



Brookline for Everyone's Endorsements for May 2023 Town Meeting

Article 7, Item 31 - Budget Item Funding the Pierce School Project

- Recommendation: **FAVORABLE ACTION** as written; **NO ACTION** on ALL amendments

Article 8 - Annual (FY24) Community Preservation Program Budget

- Recommendation: **FAVORABLE ACTION** on the motion as filed

Article 13 - To establish an Office of Housing Stability

- Recommendation: **FAVORABLE ACTION** on the petitioner's motion

Article 14 - Amend the Inclusionary Zoning By-Law to lower the unit threshold for developments that must include onsite affordable housing units

- Recommendation: **FAVORABLE ACTION** on the petitioner's motion

Article 15 - To adopt the Stretch and Specialized Energy Codes, and add fossil fuel free restrictions in accordance with the MA DOER Demonstration Project

- Recommendation: **FAVORABLE ACTION** on the motion as amended

Article 16 - Amend the Zoning Map and Articles 3 and 5 of the Town's Zoning By-Laws to create a new zoning district to set forth building massing requirements in two existing T-5 (two-family) zoning districts north of Beacon Street to encourage reuse and deter demolition

- Recommendation: **FAVORABLE ACTION** on Article 16, as modified, in the hope that the Town will follow up on ideas to allow an additional unit in these districts as a further means of discouraging demolitions and creating much needed additional housing units

Article 24 - Resolution regarding exploring alternatives to the Planning Department's efforts to meaningfully comply with the MBTA Communities Act

- Recommendation: **NO ACTION** on the motion as amended by the petitioners

Continue reading on the next page for further explanations for each recommendation.

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Article 7, Item 31 - Budget Item Funding the Pierce School Project

Brookline for Everyone strongly supports Item 31 of Article 7 to fully fund the Pierce School rebuild and renovation and opposes any and all amendments altering this item.

B4E strongly supported Yes on Question 1 during the recent election, stating: The Pierce School, built with an open plan design in the 1970's, desperately needs replacing. We recognize that we must replace this outdated building without further delay. Waiting will just make this essential project more costly.

The voters were given the opportunity to weigh in on this important project, and a significant amount of information was provided to all corners of Town both for and against the ballot question. While this was a close vote, the voters chose to accept a tax increase to fully fund the building of a new Pierce School. All Town Meeting Members, regardless of their stance on May 2, should accept the voters' decision and approve fully funding the project.

Article 8 - FY24 Community Preservation Program Budget

Brookline for Everyone recommends **FAVORABLE ACTION** on Article 8, the FY24 Community Preservation Program Budget.

At core, this article lays out a FY24 budget for the estimated \$3.55m in Community Preservation revenue - \$2.8m from the 1% local property tax surcharge and \$750k from the state's CPA trust fund. The allocations of \$465,000 each for community housing, open space & recreation, and historic preservation meet the 10% minimum required for each category (for FY23 and FY24), while the remaining two-thirds is unbudgeted.

This article is unlikely to be controversial at Town Meeting. Most important, however, is the outlined development and implementation of a CPA plan. The June - September period of drafting Brookline's CPA priorities and the process for submitting proposals is crucial. The committee has already analyzed all the relevant existing town planning documents and is now in the midst of community engagement with focus groups, an online survey, a charrette (June 5th at the high school), and a public hearing (June 17th).

From September through next March the committee will be accepting, reviewing, and recommending to Town Meeting appropriations that align with these priorities and the CPA eligible categories. Brookline for Everyone is excited at the prospect of identifying & funding housing needs in Town -- developing new housing, maintaining and updating existing housing, and creating financial supports for renters struggling to remain in our community.



Article 13 – To establish an Office of Housing Stability

With over 50% of Brookline households renting, and 45% of our renter households considered to be housing cost burdened, the high cost of housing puts our rental residents at risk of displacement and sometimes homelessness. There is currently no central townwide source to serve residents who need housing-related assistance or to develop policies to combat renter displacement. If approved, WA13 would establish an Office of Housing Stability within the Town of Brookline to do this.

Brookline for Everyone supports a centralized role for coordinating housing stability within Town Government, and therefore endorses **FAVORABLE ACTION on the petitioner’s motion**, and **NO ACTION** on the Advisory Committee’s referral motion. We are pleased to hear the Town Administrator’s commitment to addressing the needs of our renters at risk of displacement and his interest in supporting the creation of such an office, whether this article is passed or alternatively referred to him. This is a real opportunity for us to use public resources (such as Community Preservation Act funds) and to partner with local or regional community organizations to directly address the needs of renters at risk of being displaced. We will be closely watching how this role is set up in Brookline, and look forward to joining neighbors Somerville, Malden, and Revere in supporting renters and homeowners at risk of displacement.

