

ABOUT ARLINGTON

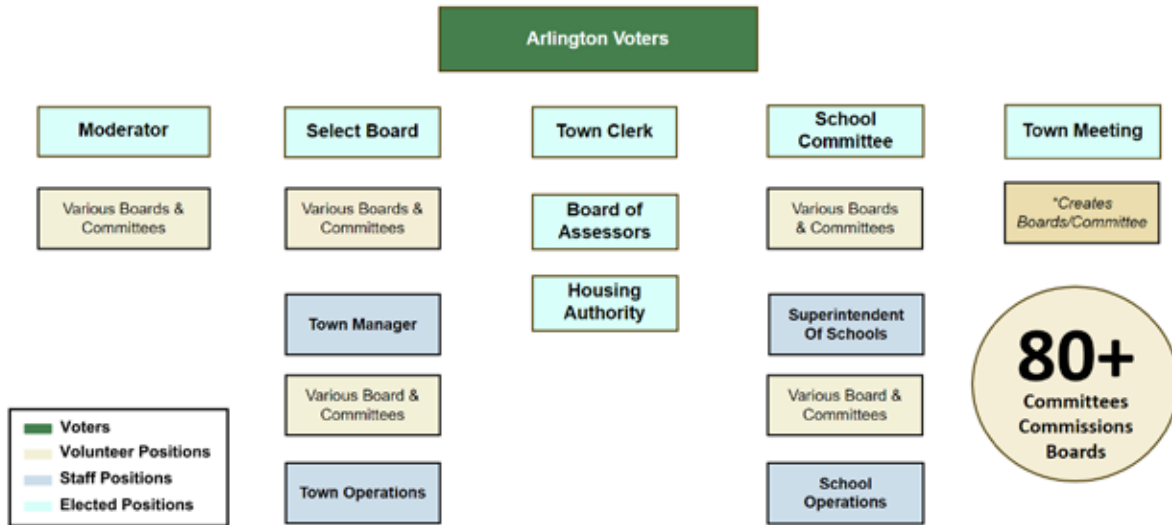
Welcome to the Town of Arlington’s Annual Report. As an introduction we have compiled a brief overview of Town governance, how to stay connected, and some facts about Arlington. If you are new to Arlington we invite you to visit the Town of Arlington’s welcome page for a deeper dive into Town governance as well as to get oriented to life in Arlington at arlingtonma.gov/welcome.

The Town of Arlington (Town) is governed by the “Town Manager Act of the Town of Arlington, Massachusetts,” the “By- Laws of the Town of Arlington,” and Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 43A, “Standard Form of Representative Town Meeting Government.” Arlington is also a member of the 5th Massachusetts Congressional District, 4th Middlesex State Senatorial District, and the 23rd and 24th Middlesex State Representative Districts.

Representative Town Meeting is the Town’s legislative body and consists of 252 members elected from their home precincts (12 members each from 21 precincts). Annual Town Meeting convenes for several nights in the spring and for Special Town Meeting, as needed. Town Meeting votes on Articles related to zoning and Town bylaws, budgets, and matters put forth by Town officials or resident petitions.

The executive branch is made up of an elected five-member Select Board. The Board hires a professional Town Manager to administer the daily operations of government. Schools are governed by a seven-member elected School Committee, which hires a Superintendent of Schools to administer their daily operations. The Town also has several independent elected offices, including the Town Clerk, who oversees official Town records, elections, and supports Town Meeting; the Town Moderator, who runs Town Meeting when in session; a three-member Board of Assessors, who are responsible for determining property values; and the five-member Arlington Housing Authority, which operates several housing assistance programs in town. Arlington Housing Authority members are elected to five-year terms, all others, including Town Meeting Members, are for three-year terms.

Arlington has over 80 boards, committees, and commissions that work with departments across the organization on a variety of issues. From environmental issues to budgeting to human rights and transportation, civic engagement in Arlington is robust and varied. If you are interested in becoming involved with a committee, we recommend you sit in on meeting or two to get a sense of their mission and if it is a good fit for you. All committee meetings are open to the public. You may view a list of all boards, committees, and commissions as well as committee openings online at arlingtonma.gov/boards.



An overview of Arlington Town Governance.

