

# EXECUTIVE SERVICES

## SELECT BOARD

The Board is composed of five elected residents who set policy and oversee the management of municipal functions of the Town. In April 2022 Steve W. DeCoursey was elected to a second three-year term. The Board elected Len Diggins as Chair and Diane M. Mahon as Vice Chair. John V. Hurd and Eric Helmuth round out the Board.

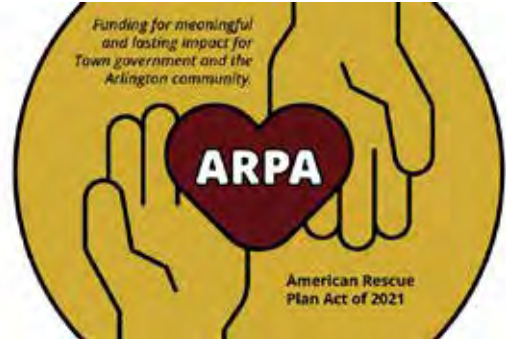
### Year in Review

The year 2022 provide both challenges and opportunities as cities and towns across the Commonwealth cautiously re-emerge and re-engage with in-person activities, which the Board is pleased to share in this Annual Report. The biggest change occurred when Arlington's Town Manager, Adam Chapdelaine, left the Town to further pursue his passion for the environment by working at the Boston Green Ribbon Commission. Among many achievements, Adam will be most fondly remembered as a champion of the environment and avid listener of the public. We wish him well in his next chapter. Arlington has been in good hands with Sandy Pooler, as Arlington's Town Manager. Sandy had served as Arlington's Deputy Town Manager / Finance Director and has effortlessly moved into the new role. However he has plans to retire in July 2023. The Board is in the process of hiring a new Town Manager to succeed him. In this chapter we touch upon only a few of the many accomplishments that happened in 2022. We encourage you to read on to learn about these and other initiatives in more detail.

### American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

Municipalities across the nation are the beneficiaries of a significant influx of federal funds via the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Arlington expects to receive \$35.27 million. The funding is to offset the negative health and economic impacts caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2022 the Town' has made many investments in public health, economic recovery, and infrastructure improvements. Following the Select Board-endorsed ARPA Framework the Town has already benefitted from several new programs, including the renovation of the Bishop, Stratton, and Peirce Playgrounds, continuing the Town's water meter replace-

ment initiative, Transformative Grants were awarded to businesses, and Housing Stability program helped 230 Arlington families pay their mortgage or rent, plus investments in public health and diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives.



### Facilities and Fiscal Planning

#### New Arlington High School (AHS)

The first wings of the new high school opened to students in February 2022 after six years of planning and hard work. Over a thousand Arlington residents toured the new wings at an open house held on Town Day. At the end of 2022 one of the last steel beams was raised as part of Phase 2 of the project. Phase 2 construction of the humanities wing, central spine, cafeteria, library, district administration offices, and preschool is anticipated to be complete September 2023. Construction of the new school remains on budget despite the continued challenges of the pandemic. The new school is anticipated to be completed in December 2024, with a year of on-site work to finish the project.



A view inside the new high school taken during the public open house on Town Day.



Arlington Select Board : John V. Hurd, Eric Helmuth, Diane M. Mahon (Vice Chair), Stephen W. DeCoursey (Chair), and Lenard T. Diggins.

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*Central School Renovation / Community Center* Renovations at the Central School building at 27 Maple Street were completed and celebrated in early spring as the new Arlington Community Center. The building continues to house the Council on Aging staff, programs, and activities; Health & Human Services Offices; and Arlington Center for the Arts. The building will also become fully accessible and compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.



Members of the community celebrate the opening of the Arlington Community Center.

### MWRA Debt Shift

With the Long Range Planning Committee, the Board developed a plan to reduce the MWRA debt shift as a means of reducing tax dollar subsidies to the water/sewer budget and reducing the impact of AHS debt exclusion and of the operating override of 2019. FY2022 was the last year the Town used tax dollars to subsidize water/sewer rates. Water bills will fully reflect water usage in the future.

