

**Town of Brookline  
Advisory Committee Minutes**

Sean Lynn-Jones, Chair

Date: May 28, 2019

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**Present:** Carla Benka, Ben Birnbaum, Cliff Brown, Carol Caro, John Doggett, Dennis Doughty, Harry Friedman, Janet Gelbart, David-Marc Goldstein, Neil Gordon, Susan Granoff, Amy Hummel, Janice S. Kahn, Steve Kanes, Bobbie Knable, Carol Levin, David Lescohier, Pamela Lodish, Sean Lynn-Jones, Mariah Nobrega, Michael Sandman, Lee L. Selwyn, Kim Smith, Claire Stampfer, Charles Swartz, John VanScoyoc, Christine Westphal,

**Absent:** Alisa G. Jonas, Stanley L. Spiegel, Kelly Hardebeck

**Also attending:** Melissa Goff, Deputy Town Administrator; Arthur Conquest, TMM 6; Neil Wishinsky and Ranch Kimball representing the Newbury College Acquisition Advisory Committee

The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

**AGENDA**

1. Review and possible vote on Article 10: Newbury College

Neil introduced Ranch – been through one of these as chair of board of Wheelock College as they ultimately merged with BU. Committee had 11 members, Paul Saner brought a banker’s perspective, Bobbie represented AC, etc.

Neil gave an update on the work of the Newbury College Acquisition Advisory Committee.

Debt exclusion contingency could have been an issue.

Went through an arduous bid process with as few contingencies as possible and submitted three bids over the course of the process.

Learned on Wednesday we are not the highest bidder and we don’t know who the buyer is. This is a large complicated real estate deal and it isn’t over until it is over. We have informed all involved that we are willing and able to talk to any perspective buyer and we are interested in participating in the deal.

This is still ongoing. We made a conscious decision to go public with our process and share it with Town Meeting.

**QUESTIONS**

Q: Would an educational institutional outside the US be eligible for DOVER? A: It is possible but not terribly likely.

Q: Will there be any statement about a potential eminent domain taking? A: No

Q: Is there any info on Newbury’s timetable for negotiating the P&S? A: They want to cease to exist legally by September with written approval by the Attorney General.

Q: Two tools in our favor are eminent domain and zoning – two tools in our favor – can’t regulate zoning if a DOVER? A: Our hands are tied.

Q: After they dissolve what happens to the student records? A: Teach out function – students records held by another institution voluntarily for the natural lives of those students. The host school is sometimes paid a fee by the dissolving college.

Q: To what extent did previous position influence the amount of money the Town is prepared to pay for the property? A: We had valuations, various uses of the property and we felt we made a fair bid irrespective of the use. Knowing going into the process we were not making any determination as to potential use other than on the west side potentially as a BEEP center.

Q: Does it follow that the Town is next in line if the first deal falls through? A: They know we don't have cash in pocket and yes, we may not be next in line.

Q: Do we know where in the pecking order of bids we were? A: We don't know what the bids were. We know we weren't highest and we believe we weren't second highest.

Q: If decision to proceed with ED process, how would we pay for it? A: We would need a debt exclusion override.

Q: Is the committee recommending to the Select Board a motion under Article 10? A: No motion just a report from Ranch.

Ranch noted that we are going to keep the Newbury Committee active because things are not final.

Q: What happens to the proceeds of the sale? A: They have debts to contractors and vendors, personnel costs, bank loans. Leftover is the corpus and must be given to another charity in your state with approval from the Attorney General.

Q: Is there any sense of the total liability load that they had on their books? A: They will have some cash leftover.

Q: Can the leftover go to a municipality in lieu of a charity? A: It is possible and we have suggested this but there hasn't been a nibble.

Q: Perhaps a fool's errand if we needed a debt exclusion to get it but no time to get the debt exclusion, what was the point? A: Under two of our offers, the Town could have been able to buy under certain scenarios.

We could have delivered a debt exclusion vote if they had been more responsive. We operated inside their cycle time in order to have a successful bid. We operated swiftly and nimbly.

Q: What was the process? Back and forth, multiple offers? A: There are no negotiations. Submit bids, get feedback and you are either in or you are out. We understand they are negotiating a P&S with someone else so reluctant to say anything more until the process plays out.

Q: If P&S falls through, will they reopen the bidding? A: Would be up to the Attorney General.

