

BROOKLINE COMMUNITY AGING NETWORK
Livable Community Advocacy Committee
FEBRUARY 6, 2023

Attending: Susan Granoff (Chair), Paul Warren (Guest Presenter), Janet Gelbart (Notetaker), Roger Blood, Carol Caro, Lee Cooke Childs, Susan Cohen, Andrew Fischer, Marion Freedman-Gurspan, Perry Grossman, John Harris, Katie Hope, M. Mayotte, Fran Perler, Yolanda Rodriguez, Stuart Rubinow, John Seay, David Trevvett

I. Announcements

1. Town Elections will be held on May 2, 2023

All registered voters may request a mail-in ballot by April 25. See the Town Clerk's website for the necessary form.

Select Board Nominees: Paul Warren, John VanScoyoc and Jesse Gray have all agreed to meet with our committee during the coming months. There will be a joint League of Women Voters/BrooklineCAN Election Forum in April.

Town Meeting Members: So far, few people have taken out nomination papers to run for Town Meeting. Anyone interested in Brookline's town government should consider running for Town Meeting this year. Nomination papers are available now at the Town Clerk's office on the first floor of Town Hall and must be submitted to the Town Clerk's Office by March 14, along with signatures of 10 registered voters in the precinct where you are registered to vote.

Expected ballot questions:

- a debt exclusion for the reconstruction of Pierce School,
- a referendum capping licenses for recreational marijuana stores in Brookline at 4
- one or more proposals for an operating override in varying amounts
The Town Administrator will be presenting what he calls “the contours of a proposed operating override” at the February 14 Select Board Meeting along with his proposed Town of Brookline Fiscal Year 24 budget. BIG will be posting the recording of that meeting the next day.

2. Meetings on new micro mobility device regulations

- February 13: The Pedestrian Advisory Committee will be voting on recommendations arising from its public hearing held on January 23
- Council on Aging will discuss the regulations at their March meeting.
- Transportation Board will review after receiving COA input

3. BrooklineCAN is in the midst of a membership drive.

Anyone wishing to renew their membership or become a member can do so at BrooklineCAN.org.

II. A conversation with Select Board Candidate Paul Warren

Guest Presenter: Paul Warren (Town Meeting Member, former Advisory Committee Member, and neighborhood advocate)

Mr. Warren introduced himself as a 12-year resident of Brookline whose two children attend Brookline Public Schools. He is in his second term as a Town Meeting Member from Precinct 1, served on the Advisory Committee for several years, and is an advocate for community issues. Raised by a single mother and himself a teen parent, Mr. Warren has personally benefited from public housing and other social safety net programs, which made him passionate about helping others. He has 30 years of professional experience in business, technology, and strategic planning. (Additional details about his personal and professional background appear in the materials circulated to the attendees and attached at the end of these minutes.)

Among his priorities if elected are:

- providing executive leadership to the town based on his professional experience
- updating the comprehensive plan to support zoning reform
- expanding the commercial tax base
- supporting the unique needs of a growing senior population
- advocating for the public schools
- reestablishing Brookline as a leader in attracting and retaining employees
- developing a sustainable plan to address climate change
- supporting diversity so that people of all backgrounds feel welcome here

Q&A

1. Given the number and complexities of the issues facing the Town, is a volunteer form of government the best model?

I'm on record as supporting the need for charter review. The Town faces complex decisions and it needs to investigate whether the current form of government is sufficient for our size. There are arguments pro and con but we need to explore the options.

2. Explain why, at the November Town Meeting, you opposed warrant articles which would provide a fund for homeowners to switch their heating systems from fossil fuels, which would be especially helpful to seniors and people on fixed income.

I opposed these warrant articles on principle, as I explained at Town Meeting. All of the articles related to eliminating the use of fossil fuels were developed by a committee advisory to the Select Board. Neither the committee, nor the Select Board, held any public hearings. One of my core values is that decisions like this [which would increase the utility costs and motor vehicle taxes paid by many Brookline households] require extensive

public participation and education. I sent an email to let people know what was happening because I could find no one – neighbors, TMMs, local business owners, realtors -- who had any knowledge of such an important topic which would affect everyone in the Town. I am passionate about finding solutions to the climate crisis, but they will only work if they are supported by the community.

3. How would you finance the conversion to fossil-free fuels for those who want to switch?

All new buildings and new construction should be fossil-fuel free. I support expanded access to EV chargers and installation of solar panels to support the chargers. But this is a multibillion dollar problem and requires investment from the state and the federal government. We need to educate the public so they understand what options are available to them, such as existing tax credits and grants.

4. What are your thoughts on the Harvard St. Project [the proposal to select Harvard St. as the re-zoned area of Brookline that would help fulfill the Town's obligations under the recently enacted MBTA Communities Act]? How do we get past the vitriol? How do we deal with increased traffic and make streets safe?

