

BROOKLINE COMMUNITY AGING NETWORK
Livable Community Advocacy Committee
March 11, 2024

Attending: Susan Granoff (Chair), Bernard Greene (Guest Presenter), Susan Park (Guest Presenter), Janet Gelbart (Notetaker), Carol Caro, Susan Cohen, Regina Frawley, Marion Freedman-Gurspan, Perry Grossman, John Harris, Katie Hope, Susan Howards, Carol Macbain, Maureen Mayotte, Diana McClure, Anne Meyers, Fran Perler, Yolanda Rodriguez, John Seay, Ruth Seidman, Alan Shepro, Judy Shepro, David Trevvett, Melissa Trevvett, Henry Winkelman

I. A conversation with Select Board Candidate Bernard Greene

Guest Participant: Bernard Greene (Select Board chair)

Mr. Greene has been involved in Town government since 2006, when he was elected as a Town Meeting Member from Precinct 7. He participated in a number of Select Board and Town Moderator committees, and was a member of the Advisory Committee before being elected to the Select Board in 2016 on which he currently serves in his second term as Chair. During his tenure he worked to insure stability of town services despite the shutdowns of the pandemic and led the Board in resisting calls to defund the police amid the anger surrounding the death of Gorge Floyd. He led the effort to appoint Jen Paster as Police Chief and to fill other top leadership positions in the Police Department after months of vacancies. His goals for the future include monitoring implementation of the MBTA Communities Act under a comprehensive planning process, achieving long-term fiscal stability, increasing the voice of seniors on Town committees, strengthening the commitment to equity for all residents, and developing sustainable climate policies and practices. (Additional details about his personal and professional background appear in the materials circulated to the attendees and attached at the end of these notes.)

Q&A

1. If you could do just one thing during the next term, what would it be and how would you achieve it?

It's hard to identify one thing because all services are inter-related. For example, improving services for seniors involves the Council on Aging, the Recreation Department, the Health Department, etc. If I could only choose one thing it would be to insure the sustainability of our finances. We need to be extremely prudent in how we manage our money.

2. Talk more specifically about the MBTA Communities Act. What do we need to do to make it right? How could it go wrong?

It could go wrong if implementation led to uncontrolled development. The market controls price, and if you build in Brookline, you are going to build more expensive housing to meet the demand from well-paid employees of the schools and hospitals in the surrounding area. We need to make sure we enforce our

inclusionary zoning laws which require 15% of the units in new multi-family housing be affordable. First floor commercial space must be protected. New construction requires attention to water and sewer capacity and adequate drainage to protect against rising water tables which already affect Amory and Griggs parks. It's important that we plan before we build more multi-story housing so we can prepare for foreseeable consequences.

3. The Town has decorated ten electric utility boxes in various places at a cost of \$225,000. Meanwhile our roads are in terrible shape. Are you setting the right priorities in the allocation of funds?

The utility boxes were decorated with ARPA funds which included money for community beautification and were allocated under a committee process with input from residents. I'm not sure road repairs was an allowable use. We are starting to put a lot more money into repairs but are running into capacity issues at the Department of Public Works. The Select Board is also reviewing our policies under Complete Streets which may be slowing the repair process as streets are re-designed to serve multiple users.

4. Parking fees have been increased to \$2.00. The Senior Center depends on donations. How do we get the money we need for Town services?

By State law, we can only increase the property tax by 2-1/2% but expenses increase faster. That means we will always have tight budgets and have to cut programs to live within the funding caps, and there's not much we can do to make that go away. But seniors are and will remain a priority. We will fix things to the extent that we can.

5. The senior population is growing dramatically. In the 2020 census, there were over 13,00 residents over the age of 60 and over 16,000 over the age of 55. Those numbers will increase as the baby boomers age. Do we need to rebalance the amount of money allocated to the schools to accommodate other needs?

We are constantly struggling with the right split between Town and School services but framing the questions as seniors vs. schools is counterproductive. We need to take care of both. Whenever possible we direct additional funding toward seniors, like the ARPA funding and CDBG grants. But it is a broader issue than just seniors.

6. You mentioned Complete Streets. Over the years we have been eliminating parking without considering the impact on those with mobility issues who need to park close to their destinations. Parking two to three streets away is not a viable option. Bike lanes are treated as throughways which puts pedestrians at risk when they cross. So this has become another area of controversy. How do we address the issue constructively?

One way is to make sure that seniors are represented in all of our planning and policy discussions. Certain groups lobby effectively without considering that they may be trampling on other people's rights. And cyclists who do not follow traffic rules create a huge hazard to themselves as well as others. I'd like to see us focus more on bike and traffic enforcement.

