

BROOKLINE ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
Administration and Finance Subcommittee

**Report on Article 29: Resolution pertaining to an Economic-Equity Advancement Fund**

The Administration and Finance subcommittee of the Advisory Committee held a public hearing on Warrant Article 29, EEOF/Marijuana, beginning at 8:00AM on September 23, 2019 in Room 111 of Brookline Town Hall.

In attendance were subcommittee chair Dennis Doughty, subcommittee member Neil Gordon, petitioner Donelle S. O'Neal Sr., Deputy Town Administrator Melissa Goff, Deborah Brown (TMM1), Meredith Mooney (SBDC), and members of the public: Taina Millsap, Eloisa de Fandis, Diti Kohii, and Jennifer Dopazo Gilbert (attorney for NETA).

The petitioner brought this warrant article because despite significant revenues coming to the Town from marijuana dispensaries, there are nonetheless no programs for the economic advancement of minorities and women, and, in particular, in assisting them in starting or expanding businesses in Brookline. From the petitioner's point of view, marijuana dispensaries can afford a voluntary additional payment and would be "happy" to do it.

Petitioner proposes requesting voluntary contributions from marijuana dispensaries in Brookline, and having the Brookline Community Foundation appropriate such funds, in collaboration with the Town's Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Community Relations.

The subcommittee members present stated that they were in agreement with the stated objectives of the warrant article. Ms. Gilbert also agreed with the objective of an economically level playing field.

There was considerable discussion of how the actual process of soliciting voluntary contributions and managing appropriation would work, and what the roles of the various parties would be.

A question was raised as to whether funds under the Town's control could be earmarked based on factors such as race or gender.

A question was raised as to whether the Town had sufficient staff resources to manage this program, which led to discussion on whether an organization that's independent of the Town might solicit and distribute funds, without direct Town involvement.

One subcommittee member suggested that the subject matter of Article 29 be referred to the Town's recently formed Small Business Development Committee, and that it be done so with a specific charge to that committee to review a program with warrant

article 29's stated objectives, i.e., broadly, (i) raise voluntary contributions from the Brookline business community, and (ii) disburse those funds to qualified applicants.

There was consensus that Neil Gordon and the petitioner would work together to draft an appropriate resolution in the form of a substitute motion. That motion would be either presented to the A&F subcommittee for a recommendation, or presented along with this report to the full Advisory Committee. The fruits of those labors are attached; no subcommittee debate or vote has been held.

Article 29 – Neil and Donelle substitute motion

Whereas, the Town of Brookline endeavors to bring about equitable opportunities in all aspects of life within the town; and

Whereas, there is, more specifically, a strong desire by the Town to bring about racial and gender equity, an essential element of which is economic equity; and

Whereas, there are positive steps that can be to begin to bring about such economic equity; and

Whereas, businesses in Brookline may be willing to provide funding for projects and programs to achieve such ends; and

Whereas, commitments made pursuant to host community agreements with marijuana dispensaries do not specifically include funding or support for minority and/or female owned businesses; and

Whereas, a dedicated fund to help minority and women owned businesses establish themselves in Brookline would, at least in part, offset the shortcomings of the host community agreements; and

Whereas, such fund could help assure equal and equitable opportunities for underserved residents of Brookline;

Now, Therefore, be it resolved, that it is the will of Town Meeting that the subject matter of this Warrant Article be referred to the Town’s Small Business Development Committee; and

That such committee explore the feasibility of establishing a fund and soliciting and obtaining donations from, inter alia, Brookline businesses; and

That such committee further explore the feasibility of using such funds to provide grants and/or loans to underserved residents of Brookline to assist them in establishing or expanding minority and/or women owned businesses in Brookline; and

That the Small Business Development Committee work with the Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Community Relations in order to best achieve the objectives of this Warrant Article; and

That the Small Business Development Committee conclude its work and report to Town Meeting no later than \_\_\_\_\_.