

# SELECT BOARD NEWS

The newsletter of the Lincoln, Massachusetts Select Board

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## Save the Date! Annual Town Meeting Saturday, March 23, 2024

January through March is the most intense period of activity in the Town’s budget and policy cycle. The town’s and schools’ recommended budgets are being finalized and boards and committees are preparing policy proposals. There will be numerous meetings, forums, and public hearings scheduled in the next three months. *Want to learn more? Sign up for alerts at <https://www.lincolntown.org/list.aspx> to get notifications from the boards of your choice.*

## Elections for Town Boards and Committees Monday, March 25, 2024 Reed Gym, Lincoln School

Those wishing to run for office can “pull papers” in the Town Clerk’s office until 5:00pm on Wednesday, January 31st. Candidates must then gather signatures so that their names can appear on the March 27th ballot. Papers are due back to the Clerk’s office by 5:00pm on Friday, February 2nd. The following positions are up for election:

- Board of Assessors - 1 seat for three years
- Board of Health - 1 seat for three years
- Cemetery Commission - 1 seat for three years
- Commissioners of Trust Funds - 1 seat for three years
- Housing Commission - 1 seat for three years
- Housing Commission - 1 seat for two years
- Lincoln-Sudbury Regional District School Committee - 2 seats for three years each
- Parks & Recreation Committee - 1 seat for three years
- Planning Board - 1 seat for three years
- preK - 8 School Committee - 2 seats for three years
- Select Board - 1 seat for three years
- Bemis Trustee - 1 seat for three years
- Water Commissioner - 1 seat for three years

Contact Valerie Fox @ [foxv@lincolntown.org](mailto:foxv@lincolntown.org) if interested.

*Congratulations to Lt. Sean Kennedy on being named Acting Chief of the Lincoln Police!*

*Acting Chief Kennedy has served as an officer in Lincoln since 1996, and led the multi-year process resulting in the Department's state accreditation.*

L to R: Jennifer Glass, Jim Hutchinson, Acting Chief Sean Kennedy, Kim Bodnar



## Town Meeting = Lincoln's Legislature

In the [June Select Board newsletter](#), we wrote about the role of the Select Board as the Executive Branch of town government and noted that Town Meeting is the Legislative Branch. At Town Meeting,



residents come together to deliberate and vote on Lincoln's budget, bylaws, and capital expenditures. Generally, Lincoln holds one Annual Town Meeting per year in March, but sometimes, as we did this past December, we need to have a Special Town Meeting to take up matters that need a decision outside of the regular town cycle. After every Town Meeting, the Select Board, Town Moderator, and Lincoln's administrative team take time to think about on how the meeting went and what can be

refined for the next time. At its last meeting, the Board reflected on the December 2nd Special Town Meeting, noting:

- The meeting was unusual because we had two warrant articles that asked voters to choose from among from multiple options:
  - Which Community Center project should move forward? (See pg. 5)
  - Which Housing Choice Act zoning option should we choose? (See pg. 5)
- ***This multiple-choice question format is a unique approach to solving complex town issues; one that adds a step to the traditional public process and gives residents more voice and control. As a Town, we have done this only three times: Once in 2018 to choose a Lincoln School project and twice this past December.***
- The multi-step voting process took time because we used a paper ballot for the first round of voting on each question. The time spent waiting for results, while an excellent opportunity to catch up with neighbors, has generated discussion about the general process of Town Meeting and whether, more specifically, we should invest in voting technology such as electronic clickers.