I think that Covid and the absence of face-to-face contact has contributed to the vitriol. The MBTA Communities Act requires Brookline to allow “as of right” multi-family housing within a certain distance of MBTA stops. We have to comply with the law or lose substantial support for the public housing we already have, so we need to develop a compliance plan by the end of the year. At the same time, we need to lobby the State to modify requirements to accommodate Brookline’s specific circumstances. The Harvard Street Corridor study should move forward, but it needs to be integrated into the comprehensive planning project now underway. The process the HAB used in creating the Housing Production Plan is a great model for achieving community engagement. We also need a plan for an integrated public way that supports how our lives are changing.

5. What is the current status of the Fisher Hill property?

There are many proposed uses for the property and it requires a robust public process before any decision is made.

6. What was your role in disseminating an alarmist email headed “Harvard Street Alert!”?

I am no longer involved with Brookline by Design, having resigned from the board when I announced my candidacy for Select Board. I would not have done it the way it was done. We need to unite the various groups to come up with one plan to present to the State for improving the current guidelines.

7. What are your general thoughts about subsidized housing and proposals to

bring back rent control?

I am an advocate for true subsidized housing like the Section 8 voucher program that I personally benefited from. Affordable units should exist in every building so that people are not defined by their address. Rent control can affect the availability of housing so may not be the best answer. Subsidized housing tied to prevailing income levels is not really affordable for those who need it most.

8. How do you talk to just plain folks and not just those already involved in town government?

Brookline needs to do a better job of letting people know what's going on in Town. Technology can help but not everyone can access technology. There are so many boards and committees involved but no one is accountable for spreading the word. As a result, we follow the letter of the law in issuing public notices, but not its spirit which I believe is to involve the community at large.

9. What do you think of proposals to suspend the overnight parking ban?

I'm not in favor of suspending the ban. It would just encourage more cars on the road when we are trying to reduce vehicle emissions.

10. How do you address the needs of seniors for local transportation, like Newton's subsidized bus system, and to be able to afford to stay in their own homes in the face of continuing tax increases?

State law limits the Town's ability to grow revenue to keep pace with increasing costs. The situation is not sustainable. I think we need to aggressively increase the commercial tax base to take some of the pressure off homeowners. We also need to figure out how to better help seniors. We should convene a group tasked to study and develop a plan for the current and long-term needs of the senior population.

11. You are the only candidate currently running for Select Board who voted in favor of the newly enacted means-tested senior property tax exemption. The Select Board will be establishing the guidelines on what constitutes "excessive assets" that will determine who can qualify for this exemption. What are your thoughts?

Seniors make up 20% of the Town's population and that proportion is expected to grow substantially. We need to consider the needs and perspective of seniors in everything we do, but often their voice is overlooked. I don't know how to make it happen, but even if I don't have the answers I will be involved in finding them.

Final Statement

I will continue to be involved in problem solving about Brookline issues whether or not I am elected, but I would be honored to have your vote. Talking and hearing from people is the way I figure things out. I want to hear from all of you, especially if you don't agree with me, so we can discuss things further and find

common ground. You can reach me at paul@paulwarren.org, or call me anytime at 617 869-5430.

III. Report on Fall 2022 and January 2023 Town Meetings

Presenter: Susan Granoff (Advisory Committee and Town Meeting Member)

Fall Town Meeting took place over eight nights from November 15 to December 8. There was an additional Special Town Meeting on January 10. All told these Town Meeting sessions considered 34 warrant articles. Of these, five failed, and a number were referred to committees for further study.

Fall 2022 Town Meeting

LCAC heard special presentations on three of the articles presented at Town Meeting. Both the article to create an Affordable Housing Overlay District Study Committee and the article to create a Tree Preservation Bylaw passed easily.

Town Meeting approved the Advisory Committee's alternative to Article 9, which sought to strengthen the Town's Bylaw on the removal of snow and ice from sidewalks. Starting later this winter, owners of single family and residential buildings with 2-4 dwelling units will have 24 hours in which to clear their sidewalks, down from the current 30 hours, but much more than the 12 hours the petitioners sought. Fines will remain unchanged. Owners for the first time will be responsible for clearing snow from ramps near their property that permit wheelchairs to access the street.

Other articles of special significance that passed at Fall Town Meeting included:

- a resolution supporting implementation and funding of the Rodent Control Action Plan developed by the Health Department and Department of Public Works.
- a Bylaw amendment to revise the discrimination complaint process, giving the Director of the Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Relations and his staff a greater role.
- an article seeking a town wide ballot question capping the number of storefront marijuana licenses in Brookline to 4.
- a Zoning Bylaw amendment to permit honey bee keeping.
- a resolution seeking the creation of a feasibility study committee on the building of an outdoor community swimming facility in Brookline for its residents.