Every year the Town publishes an Annual Report, this report, which is compiled by the Town Manager’s Office. Summaries are submitted by every department and many boards, committees, commissions working within the Town. The reports are intended to be snapshots of the reporting year. Full details can often be found on the Town’s website at arlingtonma.gov.

own budgets are compiled by the Town Manager’s Office and reviewed by the Select Board and Finance Committee. School budgets are compiled by the Superintendent of Schools’ Office and reviewed by the School Committee. Both budgets are approved by Town Meeting. The Town Manager’s Annual Budget and Financial Plan and School Budget may be found at arlingtonma.gov/budgets.

To stay in the know year-round, we encourage you to sign up to receive Town Notices email and follow the us on social media. To receive emergency messages via phone, text, and email create an Arlington Alert profile. A full list of ways to get connected and stay connected may be found at arlingtonma.gov/connect.

ABOUT ARLINGTON

Incorporation: The Town of Arlington was originally settled in 1635 as a village under the name Menotomy. In 1807 the Town, and a section of what is now Belmont, were set off from Cambridge and incorporated as West Cambridge. In 1867, the Town, was renamed Arlington in honor of the heroes buried at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia.

Population

1970 (Federal Census) 52,720
1975 (State Census) 50,223
1980 (Federal Census) 48,219
1985 (State Census) 46,465
1990 (Federal Census) 44,630
2000 (Federal Census) 42,389
2005 (American Community Survey by U.S. Census)
41,224
2010 (Federal Census) 42,844
2015 (Federal Census) 44,128
2020 (Federal Census) 46,308



Education: The Town of Arlington operates an excellent school system with seven elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school. The elementary schools are: Bishop School, 25 Columbia Road; Brackett School, 66 Eastern Avenue; Dallin School, 185 Florence Avenue; Hardy School, 52 Lake Street; Peirce School, 85 Park Avenue Extension; Stratton School, 180 Mountain Avenue, and Thompson School, 70 North Union Street. Middle Schools include, the Gibbs School at 41 Foster Street (sixth grade) and the Ottoson Middle School at 63 Acton Street (seventh and eighth grades). Arlington High School is located at 869 Massachusetts Avenue.

Location: Arlington is situated six miles northwest of Boston, in latitude 42 degrees 25 minutes north, longitude 71 degrees 09 minutes west. The Town is bordered on the north by Winchester, on the east by Medford and Somerville, on the south by Cambridge and Belmont, and on the west by Lexington.

Elevation: The Town elevation above mean tide ranges from a low of 4 feet to a high of 377 feet. Elevations include 10 feet at Massachusetts Avenue and the Cambridge line, 48 feet at Massachusetts Avenue and Pleasant Street, 155 feet at Massachusetts Avenue and Park Avenue, 281 feet at Crescent Hill Avenue and Park Place, and 377 feet at Park Circle and Eastern Avenue.

Area: Arlington covers 3,517.5 acres, or 5.5 square miles, of which 286.2 acres are covered by water. There are 158.27 acres of parkland owned by the Town and 52.25 acres under the control of the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation. Just over fifty-nine acres of the land area is devoted to cemeteries.

Infrastructure: There are 95.27 miles of public streets and Town ways, 24.36 miles of private streets open for travel, 6.11 miles of state highways and parkways, and 3.24 miles of paper streets. The permanent water system consists of 131.43 miles, and the sewer system consists of 117.37 miles. There are 77.37 miles in the Town's storm drain system, and the Town maintains 3,698 catch basins. There are 104.09 miles of permanent sidewalks and 94 miles of curbing.

Transportation: Arlington is bounded on the south by Route 2, a major transportation route allowing access to Boston and the western part of Massachusetts. Arlington is also a short distance from Interstate Routes 93 and 95. Other major routes that go through the Town are Routes 2A and 3. Public transportation is provided through the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA), servicing the Greater Boston area with bus service and a subway system. View bus and subway routes at www.mbta.com.

Additional Information: Town of Arlington website at www.arlingtonma.gov.

EXECUTIVE SERVICES



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

SELECT BOARD

The Select Board is pleased to submit its annual report for 2023 to Arlington residents.

The Board is composed of five elected residents who set policy and oversee the management of municipal functions of the Town. In April 2023, Diane M. Mahon was elected to her ninth three-year term and Lenard Diggins to his second three year term. The Board elected Eric D. Helmuth as Chair and John V. Hurd as Vice Chair. Stephen W. DeCoursey rounds out the Board.

