

June 8, 2020

Dear Town Meeting Members:

Last week, Lexington Annual Town Meeting voted on and passed Article 16A, which allocated funds toward schematic design and planning for a regional police firing range training facility on Hartwell Ave. This project has been under development and consideration for a number of years, and now, despite the fact that our local municipal leaders have followed a good, thorough, and appropriate development process, the times demand a reexamination of the community's priorities, goals, and vision for this municipal service.

Along with 122 other Town Meeting members, I voted for the long-planned project. Following my vote, a flood of emails, comments, posts, and phone calls came in and I quickly came to understand that this vote was inconsistent with the current spirit and mood of the broader community. Many of my constituents have asked me to intervene to help us dive deeper into the implications and ramifications of this proposal. In that spirit, it is my understanding that Town Meeting will be asked to reconsider the vote at tonight's session.

Despite the consternation surrounding this issue, never has my faith in the democratic process been so renewed. I am grateful to the residents who have contacted me, especially our younger residents, and I want to assure you that the leaders of your town are listening, and we hear you. The wide array of community leaders I have communicated with this past weekend are tuned in and understand that much more discourse is needed before the project moves forward. I believe that all of our local elected officials and town staff have acted in good faith, with honorable intentions, as we all want what is best for our community--Democracy is working as it was designed to: always messy, but marching forward toward progress.

In that spirit, I call on the Select Board to assure the community that any funds allocated for this project in the future will not be spent without first restarting the public input process and reviewing all facets of this project from a wide range of angles. It is essential to consider all the facts and ramifications before proceeding.

Lexington prides itself on having high quality municipal services. The community strives to have exemplary personnel, who are well trained, efficient, compassionate, and engaged. I believe we have one of the best Police Departments around, and from my personal experience, the individuals of our Lexington force are honorable, upstanding members of our community. We want to ensure they get the training and support they need in order to do their jobs effectively and keep our community safe. Nonetheless, we also need to hear the calls of the broader world, which demand we reexamine our policies and procedures, to make sure we have or are creating an environment and system that is just, inclusive, equitable, and anti-racist. There is always room for improvement.

I challenge the community to continue this dialogue inclusively in true Lexington fashion.

Thank you,

Michelle Ciccolo