Article 14 - Amend the Inclusionary Zoning By-Law to lower the unit threshold for developments that must include onsite affordable housing units

Brookline for Everyone joins the Select Board, Planning Board, Zoning By-law Committee, Advisory Committee, and Housing Advisory Board in unanimously recommending **FAVORABLE ACTION** on Warrant Article 14. If approved, WA 14 will amend our Inclusionary Zoning Bylaw to reduce (from 19 to 10) the number of units in a project where a developer can choose to make a lump sum payment to the Town’s Affordable Housing Trust (AHT) in lieu of creating 15% affordable housing units on-site in their developments. Allowing payments to the AHT in lieu of on-site units has been extremely important in creating the funds needed so that the Town can support otherwise infeasible affordable housing developments sponsored by the Brookline Housing Authority and private, nonprofit housing developers such as 2Life Communities and Hebrew Senior Life. We also think that providing more units directly as part of new developments is vital. The availability of significant funds for affordable housing from the Community Preservation Act, recently implemented by the Town, has prompted revisiting this issue. We commend HAB Chair Roger Blood, as the primary sponsor, and the HAB itself, for carefully reviewing the issue and recommending the reduction from 19 to 10, which after detailed analysis has been chosen as the best number to balance the competing needs for payments to the AHT and on-site units.



Article 15 - To adopt the Stretch and Specialized Energy Codes, and add fossil fuel free restrictions in accordance with the MA DOER Demonstration Project

Brookline for Everyone strongly recommends **FAVORABLE ACTION** on Article 15, as have all of the Town boards (AC, Select Board, Zero Emissions Advisory Board, School Committee, and Planning Board) who have voted overwhelmingly in favor of this climate legislation sponsored by the Planning Department. This amends the Town's General By-Laws to clarify and update votes previously taken regarding the Stretch Code and Specialized Energy Code. It adds fossil fuel free (FFF) restrictions in accordance with the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources' (DOER) 10 Community Fossil Fuel Free Demonstration Project. This allows Brookline to build upon our groundbreaking 2019 legislation requiring FFF in new construction and major renovations by securing Brookline's participation in the DOER pilot. Brookline Town Meeting has passed similar legislation with near-unanimous votes four times since 2019. Admission into this program would allow us to mandate FFF construction for new construction and substantial rehabilitation, using our new State building codes. A no vote would prevent Brookline from participating in the DOER pilot, and Brookline's place will be taken by another community currently on the waitlist.



Article 16 - Amend Town's Zoning By-Laws to create a new zoning district to set forth building massing requirements in two existing T-5 (two-family) neighborhoods to encourage reuse and deter demolition

Brookline for Everyone supports the Planning Department's proposal, as modified, to revise the requirements in certain Two-Family Zones as a first step to hopefully discourage the replacement of existing two-family homes with new, larger, and more expensive homes that provide no net additional housing. We emphasize "first step" because we believe that there are other important opportunities -- particularly allowing an additional unit on those properties in certain circumstances -- that could address both the concern about demolitions and large size of new luxury apartments while at the same time providing much needed additional housing.

The Fall 2022 Town Meeting passed a resolution (Article 12) asking the Planning Department to study proposals to reduce the number of demolitions in Brookline. The proposed article would create a new zoning district, called T-5 (NH), to encourage reuse of buildings and discourage demolitions. The new zoning district would prescribe massing standards for the build-out of attic spaces, third floors, and additions, and would limit building depth on a lot. This effectively down-zoning which the Planning Department believes would reduce the rapid pace of the demolition of existing housing stock and encourage conversions of attic spaces and additions for greater living space. The initial proposal was modified, and in its revised form, which we support, was endorsed by the Planning Board, the Preservation Commission, and the Advisory Committee's Subcommittee on Land Use Planning. We note that the Planning Board's report specifically states that "[t]he committees understood that the new T-5 (NH) zoning was meant to be a stop gap measure to provide time for public discussion of the idea of allowing a third dwelling unit in the T-5 district and allowing additional roof styles when architectural design standards were formulated for them."

Brookline for Everyone recommends **FAVORABLE ACTION** on Article 16, as modified, in the hope that, once it is approved, the Planning Department, the Planning Board, and Town Meeting will promptly follow up on ideas to allow an additional unit in these districts as a further means of discouraging demolitions and creating much needed additional smaller (and less expensive) housing units.



Article 24 - Resolution regarding exploring alternatives to the Planning Department's efforts to meaningfully comply with the MBTA Communities Act

Brookline for Everyone continues to support the work of the Select Board, the Planning Department and the MBTA-CA Multifamily Permitting Committee as they work to find the best, meaningful approach to compliance for Brookline.

Warrant Article 24 as amended asks Town Meeting to support the work of the Select Board's MBTA-CA Multifamily Permitting Committee. Because the petitioners agree that the ongoing work of that committee is important and should continue, B4E believes taking the time to discuss this Warrant Article would be a waste of Town Meeting's time. We believe the petitioners should withdraw Warrant Article 24.

Beyond the fact that the Article's resolution is moot, WA24 includes a number of WHEREAS clauses implying the Planning Department ignored simpler compliance models that "would not require the Town to impose changes on the Harvard Street corridor." As the work of the current Committee shows, there are no simple approaches to **meaningful** compliance with the MBTA-CA that do not include meaningful changes along the Harvard Street corridor.

Brookline for Everyone expects the MBTA-CA Multifamily Permitting Committee to look at alternatives to the Planning Department's Harvard Street Plan, as set forth in the Select Board charge, to recommend at least one compliance approach that incentivizes the creation of at least 699 potential new homes. It is notable that the proposed WA 24 fails to even mention any new homes. Should this be moved, Town Meeting should support the work underway by voting **NO ACTION** on WA24.