

## **BEC 2022 STM WARRANT ARTICLE RECOMMENDATIONS**

Brookline's Special Town Meeting is set to begin on November 15, and Town Meeting Members will be presented with over thirty warrant articles and resolutions on which to vote.

Many of these articles and resolutions directly relate to the ongoing struggle to realize racial, economic, environmental, and social justice in Brookline. In keeping with our mission to advocate for solutions to the many equity-related issues facing our Town, the Brookline Equity Coalition (BEC) is publishing the following recommendations on the listed warrant articles.

**NOTE:** These recommendations, aside from one (WAs 11-13), reflect BEC's position on the **main motion** for each listed article. Additional votes may be required on amendments or substitute motions for some of the articles listed. These recommendations will be updated on a rolling basis to reflect BEC voting recommendations on any amendments or new motions under these articles that are introduced over the next few weeks (this is a living document).

### **WA 7 - Digital Warrant & Reports Distribution:** **VOTE YES**

- Article 7 would change the default method of warrant and report distribution by the Town to a digital format, with printed copies available upon request. If passed, this article has the potential to greatly reduce paper waste and save the Town up to \$60,000 annually, while also ensuring that individual preferences for written or digital reports is respected. BEC supports Article 7 as a means to free up revenues for important Town functions and to reduce the environmental waste generated by the operations of the Town government.

### **WA 9 - Snow & Ice Removal Bylaw Update:** **VOTE YES**

- Article 9 will reduce the number of hours allowed before property owners are required to remove snow and ice from their abutting sidewalks and strengthen enforcement of the snow removal bylaw. This article will lower the number of hours from 30 to 12. This would better align Brookline's policy with Boston and other surrounding communities, and would help to ensure that our streets and sidewalks remain accessible to people with disabilities throughout the entire year.

BEC supports these proposed updates to the bylaws in order to ensure that our streets and sidewalks prioritize accessibility for all Brookline residents year round. BEC is supportive of the main motion for Article 9, but recommends opposition to the substitute motion to be introduced by the Advisory Committee, which substantially weakens the original article (it would only lower the number of hours owners are required to remove snow and ice from 30 to 24).

### **WAs 11, 12, & 13 - Demolition and Design Review:**

#### **UPDATE: Referring only to the amendments moved by Bob Lepson or Simon Grossman, VOTE YES**

- BEC members have authored **one amendment each for warrant articles 11, 12, and 13**. The stated goals of the base warrant articles are: To extend the town's demolition delay (WA 11), urge the Department of Planning and Community Development to study how to reduce the number of demolitions in town (WA 12), and require a design review after the expiration of a stay of demolition (WA 13).

With regards to **WA 11 and 13**, **our amendments** would simply ensure these two changes don't halt housing projects that would create very substantial amounts of affordable housing. More precisely, **our changes would exempt from the extended demolition delay and design review projects that consist of at least 50% affordable housing units** (as defined in [section 4.08](#) of the town's zoning bylaw).

And our **amendment to WA 12** aims to change this directive from Town Meeting to the Planning Department to **prioritize people having an affordable place to live just as much as buildings and demolitions**.

You can find the [exact language of each amendment laid out here](#). Our intentions with these three amendments is to **ensure the town does not adopt laws or policies which would prevent projects that represent very significant steps towards addressing the housing crisis (see the 75% threshold)**.

### **WA 14 & WA 36 - Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) Program Reform:**

#### **VOTE YES**

- This pair of articles propose reforms to Brookline's PILOT program, which is a voluntary contribution program where tax-exempt property holders are asked to contribute a portion of what they would have paid in property tax. Article 14 requires

transparent reporting on the Town's PILOT agreements, while Article 36 will convene a Moderator's Committee to study and propose additional PILOT reforms.

These measures have the potential to increase PILOT contributions, which predominantly come from large universities and hospital systems, to fund critical Town services and municipal departments. BEC supports these articles to ensure that large non-profit institutions are contributing their fair share to the Town and to increase revenues for Town operations.

### **WA 21, 23, 25, 26, 28, & 29:**

- ["Overview of Brookline's Municipal Climate Empowerment Program Legislation at Town Meeting"](#)

### **WA 31 - Discrimination Complaint Process Article:** **VOTE NO**

- Article 31 is a proposed overhaul of the bylaws concerning the Commission for Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Relations (CDICR) and the discrimination complaint commission.