7. The Council on Aging is facing a \$600,000 deficit in 2026 when the ARPA funds expire. This means seniors will lose access to transportation to medical appointments among other things. How do we advocate to prevent this?

Seniors need to amplify their voice in Town discussions. They should present their concerns during the comment period at public meetings, contact Town Meeting Members, and email the Select Board (SB@brooklinema.gov). There are links on the Town website for applying to the boards and commissions that deal with these issues. The Select Board works through the Mass Municipal Association and [State Representative] Tommy Vitollo to lobby the Governor and other state officials and that is more effective than individuals working on their own.

Concluding Remarks

I hope I've given you a sense of who I am and how I think about the issues. My long years of experience in Town government enable me to understand the history and personalities involved which give me credibility to deal with the tough issues. I work for all members of the community and will not support things I think are bad for the Town no matter how loud the voices against me. The best example of that is my stand in opposition to defunding the police. I have a tough skin and the courage to stand up for my beliefs. You can contact me at bgreene@brooklinema.gov, through my campaign website bernardgreene.org, or call me at 857 235-0402.

II. A conversation with Select Board Candidate Susan Park

Guest Participant: Susan Park (Town Meeting Member Precinct 17, Vice-President of Town Meeting Members Association)

A nine-year resident of Brookline, Ms. Park is in her fifth year as a Town Meeting Member from Precinct 17 [formerly Precinct 2] and her second year as Vice Chair of the Town Meeting Members Association. She has also served on the Advisory Committee, as PTO Chair for the Remote Learning Academy during the pandemic, and is a board member of the Asian American Family Network and other organizations. A former English and writing teacher, she was also head of the English Department for an international school. She considers her greatest strengths to be her energy, work ethic, and willingness to listen to all voices to bring people together in creative solutions. Her priorities for Brookline include improving communication and government transparency, addressing the housing crisis through a comprehensive planning initiative, increasing the commercial tax base, helping seniors age in place, and working toward a carbon-free Brookline. (Additional details about her personal and professional

background appear in the materials circulated to the attendees and attached at the end of these notes.)

Q&A

1. How does your experience with the schools from the perspective of a parent and administrator of international programs help you to address the current budget tensions between town and school services when there are limited resources to deal with projected deficits?

It takes good teachers, good leadership, good curriculum and good management to make good schools. My insight into issues that the schools face helps me answer the tough questions on issues like deleveling. My experience in other school systems and other countries has shown me what works and what doesn't work in communities in a variety of settings, both for schools and business development. It helps me see through the noise to get to the answers.

2. How, specifically, will you find the funds to make up the deficit the Senior Center will face in 2026 when ARPA funding runs out?

We have to prioritize our seniors and determine what's most impactful and effective. I've managed a household budget for three decades and know how to make the hard decisions. We need community input, auditing and accountability to find out what the real needs are and to prioritize those things.

3. The Senior Center has limited access to parking which is an issue for those who don't live within walking distance, especially residents in South Brookline. What more can the Town do to improve transportation or to create a satellite center in South Brookline or on the Newbury campus when it becomes available?

If there is a need for seniors to get to the Senior Center, it is a need that must be met. I would support a pilot program similar to the one in Newton but I believe there is a cost to that. A satellite location requires planning and funding. Perhaps we can share resources that are already there, like the library. The important thing is to move forward with the idea and make it happen.

4. There are a lot of empty storefronts around town. Why does it take so long to fill them?

I've been asking that question, too, and there are a variety of answers. The main one seems to be high rents. The Planning Department says vacancies are at a low but we do keep losing businesses. There are also new businesses coming in.

5. As a spokesperson for the Asian-American community, what's your strategy for getting more Asians involved in town government?

I'm on the board of the Brookline Asian American Network and try to amplify the voice of Asian Americans. That means advertising events, talking to people of all

ages, recruiting them to apply for openings on committees or to run for Town Meeting. It takes time to explain because so many people don't know how Town government works.

6. As mentioned about vacant storefronts, there also seems to be a disconnect between what we see and what the Town says about parking. [Director of Planning and Community Development] Kara Brewton refers to a parking study in Coolidge Corner which is ten years old. How would you deal with the disconnect?

It's all about communication and bridging the disconnects. We need to keep at it and have more than just one conversation. For example with our marijuana study in the high school, the parent survey was released in the summer and the response was too small to draw meaningful conclusions. So we asked for the survey deadline to be extended and advertised it in the PTO newsletter. That's going the extra mile which is what I'm about. We need to find what the disconnect is and try to connect it.

(A member of the audience spoke at length about the need for interdepartmental discussions of the parking issue, including input from residents, to understand the full picture instead of dealing with perspectives of various constituents on a piecemeal basis.)