- a Bylaw amendment to require speakers at Town Meeting to disclose any financial interests that they or immediate family members have in the warrant article being discussed.
- two amendments to the Town's Zoning Bylaw related to the demolition of buildings deemed significant by the Preservation Commission: to extend the length of the required demolition delay to 24 months from 12; to require design review after the expiration of a demolition delay.
- a resolution urging the Planning Department to study proposals to reduce the number of demolitions in Brookline.
- three complex climate crisis related articles (out of 6) brought by the Zero Emissions Advisory Board (ZEAB) asking the State Legislature to give Brookline the power to: (1) establish and administer low interest betterment loans to qualifying homeowners seeking to transition their homes from fossil fuel energy sources to electricity; (2) petition the state Department of Public Utilities to amend the Community Choice Aggregation Program to add a surcharge for users of Brookline Green Electricity to fund town investments in renewable energy; and (3) create new “Green Zoning” bylaw provisions inconsistent with the State Building Code and other state regulations so as to reduce the Town's greenhouse gas emissions.

January 2023 Special Town Meeting

Town Meeting voted to enact a Specialized Energy Code regulating the design and construction of new buildings (and major renovations to over 50% of a building) for a more effective use of energy and greater reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

Town Meeting also passed an article to accept a state law that will require the Town to mail to every voting household in Brookline information about local ballot questions (similar to information provided by the Secretary of State on statewide ballot questions).

IV. Other Business

Suggested topics for future discussion

- Over 60% of the budget is devoted to the Brookline Public Schools, and the budget affects all of us. Perhaps, LCAC should invite School Committee candidates to address us
- Street parking is a senior issue for caregivers and visitors whether overnight or the two-hour limitation
- Joint Meeting with the Bicycle Advisory, Pedestrian Advisory, and Shared Mobility Advisory Committees to discuss seniors' concerns

The Chair will investigate the best way to bring these issues forward.

V. Date of Next Meeting: March 6

Dear Friends, Neighbors, and Colleagues,

Like many of you, I am very concerned about Brookline's future. Affordable housing, climate change, intense real estate development pressures, and the escalating costs of living that threaten to displace long-term and middle-income residents are just a few of the things that I worry about. All across Brookline I hear from many who are looking for pragmatic, accountable, and engaged leadership and management for our Town.

That is why I have made the decision to run for the Brookline Select Board.

Twelve years ago my wife, Amy, and I chose Brookline as our home because of its great schools, diverse community, walkable streets, transit access and wonderful green spaces. Our two children attend Brookline Schools, and their grandmother recently moved to our neighborhood. I love this Town.

My nearly 30-year professional career includes leadership roles in business, technology and strategic planning. In the civic realm, I have served as a member of the Town's Advisory Committee, and I just began my second term as a Town Meeting Member from Precinct 1. As a neighborhood advocate, I have built many relationships with people who are not involved in Brookline politics but who care about their community. They have taught me how to see our Town government through their eyes and through my own life experiences.

I was raised by a hard-working single mother, and became a teenage husband and father. I survived with the help of a range of social services, Section-8 housing, and the generosity of individuals, especially Brookline's Aaron Feurstein who gave me, a young father, both a job and the mentoring I needed to understand the meaning of a life of service. I was able to overcome significant adversity, attend college at the University of Lowell, and embark on a successful business career. I understand the feeling of not having resources and the importance of having an advocate. This is why I meet with people where they are, fight for them when they need help, and why I take on the difficult issues that others are unwilling to touch. I am known for being a tireless advocate who

engages in countless conversations with stakeholders to solve problems. My life experiences drive my passion to advocate for others and inform my priorities for Brookline.

My priorities as a member of the Select Board would be:

Provide much needed executive leadership in partnership with the other members of the Select Board and the Town Administrator and Town staff. Expand the commercial tax base to slow the growth of residential taxes. Implement effective, sustainable and community-supported policies to address the climate crisis.

Develop a plan to address the pressing, fundamental needs of our growing senior population. Preserve and improve basic services including maintenance of our sidewalks, bikeways and streets.

Reestablish Brookline as an employer that attracts and retains a diverse group of individuals to work in our schools and municipal services including public safety. Complete the comprehensive land-use planning and zoning reform project to ensure that it is residents who drive the goals of our growth.

Continue the important work of increasing diversity in Brookline, making it a more equitable place where everyone who lives, works or visits feels welcome, included and safe.

I value hearing from members of our community. Please share with me your thoughts on the above and your own priorities via email at paul@paulwarren.org.

I hope that you will join me in this campaign and help to build a better future for our community. I ask for your vote in the Brookline Town election on Tuesday, May 2, 2023.

It would be my honor to serve the residents of Brookline. Please visit www.paulwarren.org for more information. Warmest Regards,

Paul Warren