Year in Review

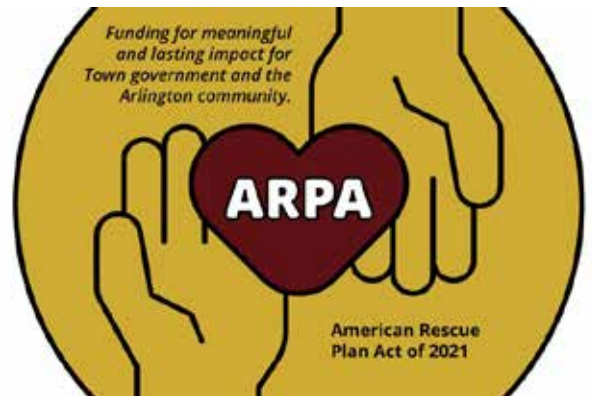
The year 2023 was another year of transition with the retirement of Sandy Pooler, who served as Acting Town Manager for 13 months after six years as Deputy Town Manager, and the appointment of Jim Feeney as Arlington's new Town Manager. The Board is pleased to report a strong leadership transition. Having worked for the Town for over a decade, Jim brings the institutional knowledge and expertise that is vital to ensuring quality service delivery across the organization, and abundant energy and enthusiasm for advancing Town initiatives and goals. The Board thanks Sandy Pooler for his service to Arlington.

In a Special Town Election on November 7, 2023, Arlington voters approved a \$7 million dollar property tax increase under Proposition 2 ½ (Operational Override) to maintain a high level of Town services and make critical new investments in the schools. The Board is grateful to the voters for their support.

Voters also approved a second question authorizing the Town to establish a means-tested senior citizen property tax exemption for eligible residents over 65 years of age who qualify for the State "circuit breaker" income ceiling. Beginning in Fiscal Year 2025, the Board will annually set the amount of relief for qualifying seniors subject to two constraints. First no qualifying resident may have their tax obligation reduced by more than 50%; and second, the total taxes exempted under the program in any year cannot exceed 1% of the

Town's residential property tax levy.

The Board is grateful to the Arlington community for its continued support of Town and School services, and pledges to stand by its override commitments to exercise fiscal discipline, provide quality municipal services, and invest in Arlington's future. In this chapter we touch upon only a few of the many accomplishments in 2023.



American Rescue Plan Act

Municipalities across the nation are the beneficiaries of a significant influx of federal funds via the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). The funding is provided to offset the negative health and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and includes support for public health, economic recovery, and infrastructure improvements. Following the Select Board-endorsed ARPA budget framework, the Town was able to continue investments in school playground improvements (Bishop, Stratton, and Peirce), boost economic development with Transformative Growth Grants to local businesses, bolster public health programs offering more mental health assistance, and improve infrastructure with the continuation of the Town's water meter replacement initiative and upcoming/planned HVAC improvements at Town and School buildings. With the help of ARPA funding, the Town also completed the Community Equity Audit, which will help the Town develop implementation steps to advance equity across all facets of the Town.

Facilities and Fiscal Planning

New Arlington High School (AHS)

With the completion of Phase 2 in November 2023, three-quarters of the new high school is now complete. Phase 2 was the largest and most complex of the multi-phase project. Construction of the new school remains on budget and is anticipated to be finished in February 2025. Features of the newest AHS wing include 46 classrooms, central spine, cafeteria, library, district administration offices, and Menotomy preschool. The School Department has included full information in their report on page 69.



Town and School officials, past and present, and AHS project partners pose at the Phase 2 opening at Arlington High School, November 8, 2023.

Net Zero Action 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) and in 2021 it endorsed the Town's Net Zero Action Plan. In 2023, Electrify Arlington continued 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 connects residents and businesses with existing programs, rebates and incentives, and technical assistance to make it happen. Among many successes in 2023, a new phase was funded through a Mass Save Community First Partnership (CFP), which awarded Electrify Arlington \$20,000 to focus on serving low and moderate income households, renters, and landlords. The Town also initiated an official partnership with a home performance contractor, HomeWorks Energy, to support scheduling no-cost energy assessments, and updated the Electrify Arlington website at arlingtonma.gov/electrify.



Transportation & Parking

Safety Improvements

The Board was pleased to see the substantial completion of the Chestnut Street Safety Improvement project. The project greatly improved travel for all travelers with clearly marked road and bicycle line striping and the installation of a new solar powered crosswalk. The Board approved the conceptual design for the Mass Ave / Appleton Safety and Accessibility Project in October, allowing the Town to advance to formal engineering design to create shovel-ready construction plans, and to apply for state funding.



