

Warrant Article 21  
Spring 2016  
Capital Subcommittee Report

The Capital Subcommittee held public hearings to discuss Warrant Article 21 on Thursday, April 14, 2016 at 6:15 pm in room 408 of Town Hall, and again on Thursday, May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2016 at 10am in room 11. On April 14<sup>th</sup> committee members in attendance were: Amy Hummel, Carla Benka, Fred Levitan, Cliff Brown, Harry Friedman, and Pam Lodish. Also in attendance were petitioners John Harris, TMM Pct. 8, David Lescohier, TMM Pct. 11; Melissa Goff from the Selectman's office, and David Pantalone. On May 5<sup>th</sup>, committee members in attendance were Amy Hummel, Carla Benka, and Pam Lodish, as well as petitioner David Lescohier.

The Capital Subcommittee appreciates the fact that this article is timely, in-so-far-as Governor Baker signed Chapter 75 of the Acts of 2016 on April 11<sup>th</sup> regarding an issue the WA seeks to support – a raise in the caps of the state's solar energy net metering program.

Per the Boston AP: "Net metering allows homeowners, solar developers and municipal governments to sell excess power they generate back to the electrical grid in exchange for credit. Existing net metering caps have been reached in much of Massachusetts, stalling some solar projects. Under a compromise negotiated by lawmakers, residential and municipal projects will be reimbursed at the full retail rate while most commercial developers would be reimbursed at the less generous wholesale rate."

These new caps although a step forward, will also likely be reached soon; once they are, utilities are no longer be required to accept new participants (with the exception of residential participants.)

Utilities are pushing back on higher caps; the primary issues for them are their rate of return and the additional complexity of managing a growing and decentralized power-base compared to their previous, generally centralized base.

This resolution seeks to affirm that Brookline is committed to solar power as part of its energy mix, and asks the Town of Brookline to press for a more robust solar legislation in Massachusetts by sending this resolution and the warrant article's explanation to a variety of political and energy officials.

At the first public hearing, the subcommittee voted No Action, by a vote of 6-0. The committee was generally in support of the petitioner's goals, but took considerable issue with the lack of clarity and organization in the article as presented.

The committee has no recommendation on the version of the article before you tonight. The subcommittee lacked a quorum at the second subcommittee meeting.

The second iteration of the article was a stripped down version of the first, where the key elements of a robust solar program were listed, without the companion comments, along with the resolutions that Town Meeting urge the General Court to enact improved legislation supporting a robust solar program, AND that copies of the resolution and the explanation, be sent to the same of political and energy officials listed in the original article.

The committee appreciated that while the primary petitioner wasn't available, co-petitioner's/authors had worked in his absence to improve upon the article. Still, the reason and relevance to Brookline was missing.

After the second meeting, the committee received an third iteration of the article as well as the following whereas clause for consideration:

Whereas a discussion of net metering that merely advocates for extension of existing net metering policy and removal of caps does not address the long term inadequacies of the traditional physical and institutional system of fossil fuel-based centralized electricity production and distribution;