2. Possible reconsideration, further review, and votes on the Committee's recommendations on other Warrant Articles for the 2019 Annual Town Meeting - Article 26: Amendment offered by Arthur Conquest

Arthur addressed the Advisory Committee – wants to see change so the Town doesn't have to see ugly incidents like Dr. Mims here at the high school. Teacher for 18 years; he applies for headmaster but loses out to one of his students. What about Al Fortune? He could have been a great headmaster of Brookline High School. We have to turn that corner and we are headed in that direction. Great we have a black man that heads the Select Board and some department heads but I want to see more. I think it is possible. And I don't think I should be seen as an "angry black man" because I want to see these things. What has GARE done for these past two years and I don't think it is enough. I would like to see more being done. How it happens I am not ready to say yet. Want to put something in motion and see that happen in a positive way. One way we can do this is to study where we have been and where we are going. You have moved a little further in my direction as I learned earlier this afternoon after discussion with Ms. Brown. But you can do better.

The Chair invited one of the petitioners, Deborah Brown, to address the amendment. She noted that the Warrant Article wasn't intended to be a be all and end all and so they began to develop a scope of work. They recognized the need for action but not so fast that they overlook some basics. She said, we believe we are in a position to move forward and this won't be GARE 2.0 – in fact, she thinks it is stronger than that.

Q: Can you summarize your amendment and what it hopes to accomplish? A: It would have given me some time to look deeper into what the program is that they are bringing forward and I would have had an opportunity to question some of the things being proposed and that are happening – like white people challenging racism, or why we haven't been able to get figures from Mariela Ames's warrant article of a number of years ago.

When Brook House was built, Irish tenements taken down – did you bring GARE in? When Jews came from Mattapan to Brookline, did you bring GARE in? Many things I disagree with that are not included in WA 26 but are still out there. I don't need white people challenging racism when I can speak for myself; I don't need anyone to do for me either, I can do for myself.

Why are we starting with another consultant when we haven't done a bunch of things we agreed to as far back as 2010?

Q: What has Lloyd Gellineau said about the effectiveness or not of GARE? A: Diversity Commission has fallen far short.

The RFP includes a review of what we have done or not done in the past. There haven't been any specific results and that is why this is coming forward. Professional external view of where we are and where we haven't fulfilled the aspirations of the Town.

We don't need another report that sits on a shelf. The kinds of things talked about in the amendment require action and I hope that is taken seriously.

Janet Gelbart noted that during the subcommittee hearing, Lloyd Gellineau suggested that GARE hasn't gone far because he hasn't had the resources and hope that this consultant would assist.

Q: Are you looking for a master plan and would this be more effectively brought about through a committee of Town residents rather than a consultant? A: Just don't want to have the process and activities being so Euro-centric. Give me a program STEPS to Success, Hidden Brookline, - name one of these programs that is headed by a black person –

Q: The motion you are offering will delay any kind of report for a year or longer – because what will have to be done is to determine if there is a need for a consultant. Is that your intention? A: No I wrote it before I knew what I now know from Deborah Brown.

The Article as drafted is outcome driven and focused on efficiencies of time and scale and has a comprehensive community involvement piece that includes community members and elected officials.

Arthur suggested he would not be moving his motion so no further action was taken.

There being no further business, the meeting ADJOURNED at 7:00 p.m.

ARTICLE 26

**MOTION OFFERED BY ARTHUR WELLINGTON CONQUEST III, TMM6**

VOTED to amend the main motion under Article 26 by adding the following at the end of the last paragraph thereof: “; provided, however, that prior to engaging such a third-party consultant, the efficacy and advisability of such an undertaking shall be considered by a moderator’s committee which shall (a) undertake a comprehensive evaluation of the efficacy of similar projects that have been undertaken by the Town in the past, including, but not limited to, the Report of the Committee on Urban Responsibilities (1969), the Report of Selectmen’s Subcommittee on Police and Community Relations (1987), the Annual Report on Workforce Diversity and Inclusion (2011, 2012, 2013), (b) determine whether the engagement of a consultant in accordance with this vote is advisable, appropriate, useful and in the best interests of the Town, and (c) report its findings and determinations, which may but need not include its recommendation concerning an appropriate consultant, to Town Meeting no later than the date of the 2020 Annual Town Meeting. In the absence of an affirmative report from such committee, to the effect that the engagements of a consultant as provided in this vote is advisable, appropriate, useful and in the best interests of the Town, no further action shall be taken pursuant to this vote.”