An aerial view of Chestnut Street looking west and the new solar powered pedestrian beacon.

Parking Pilots

The Board initiated an overnight parking pilot program in June 2023. The townwide pilot is limited to 125 new permits and was extended to June 30, 2024. The trial program allows residents and Town leaders to evaluate the benefits, drawbacks, and feasibility of expanding current temporary permits, waivers, and exemptions. The Board plans to make a decision about the future of this program at an upcoming meeting in 2024. The Board also endorsed a two-year parking pilot that aims to provide relief to seniors 65 and older when shopping in Arlington and visiting the Community Center by allowing free parking in municipal lots and unlimited parking near the Community Center.

Veterans' Acknowledgments

The Town and its residents demonstrated their deep commitment to commemorating the sacrifices Arlington residents have made in the military services through carefully planned ceremonies to observe Memorial Day in May and Veterans Day in November. Many organized groups and individual residents turned out to participate in-person and many others watched coverage of the observances at home on ACMi TV.

In June longtime Veterans Director, Jeff Chunglo, retired. The Board expresses its gratitude to Jeff for his unwavering commitment to Arlington veterans. The Board also welcomes Philip J. McGovern as the Town's new Veterans Services Director.



Town Day attendees tour Arlington Fire Department vehicles and watch safety demos.

Town Day Celebration

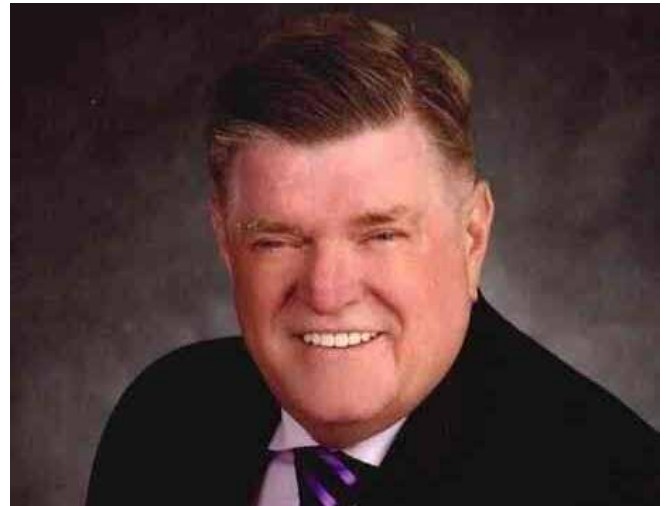
The Board was pleased that the rain held off for Town Day 2023. It was another successful and well attended event, which highlighted many organizations and civic groups in Arlington. Zero Waste Arlington had a large presence, offering reusable cups, plates, and utensils and a free MWRA drinking water station so participants could reduce single use plastics. The Board extends 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.



Zero Waste Arlington partners with MWRA to help reduce single-use plastic by providing a drinking water truck and reusable cups at 2023 Town Day.

Acknowledgments & Recognitions

In September of 2023, former Select Board member Charlie Lyons passed away. Charlie leaves an enduring legacy for the town, having served 24 years on the Board and seven years on the Arlington School Committee. Charlie made connections with people everywhere he went. His fiscal knowledge of school and municipal operations was unmatched. When the Town was slated to lose Federal Community Development Block Grant funding due to a drop in population, Charlie, utilizing his Massachusetts and federal contacts, was instrumental in ensuring that Arlington would continue to receive these monies. As a result, over the past 25 years the Town has received over \$30 million in funds it would not have otherwise received. In 2005, Charlie introduced the Lyons Plan, a multi-year fiscal stability plan that would couple a successful override vote with specific spending limits and a commitment not to return to voters for a future override request for a specified number of years. Now known as the five-year plan, it has become an essential part of the Town's budgeting process. He will be missed.



Charlie Lyons, former Arlington Select Board and School Committee member.

The Board welcomes Britton Mallard to its administrative staff, and expresses its gratitude to all the administrative staff for their hard work on our behalf year-round. They are second to none in delivering excellent service in a pleasant manner to all who visit the Select Board's Office.

EXECUTIVE SERVICES

TOWN MANAGER

I am excited to deliver my first Annual Report in my capacity as Town Manager. This report provides an overview of the financial, organizational, and community-based efforts that took place during 2023. As the Select Board noted in their report, 2023 was a year of transition for the management team. As I adjust from my role as Deputy Town Manager – Operations to Town Manager, I am humbled the Select Board chose me for this role. It is an honor to lead our tremendous Town staff whom I have served with for over a decade.



