

## **2022 Planning Board Candidates**

**One to be elected for three years:** Candidates Diab Jerius and Philip Arthur Frattaroli

**Two to be elected for one year:** Candidate Kurt Spring

(\* indicates incumbent)

### **Diab Jerius\***

Precinct 8

[info@diab4planningboard.win](mailto:info@diab4planningboard.win)

### **Community Activities**

- Founding member of the Winchester Hamilton Farm Interest Group (WHFIG), formed to protect Hamilton Farm (now Wright-Locke Farm) from development.
- Town Meeting Member since 2008
- Planning Board Member since 2016
- Housing Partnership Board member for six years.

### **Candidate Statement**

I'd like to begin with a short summary of what the Planning Board does, as its part in Town government can appear somewhat fuzzy.

The Planning Board's role is to facilitate the creation of a vision for development in Town and to advocate for that vision and advance its implementation. The vision is maintained in the Town's Comprehensive Master Plan; one of the foundational tasks of the Board is create that plan in concert with the community. The Plan must provide concrete, achievable steps to attain that vision.

The Board advocates for that vision through its role advising other Boards and Committees. For example, it advises the Town's Zoning Board of Appeals on all of the special permits and site plan reviews that are submitted to that body, examining how each project meets the requirements of existing zoning and the needs of the current occupant as well as its impact on neighbors, community needs, and historical and natural resources. The Board also examines how a project fits into the long-term vision of Winchester's development and needs.

This approach of viewing development from many different perspectives is a unique characteristic of the Board, and its strength. The hands-on reviews provide the Board with an insight into contemporary development trends and how they fit in with community needs, and ensures that the Board is not isolated from the practical concerns of the Town's residents.

The Board has a complementary role as the historical maintainer of the Town's Zoning Bylaws. The Planning Board reviews them for currency and to see how they help or hinder the implementation of visions for the Town's development. Notably, Town Meeting has final approval over any changes to those laws, ensuring that the Planning Board is responsive to the broader interests of the Town.

### **What skills and experience would you bring to the Planning Board?**

I have been on the Planning Board for two terms (six years) and have participated in the writing of the Center Business District regulations, development of the Town's new Comprehensive Master Plan, and the Town's Housing Production Plan. I am the current Planning Board chair. I

also represent the Board as an active ex-officio member of the Town's Housing Partnership Board, which advises Town Government on housing policies, initiatives, and needs.

I am a scientist by training (physics/astronomy) and bring an analytical approach to decision making. My parents were physicians, devoted to their patients, and I learned from them the importance of listening to people's stories and understanding their lives and perspectives. The Planning Board is by its nature collaborative, and it is important to me that open and respectful debate happen. I believe that I have been effective at fostering that in my role as Board Chair.

Over the years I've been on the Board, now Chair for the second time, I've had sustained discussions with residents, developers, business owners, financial consultants and planning consultants and experts. That experience has informed my approach to achieving consensus decisions which are respectful of the often-competing interests at play.

Good planning requires a cautious, deliberative approach. It is difficult to predict with accuracy long-term trends, and changes in zoning take time to be reflected in changes in development or use. In my professional career I typically work on projects which require long-term thinking and planning for success. I believe that I bring that focus to the Planning Board.

**What Winchester issues related to planning do you think are most important?**

The Planning Board has a mandated, special responsibility towards meeting the housing needs of the Town's residents. The median home price of almost \$1.5M may be the price that market forces put on gaining access to Winchester, but it is not indicative of the typical household in Winchester. The current lack of housing affordable to the majority of the Town's residents is placing significant strains upon the Town's social and economic fabric. Some of this is caused by market forces beyond our control, but some of it is caused by zoning which reflects a view of residential housing that is decades out of date.

One of the unique characteristics of a New England Town is its center commercial district, which provides a sense of activity, purpose, and destination. Equally important are districts easily accessible from side neighborhoods, such as along North Main St. Our Town center businesses have struggled, not just because of the ongoing epidemic, but because of the earlier impact of large shopping centers and now by that of on-line shopping.

The Center Business District rezoning that was passed by Town Meeting in 2015 has finally begun to provide traction for new development in the Town Center, bringing with it the promise of permanent residents. North Main St. has great, undeveloped potential, which the Planning Board is now addressing.

**Of those important issues, which one do you feel most passionate about, and what is your position on that issue?**

A home plays a foundational role in human lives. It provides shelter, security, and stability. I believe that we have a responsibility to ensure that there is equitable access to housing which meets our residents' diverse needs. I believe in accessible housing located in neighborhoods which are walkable and integrated with our natural environment and ecosystem.

**What do you think the role should be for the Planning Board in the development of affordable housing in Winchester?**

Housing affordability exists on a continuum.

Some of our residents are "housing cost burdened," meaning that their housing costs are so

high that they struggle to pay for their other living expenses. Many of our neighbors in that situation are renters. For that population, subsidized housing would provide relief.

Another way of assessing affordability is, "If you were to sell your house, could you afford to purchase another one in Winchester?" For a great number of residents, that answer is "no".

One can broaden the focus by asking whether those who work in Winchester can afford to buy a house here, or whether the current generation of young adults could do so.

There's also the question of what type of housing is available. For example, do we have enough rental units, which lowers the up-front costs of living in Town?

There is no single definition of affordability, and thus no single solution. There is significant need at many levels.

The Planning Board has a particularly relevant role, as its establishment in the Commonwealth's General Laws directs it to "make plans for the development of the municipality, with special reference to proper housing of its inhabitants."

The Board can act by proposing zoning changes to Town Meeting, by advocating to other Boards and Commissions, and by undertaking studies which provide insight and answers.

