in Arlington	< 5	○	5- 15	○	> 15	○		
Do you own or rent?	Own	○	Rent	○				
Best description for your housing	Single Family	○	Condo	○	2-4 units	○	5 or more	○
Internet Access	Home	○	Work	○	Library	○	None	○

**Survey Questions:**

The following pages offer you the opportunity to weigh in on the critical fiscal decisions that face our community. Each option asks if you would find the suggested action Desirable (D), Acceptable (A), or Unacceptable (U). We suggest that you read through all the options first, then return to the beginning and complete your responses by filling in the bubble under your selected D, A, or U response.

**Reductions in Expenditures**

**Public Safety**

**1. Fire Department** Currently the Town operates an engine company at each of its three stations, as well as one(1) ladder truck, and one(1) ambulance. Eliminating an engine company for a portion of the year could save approximately \$200,000. However, when an engine is out of service, this reduction would have a negative impact on our response time to emergencies and overall fire fighting, our rescue services, and our mutual aid agreement.

	<b>Desirable</b>	<b>Acceptable</b>	<b>Unacceptable</b>
<b>Eliminate an engine company for a portion of the year (Save \$200,000)</b>	○	○	○

**2. Police Department** The elimination of two police officer positions, at a savings of \$126,000, may result in slower response times to emergencies, and reduced/slower responses to crime/investigations.  
**Eliminate two police officers (Save \$126,000)**

○	○	○
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**Libraries**

**3. Libraries** Arlington is a member of the Minuteman Library Network (MLN), a consortium of 42 libraries that allows residents to borrow and return materials at any location in the MLN. The Arlington libraries are open 63 hours per week. Cutting services by reducing the new book purchases or dropping below current hours would jeopardize our MLN certification, patrons' ability to borrow from any other library in the MLN system, and a loss of \$40,000 in state aid.

<b>Close Fox Library 1 day, close Robbins' Children's Rm. 1 evening (Save \$29,000)</b>	○	○	○
<b>Close Robbins Library at 6pm one evening (Save \$29,000)</b>	○	○	○
<b>Reduce funding for books and periodicals by 30% (Save \$48,000)</b>	○	○	○
<b>Close Fox Library and building (Save \$140,000)</b>	○	○	○

**Schools**

**4. Over the past four years**, the Schools have addressed budget deficits totaling over \$7 million through fee increases, restructuring, the use of one-time revenues, and wage concessions by the staff. At the same time, we have been able to preserve teaching positions, and maintain or even improve core programs. Next year, however, the schools face an additional deficit of between \$2.6 and \$5.5 million, based on decisions at the state and federal levels. As things stand today, we will not be able to balance next year’s budget without significant and painful cuts to core teaching staff and programs.

Closing a \$3 million deficit, for example, could require cuts of up to 60 positions, of which more than 50 would be teaching staff. This would mean 3 fewer teachers per elementary school (21 total), resulting in an increase in average class size (from 22 to 27); 15 fewer teachers at the middle school, and 15 fewer teachers at the high school. At the middle and high schools, teacher reductions will create larger class sizes and fewer curriculum hours.

New or increased user fees account for about \$1 million in additional revenues over the past four years. These fees cover some of the cost of the programs they support. For example:

Fees	Per Student	Total Raised	Percent of Program Cost
Instrumental Music	\$425/student	about \$120,000	covering 75%
Athletics	\$235/sport	about \$200,000	covering 25%
Full Day Kindergarten	\$2,400/student	about \$750,000	covering 40%

	Desirable	Acceptable	Unacceptable
<b>Leave fees as they are, eliminate 60 positions</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Increase fees by 50%, eliminate 50 positions</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Increase fees by 100%, eliminate 40 positions</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Pass an Override (there is another question elsewhere relating to this) and maintain positions</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**5. As of 12/1/09**, the largest elementary class is 27. If 21 elementary teachers are lost, class sizes could exceed 40. Although it is not likely to produce significant savings, reassigning students among the elementary schools would produce more consistent class sizes. With redistricting, or reconfiguration (e.g K-2,3-5), the largest class would be around 32.