Arlington Town Manager, James Feeney.

Throughout the many transitions in post-pandemic life, Town staff and volunteers continue to show their resiliency and find creative solutions in service to the Arlington community. Throughout this report you will read about these accomplishments. I am also pleased that the voters of Arlington continue to support their local government by approving a \$7 million dollar operating override this past fall to preserve Town services and invest in Arlington's future.

Town's Financial Outlook

The FY2025 budget observes Arlington's long-standing financial policies and practices that protect the financial health of the organization. Of note, this budget adheres strictly to growth rates committed to voters in November 2023 and maintains strong financial reserves. As always, 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. Further, given that Arlington is mostly built-out, our New Growth regularly comes in well below the State average. 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. Arlington's local economy remains strong, and local revenues from meals and hotel taxes has largely rebounded to pre-pandemic levels.

The next largest source of revenue for the Town is State Aid. Local aid, while having improved in recent years, can be somewhat unpredictable and difficult to forecast. The Student Opportunity Act has been providing for increased education funding over the past few years; however, as we head into the final year of the Student Opportunity Act, it appears that Arlington's growth in education funding will be less than projected, growing at less than 1%. The Commonwealth continues to experience revenue shortfalls that can trickle down to Arlington in a number of ways, including through reduced earmark funding. Fortunately though, despite the statewide revenue challenges, Unrestricted General Government Aid remains a priority for the Governor.

The framework for Arlington's long range financial planning remains intact. FY2025, the upcoming fiscal year, is the second year of a three-year plan that incorporated the Proposition 2½ override of November 2023 designed to carry the Town's budgets through FY2026. The Select Board adopted a set of commitments which served as the basis for the \$7,000,000 operating override that was successfully passed via a Town-wide ballot measure on November 7, 2023. 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 prior to Fiscal Year 2027—**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 at 3.22%.**
 - d. Continue to fund special education cost growth at a rate of 6.5% per year. – **This commitment is maintained.**
- 2) Respond to ongoing school enrollment pressures. Update the education budget for future enrollment increases or decreases at a rate of 50% of per pupil expenditures. – **This commitment is maintained.**
- 3) Invest for Arlington's future
 - a. Phase in funding of the Arlington Public Schools and Arlington School Committee's

EXECUTIVE SERVICES

Strategic Plan: to ensure cohesive and consistent excellent instruction for all students, provide adequate staffing and service provision to meet all students' needs, close achievement and opportunity gaps, recruit and retain a diverse workforce, ensure safe and modern schools and operations, and build and sustain two-way partnerships with families. Adopt the following schedule of increases to base operating budgets:

FY24: \$1,000,000; FY25 - \$3,100,000; FY26 - \$1,700,000; FY27- \$600,000; FY28 - \$300,000.

This commitment is maintained.

- b. Improve mobility for all residents by adding \$200,000 to the base budget for pedestrian infrastructure, including road and sidewalk repair. Add \$250,000 to the Public Works Department to cover the costs of the upcoming new trash collection and disposal contract. Add \$150,000 to the annual contribution to the OPEB fund to cover retiree health insurance costs. – **This commitment is maintained, with \$200,000 for mobility improvements being included in the capital budget and \$250,000 in funding included in the Solid Waste budget.**

4) Minimize impact on taxpayers, particularly seniors and others with income challenges.

- a. Continue new tax relief programs, including a municipal circuit breaker and increased eligibility for property tax deferral options, and publicize existing relief programs. - **Voters recently approved a question providing income-based local property tax relief for eligible seniors.**
- b. Pursue new revenue sources. – **This commitment is fulfilled on a year over year basis.**
- c. 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.**
- d. Direct the Town Manger to continually look for budget efficiencies that can produce cost savings in each department. -**This commitment is fulfilled on a year over year basis**

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 three-year plan. – **This commitment is maintained.**

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

Budget information is also available via the Town's online budget tool, Arlington Visual Budget. It can be viewed at arlingtonvisualbudget.org.

