



**Brookline PAX**  
*think globally • act locally*

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## Brookline PAX Recommendations

### Annual and Special Town Meetings, May 23, 2017

#### **Warrant Art. 6: SUPPORT - Accept Legislation to Increase Property Tax Exemptions**

This Article allows the Town to continue its current practice of increasing (i.e., doubling) state mandated property tax exemptions for several classes of qualifying taxpayers, including disabled veterans, surviving spouses, blind taxpayers, and low-income elderly taxpayers. The estimated cost is modest, approximately \$62,000, and PAX has long advocated this.

#### **WA 9 – Annual (FY-18) Budget Article – TMMs are encouraged to comment and ask questions on line items of interest!**

PAX makes no specific recommendations on the budget, but we note that it includes Special Appropriations for bicycle access improvements, energy conservation projects, and traffic calming studies and improvements, initiatives which PAX has long supported.

#### **WA 10: OPPOSE - Amend Art. 2.1, §2.1.5 (B) of Town By-Laws as to distribution of Warrants for T/M's**

This article attempts to reduce the costs of publishing – recently, only twice a year -- the complete T/M warrant in the TAB, instead substituting publication of only the “index,” and merely directing readers to the complete warrant on the Town website. The Article is motivated from the extraordinary cost of publishing the 135 page warrant for the Nov., 2016 Special T/M, which had some wordy zoning By-Law amendments. PAX believes that no index or summary, often with opaque or even confusing titles for articles, can substitute for the Warrant itself in providing fair warning to the public about the upcoming business of T/M. In the interest of open government and transparency, PAX believes we should continue full publication of each Warrant. The 2016 cost, \$6,396, was obviously an outlier (see Comb./Rpt @ 10-4); but if a single citizen sees the full warrant but wouldn't otherwise, we should spend the (8-year) average of \$3,615.

**WA 11: SUPPORT - Delete Art. 3.1, §3.1.7 of By-Laws, and adoption of a new Art. 4.9 - ELECTION CAMPAIGNS**

Brookline's By-laws currently require campaign finance disclosure from selectmen campaigns which supplement disclosures mandated by state law. WA 11, by PAX Co-Chair Neil Gordon, proposes (i) extending that supplemental disclosure, specifically, reporting two weeks prior to an election, a week earlier than the state mandate, to include all town-wide offices as well as ballot question committees, and (ii) modifying such supplemental disclosure to simplify the reporting process, with modest reduction in the level of detail required to be reported.

**WA 12: SUPPORT - Create new By-Law Art for Commission on Disability:**

There is no Brookline By-law concerning a handicapped or disability Commission, and no record of approval of any principles and procedures for the Commission itself. WA 12's By-Law establishes principles and procedures for the governance of our already well-established Commission on Disability.

**WA 13: SUPPORT - Amend Art. 8.23, §8.23.5 of By-Laws – Limiting the Issuance of Tobacco Sales Permits**

This article would change the by-law such that no new permits could be issued. The existing permit holders (we believe 22) would keep their permits and continue to apply for renewals. They could also sell (or otherwise transfer) their business, one time only, and subsequent owners would be presumed to be eligible for the permit -- provided that they're maintaining substantially the same business in the same location. Subsequent owners (beyond the one transfer) would not be eligible for the tobacco permit. Thus, over time, the number of locations in Brookline selling tobacco would decline, eventually to zero. Ok by us.

**WA 16: SUPPORT - Authorize 20 year lease of Runkle School rooftop to host a Rooftop Solar Photovoltaic Installation**

The Town has been in contract negotiations to install solar photovoltaic arrays on several municipal buildings. At this time, the Selectmen are seeking permission to grant a lease agreement for rooftop space on the Runkle School, which would be the first site available, for installation by summer 2017. Great by us.

**WA 18 & 19: SUPPORT - WA18 - Accept G.L. ch. 90, §17C—to establish speed limits of 25 mph for thickly settled or business districts; & WA 19 – Accept the provisions of G.L. ch. 90, §18B—to establish speed limits of 20 mph for safety zones**

By adopting these local options, the Transportation Board could consider resident or other requests to install a speed limit of 25 mph, town wide or on specific roadway types, and, separately, create designated "safety zones," e.g., near schools, parks, or the Senior Center, or in other hazardous areas, where it could be further reduced, to 20 mph. These local options have the potential to significantly increase public safety, and especially for pedestrians and cyclists.