### Age and Dementia Friendly Action Plan

In June the Board accepted the Town's Age and Dementia Friendly Action Plan, which was compiled by the Council on Aging over several years. The plan highlights future plans and action steps to improve social and physical environments and make communities livable for older residents, while also prioritizing members of the community living with dementia and their families.



### Net Zero Plan

In 2018 the Select Board voted to commit Arlington to becoming carbon neutral by 2050 (net zero emissions of greenhouse gases from all sources). In 2021 it endorsed the Town's Net Zero Action Plan. In 2022 Electrify Arlington was launched to assist residents and

businesses to power buildings and transportation with clean electricity. Managed by the Town's Sustainability Coordinator and the Clean Energy Working Group, Electrify Arlington will connect residents and businesses with existing programs, rebates and incentives, and technical assistance to make it happen.



### Transportation & Parking

In 2021 the Board endorsed Connect Arlington, the Town's Sustainable Transportation Plan. Connect Arlington supplants the Traffic and Circulation section of the Master Plan with a more robust and detailed explanation of existing transportation conditions and goals and strategies for the transportation system in Arlington. Connect Arlington focuses on all aspects of transportation and mobility in Arlington, including walking, bicycling, public transportation, driving, shared mobility, and micro-mobility. The plan provides a vision for the development of the transportation system in Arlington over the next 20 years.

In 2022 work on trails and shared-use paths took a central role with the completion of the award-winning Minuteman Bikeway Planning Project in the summer and the feasibility study for connecting the Mystic River Path to the Minuteman Bikeway via the Mystic Valley Parkway and Summer Street. The latter project received a one-million dollar earmark for future design work.



Additionally of note was the more than \$300,000 MassWorks grant awarded for the Mass Ave/Appleton Safety and Accessibility Improvement Project, which will finance the completion of design work for the intersection of Mass Ave, Appleton Street, and Appleton Place to advance the short-term improvements implemented in November 2021.

## Veterans' Acknowledgments

The Select Board unanimously approved the design renderings for Arlington's Veterans Memorial Park to replace the current park located in the town center next to the Central Fire Station. With this approval, steps can be made toward making improvements to this area that will be a fitting tribute to our veterans and will provide residents a space for the public to enjoy.

## Town Day Celebration

After a 3-year hiatus, it was terrific to see so many in the community come out and enjoy food and music on a beautiful day for the return of Town Day this past September. It was the largest attendance in recent memory. The Board would like to extend its thanks and congratulations to the Town Day Committee and the many businesses and tireless volunteers whose loyalty, dedication, and hard work made this celebration such a success. The Board looks forward to next year's celebration.



*A bird's eye view of Town Day 2022.*

## Acknowledgments & Recognitions

In 2022 long-time Select Board Administrator, Marie Krepelka passed away. Marie served Arlington for over 60 years. She became the Select Board administrator in 2001. As Board Administrator she assisted the Select Board in their many duties as well as assisted the public, showing her deep knowledge on how Arlington government worked to everyone who visited or called the Select Board office. She is greatly missed by many. The Board wishes to welcome Ashley Maher as its new Administrator.



*Former Select Board Administrator, Marie Krepelka. Marie left an enduring legacy in her 60 plus years in service to the Town of Arlington.*

## TOWN MANAGER

I am pleased to deliver Arlington's 2022 Annual Report in my capacity as Town Manager. My goal in making this report is to provide an overview of the financial, organizational, and community-based efforts that took place during 2022.

As the Select Board mentioned in their report, 2022 provided both challenges and opportunities in post-pandemic life. Town staff and volunteers continued to show their resiliency and find creative solutions in service to the Arlington community. Throughout this report you will read about these accomplishments and more. Before I provide some highlights, I want to provide an overview of the Town's financial outlook.