7. Who should be setting priorities for the Town when there's not enough funding to do everything we want?

That is the job of the Select Board based on input from residents at public hearings and through emails.

8. As a Select Board member you are a top safety officer for the Town. Would you involve the police in pursuing local people who try to scam seniors into providing them with funds?

I would partner with the police department on this issue. One thing is to educate the public to make them aware of potential harms. For example, after they caught a drug dealer operating at BHS, the Police Department created a video which was shared with parents to alert them to the issue and what to look out for. Similarly, the Town developed and distributed materials to explain the new senior tax write-offs to encourage people to apply for the benefit.

Concluding Remarks

I have the passion, energy, integrity, time, values, and experience to make Brookline better in many different ways. I am seasoned, experienced, creative, and am willing to take risks. Actions speak louder than words and I have a proven track record of drafting policies, capping marijuana dispensaries, serving during Covid, participating in many programs and projects, and sprinkling joy along the way. I am a relationship person who connects with others to make impactful change. One of my guiding principles is to

take care of what we have, follow through and communicate. Good governance is checking in with the community, making sure they have the information they need, and following through on what we learn. You can contact me at 551 574-0690 or through my website at susanforselectboard@gmail.com.

III. Discussion of Which Warrant Articles the LCAC Would Like Presented at April/May LCAC Meetings

The group will invite Ruthann Dobek and Director of Finance Lincoln Heineman to its meeting on April 8 to discuss Warrant Article 12 regarding an expansion of the Senior Tax work off program. Roger Blood of the Housing Advisory Board (HAB) will be invited to discuss Warrant Article 13 which would amend the Town's Zoning By-law to reduce the restrictions for Accessory Dwelling Units.

IV. Other Business

Future Agendas

Sana Hafeez has indicated an interest in running for Select Board and will be invited to speak to the LCAC if she submits her nomination papers by the March 19 deadline. Following a lively discussion of bike lanes, the group asked that the Transportation Board be invited to the May meeting to discuss potential impacts on pedestrians and parking.

V. Date of Next Meeting: April 8

The Livable Community Advocacy Committee is one of several BrooklineCAN committees. Everyone is welcome to attend, but if you do so regularly, we invite you to support BrooklineCAN with your membership. You can join using PayPal, credit card or by check. Instructions are on the right hand sidebar on the front page of brooklinecan.org Thank you.

An Introduction to Bernard Greene

ABOUT ME

I have been in Town government since 2006 when the late Emily Novick urged me to run for Town Meeting and with the help of the late Marvin Feinman and Ponnice Katz and other Precinct 7 Town Meeting Members I won election to Town Meeting. Over the years I have served on many committees for the Town. They include committees that created the Diversity Commission, that wrote the Police Complaint Policy, that produced the Police Commissioners Advisory Committee, and I Chaired the Audit Committee for seven years. I served on committees for the hiring of Town Administrator Mel Kleckner, Fire Chief John Sullivan, and Police Chief Andy Lipson. I also served on the Advisory Committee before running for and winning a seat on the Select Board in 2016.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

I have served on the Select Board for nearly nine years, and more than three years as Chair. During this time, I have helped to navigate the Town through several challenging times.

I was Chair during the difficult period of national anger around the killing of George Floyd when I lead the Board to resist calls to defund the police and efforts by some to disparage the Brookline police department for things that happened in a small number of the more than 16,000 local law enforcement agencies in the country. Since becoming Chair of the Select Board for the second time in February of 2023, I successfully led the effort to appoint Police Chief Jen Paster and fill the top leadership positions in the Police Department that were vacant for many months. These vacancies caused dangerous gaps in the leadership of the Police Department putting the Town and its residents at risk.

As Chair, during the period 2019 to 2021, I worked to ensure the continued operation of the Town and the provision of critical Town services during the COVID-19 pandemic that closed everything down.

Most recently, I have been leading the Select Board to operate more collaboratively and efficiently. This resulted, among many other things, in the creation and overwhelming support at Town Meeting for the Consensus Plan that brought Brookline into compliance with the MBTA Communities Act.

THE FUTURE

We have a lot of work left to do. Some of my goals for my next term are:

MBTA Communities Act. We are not finished with the MBTA Communities Act. Going forward, I will work on the Select Board to implement and monitor the new zoning to ensure that:

- Existing local businesses are protected, and new first floor commercial spaces are developed.

- Affordable senior, low-income, and workforce housing is not squeezed out by high-priced luxury housing.
- The essential infrastructure for any new development is built, including parks, walkable neighborhoods, and safe roads.
- We don't lose important grocery and other stores used by seniors, such as Stop and Shop.
- We engage in a smart comprehensive planning process to achieve these and other goals.