**Adjust school district boundaries or reconfigure grades to reduce class size variability**

	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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**Department of Public Works**

**6. Snow Removal** Recently the Town has added sidewalk and corner clearing at key locations, as well as bikepath plowing. The cost of snow removal often exceeds \$1million annually. Currently the Town pre-treats all road surfaces with a salt mixture in an effort to get the roadways down to bare pavement as soon as possible after a snowfall. If the Town were to stop pre-treating side roads and instead increase the use of sand, we could save \$500,000 annually with the probability that some side roads will have persistent ice or snow pack, causing possible safety issues.

<b>Discontinue bike path plowing</b> (Save \$3,600)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Discontinue sidewalk/corner plowing</b> (Save \$27,000)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Eliminate the pre-treatment of side streets</b> (Save \$500,000)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**7. Town Fields** Elimination of lawn irrigation, some field enhancements, and pre-game prep of sports fields could save \$173,000 annually. However, this would speed deterioration of our fields, and varsity field sports would have to fund labor for raking the fields and line painting. The youth sports groups now contribute \$40,000 to the upkeep of the fields and this would not be affected.

**Eliminate these sports field and park services** (Save \$173,000)

	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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**Social Services**

**8. The Arlington Youth Consultation Center (AYCC)** AYCC provides help for troubled youths and their families. in and out of the school environment. Clients are charged for this service on a sliding scale dependent on their income and the center also receives some insurance reimbursement. The Town’s FY09 contribution to this service was \$293,000, 78% of AYCC's operating expenditures.

<b>Reduce the program by 50%</b> (Save \$147,000)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Eliminate the AYCC program</b> (Save \$293,000)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Increases in Revenues

**9. Override Proposition 2 1/2** A Proposition 2 1/2 Override of 11.5% in 2010 would fund the Town budget for 5 years given the limits on spending increases in place for the last 5 years. A 9% Override would provide funding for a period of 3 years. In FY2009, the average single-family home had an assessed value of \$465,952 and a tax of \$5,554. The increase in property taxes on an average single-family home would be \$514 (3 year plan) and \$668 (5 year plan).

	Desirable	Acceptable	Unacceptable
Pass a 9% override (3 year plan)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pass a 11.5% override (5 year plan)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**10. Implement Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT)** The Town's solid waste program (trash collection and disposal, together with recycle & yard waste collection) costs over \$3.2 million annually and helps the environment. Recycling paper and containers avoids the cost of the final step in the disposal process (incineration). To further reduce these disposal costs, a PAYT program based on trash bag sales could be instituted. The price of the bags could be set to pay for part or all of the solid waste program.

<b>Institute a PAYT program with enough free bags -- thus no additional expense to an average household with efficient recycling practices</b> (Positive environmental impact)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Institute a PAYT program with bag prices set to pay the trash disposal cost. The annual expense to an average household with efficient recycling practices would be \$40.</b> (Save \$1,000,000)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Institute a PAYT program with bag prices set to pay the entire cost of the solid waste program. The annual expense to an average household with efficient recycling practices would be \$130.</b> (Save \$3,200,000)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**11. Adopt Community Preservation Act** Under the Community Preservation Act (CPA), the Town, using a property tax surcharge, raises funds that the State matches. Use of the surcharge and the matching funds is restricted to a combination of affordable housing, open space, historical preservation projects/acquisitions and recreation. Some future capital projects would qualify for such funds. If authorized by the voters, a 1% surcharge would raise \$850,000 annually. The state match will vary. In previous years the state match had been 100%, but this year it would have been 40% or \$340,000. Cost to an average single family home, taxed at \$5550, would have been \$55. An example of a project that would be appropriate for CPA funds would be the renovation of the historic Central Fire Station.

<b>Implement the CPA Program</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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**12. Use Stabilization Funds** The Town has a Stabilization Fund of approximately \$2.5 million. This fund is for emergencies or unexpected costs and requires a 2/3 vote of Town Meeting. Having a reserve fund is critical to maintaining a high credit rating. Use of these funds has the potential of decreasing our credit rating, thereby increasing the Town's future borrowing costs for capital projects (schools, fire station rebuild, etc.)