Unlike [the proposal heard at the May Town Meeting \(WA 12\)](#), this version would largely strip the CDICR of its ability to handle complaints and vest this power with the Director of the Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Community Relations (ODICR). The measure would include a Director veto over even complainant appeals of an initial finding. Additionally, the proposed complaint process would largely be toothless, with neither the CDICR or Director being given subpoena power, the ability to impose fines, or even to compel witness testimony. Town employees and Brookline Public Schools (BPS) students would also largely be prohibited from filing discrimination complaints with the Director.

The CDICR has unanimously recommended no action on Article 31, and has indicated that they plan to file a stronger discrimination complaint article at the May 2023 Town Meeting. Article 31 is in a way an attempt to "end run" around a more substantive proposal for a discrimination complaint committee. For these reasons, BEC urges a NO vote on Article 31.

### **WA 34 & WA 35 - Town Meeting Ethics Reform: VOTE YES**

- This pair of articles seeks to codify in the bylaws new ethical standards for Town Meeting Members and speakers to prevent conflicts of interest from influencing outcomes at Town Meeting.

Article 34 would require that Town Meeting Members abstain from voting on any measure in which they or a close family member has a financial stake. While Article 35 requires that speakers at Town Meeting disclose any personal or close family member's financial stake in any matter on which they speak.

These commonsense ethics reforms will improve the performance of Town Meeting and prevent the appearance (or existence) of real conflicts of interest on key votes. BEC supports codifying these important ethics rules to prevent conflicts of interest from arising and compromising the integrity of future Town Meetings.

### **WA 38 - AAPI Heritage Month Resolution: VOTE YES**

- Article 38 requests that the Select Board proclaim May to be Asian American & Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month, and that the Town conduct an annual celebration of AAPI Heritage Month in conjunction with local AAPI organizations and with adequate funding guaranteed by the Select Board.

The resolution also calls for Public Schools of Brookline (PSB) to plan and organize activities with students to celebrate AAPI Heritage Month. BEC strongly supports the Town taking these actions to honor and respect the heritage and myriad contributions to Brookline of our AAPI community members and to celebrate the diversity of our community.

### **WA 39 - Golf Course Study Resolution: VOTE YES**

- Article 39 requests that the Master Plan for the Municipal Golf Course be opened up to consider additional uses of the course's 120 acres rather than exclusive use for an eighteen-hole golf course.

At present, the Golf Course covers over one quarter of all green-space/recreation use land in Brookline. However, the Course only serves a small portion of residents while using potent pesticides, and fossil fuel powered carts.

BEC supports expanding the Master Plan to consider alternate uses for this land, including for more equitable and accessible outdoor recreation, for walking trails and bike connectivity trails, or for other socially desirable purposes.

The petitioners are not advocating a specific alternative, only that consideration should be given to reducing the golf playing area in lieu of other uses, including walking and biking paths and habitat restoration.

Petitioners are not requesting further destruction or construction, and in fact would be in favor of removing drainage & restoring the land to its natural and more climate friendly state. They have modified the article to ensure responsible environmental stewardship of this land and seek for this land to be used by residents and non-residents alike and not to be closed to those not playing golf nor to other uses.

#### **WA 40 - Outdoor Pool Feasibility Study Resolution: **VOTE YES****

- Article 40 calls for the funding and completion of a feasibility study for the creation of an outdoor pool complex in Brookline. This would cost \$75,000 in funding, and the report will be completed in time for a potential vote of Town Meeting to approve an outdoor pool project in Fall 2026.

Brookline is already underserved for both swimming access and outdoor recreation in general, and as climate change makes heat emergencies more extreme and frequent, ensuring access to safe outdoor activities and cooling resources during the warmer months is an equity issue of growing importance. BEC supports this measure to mitigate the impacts of climate change and to expand access to communally accessible and equitable outdoor recreational activities.

#### **WA 41 - Affordable Housing Overlay Study Committee Resolution: **VOTE YES****

- Article 41 would create a study committee, comprised of Brookline Housing Authority residents, housing experts, and residents with valuable lived experiences, that would be tasked with recommending zoning reforms and bylaw changes to increase the ability to build new affordable housing in Brookline.

These recommendations would likely include the creation of an affordable housing overlay district, which would enable the zoning of construction of more affordable, higher density, housing in Brookline that will help to alleviate the impacts of the regional housing crisis on Brookline residents. BEC strongly supports zoning and bylaw changes that facilitate the development of new affordable housing, and is supportive of the formation of this study committee.