

## CITIZEN'S PETITION: CHANGE THE NAME TO "SELECT BOARD" (INSTEAD OF "SELECTMEN")

Warrant Article: To amend the General By-laws to change the title of the "Board of Selectmen" to the "Select Board."

Any reference in the General Laws, special laws or by-laws to "Board of Selectmen" shall be replaced with "Select Board"; and "Selectman" shall be replaced with "Select Board Member" or "Select."

### TALKING POINTS

**Why change?** The term "selectmen" traces its history back to the early days of America. When English citizens colonized New England, they installed an open town meeting form of government, in which every citizen was called on to voice their opinion and vote on town matters.

This being the 17th century, however, "every citizen" referred to every land-owning male citizen. Soon, the notion of calling every man in town together to decide daily matters proved too cumbersome, and a group of men were selected to manage the details of town governance, giving rise to the term "selectmen." (<https://lexington.wickedlocal.com/news/20190328/lexington-town-meeting-wrap-up-new-name-for-board-of-selectmen>)

Many women now serve in leadership positions in Lincoln's town government and specifically on the Board of Selectmen. No other board name refers to gender, and it is time to change to a gender-neutral term for the BOS.

- In 1977, a mere 43 years ago, Beth Ries was the first women elected in Lincoln to the Board of Selectmen.
- Since 1977 there have been 9 women elected as Select Board Members
  - Beth Ries – 1977
  - Susan Fargo
  - Katherine McHugh
  - Harriet Todd
  - Sara Mattes
  - Rosamond Delori
  - Penny Bilings
  - Sarah Cannon Holden
  - Renel Fredriksen
  - Jennifer Glass
- Recently a number of towns in MA have changed the title of "Board of Selectmen" to the gender-neutral "Select Board". Following is just a sampling of some of the more than 30 towns and cities who have made the change. Note the towns considered our "peer towns" in **bold**.
  - Andover
  - Arlington
  - **Bedford**
  - Belmont
  - Brookline
  - Chelmsford
  - **Concord**
  - Grafton
  - Hopkinton
  - **Lexington**
  - Needham
  - Reading
  - **Sudbury**
  - **Weston**
  - Winchester

**ALSO:** In addition to supporting our petition, we urge you to support the warrant article sponsored by the BOS that will work to ensure that all language in the Town By-Laws will be gender-neutral.

#### Articles or videos to review:

- <https://lexington.wickedlocal.com/news/20190328/lexington-town-meeting-wrap-up-new-name-for-board-of-selectmen>

- <https://weston.vod.castus.tv/vod/?video=7a32d967-73e4-44e7-8168-c0c58ae85dc6> . . . (please start around minute 32)
- <https://www.mvtimes.com/2019/07/03/name-trend-hasnt-reached-island/>

### **Reasons to change titles and use gender neutral language:**

- Promote inclusivity and equality.
- Studies demonstrate that the consistent use of masculine pronouns leaves the impression that women could not be part of the group to which someone is referring.
- Not asking to change town history, but asking town to change the future, to a future that is inclusive and reflects all the participants in our government without question or doubt.
- Change in terminology is reflected as high up as the Massachusetts Municipal Association, an organization that represents executive boards across the commonwealth.
- 200 of state's 351 communities still use "Board of Selectman" but a groundswell of support for gender neutral designation language has emerged. At least 75 of the state's cities and towns use "Select Board" and all but on of the state's more than 40 cities use "city council."
- Other common name changes: chairman to chair; fireman to firefighter; mailman to postal carrier.