Economic and Fiscal Stability. I will work to ensure long term fiscal stability, which is necessary to keep taxes under control and ensure the revenues needed to provide the services and critical infrastructure that we need to create a livable community.

The Voices of Seniors Will be Heard. I will fight to add strong advocates for Seniors on Town committees and projects to ensure that the unique needs of Seniors are not ignored but included in the planning and implementation of projects and programs from the start.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. At a time when the very idea of equity is under attack nationally, I will continue to strengthen the Town's commitment to the central principle of treating all people fairly and equitably in all the services and opportunities that the Town provides.

Sustainable Climate Action. I will continue to help do our part to address the climate crisis with effective and sustainable policies and practices that engage and are supported by the full range of residents of Brookline, especially Seniors. I will help ensure that our children and grandchildren will be proud of what we did to protect their planet and their futures.

GETTING TO THE FUTURE

Brookline needs a leader who is open-minded, collaborative, and capable of guiding other members of the SB and Town bodies to good and prudent solutions to Town problems. I believe my nine years on the SB and 18 years in Town government have demonstrated that I can provide that leadership in my next term on the Select Board. I have great hope for our future.

I ask for your vote in the May 7 local election and ask that you urge your friends, neighbors, and family members in Brookline to vote for Bernard Greene.

bernardgreene.org,

An Introduction to Susan Park

Hi, my name is Susan Park, and I am excited to run for Select Board. I am Korean American, and was born and raised in the United States. My parents immigrated to New York from Korea 54 years ago. They worked very hard and built a lovely life for my three sisters and me. Fast forward to the present, I am happily married to Kee Park going on 29 years and have raised three strong and amazing daughters (two of which have already graduated from college and thriving in the work place). My youngest is rocking it at BHS. I also have an adorable dog named Quincy and enjoy taking him to Amory Park, the setting of my children's book What Happens at the Dog Park. I have a wide range of experiences in Brookline and have served and led on many different committees and boards that have impacted our town for the better. I have helped change policy and passed a handful of warrant articles. You are probably wondering why I want to run for Select Board.

These are some of the many reasons:

- I received my Public Leadership Credentials Certificate from the Harvard Kennedy School and am equipped to serve on the Select Board.
- My family and I love Brookline, and I want to give back. My husband and I raised two of our daughters here, and I would love to bring diversity, representation, and fresh perspectives to the Select Board.
- I naturally boost morale and bring people together and enjoy working with people.
- I am a creative problem solver and have experience working with policy and making things better and have passed a handful of warrant articles in Brookline.
- I like to work hard and make a positive difference for our community and have led many teams.
- I've been on a lot of different committees and boards and have experience with the town's finance committee and how the town operates.

This is my fifth year as an elected Town Meeting Member and my second year as the Vice President of the Brookline Town Meeting Member Association. As a former 11th and 12th grade English teacher and head of the English Department, I've worked with many teachers all over the world and have a diverse and global perspective. A diverse perspective is needed on the Select Board, and my presence on the board will help people who felt unseen feel seen.

I have a proven track record to take on challenges by working well with others, rolling up my sleeves, and not being afraid to do the heavy lifting or speaking up when things don't look right. An example is the successful YES on 3 Campaign last year which won overwhelmingly. I take on challenges, take risks, and get results.

Some of my priorities if I am elected to the Select Board:

1. Continue the work of the recent passing of the Consensus Warrant Article that commits to more housing in Brookline.

2. With more housing, it's important to bring more businesses to expand the commercial tax base. I have a vision to build up parcels of land that will produce commercial revenue.
3. I would continue and support the work Brookline has begun to address climate change in which my former Girl Scout Troop participated in and spoke on at Town Meeting so Brookline can proudly do her part in carbon reduction.
4. I also am committed to continue to support our beloved seniors so they can age in place, and given the national mental health crisis, I will work hard to address the mental health issues for all ages in Brookline. During the peak of Covid I regularly checked in on the seniors and wrote articles in the Brookline TAB about Brookline senior centers to keep senior centers accounted for during the pandemic.
5. It's so important to me to take good care of what we do have. Improving communication from town to the community is a priority of mine so we can access what is and is not working.
6. Being prudent with our finances and managing future construction well.

I have been told I am the TRUSTED CHOICE, and that I do have a reputation for being a leader. One of my biggest strengths is that I get along with others, motivate people, and bring people together. Creativity is another strength of mine, and I think outside the box. If elected, I will bring diversity, a wealth of experience, a heart full of service and integrity to the Select board. I hope you will join me in making Brookline a more diverse, healthy, caring, vibrant, and livable community for all. It would be an honor to work together on these endeavors.

Please reach out with any concerns.

Susan Park (551-574-0690) susanforselectboard@gmail.com