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 received \$35.27 million in funds. These funds have specific spending requirements, and Arlington is making investments in all areas allowable, including public and behavioral health, economic recovery, affordable housing, equity and outreach, food security, parks and playgrounds, and infrastructure projects. From this funding the Town allocated \$10 million to revenue loss, the maximum allowed, to help reduce the amount asked in the override vote last fall. In addition to the ARPA projects mentioned in the Select Board section of this report, this funding also helped support the community mural project in Arlington Heights, entitled "You Are Loved,;" and the installation of a bronze cast of Dallin's Paul Revere statue on a new granite plinth in the west garden outside the Cyrus Dallin museum, a project supported by the ARPA funded Transformative Growth Grant Program. In this Annual Report you will read additional references to how the Town is spending ARPA funds.



Members of the community and artist take a break from painting the You are Loved mural in Arlington Heights.

Commitment to Racial Equity

Building off the great work and investments made since 2020, the Town's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Division (DEI) continues to broaden awareness and knowledge of systemic racism. With ARPA funding, the Town was able to complete the Community Equity Audit in 2023. The Community Equity Audit will help guide the Town to advance equity across the organization.

Capital Projects

As previously mentioned in the Select Board report, Phase 2 of the Arlington High School project opened the new wing to students and staff in November. Phase 3 is underway and substantial completion of the new high school is expected for February 2025. In addition to several school playground renovations (featured on the back cover of this report), the new Arlington Town Yard & Municipal Services building at 51 Grove Street opened to the public (featured on the front cover of this report). The new Municipal Services building houses Inspectional Services and Public Works, providing a modern facility to both staff and the public.



An aerial view of the new Town Yard & Municipal Services building at 51 Grove Street. In the back to the right is the new salt shed.

The Whittemore Robbins Estate, located behind the Robbins library, is undergoing renovations. When the exterior and interior renovations of the Cottage are completed it will expand use for Arlington Youth Counseling Center.

Hurd Field completed its renovations and opened to great fanfare in the spring of 2023.



Play ball! The first pitch at the newly renovated Hurd Field in Arlington Heights.

Town Hall Plaza renovations have been completed. The restoration of the garden continues zone by zone, however, the building envelope is in great need of repair. The first step to begin repairs is the removal of the clock tower, followed by repairs to the roof to

stop the leaking. As a historic structure, the repairs will require significant funding and take time to complete. Every effort is being expended to find the funding and expedite these repairs.

MBTA Communities

In response to the MBTA Communities Law enacted in 2021 (Mass General Law Chapter 40A, section 3A) the Arlington Redevelopment Board (ARB) established the MBTA Communities Working Group to support the Department of Planning and Community (DPCD) staff in implementing a compliant MBTA Communities zone. Over the course of 2023, the Working Group and DPCD staff engaged with the public, deliberated, researched, and ultimately developed an implementation plan that would allow Arlington to comply with state law by instituting an MBTA Communities overlay district. The new overlay district contains two sub-districts, where multi-family housing may be constructed by-right, meaning without a special permit. The zone was approved by Special Town Meeting in October 2023. Special Town Meeting also passed a slate of business zoning articles in order to promote development of commercial and mixed-use properties as a complement to the residential MBTA Communities overlay.



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 2023, the Town received its twelfth 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 over two million, one of the highest in the state. Three Town buildings will receive improvements through the grant, utility incentives, and Town matching funds. The Dallin Branch Library Building (85 Park Ave), which houses Arlington Community Media, Inc. (ACMI), the Jarvis House, and the Cyrus E Dallin Elementary School. Efforts to Electrify 85 Park Ave and the Jarvis House on Pleasant Street are well underway.



AED Installations

Two outdoor automated external defibrillator (AED) units were installed in town in 2023. An AED is used to help those experiencing sudden cardiac arrest. It's a sophisticated, yet easy-to-use, medical device that can analyze the heart's rhythm and, if necessary, deliver an electrical shock, or defibrillation, to help the heart re-establish an effective rhythm. The two new AEDs are now at Buck Field/Hills Hill Field on Summer Street and at Thorndike Field at the end of Margaret Street by the Minuteman Bikeway. I strongly encourage everyone to be aware of these new medical devices that can help save lives and I want to thank Lyn Shamban for her generous donation. The Town is looking to install additional AEDs around Town.



AED installed at Buck Field/Hills Hill Field on Summer St.

Arlington Civic Academy

Arlington Civic Academy is geared toward providing information to those who are interested in joining a Town committee or may want to run for Town Meeting or other elected office. In the fall of 2023 Arlington conducted its first Civic Academy. Twenty residents met weekly for 6 sessions. Each session provided an overview of government operations led by Town and School officials with discussion and/or a hands-on activity. The experience was well received by both participants and presenters. At least a half dozen graduates reported increasing their civic activity, including working at elections, joining a committee, or running for Town Meeting. Civic Academy presenters reported authentic

interactions with residents who were curious about how Arlington town government works and a genuine interest to serve. Because of this success and the demand by residents to participate, we plan to conduct two Civic Academies in 2024.