*Arlington Town Manager, Sandy Pooler.*

## Town's Financial Outlook

The FY2024 budget is built on a foundation that is both stable and potentially volatile. Property taxes remain a stable source of revenue and make up three quarters of the Town's budget. As the largest source of revenue, property taxes increase steadily each year, but that revenue growth is limited by Proposition 2½ and is insufficient to keep up with rising costs. It is because of this structural deficit between limited property tax revenue increases and steadily increasing costs for essential services that that Town has periodically asked voters to approve Proposition 2½ operating overrides. The volatility in the revenue picture stems from two factors; the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and anticipated changes in State aid. The COVID-19 pandemic reduced local revenue for several years in areas such as Motor Vehicle Excise Tax receipts, meals and hotel taxes, and some fees. These sources have slowly been returning to their former levels, but some still lag their previous highs. To replace that lost revenue, the Town has used \$5 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds last year and this year. Based

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on the Governor's budget, State Aid will see modest increases, mostly in education funding.

The framework for Arlington's long range financial planning remains intact. FY2023, the current fiscal year, is the fourth year of a four-year plan that incorporated the Proposition 2 ½ override of 2019 designed to carry the Town's budgets through FY2023. The Select Board adopted a set of commitments which served as the basis for the \$5,500,000 operating override that was successfully passed via a Town-wide ballot measure on June 11, 2019. The Board's commitments and the status of fulfilling them are as follows:

- 1) Exercise fiscal discipline and provide quality municipal services.
  - a. Commit to no Proposition 2½ overrides for at least four years. – **This budget submission maintains this commitment.**
  - b. Continue to increase general education operating budgets by 3.5% annually. – **This commitment is maintained.**
  - c. Continue to increase general government operating budgets by 3.25% annually. – **This commitment is maintained.**
  - d. Continue to fund special education cost growth at a rate of 7% per year. – **This commitment is maintained.**
- 2) Respond to ongoing school enrollment growth pressures. Increase the education budget for future enrollment increases at a rate of 50% of per pupil expenditures. – **This commitment is maintained.**

- 3) Build Arlington's future.
  - a. Phase in funding of the School Committee's Multi-Year Plan to: address the impact of explosive enrollment growth of 26% since 2011 through 2019, [making Arlington one of the fastest growing school districts in the State]; improve instruction; close the achievement gap for high needs students; ensure safe and supportive schools; and attract, retain, and develop talented staff. Adopt the following schedule of increases to base operating budgets: FY20 - \$600,000; FY21 - \$600,000; FY22 - \$800,000; FY23 - \$800,000. – **This commitment is maintained, but the schedule of funding has changed due to the economic impacts of the pandemic.**

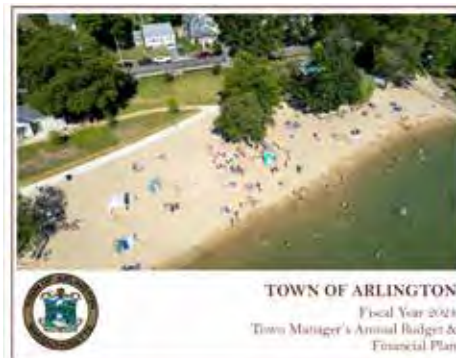
- b. Improve mobility for all residents and support the goals of the Town's Complete Streets and Age-Friendly Community initiatives by adding \$250,000 to the base budget for pedestrian infrastructure -- including sidewalk brick removal and repair -- and senior transportation, such investments to be guided by the Town's sustainable mobility planning efforts. – **This commitment is maintained, with**

**\$200,000 for mobility improvements being included in the capital budget and \$50,000 in funding included in the Council on Aging Transportation Enterprise Fund.**