### A bit of history...

As the Town engages in a new round of discussions centered on opportunities for keeping town meeting functional and relevant, Tim Higgins, Lincoln Town Administrator, offers this view:

*Historically, our Moderators and Select Board members have always been open to suggestions for fine-tuning our town meeting procedures and remain so today. In the process, town leadership has been careful to try to maintain the small-town flavor of the meeting. These efforts require a careful balancing of increased speed, efficiency, and convenience with a respect for not only the traditions of Town Meeting in Lincoln, but also the philosophy about how the legislative process ought to work. I offer these observations and reflections to help create a common understanding of prior discussions, the meeting changes that resulted, lessons learned from other communities, and the legal constraints that limit our options. As with all things, there will be differences of opinion about how these challenges and potential adaptations ought to be balanced. Regardless, the results of prior discussions, research, and lessons learned should serve as a useful jumping off point.*

#### EFFICIENCY OF THE MEETING

A number of changes have been made over the years to increase efficiency, including:

- expanding the number of articles that are voted as a slate on the consent calendar;
- consolidating the departmental operating budget presentations into one overall presentation now delivered by the Finance Committee;

- tightening the presentations of the Capital budget and the Community Preservation Committee budget with each now presented as a slate of individual projects;
- scaling back of the time dedicated to recognizing past service of volunteers and staff.

#### TOWN MEETING INFORMATION & MATERIALS

Town Meeting materials are made available in a number of formats and are distributed through a variety of channels:

- the Moderator has published primers on basic town meeting procedure on the town website and in town meeting materials;
- the Town Meeting Warrant and the Finance Committee's overview are mailed to all residents; additional background materials explaining matters that appear on the Town Meeting Warrant are available on the town website and are kept updated as the decision making process unfolds;
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) documents help distill key considerations;
- updates and reminders are posted to LincolnTalk and the Squirrel;
- Select Board newsletter, including a spring Town Meeting preview edition;
- video recordings of the meetings of the key boards are available on the Town's website.

#### OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT

Boards and committees use a variety of techniques to keep residents informed and engaged, including:

- regular updates throughout the year during board and committee meetings;
- public comment and input during regular meetings; single-topic public hearings and forums as needed;
- an automated meeting notification option is available on the website;
- planning and design charettes;
- Select Board office hours; surveys and focus groups;
- the fall State of the Town meeting created to provide residents the opportunity to learn about key issues and challenges, and to help shape important decisions.

#### ABOUT LINCOLN'S STATE OF THE TOWN MEETING (SOTT)

Lincoln's State of the Town Meeting (SOTT) is a unique phenomenon, recognized as such by the Massachusetts Municipal Association with an Innovation Award for resident engagement. It was launched 20+ years ago by the Select Board in response to residents' desire for a more efficient way to become informed about key issues, projects, and initiatives and to provide input earlier in the decision-making process. SOTT is intentionally more informal than a normal Town Meeting, typically organized as more of a discussion than a setting for formal votes on budgets, bylaws, etc. SOTT is organized and facilitated by the Selects rather than the Moderator, again with more of an emphasis on conversation. For those who don't have the time or inclination to attend frequent board meetings to track the evolution of issues and projects, the State of the Town Meeting is an efficient alternative; one stop shopping if you will, where residents can come up to speed on the most important issues, provide feedback, and help shape decisions. A testament to Lincoln resident participation, SOTT attendance averages in the range of 250 - 450 residents, a participation that is only slightly below that of a typical Annual Town Meeting where formal votes on budgets, bylaws, projects, citizen petitions and the like are bound to draw a larger crowd. Since SOTT is not a statutory requirement, we have more discretion in the way it is organized and facilitated.

OTHER CONTEMPLATED TOWN MEETING CHANGES

The current round of discussions, only recently begun, has produced a number of suggested changes, including:

