

## Cindy Arens

### **1. Why should people who care about social justice vote for you?**

While living in the beautiful town of Lexington, it might be easy at times to forget that we live in a region, a country and on a planet with intense social and environmental justice (EJ) issues and that our community is tightly interconnected with those issues. I believe that, as a community, we must respond to that fact with plans and actions to help make things better. I also believe that progress in racial equity and social justice will require constant attention and iterative solutions.

I have experience working with organizations in the region and state agencies that have very rightly centered the climate discussion around social and environmental justice, the concept that black/brown, low-income and other marginalized groups have been forced for a number of reasons to live near high pollution areas or have less resources to adapt to the worst effects of climate change. For example, Lexington sends our trash to be burned in toxic polluting incinerators right next to Lawrence, an EJ community that has also had to endure terrible gas explosions. To restore some justice to these groups, I have worked to make sure that we have a plan and take action to dramatically reduce what we send to the incinerator.

We also have a responsibility to address systemic inequities that have existed in the creation of housing, which includes creating housing that is healthier, highly efficient, and with a low energy cost burden. I have also been working to make sure that we do not leave our most vulnerable populations behind as we transition to cleaner, healthier energy use. It's clear that voices of these marginalized groups need to be included in shaping solutions, whether the issue is housing and incineration or equal representation in staffing and removing bias from interactions. This is what I strive for in my work and what I will continue to prioritize as a Select Board member.

### **2. What role do you believe individual Select Board members and the Select Board as a whole has in holding our municipal government accountable to the racial equity and social justice resolutions that have been endorsed by the Select Board and passed by Town Meeting in recent years? In your answer, please include specific actions that you believe individual Select Board members and the Board as a whole can take.**

First, it's critical for members of the Select Board to leverage the knowledge, perspectives and important work of the Human Rights Committee and Commission on Disability, as well as the Lexington Residents Reimagining Public Safety group and affinity groups within Lexington's community coalition. The Select Board should be looking to identify any potential racial equity or social justice impacts or issues with any items or initiatives that come before the Board.

In response to the resolutions passed at Town Meeting over several years, Lexington's Chief Equity, and Sustainability and Resilience Officers developed a framework in 2023 for setting goals and tracking progress related to our clear stated goals for equity and inclusion. This framework is an excellent start and documents specific actions the Town is taking or plans to take, including an internal audit. As a Select Board member, I would be paying close attention to results of that audit and what the suggested changes are. I would also be asking how any changes will be tracked and measured against goals. I believe individual Select Board members should use their liaison positions on all committees to raise awareness of this framework and identify how it might guide improvements for committee practices and other activity in our town.

Finally, the Select Board needs to be aware of data and developments within our schools, like the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, discipline reports and issues with equity in teaching practices. To be clear, overseeing educational practices is not in the purview of the Select Board, but it IS the responsibility of every member of the Board to understand how what is happening in our schools is related to or affects the diversity, equity and inclusion of the community at large.