- 4) Minimize impact on taxpayers, particularly seniors and others with income challenges.
  - a. Advance new tax relief programs, including a municipal circuit breaker and increased eligibility for property tax deferral options, and publicize existing relief programs. – **A new tax deferral program is in place with higher eligibility criteria to allow residents greater access to the program.**
  - b. Remove certain water and sewer debt costs from property tax bills. – **The Select Board's reduction of the MWRA Debt Shift in coordination with the issuance of debt related to the Arlington High School Project is complete and no longer in the Town budget.**
  - c. Pursue new revenue sources. – **This commitment is fulfilled on a year over year basis.**
  - d. Work with financial leadership to develop bonding schedules that will minimize single-year tax increases and debt service costs related to the Arlington High School rebuild. – **This commitment is being maintained by the Town's Finance Department.**
- 5) Protect against future fiscal shocks and maintain the Town's strong bond rating. Maintain financial reserves at 5% or better for the duration of the four-year plan. – **This commitment is maintained.**

Beyond the investments outlined above, the FY2024 budget proposal is a level service budget that maintains core municipal services (Police, Fire, DPW, Town Hall, Library, and Human Services) at current levels. Targeted investments have been made to address community needs.

For in-depth information about the Town's financial condition please refer to the Town Manager's Annual Budget & Financial Plan online at: [visit arlingtonma.gov/budgets](http://visit arlingtonma.gov/budgets)



*Fiscal Year 2024 Town Manager's Annual Budget and Financial Plan.*



## American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

Municipalities across the nation are the beneficiaries of a significant influx of federal funds via the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Arlington expects to receive \$35.27 million in funds. Spending of these funds have specific requirements and Arlington is making investments in all areas allowable, including public and behavioral health, economic recovery, affordable housing, premium pay for essential workers, equity and outreach, food security, parks and playgrounds, and infrastructure projects.

From this funding the Town is allocating \$10 million to revenue loss, the maximum allowed, to help reduce the amount asked for any upcoming override vote. In this Annual Report you will note many references to how the Town is spending these funds. You may also view details at [arlingtonma.gov/arpa](http://arlingtonma.gov/arpa).

## Commitment to Racial Equity

Building off the great work and investments made since 2020, the Town's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Division continues to broaden awareness and knowledge of systemic racism. Through ARPA funding, the Town was able to conduct racial equity workshops with Town employees and engage a consultant to work on an Equity Audit. Feedback from these initiatives will culminate in an Equity Plan for the Town.

## Capital Projects

As previously mentioned in the Select Board report, and highlighted on the cover of this report, the newly renovated Community Center at 27 Maple Street opened its doors in 2022, as did the newly renovated Arlington Reservoir. The Arlington High School Building and Public Works Facility projects continue, and several playgrounds were renovated, including Parmenter, Peirce, Stratton, and Spy Pond. Hurd Field was also renovated with plans to open in 2023. The completion of Phase II of the Whittemore Park Revitalization Project provided much needed accessibility improvements to the park and the Jason Russell House, as well as updated the side garden on either side of the house.



*Newly renovated playground at Bishop Elementary School.*

## Sustainability/Energy Conservation

### Green Communities

In 2010 Arlington was named a Green Community by the state Department of Energy Resources (DOER). This designation was in recognition of the work that Arlington had done in the past to reduce energy usage, and the plans it had to further reduce energy use in the future. In 2022, the Town received its eleventh grant award since the inception of the Green Communities program in 2010. This new grant award of \$100,000 puts Arlington's cumulative grant total at \$1,973,393, one of the highest in the state. Projects earmarked for these funds to reduce energy usage are projected to save nearly \$17,000 in annual energy costs.

### Arlington Community Electricity (ACE)

ACE continues to provide residents and businesses rate stability and renewable energy options from which to choose. In November of 2022, the Town started a new two-year contract with NextEra Energy. As part of this new contract the default percentage of extra renewable energy increased from 11 to 30 percent. Purchasing extra renewable energy through this product enables customers to contribute to increased renewable energy development in the northeast region.