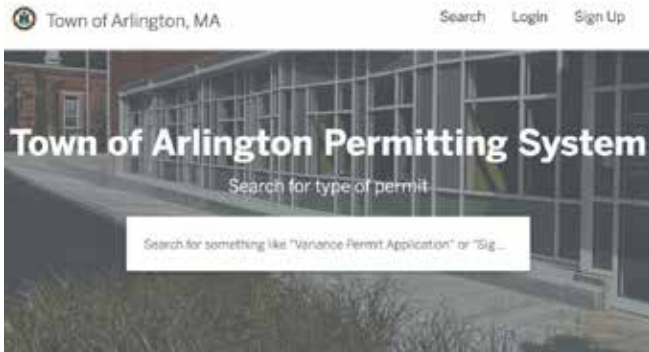
Arlington Civic Academy participants discuss MBTA Communities in one of the interactive sessions.

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 | 2023 |
|--|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Fire Department Reports | 36 | 29 | 20 | 23 |
| Maps / GIS Data | 89 | 100 | 114 | 102 |
| Municipal Records | 278 | 175 | 155 | 216 |
| Property / Building Specific Information | 181 | 213 | 196 | 210 |
| Total Requests | 584 | 614 | 532 | 551 |



New Online Permitting System

In 2023 Inspectional Services launched its first on-line permitting system. Powered by OpenGov, the new system will allow visitors to apply for permits and pay online, greatly improving the permitting process. In addition to improved convenience for applicants the system will assist with record keeping and improve access for public records as well as free up time for staff to focus on conducting inspections and serving the public.



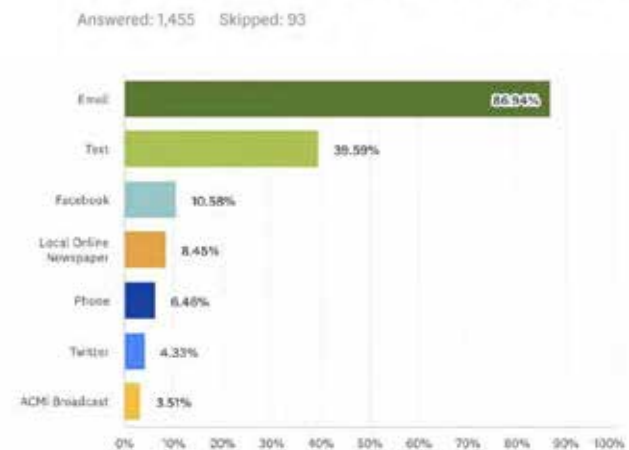
Communications & Customer Service

Public communications and customer service remains a top priority. The Town manages several communication channels that are extremely valuable in delivering ongoing, accurate information about general Town activities and emergency information as needed. These systems include the following: the Request/Answer Center, arlingtonma.gov website, social media channels, and Arlington Alerts mass notification. Siteimprove is used to monitor ADA compliance on Town websites.



Communications Survey

In 2023 the Town conducted its bi-annual Online Communications Survey, which measured resident satisfaction on these channels and sought feedback on preferred methods of notification for non-emergency communications. The survey received 1,548 responses, the most the Town has received for a communications survey. Email is clearly the preferred method by respondents (87%) followed by text messaging (40%). A key take away was to explore expanded use of text messaging.



Arlington Alerts Mass Notification System

In late 2023 the Town launched a campaign to encourage residents and businesses to provide their text and email information via the Arlington Alert system, which allows geo-targeted notifications via these methods as well as phone. The campaign focused on street sweeping; a Town activity survey respondents showed a strong preference (86%). The campaign greatly contributed to the Arlington Alert subscription growth seen in 2023, with a 25% increase in email subscriptions and 29% for text (see chart below). The Town plans to continue this campaign and seek other opportunities to utilize the Arlington Alert system and increase text and email subscriptions.