<b>Spend 25% of the reserve fund to offset the deficit</b> (\$625,000)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Spend 50% of the reserve fund to offset the deficit</b> (\$1,250,000)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**13. Add Advanced Life Support** The Town runs a Basic Life Support (BLS) ambulance service which transports patients to the nearest hospital in an emergency. Currently Advanced Life Support (ALS) is provided through a private contractor at no cost to the Town. Instead, the Town could run an in-house Advanced Life Support (ALS) service using Fire Department Paramedics. This in-house ALS service could potentially bring in an additional \$300,000 in revenue annually. The program would require an investment of \$1million over the first three years. Break even would be realized in year 5, and in year 6 a net gain of \$300,000 annually would be the ongoing estimated revenue.

<b>Develop an in-house ALS ambulance service</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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**14. Install LED Street Lights** The current budget for street lights (electricity) is about \$205,000. If the existing street light bulbs were replaced with high efficiency light emitting diodes (LED's), a savings of \$110,000 per year is possible. Yet, LED street light technology is still new and there would be substantial "set up" costs, estimated at \$2.2 million. So savings would be delayed for some time.

<b>Replace street lights with LED technology</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Wait until the technology is more affordable</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



**15. Install Solar Photovoltaic Systems** Electricity for municipal and school buildings costs more than \$1,000,000 per year. Installation of solar photovoltaic (PV) systems on Town buildings would reduce the amount of electricity purchased. These systems can be owned and financed by third parties who would then sell the solar electricity to the Town at a price that is less than the current price paid for electricity from the grid, thereby reducing the overall cost of electricity. Installation of PV also provides a hedge against rising electricity prices and reduces the environmental impact of Town energy use.

Desirable    Acceptable    Unacceptable

Develop a solar photovoltaic program

**16. Increase State Income Tax** State Aid to Arlington has decreased 20% in just the past year alone, and from 18% of total Town revenues in FY04 to 14% (FY10). State Aid is dependent upon State revenues which are heavily dependent upon the state income tax. The state income tax rate is set by the legislature. An increase in the state income tax to 6% could yield \$720,000 for Arlington if it were distributed to towns/cities using current local aid funding formulas.

**Urge our legislators to increase the state income tax rate to reduce the pressure on the real estate tax**

### Parking in Arlington Center

The Town is currently considering changes to parking regulations in the business districts to make parking more available for customers. If you are a driver, we would appreciate your input on the following questions.

	Yes			No
1. Do you have difficulty parking your car in Arlington Center?	<input type="radio"/>			<input type="radio"/>
2. Which of the following describe your difficulty? (Fill in the bubble for the reasons that are applicable to you.)				
a. Usually there is no parking available near my destination <input type="radio"/>			c. The Russell Common Lot is not convenient to my destination <input type="radio"/>	
b. There is a charge to park in the Russell Common (corner Mystic & Chestnut) and Depot/Water St. lots <input type="radio"/>			d. The parking regulations in the Russell Common Lot are confusing <input type="radio"/>	
3. Do any of the problems listed above deter you from shopping in Arlington Center?	Yes	<input type="radio"/>	No	<input type="radio"/>
4. How many blocks from your destination would you be willing to park?	1	2	3	4
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Would parking meters on Massachusetts Ave., Medford St., and Broadway Plaza discourage you from shopping in Arlington Center?			Yes	No
			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. What is the highest parking meter fee you find acceptable?	\$.25/hr	\$.50/hr	\$1.00/hr	
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	

**Vision 2020** - If you would like to work with others for Arlington's future by joining any Vision 2020 Task Group(s), please select your task group preference(s) from the list below. A leader of the group will contact you.

*(See Town Goals page for information about Vision 2020 projects)*

- |                                                 |                                 |                                                           |                                        |
|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Culture & Recreation      | <input type="radio"/> Business  | <input type="radio"/> Environment – Reservoir             | <input type="radio"/> Fiscal Resources |
| <input type="radio"/> Communication             | <input type="radio"/> Diversity | <input type="radio"/> Environment – Spy Pond              | <input type="radio"/> Governance       |
| <input type="radio"/> Community/Citizen Service | <input type="radio"/> Education | <input type="radio"/> Environment – Sustainable Arlington |                                        |

To volunteer for a Vision 2020 Task Group, clearly print your contact information in the box below:  
*(Include your Name, Street Address, Zip Code, Phone # and/or e-mail address)*