### Electrify Arlington

In summer 2022 the Town launched Electrify Arlington, a community-wide campaign to power buildings and transportation in Arlington with clean electricity. The campaign educates residents and businesses

about electrification and connects them with existing programs, rebates, and technical assistance. Electrify Arlington offerings include free heat pump coaching sessions with trained community volunteers; the newly launched webpage [arlingtonma.gov/electrify](http://arlingtonma.gov/electrify) with resources for residents and businesses; support scheduling no-cost energy assessments; and educational events.



### Master Plan

Two projects were completed in 2022 that took cues from the Master Plan. These projects include the completion of the Arlington Housing Plan and Open Space and Recreation Plan. The Arlington Housing Plan serves as an update to the 2016 Housing Production Plan and was adopted by the ARB in January, 2022, the Select Board in April, 2022, and approved by the Department of Housing and Community Development in May, 2022.

The Open Space and Recreation Plan Update guides Town policy regarding open space issues and is required by the state to maintain eligibility for state funding programs.



### Affordable Housing Action Plan

Developed in coordination with the Affordable Housing Trust Fund Board of Trustees and DPCD, the Affordable Housing Action Plan was approved by the Select Board in November. The Action Plan was developed through a months-long community process, including outreach to the public, affordable housing professionals, and housing stakeholders. The result is a plan with specific recommendations and financial strategies for creating, preserving, and financing affordable

housing in Arlington by leveraging Community Preservation Act, ARPA, and other local funding sources.

### Public Records Center

The Public Records Center is Arlington's online customer service portal where residents can make requests for, and receive, public records. The system was launched in 2017 to foster compliance with the updated Public Records Law that went into effect January 1, 2017. In its ongoing commitment to open government and transparency, the Town proactively posts many commonly requested documents to its website and provides access to, or copies of, public records upon request. Although public record requests can be submitted in any fashion, the Public Records Center is growing in popularity each year due to its convenience, as well as increased public interest in local government matters.

Some public records requests are simple in nature, seeking only a copy of a single permit or plan, while others are labor intensive, requiring input from a number of Departments or time-consuming searches of historical archives or electronic records. The Public Records Law requires municipalities to designate a Records Access Officer to coordinate the response to public record requests. In Arlington, this function is performed by the Deputy Town Manager for Operations. Below is a summary table of common request types.

Public Records Requests	2020	2021	2022
Fire Department Reports	36	29	20
Maps / GIS Data	89	100	114
Municipal Records	278	175	155
Property / Building Specific Information	181	213	196
<b>Total Requests</b>	<b>584</b>	<b>614</b>	<b>532</b>

We also would like to acknowledge ongoing efforts to provide Town information and data online that traditionally the public would call or visit an office to have access to. For example, having property assessment data online has resulted in a reduction of public records records requests, phone calls, and visits to the Assessor's Office. Similarly, having real estate, excise tax, and water bill information (and payment options) online has reduced phone calls and visits to the Treasurer's Office.

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Website Traffic (arlingtonma.gov)	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Page Views	1,687,147	1,590,677	2,385,342	2,324,420	1,864,383
Visits/Sessions	648,305	603,733	1,029,520	1,212,208	810,686
Frequency & Recency: Over 200 visits to website	29,296	29,752	28,138	33,455	31,370
COVID-19 Section / PageViews			300,414	95,950	34,769



## Communications & Customer Service

Public communications and customer service remains a top priority. The Town's existing communication channels continue to be extremely valuable. Delivering ongoing day-to-day and accurate information, and ongoing public health information, as needed

In addition to informing the public, Town staff rely on several systems to interact with the public to conduct their communication and customer service needs. These systems include the following: the Request/Answer Center, arlingtonma.gov website, Siteimprove the Town's website ADA compliance checker, social media channels, and Arlington Alerts mass notification.