<p><b>Remote participation at Town Meeting, including remote voting.</b></p>	<p>Town Counsel has confirmed that remote participation and voting is impermissible under current Massachusetts Law. The concept has been considered and debated by communities around the state. Proponents argue that remote voting would make participation more convenient thereby increasing the number of votes cast. Opponents argue that there is real value in coming together as a community to listen, debate, and decide important matters. Regardless of one’s personal view, until state law changes the option will remain unavailable. The Town of Wayland is one of several communities has filed a home rule petition seeking authorization to offer remote participation and voting at its Town Meetings. Historically, the Secretary of State, Attorney General, and the legislature have taken conservative positions on proposed departures from the customary rules governing town meetings. We will continue to monitor their progress and remain in communication with our colleagues around the state.</p>
<p><b>A so-called split session wherein presentations and debate occur during one meeting, and voting occurring on another</b></p>	<p>Our early research yielded conflicting views on whether this approach is legally permissible. In Weston, for example, they concluded that the split session process they were contemplating would require special legislative authorization. It appears, however, that the model envisioned by Weston included an absentee ballot option which seems to be the element that made the concept impermissible under current state law. If Lincoln residents want to explore this concept, removing the absentee ballot element would appear to make the concept legally permissible without the need for state authorization. Again, as with the concept of remote participation, there will be differing views on whether split session town meetings would be an enhancement to the process.</p>
<p><b>Automatic voter counter (“clickers”) to speed the vote counting process.</b></p>	<p>A funding request has been included in the FY25 capital budget. If approved, the funds would be available July 1, 2024 so that the system could be tested at the 2024 State of the Town and implemented at the March 2025 Annual Town Meeting.</p>

VOTER PARTICIPATION RATE

We conducted a survey to compare our voter participation in our elections and town meetings with those of some of our peer towns. We will share the results as soon as they are available. Historically, we know that our voter turnout for elections has been on a par with those of our neighbors. We also know that Lincoln’s Town Meeting attendance has been strong especially when compared with our peer towns and adjusted for population size. Would we like all 5,000 of our registered voters to turnout for Town Meeting (typically 350 - 450) and our elections (typically 1200 - 1500)? Of course. At the same time, it’s important to recognize that our participation rates are comparably healthy and steady. We are anticipating a strong turnout in March for the Town Meeting votes on the Housing Choice bylaw and the funding of the Community Center, and at the Town Election two days later where the ballot will include the debt exclusion referendum for the Community Center project. Our preparations will take into account the likelihood of a larger than ordinary turnout.

NEXT STEPS

The Select Board and Moderator will be convening meetings in the spring to engage town officials, staff, and residents in a discussion about options for additional improvements to the process.

An active and informed citizenry is necessary to the smooth functioning of our small-town government and our open town meeting legislative decision-making process. Town leadership will continue to look for opportunities to make the process more efficient and convenient, while also trying to preserve the central role town meeting plays in the civic life of the community. Please reach out to our Town Moderator, Sarah Cannon Holden and Select Board Member, Jim Hutchinson to share your ideas!

[townmoderator@lincolntown.org](mailto:townmoderator@lincolntown.org)

[jhutchinsonselect@lincolntown.org](mailto:jhutchinsonselect@lincolntown.org)

**Community Center Building Committee (CCBC)**

At the December 2nd Special Town Meeting, residents voted for the CCBC to move into schematic design for an all-new building that will be approximately 19,500SF and is projected to cost a maximum of \$25M. The Community Center will house the Council on Aging & Human Services, the Parks & Recreation Department, and the Lincoln Extended Afterschool Program (LEAP). *At the March Annual Town Meeting, residents will vote on the funds needed for the project to go forward. This will require a 2/3 supermajority vote at Town Meeting AND a simple majority vote at the Annual Town Election on Monday, March 25, 2024.*

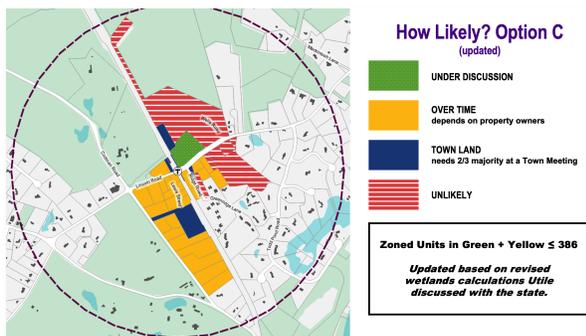


➔ VISIT THE CCBC'S WEBSITE FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO SIGN UP FOR UPDATES:  
[HTTPS://LINCOLNCOMMUNITYCENTER.COM/](https://lincolncommunitycenter.com/)