***WA 20: SUPPORT - Resolution Committing Brookline to Uphold and Adhere to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change***

The 2015 Paris Climate Agreement is a major step forward in addressing climate change. This resolution asks Brookline to join over 2500 cities and towns worldwide, including several in greater Boston, that have signed on as Non-State Actors to the Agreement. It states of our commitment to work diligently, in concert with the entirety of the world community, to address the very serious threat of climate change. When “our” President refuses to lead, especially when he jeopardizes the world’s future, states and local governments must rise to the occasion. (See Special T/M WA1, Impeachment, below.)

***WA 21: SUPPORT - Resolution for a “Net Zero Energy” 9<sup>th</sup> Elementary School and expansion of BHS***

This Resolution establishes goals for new and expanded school construction that would urge the Town to design and build the most energy-efficient schools possible. Another no-brainer.

***WA 22: SUPPORT - Resolution Supporting Brookline participation in the Government Alliance On Race & Equity (GARE)***

GARE is a most welcome nationwide initiative to advance racial equity and increase opportunities for communities within and through government, not just a serious Brookline issue, but one throughout the 50 states – in part a legacy of one of the USA’s 2 or 3 original sins. The Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Community Relations (ODICR) has – commendably -- already enrolled the Town in GARE as a core member. This T/M Resolution affirms that.. We welcome it with enthusiasm and urge steadily heightening attention to it – within and outside Townhall. And, we caution not to incautiously rhetorically exaggerate our half (or more) empty side of this nationwide glass, at risk of backfiring by exacerbating our, yes, obvious diversity deficits.

***WA 23: SUPPORT - Resolution in support of a local option gasoline tax***

An amended article will be moved at T/M, supporting passage of S.1551, “An Act Relevant to Regional Transportation Ballot Initiatives,” but deleting specific reference a local option gasoline tax. S.1551 would allow the Town to implement, by ballot initiative, local option taxes (e.g., on gasoline, motor vehicles and/or real estate), with funds raised used for transportation initiatives, which could be specifically directed toward pedestrian, bicycle and mass transit projects. PAX has long supported increasing gas taxes, hopefully with some care to compensate for regressiveness, and has long supported investment in alternative (to cars) transportation infrastructure.

**Special T/M WA1: SUPPORT - Resolution Supporting Congressional Investigation regarding IMPEACHMENT of President Trump**

Quoting from the Petitioner’s article description: “There is plenty of evidence now to impeach President Trump for violations of the Foreign and Domestic Emoluments Clauses of the Constitution. It is our duty as citizens to make sure that the Constitution is enforced.” Indeed we see numerous other reasons for impeachment – or for removal under the 25<sup>th</sup> Amendment for being “unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office” -- e.g. likely obstruction of justice and intimidating witnesses, chronic falsehoods, undermining the rule of law by (inter alia) attacking the integrity of the judiciary, eviscerating our five century tradition as a nation of “undocumented” “immigrants.,” etc.

And we, 1<sup>st</sup>, welcome the broadening anti-Trump struggle as reflected in this proliferating Resolution; but, 2<sup>nd</sup>, we caution that all the welcome new anti-Trump energy – including some new TMM’s -- must be morphed into long-run progressive, grass-roots infrastructure and coalition building, including attention to what we are FOR, and HOW to struggle for it. Since DC – especially the House -- is a corrupted cesspool of gerrymandered districts and Citizens (Dis-United) campaign money, the impeachment effort seems at best unlikely. However the energy it signifies could be a great step “forward.” As Harry Belafonte recently cautioned to civil rights activists, “we have a struggle but not a movement.” Many anti-Vietnam-War activists got and stayed involved; many others got and stayed complacent and comfortable. Maybe some good will come from our “so-called president” – if his proliferating critics have staying power.

**Special T/M 2<sup>nd</sup> WA1: SUPPORT - FY 2018 Special Appropriation for BHS Expansion Project:**

The number of students at the High School is projected to increase more than 40% over the next six years. To accommodate this growth, the Town proposes buying the property at 111 Cypress St., razing the existing building, and replacing it with a structure that would house a new 9<sup>th</sup> grade academy. With the agreement of the MBTA, the new building would extend over the T tracks and connect with the BHS campus. \$1,850,000 is needed to complete a feasibility study and make schematic designs for both the 9th grade academy and necessary renovations to the existing high school. As with a 9<sup>th</sup> school and repeated overrides, PAX believes public education is a huge priority in Brookline and everywhere. And, here, unlike the 9<sup>th</sup> school issue, the local TMM’s are very supportive.

*Marty Rosenthal & Neil Gordon,*

Brookline PAX Co-chairs