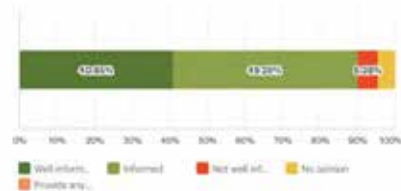
EXECUTIVE SERVICES

Town Email Lists

Email continues to be the most preferred method of contact for residents and Town Notices, the Town's general informational email notification list, continues to provide the strongest and most consistent link with residents. We are pleased that a large portion of survey respondents that receive Town Notices felt informed (90%). Similar to Arlington Alerts, our challenge continues to be encouraging residents and businesses to sign up to Town Notices. In 2023 we created welcome and connect post cards and business cards and distributed them around Town and School offices as well as to the Arlington Chamber of Commerce in hopes to attract new residents to our communication services.

Please indicate how informed Town Notice emails keep you about Town activities, news, and initiatives.

Answered 564 - Skipped 564



Social Media

The Town maintains several social media channels, across several departments. The official Town Facebook channel has over 3.9K followers and its Twitter channel has 4.3K. We continue to invest effort to ensure followers of these channels are receiving all information we post to our website and send via Town Notices emails, plus introducing new public facing staff, recognizing staff accomplishments, and promoting Arlington a great place to work, live, or visit.

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 eighty 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 2022 with 64 users.

Arlingtonma.gov continues to experience healthy use as website traffic begins to level off just above pre-pandemic levels.

| Website Traffic (arlingtonma.gov) | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
|-----------------------------------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| Page Views | 1,590,67 | 2,385,342 | 2,324,420 | 1,864,383 | 1,851,10 |
| Visits/Sessions* | 603,733 | 1,029,520 | 1,212,208 | 810,686 | 884,241 |

| Online Communications | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Town of Arlington Notices Subscribers | 6,046 | 5,651 | 6,074 | 6,452 |
| % of Growth from previous year | 6% | -7% | 7% | 6% |
| % Compared with # of households (19,000) | 32% | 30% | 32% | -19% |
| Arlington Alert Emails Subscribers* | 6,049 | 6,446 | 4,110 | 5,484 |
| % of Growth from previous year | 12% | 6% | -57% | 25% |
| % Compared with # of households (19,000) | 32% | 34% | 22% | 29% |
| Arlington Alert Text Subscribers* | 3,500 | 3,607 | 3,678 | 5,317 |
| % of Growth from previous year | 3% | 3% | 2% | 31% |
| % Compared with # of households (19,000) | 18% | 19% | 19% | 94% |
| Town Social Media | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| Facebook | 2,300 | 2,750 | 3,250 | 3,900 |
| Twitter | 2,900 | 3,300 | 3,800 | 4,300 |

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. 2023 marked the sixteenth year for the service. The Request/Answer Center has 76 users and is heavily used by Public Works, followed by Health & Human Services, and the Town Manager's Office.

EXECUTIVE SERVICES

Online ADA Compliance

Online compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a top priority for the Town. With ARPA funding we were able to hire a Communications Coordinator to assist our online ADA compliance. In 2023 our Communications Coordinator was able to resolve many of the findings identified in the Town's ADA Self-Assessment Report and implement key components 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. Highlights include developing documentation and trainings for 28 staff members who post to the website and nine who post to social media. The Online ADA Plan has set a goal of 90. The Town has not reached its goal, but it has seen improvements during 2023 from a score of 73.1 in January to 82.6 in early 2024. The Communications Coordinator continues to work with both Siteimprove and Town staff to improve our scores and institutional knowledge of ADA compliance and best practices.



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 in my new role as Town Manager. I am also very grateful for the professionalism, knowledge, and support provided by Public Information Officer Joan Roman, Purchasing Officer Mary Ellen De Natale, and 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 like to welcome Alex Magee, Deputy Town Manager/Finance Director, Christine Bongiorno, Deputy Town Manager/Operations, and Lauren Costa, Budget Coordinator, to the Town Manager's Office. Alex brings a wealth of expertise in ensuring smooth financial functions, Christine is no stranger to the Town having served as our Health & Human Services Director for almost two decades, and Lauren has also served the Town in both the offices of the Town Clerk and Select Board. I would also like to congratulate Julie Wayman as our new Town Treasurer, Michael Cunningham as our new Town Counsel, and Colleen Leger as the Town's new Health & Human Services Director. All three have a proven track record of serving the Town. I would also like to thank former Town Counsel, Doug Heim for his many years of service and wish him well in his future endeavors.



Aerial view of Arlington High School. In 2023, Phase 2 completed and welcomed students and staff to the new Humanities wing, library, and over 40 classrooms.