### Online ADA Compliance

With ARPA funding we were able to hire a temporary Communications Coordinator to assist online compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Duties include responding to findings identified in the Town's ADA Self-Assessment Report and the development and implementation of the Online ADA Compliance Strategy & Training Plan. The latter, aimed at building institutional knowledge of ADA best practices among 60+ staff that post content to the website and social media for the Town. This position also assists in communicating

about ARPA funded projects and will work to assist in the implementation of online language access options as identified by the DEI Division

### Request/Answer Center

The Request/Answer Center is Arlington's online customer service portal where residents can make requests of Town services (and track them), ask questions, and find answers. 2022 marked the fifteenth year for the service. The Request/Answer Center has 77 staff users and is heavily used by Public Works, followed by Health & Human Services, and the Town Manager's Office.

### Arlingtonma.gov

Arlingtonma.gov is the Town's communication hub. The site serves a population of approximately 46,000 residents, surrounding communities, and beyond. The site supports the online communication and outreach activities of fifteen departments, and over ninety boards, committees, and commissions. Since the institution of the Open Meeting Law (OML) in 2010 approximately 1,300-1,500 documents are added to the site annually, mostly agendas and minutes. There are currently 69 users of the content management system (CMS) that powers the website, similar to 2021 with 68 users.

Arlingtonma.gov continues to experience healthy use as website traffic begins to return to pre-pandemic levels.

Online Communications	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
<b>Town of Arlington Notices</b>					
<b>Subscribers</b>	5,242	5,713	6,046	5,651	6,074
% of Growth from previous year	1%	8%	6%	-7%	7%
% Compared with # of households (19,000)	28%	30%	32%	30%	32%
<b>Arlington Alert Emails</b>					
<b>Subscribers*</b>	5,144	5,351	6,049	6,446	4,110
% of Growth from previous year	3%	4%	12%	6%	-57%
% Compared with # of households (19,000)	27%	28%	32%	34%	22%

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## Arlington Alerts



Receive emergency/important Town Notifications via phone, text, and email.

### *Arlington Alerts Mass Notification System*

Since 2012 Arlington Alerts have been notifying residents via phone, text, and email before, during, and after emergencies or to relay important information. In early 2022 the Town switched vendors moving to Everbridge Mass Notification. Because the system can geo-target notifications, the Town is exploring expanding its use for non-emergency text and emails. A survey is being conducted in early 2023 to measure public preferences for such notifications and to develop a plan that meets those preferences.

### *Town Email Lists*

Town Notices, the Town's main email notification list continues to provide the strongest and most consistent link with residents. Email continues to come up in our Communications survey as the most preferred method. Our challenge continues to be encouraging residents and businesses to sign up to Town Notices and similarly Arlington Alert text and email options. In developing a plan on how to use these systems to inform the public in timely ways, the Town also needs to invest in different modes of outreach to encourage new registrations to both these critical channels Town Notices and Arlington Alerts.

### *Social Media*

The Town maintains several social media channels, across several departments. The official Town Facebook channel has over 3,000 followers and its Twitter channel over 4,000. We continue to invest effort to ensure followers are these channels are receiving all information we post to our website and send via Town Notices emails, including introducing new public facing staff, recognizing staff accomplishments, and promoting Arlington a great place to work and live.

### **Acknowledgements**

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, Boards, and Committees. Together with our elected leaders, management team, and staff, they make Arlington a desirable community. I would like to thank the Select Board for its continued leadership and support throughout in my role as Town Manager. I am also very grateful for the professionalism, knowledge, and support provided by Deputy Town Manager of Operations, Jim Feeney, Public Information Officer Joan Roman, and my Executive Assistant, Kristen DeFrancisco. They are exceptional public employees dedicated to providing the best possible service to each and every person interacting with the Town Manager's Office.

I would also like to recognize the retirements of Phyllis Marshall, who served 4 years as Arlington's first appointed Treasurer and Domenic Lanzillotti, who served 19 years as the Town's Purchasing Officer. I would also like to welcome the addition of Mary Ellen De Natale as our new Purchasing Officer, congratulate Julie Wayman on her promotion to Budget Director, and welcome Janna Settembre as our Communications Coordinator.



Significant renovations were made to playgrounds at the Peirce, Stratton, and Bishop elementary schools during 2022 with funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).