2019 03 26 Personnel Subcommittee Report on W.A. 29
Resolution to Encourage Brookline Town Meeting to Pursue
Representativeness Among its Membership

The Personnel Subcommittee of the Advisory Committee held a public hearing on
March 26, 2019 at 6:30 p.m. to consider Warrant Article 29: Resolution to
encourage Brookline Town Meeting to pursue representativeness among its
membership. In attendance were subcommittee members Janet Gelbart, Carol
Caro, Chuck Swartz, and Christine Westphal; petitioner Mariah Nobrega (AC,
TMM 4), and Kea van der Ziel (TMM 15).

Summary
Warrant Article 29 seeks to raise awareness among Town Meeting Members of
the disparity between the demographic make-up of Town Meeting and the Town
population overall, and to encourage outreach to underrepresented groups with
the goal of making Town Meeting more diverse. Town Meeting embodies
Brookline's geographic distribution, but this does not ensure representation of all
Brookline Protected Classes as defined in Article 3.14 of the Town bylaws. The
petitioner feels that since Town Meeting is often a source of participants for
appointment to Brookline boards, committees, and commissions, increasing the
diversity of TMMs should lead to more diverse representation on other Town
bodies. The subcommittee voted 4-0-0 to recommend favorable action on WA 29.

Discussion
The petitioner attended the Brookline Summit for Racial Equity, and crafted the
resolution in response to one of the seven priority areas identified by the
Brookline People of Color (POC) Coalition. There is no intent to remove any
current TMMs. Instead, TMMs are encouraged to proactively recruit more
diverse candidates as Town Meeting membership changes through attrition. This
means identifying groups that are underrepresented and actively inviting their
participation. It requires extensive outreach beyond the usual personal networks.
An example of such outreach is the Diversity, Inclusion, and Community
Relations department's pop-up meetings in Brookline Housing Authority
residences. W.A. 29 also encourages the Moderator to consider the inclusion of
Brookline Protected Classes when determining the order of speakers at Town
Meeting.

While supportive of the petitioner's intent, comments from the subcommittee
and general public focused on the difficulty of achieving the stated goals.
Contrary to the petitioner who sees Town Meeting as a feeder to Town
committees, one subcommittee member suggested that it might be easier to start
at the committee level because it does not require running for office. Since
incumbency is a huge factor in electability, it was suggested that TMMs who were
not planning to stand for re-election resign before completing their terms so that
more diverse candidates could be caucused in. Though not mentioned in the
warrant article, the subcommittee suggested that the Select Board should be
couraged to consider diversity when it appoints committees and commissions.
Diversity should also be considered when the Moderator makes appointments to the Advisory Committee, which must be staffed by at least one TMM from each precinct and can have up to 14 at-large members.

There are economic, cultural, and social network constraints which may limit participation by members of Brookline Protected Classes. For example, the DICR pop-ups have not been well attended potentially because of conflicts with second jobs or the need for child care. Mentorship was cited as one way to help recruits adjust to new roles. All agreed that passage of the resolution would be an important first step in a long and difficult process.

Vote
By a vote of 4-0-0, the subcommittee recommends favorable action on WA 29.