The most powerful lever is zoning change. Our current patterns of land use are the product of decisions made more than half a century ago. In some cases, they still meet contemporary needs, or have historical significance worthy of preservation. In others they don't.

The Town's Comprehensive Master Plan and Housing Production Plan provide the vision as well as strategic goals and actions which the Board can use to reshape our zoning to increase the quantity and diversity of housing. The Board is currently studying revitalization of North Main St. in accordance with those plans.

More difficult conversations lie ahead; there is an unmet need of 700 affordable units for current residents, and the Town must find a way to meet that need in an integrated, sustainable manner. The Planning Board has the responsibility to create a respectful forum which will allow us to reach consensus.

### **Philip Arthur Frattaroli**

Precinct 5  
philipfrattaroli@gmail.com

### **Community Activities**

I am a member of Town Meeting, a Director of the Winchester Chamber of Commerce, Co-Owner of Ristorante Lucia in Winchester, and the father to three young daughters, Olivia (6), Adeline (4) and Carolina (2).

## **Candidate Statement**

### **What skills and experience would you bring to the Planning Board?**

Having grown up here, I have a deep seeded knowledge of this town, and as a father to young children, I have my eyes set on its future. I am an attorney with a background in real estate law. I served on the North End Waterfront Neighborhood Council in Boston's North End for six years, three as President. I have developed a mixed-use building in East Boston that's home to my restaurant, a yoga studio and residential apartments. So, I have experience on both the resident and proponent side of planning and zoning issues. As a small business person, I understand what businesses and developers are looking for before they invest in a community.

I have also been through permitting in Winchester for renovations we have done on our home and I am very familiar of the challenges homeowners face.

### **What Winchester issues related to planning do you think are most important?**

As a town we face challenges relating to our small commercial tax base, one of the smallest in the state. We face challenges relating to the affordability of our housing, not only in terms of our affordable housing obligations under Massachusetts Law, but the rising cost of housing, especially for our seniors. We face implementation of a new law passed by the legislature in January requiring more multi-unit housing. In addition, we are facing the unprecedented challenge of Global Warming, and Winchester has a role to play.

### **Of those important issues, which one do you feel most passionate about, and what is your position on that issue?**

I see all of those issues as part of the same puzzle, and I am excited to work on all of them especially as solutions for one can offer relief of another. If there is one issue that I am most passionate about, it's the environment. As a father, I want to ensure we are leaving the planet to future generations in the best conditions possible. The potential of new technological innovations relating to environment, whether it's in the household, on the roads or in our grid, is extremely exciting to me.

### **What do you think the role should be for the Planning Board in the development of affordable housing in Winchester?**

The role for the Planning Board in the development of affordable housing is to plan for affordable housing! Both the production of affordable units so that we can meet our obligations to state law and to prevent the Town from falling out of "safe harbor" and making us susceptible to "hostile 40B" developments where a developer can build an affordable housing building with nearly no restrictions or input for the Town. Winchester is about two weeks from falling out of safe harbor under the leadership of the current Planning Board. In recent years, the Board has rejected a number of modest developments that would have allowed us to meet the production requirements to stay in. Further, in 2018 the Planning Board rush through a plan to "down zone" North Main Street, preventing that important high traffic, traditionally commercial corridor from being developed with mixed and affordable units.

The lack of foresight has cost the Town, not only in the pending loss of safe harbor status, but in increasingly meagre options. The Waterfield Project for instance, a planned development that would have brought just 40 units of affordable housing, yielded effectively only \$500,000 in land acquisition costs, and cost the downtown 47 parking spaces was rejected by Town Residents in June 2021. The burden of our affordable housing obligations is making it unlikely that the Town

will recoup its investment on the Washington and Swanton eminent domain project. We need better planning on Affordable Housing and we will get better outcomes.

**Kurt Spring\***

Precinct 4  
kspring@gmail.com

**Community Activities**

Volunteer coach of Winchester youth soccer, baseball and flag football  
Board member of Habitat for Humanity Greater Boston  
Planning Board: Interim appointment October 2021

**Candidate Statement**

**What skills and experience would you bring to the Planning Board?**

I am currently filling an interim vacancy on the Winchester Planning Board and have been since October 2021 so I have direct experience with the board. Beyond that, I studied Economics and Urban Studies as my undergraduate majors at Haverford College, as well as project finance and commercial real estate as part of my MBA program at Boston College. Professionally, I have worked in various capacities in commercial real estate for almost 20 years including as an investor and owner of market rate and affordable housing. Given my experience, I bring an intimate knowledge of development finance that can hopefully help the board understand what levers may be available as we evaluate projects.

**What Winchester issues related to planning do you think are most important?**

Winchester has successfully preserved an intimate village community while located only ten miles north of Boston. The planning challenge we face as a community is preserving this unique and cherished environment while allowing growth and progress to move forward. This means promoting thoughtful development consistent with the Winchester master plan. We need to preserve and enhance economic vibrancy downtown and develop a diversity of housing to meet the needs of our growing community.

**Of those important issues, which one do you feel most passionate about, and what is your position on that issue?**

Access to affordable and middle-income housing is extremely important to me. Winchester is short of our required 10% affordable units which creates two challenges: (1) we are not serving the needs of our entire community by making affordable housing available, and (2) we are opening the town up to developers who can leverage this to potentially bypass our zoning bylaws. I am a proponent of adding affordable housing units in Winchester and doing so in a manner consistent with our zoning bylaws.

**What do you think the role should be for the Planning Board in the development of affordable housing in Winchester?**

At the risk of being repetitive, I believe the Planning Board should support the development and preservation of affordable housing in Winchester and do so in according with the zoning bylaws approved at Town Meeting.