

**2019 04 18 Personnel Subcommittee Report on W.A. 25-26
Appropriation of Funds for and Engagement of a Racial Equity
Review Consultant**

The Personnel Subcommittee of the Advisory Committee held a public hearing on April 18, 2019 at 7:00 p.m. to consider WA 25: Appropriation of funds for the advancement of racial equity in Brookline; and WA 26: Resolution pertaining to the engagement of a race and equity review consultant. In attendance were subcommittee members Janet Gelbart, Carol Caro, Chuck Swartz, and Christine Westphal; petitioners Deborah Brown, Michael Sandman (AC, TMM 3), and Susan Wolf Ditkoff; Deputy Town Administrator Melissa Goff; Chief Diversity Officer Lloyd Gellineau; and members of the general public Steve Vogel, Colin Stokes, and Joanna Baker (TMM 13).

Summary

Warrant Article 25 asks the Town to appropriate up to \$250,000 to engage an outside consultant to conduct a comprehensive race and equity review of all Town departments and make recommendations to advance racial equity in Brookline, with funding for implementing those recommendations to be included in the 2021 budget. Prior to the public hearing, Town Administrator Mel Kleckner identified, and the Select Board approved, \$150,000 from the Boston Athletic Association (BAA) Trust Fund to be used for this purpose. As a result, the petitioners indicated that they do not intend to move WA 25. The subcommittee recommends no action on WA 25 by a vote of 4-0-0.

Warrant Article 26 is a resolution which defines the terms of the consulting agreement referenced above. Under this article, the consultant would report jointly to the Town Administrator and Chief Diversity Officer and report back to Town Meeting by November 2019 with interim progress reports to the Select Board and Commission on Diversity Inclusion and Community Relations. The consultant will “undertake an independent, comprehensive review of practices and operations with respect to Equity Goals across all Town Departments.” Implementation of recommendations from the report will be incorporated into the 2021 budgeting process. The subcommittee recommends favorable action on WA 26 by a vote of 4-0-0.

Discussion

As outlined in Mr. Kleckner’s April 15 memo to the Select Board (attached), The BAA Trust Fund consists of annual contributions to the Town from the BAA in recognition of the Town’s costs in hosting the Boston Marathon. Use of the funds for a racial equity review consultant is consistent with the terms and spirit of the Fund. Release of the funds requires approval by the Select Board and was voted at its April 16th meeting. No further action from Town Meeting is required. Mr. Kleckner made a commitment to develop a supplemental budget for the November Special Town Meeting if additional funding is necessary.

Most of the discussion at the public hearing focused on WA 26. Issues raised included the relationship between the consultant and GARE, participation by the school department, and concerns that there be appropriate follow-through. One subcommittee member voiced disappointment with the Town's implementation of GARE to date and questioned whether hiring another consultant would lead to substantive action.

Petitioners indicated that the GARE initiative has been an unfunded mandate without the resources to succeed. They feel a consultant can pull together the separate projects undertaken in various departments so that Town resources can be put to their highest and best use. Because the consultant will be working within the GARE framework, there will be community involvement throughout the process.

Initially, the consultant will conduct a comprehensive survey of all town employees to determine a baseline of attitudes and concerns, and delineate the tools the Town already has to address these issues. For example, the strategies and tactics in the police department's crisis intervention program might be applicable to other situations. The ultimate goal is to imbed consciousness of racial equity into all Town operations rather than regard equity issues as just an extra box to be checked in the hiring process.

By incorporating best practices, training, and analytic tools into a holistic, data-driven approach, the process will generate implementable plans for which the Town can be held accountable. The role of the independent consultant is to hold up a mirror to show us where we really are and not just focus on training and head counts that don't produce meaningful change. Brookline should be proactive in resolving underlying equity issues instead of remaining reactive to lawsuits and individual violations of policy.

The school department will be participating in the process as both an insider and outsider. Under the 2018 override, the school department created the full-time position of Senior Director of Educational Equity and is further along than Town departments in addressing equity concerns. By joining with Town department heads at monthly meetings, school staff will be able to share their experiences and learning, but they will not be part of the consultant's review.

The Town Administrator's commitment to the project is evidenced by his finding the funds to get it started. He will utilize his monthly department head meetings as a forum for all voices to be heard and learning shared. Steve Vogel, who initiated the resolution that led to the Town's membership in GARE, indicated that GARE began in Seattle when the Mayor made racial equity a priority. That provided the capacity for his staff to follow through. Deputy Town Administrator Melissa Goff reported that department heads have responded favorably to the proposal and are looking forward to concrete results that can begin to be implemented through the 2021 budget process.

Lloyd Gellineau anticipates that the outcome of the project will be a master plan to guide the Town's racial equity efforts going forward. He concurred with the petitioners that his department has not had the bandwidth to take full advantage of what GARE has to offer. The consultancy is not meant to supplant GARE, but to partner with GARE and the Town to create an effective racial equity action plan.

Vote

By a vote of 4-0-0, the subcommittee recommends no action of WA 25.

By a vote of 4-0-0, with specific reference to the Town Administrator's memo to the Select Board dated 4/15/2019, the subcommittee recommends favorable action on WA 26.