

## WA 17 Report on Public Hearing and Vote

The Human Services Subcommittee convened a public hearing at 6:30 p.m. on March 28, 2019 in Room 408 in Town Hall to consider WA 17. The meeting was duly posted. The article seeks to make changes in the composition of the Naming Public Facilities Review Committee (Section 6.8.2 of Town Bylaws), increasing the number of members from 5 to 7, including one standing member from the Commission for Diversity, Inclusion and Community Relations and another member at the discretion of the Select Board.

Present at the meeting were subcommittee members David-Marc Goldstein (TMM 8), Kim Smith (TMM 6), Claire Stampfer (TMM 5), and Ben Birnbaum (chair, AC AL). Also present were petitioner Neil Gordon (AC and TMM 1), Bobbi Knable (AC and TMM 10), Regina Frawley (TMM 16), and Justin Casanova-Davis, assistant town administrator.

### Background

The Naming Public Facilities Review Committee was established in 2005. Appointed by the Select Board, its five members are responsible for reviewing “all proposals for naming public facilities, with the exception of rooms and associated spaces under the jurisdiction of the School Committee and Library Trustees.” It offers its views to the Select Board. It is also empowered to “from time to time, initiate its own proposals for naming public facilities.” Naming authority, however, ultimately rests with Town Meeting.

Among its five members, the Naming Committee includes representatives from the Select Board, Advisory Committee, Parks and Recreation Commission, and Preservation Commission. It is called to attend to the following naming criteria:

- A person/organization of excellent reputation and character who/which has set an example of outstanding citizenship and/or has made an exemplary contribution of time, service, or resources to or on behalf of the community.
- A national noteworthy public figure or official.
- An event of historical or cultural significance.
- A significant donation or bequest, establishment of a trust, or other similar action.

The petitioner notes that the Naming Committee has met four times since August 2014—considering the naming of a field, two squares, a park, the “clock triangle” in Brookline Village, and, in April 2018, to hold a public hearing on renaming of the former Devotion School and “consideration” of renaming Washington Street.

### Discussion

The petitioner observed that, in view of contemporary sensibilities and issues, it would be appropriate to add to the Committee an individual with a Town-designated commitment to “honoring deserving individuals who are members of ‘Brookline protected classes,’” as these are designated in the Town’s bylaws.

One member of the public and one member of the Subcommittee voiced concern that WA 17 might be seen as a judgment on the work of the Naming Committee. The petitioner said that it was not his intent to offer a criticism, but to advance a “simple, straightforward” bylaw amendment that could benefit the Committee and Town in future. In favor of the WA, the argument was made that the appointment of a diversity advocate to a committee whose work would directly and publicly reflect professed community values seemed prudent, even if experience did not speak to its necessity.

### Vote

By a vote of 4-0, the Subcommittee recommended Favorable Action on Article 17.