**Explanation**

Brookline has been orbiting in slow motion the issue of Race, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Human and Community Relations, and Social Justice since I moved to the community in the fall of 1982. My very first day in Brookline I was invited to attend a Black Achievement Committee meeting at Brookline High School. Fast forward to 2010, Town Meeting passed Resolution #17 which included the following statement: “Acknowledging that Dr. King’s message and dream are still alive today, the Town should offer a report on the diversity progress of its different departments.” The Resolution stated further: “Town Meeting urges the Board of Selectmen to ... Establish an Annual Progress Report on Diversity that will be presented each year during the celebration ceremonies.” What exactly has the Town’s commitment been regarding its follow through on this resolution as it pertains to combating racism? Many would assert that it’s been lackadaisical and sloppy at best!

In October 2010 the Town of Brookline joined the Commonwealth Compact, a collaboration of institutions of higher learning, as well as for profit and not for profit organizations. “The Compact’s goal is to make the State of Massachusetts a location of choice for people of Color and women in the belief that their contributions are vital to the region’s social and economic future.” So how has the Town of Brookline benefited from its membership with this Compact? What are the specifics in terms of numbers of increases of Blacks, Latinxs, Asians and People of Color in the Town’s workforce? What are the funds required for membership in the Compact?

In 2015, Town Meeting passed Warrant Article #18 filed by Ruthann Sneider, (the late) Merelice, and myself – I was the invisible participant -- by a vote of 155 in favor, 3 opposed and 6 abstentions that said the following: “Despite the Town’s efforts, the racial makeup of the Town’s workforce, particularly employees who are Black, Hispanic-Latino/a, Asian, American Indian, and other people of color, does not reflect the racial make-up and availability of workers in the metropolitan Boston region, comprised of the Counties of Norfolk, Suffolk, and Middlesex (‘Metro Boston.’), from which the Brookline workforce is drawn.”

In 2017, Town Meeting passed almost unanimously – with an objection of one member, yours truly -- Resolution #22, which allocated “\$10,000” to the Government Alliance on Race and Equality Community Group (GARE). What has GARE accomplished since 2017 in Brookline to implement its program(s)?

But during that same Town Meeting I posed the following question about Warrant Article #18, which was passed in 2015: “Last Spring, Ruthann Sneider, Merelice and myself...filed a Resolution at Town Meeting which passed overwhelmingly that supposedly would increase the number of Black, Latinx and People of Color in the Town’s workforce. How may I ask has that initiative progress?” The School Committee had not since Warrant Article #18 was passed by Town Meeting in 2015 taken any steps towards voting on the measure. But also, what steps had the Diversity and Inclusion Committee taken? Zero!

More recently, 2019 a course has been offered through the Brookline Adult and Community Education Program entitled “White People Challenging Racism, Moving from Talk to Action”. This course has been taught by White people only. What exactly do White people know about “Racism,” what they’ve read in books or newspapers, seen in movies, on TV screens – e.g. Mississippi Burning or In The Heat of the Night? And if they’re unable to experience “Racism” then how can they “Move from talk to Action”? What’s really at play in the Town of Brookline is White people controlling the overall discussion, direction, and their interpretation of the solutions to the problem of racism from a White perspective, which often is opaque and deluded!

For half a century now the Town of Brookline has been stuck in climate of institutional racism, white supremacy, and its brand of apartheid lite. The Town, however, is running out of options. Warrant Articles #26 will take the Town of Brookline absolutely nowhere. We are set to shovel the funds being requested into a furnace during the month of February, which would possibly make far better use of those funds. Quite frankly, there needs to be a whole restructuring of goals and objectives as they relate to institutions in Brookline that must be examined and rectified.

The Moderator’s Committee being proposed will be charged with uncovering exactly why Brookline is still mired in the disease of Institutional Racism, and why it hasn’t been unable to extricate itself from it, and where its energy and finances to achieve meaningful and lasting outcomes should be directed. In short, there needs to be a town-wide master plan

that would include representation of thoughts and input from the left, right, radical, conservative, and center political forces.

Finally, only a fool would claim that there hasn't been some racial progress in Brookline: A Black man is chair of the Select Board; the Town just elected its first Latinx to the Select Board; there are two Blacks who presently head departments in Town Government; there are three Black females serving as assistant superintendents in the Public Schools of Brookline, to name just three of the significant advances that have come about over the past couple of years. But pay a visit to the School Department's central administration offices on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor at Town Hall and there isn't a single Black male to be found. The same is true for the central administration at Brookline High School. How many of the outside vendors or contractors the Town does business with are Black, Latinx and or People of Color? And how many Black, Latinx, Asian, or people of color journeyman will be working on the renovation of Brookline High School this summer coming? We need to cease being whimsical, neo-liberal, and in some cases outright disingenuous. There's still room for Dr. Martin Luther King's Dream to be fulfilled here in Brookline.