WANT TO WATCH VIDEOS OF LINCOLN BOARD & COMMITTEE MEETINGS?  
VISIT [HTTPS://CLOUD.CASTUS.TV/VOD/LINCOLN/?PAGE=HOME](https://cloud.castus.tv/vod/lincoln/?page=home)

**Housing Choice Act Zoning**

At December's Special Town Meeting, residents were asked to choose from among five zoning options that would meet the requirements of the 2021 Housing Choice Act. "Option C," which places all the rezoning within 1/2 mile of the Lincoln MBTA Commuter Rail station, received a majority of the vote and will be brought forward for approval at the March 23rd Annual Town Meeting. Next steps:



- The Planning Board will focus on the draft of the accompanying zoning bylaw in January.
- Design guidelines will be discussed in February.
- The Planning Board will be meeting every week between now and March, and there will be a series of public forums.
  - **THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 8 @ 6:30PM: Community Forum re: Zoning Bylaw; in person @ Bemis Hall**
  - **FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 9 @ 8:30AM: Community Forum re: Zoning Bylaw; via Zoom**

- **TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 20 @ 7:00PM: Public Hearing re: Zoning Bylaw; hybrid @ Town Offices and via Zoom**
- **TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 27 @ 7:00PM: Community Forum re: Design Guidelines; in person @ in the Lincoln School Learning Commons**
- **THURSDAY, MARCH 14 @ 7:00PM: Community Forum re: Town Meeting preview; virtual via Zoom**
- Information will be sent out on a regular basis via LincolnTalk and posted on the Housing Choice Act page of the Town website, <http://www.lincolntown.org/1327/Housing-Choice-Legislation>.



## Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, & Anti-Racism Committee (IDEA)

The IDEA Committee will be reviewing a draft of an action plan at the end of January. The draft will be informed by the research done by the Town's consultant, Racial Equity Group, input from resident surveys and focus groups, and by outreach IDEA members have done to other town boards and committees.

Next steps include a presentation to the Select Board followed by a community forum to gather input on the draft action plan..

- ➔ SEE THE IDEA PAGE ON THE TOWN WEBSITE FOR MORE INFORMATION:  
[HTTP://WWW.LINCOLNTOWN.ORG/1221/IDEA](http://www.lincolntown.org/1221/IDEA)

### EV Level 3 Fast Chargers Coming to Town Offices!

Early last spring, Paula Vaughn MacKenzie, Director of Planning and Land Use, applied for a grant from Eversource to install level 3 charging stations at Town Offices. At the end of December, we learned that Lincoln was selected. The contract to install 2, level 3 chargers is \$340,000, of which the Town's contribution is \$3,000. Eversource pays the rest! Each charger will have two charge ports that are compatible with all types of EV cars, and we are hoping they will be installed by the start of summer.

### State Approves Lincoln for Fossil Fuel Free Demonstration Project

The Department of Energy Resources has approved the Town of Lincoln to participate in the Fossil Fuel Free Ten Town Demonstration Project. The General Bylaw and other information can be found here. <https://www.lincolntown.org/1419/Town-Meeting-2023>. Please scroll Down to Article 30: The Ten Town Pilot Program. The effective date of these new regulations is June 22, 2024. *IF you are working on a new home building project or a major renovation, please contact Mark Robidoux, our building inspector to see if this program applies to your project: [robidouxm@lincolntown.org](mailto:robidouxm@lincolntown.org).*

## Fiscal Year 2025 Operating and Capital Budgets

The town budget cycle began at the end of the summer and will culminate in votes at the March Town Meeting. The Finance Committee (FinCom) and Capital Planning Committee (CapCom) are integral to shaping this process:

- ➔ **SUMMER - EARLY FALL:** Town departments provided further details about their capital and operating budget requests for the next fiscal year (FY25).
- ➔ **OCTOBER - DECEMBER:** FinCom issued guidance for the upcoming fiscal year (an increase of 2.5% for FY25); Departments discussed and refined proposals.
- ➔ **DECEMBER - JANUARY:** The Town Administrator, Lincoln and Lincoln-Sudbury School Departments, Lincoln Library, and CapCom present operating and capital projects to FinCom in budget hearings. Funding sources for budgets and projects are discussed, particularly for items that are outside of FinCom’s guidance.
- ➔ **MARCH: *Lincoln residents vote*** on capital projects at the Annual Town Meeting.

### Town Meeting Preview

The Select Board officially opened the Town Warrant at its January 8th meeting. The Warrant contains all the articles on which residents will vote at the Annual Town Meeting. Boards, committees, departments, and citizens have the opportunity to submit items for the warrant **before noon on Monday, January 22nd**. The Select Board will close the warrant at its meeting that evening. Want to submit a citizens’ petition? Voters who may be considering sponsoring a Town Meeting petition are strongly urged to contact the Town Clerk’s Office (781-259-2607 or [foxx@lincolntown.org](mailto:foxx@lincolntown.org)) for guidance about the process. The Town Administrator’s office will contact the people identified as lead petitioners to ensure coordination as the Select Board prepares for the discussions and presentations that will be occurring in advance of Town Meeting.

Here are some of the items that will appear on the March 23, 2024 Warrant:

Warrant Article	Sponsor
FY 25 Town and Schools Budgets	Finance Committee
Capital Expenditures	Capital Planning Committee
Community Preservation Act Projects	Community Preservation Act Committee
Housing Choice Zoning Bylaw	Planning Board & Select Board
Community Center Project Funding	Select Board
Extended Senior Circuit Breaker Property Tax Relief Program	Select Board

### Lincoln Transportation Coalition

In May 2023, the Transportation Coalition was created to enhance the connection between the Lincoln’s Roadway Traffic Committee (RTC) and the Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC). With staff support from our Planning Department, Public Works, and Public Safety, the committee members from the RTC and BPAC meet monthly to brief each other on ongoing efforts in their respective committees, to discuss possible synergies, and consider prioritization of Town resources. The meetings encourage discussions about ways to make our roads and vulnerable road users safer through design, signage, and enforcement. The Coalition recently worked to install new “Motorists Give 4 Ft To Pass” signs around town and is currently discussing opportunities for improving the safety of the crosswalk at the Town Hall Exchange. All meetings are open to the public and agendas can be found on the [town website](#).

**Semiquincentennial – Hard to spell but fun to celebrate!**



In 2025 Massachusetts will celebrate the events that led to the American Revolution, including the Battles of Lexington and Concord in April 1775. Lincoln, along with our neighboring communities on the Battle Road and Minute Man National Historical Park (MMNHP) are collaborating closely to host cultural events and programs, parades, re-enactments etc. that celebrate our rich history in our nation’s quest for independence.

This coordination extends to conversations about transportation planning and how best to move residents and visitors between events in Arlington, Concord, Lexington, Lincoln and Minuteman National Park. With the expected increase in visitors over Patriots Day 2025, there is also coordination among our public safety and public works personnel to ensure all can enjoy the long weekend safely. Our planning committee, Lincoln250, is very excited to be hosting the next regional meeting in early February at the Lincoln School. This is the fourth regional planning meeting, but the first one we are hosting in Lincoln. We are excited to continue the partnership with other Battle Road communities, the National Park and Hanscom.

For more information on events and programs happening in Lincoln, please bookmark the [Lincoln250 page](#) on the town website and stay tuned for updates from our Lincoln250 Planning Committee.



**Thank you, Chief Kevin Kennedy, for your 31 years of service as a Lincoln Police Officer. In a career that has encompassed high profile national events, a global pandemic, wildlife adventures, and the daily highs and lows of peoples’ lives, you brought thoughtful, calm, and compassionate leadership to our community.**

**Congratulations on your retirement!**

Lincoln Select Board  
Kim Bodnar  
Jennifer Glass  
Jim Hutchinson, Chair  
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Lincoln, Massachusetts 01773

Pre-Sorted  
Standard  
US POSTAGE PAID

ECR-WSS

Postal Patron

Lincoln, Massachusetts 01773