

**Town of Brookline  
Advisory Committee Minutes DRAFT**

**October 1, 2019**

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**Present:** Vice-chair Carla Benka, Ben Birnbaum, Harry Bohrs, Clifford Brown, Carol Caro, John Doggett, Dennis Doughty, Harry Friedman, Janet Gelbart, David-Marc Goldstein, Neil Gordon, Susan Granoff, Amy Hummel, Alisa Jonas, Janice Kahn, Steve Kanes, Bobbie Knable, David Lescohier, Pamela Lodish, Mariah Nobrega, Carlos Ridruejo, Chair Michael Sandman, Lee Selwyn, Kim Smith, Charles Swartz, John VanScoyoc, Christine Westphal, Neil Wishinsky

**Absent:** Carol Levine

**By Phone:** Claire Stampfer

**Also Attending:** Assistant Town Administrator Justin Casanova-Davis, Petitioners for Warrant Article 26 Deborah Brown and Anne Greenwald, Petitioner for Warrant Article 27 Larry Ruttman and TMM Precinct 9, former School Committee Member and former Devotion Parent Joyce Jozwicki.

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM and made the following announcement:

Pursuant to this Board’s Authority under 940 CMR 29.10 (8), Advisory Committee member Stampfer will be participating remotely via telephone due to geographic distance. I have reviewed the requirements of the regulations. There is a quorum physically present and all votes taken will be recorded by roll call. Advisory Committee member Stampfer will be allowed to vote.

**7:30 pm WA 11 – Authorization for the termination and relocation of certain sewer and drainage easements at Kerrigan Place. (DPW)**

Harry Friedman provided an overview of the Capital Subcommittee’s consideration of Article 11, the details of which are captured thoroughly in the subcommittee report. The subcommittee voted unanimously to recommend favorable action.

A **MOTION** was made and seconded for favorable action on Warrant Article 11. By a **VOTE** of 25 in favor, none opposed and no abstentions, the Advisory Committee voted favorable action on Warrant Article 11.

BENKA	Yes	GORDON	Yes	NOBREGA	Yes
BIRNBAUM	Yes	GRANOFF	Yes	RIDRUEJO	Yes
BOHRS	Yes	HUMMEL	Absent	SANDMAN	---
BROWN	Yes	JONAS	Yes	SELWYN	Yes
CARO	Yes	KAHN	Yes	SMITH	Yes
DOGGETT	Yes	KANES	Yes	STAMPFER	Yes
DOUGHTY	Yes	KNABLE	---	SWARTZ	Yes
FRIEDMAN	Yes	LESCOHIER	Yes	VANSCOYOC	---

GELBART	Yes	LEVIN	Absent	WESTPHAL	Yes
GOLDSTEIN	Yes	LODISH	Yes	WISHINSKY	Yes

**7:45 pm WA 30 – Adoption of a new General By-Law pertaining to the establishment of a Brookline Community Engagement Plan (Brown, TMM1, et al)**

Janet Gelbart provided an overview of the Personnel Subcommittee consideration of WA 30 and highlighted some public comments.

A community engagement plan would provide Town government with a template to solicit input, keep participants engaged, and publicize decisions and the rationale behind them. Many communities have instituted such plans, and the MAPC can provide a framework so the Town is not recreating the wheel. The proposed by-law includes provisions for measuring effective outreach and evaluating and updating the plan annually.

This is envisioned to simplify what people do already but some not as well as others. The subcommittee voted 2-1-0 for favorable action on WA 30.

Petitioner Mariah Nobrega shared a presentation on the benefits of the Community Engagement Plan, evaluation of same, and impact on resources (attached at the end of these minutes).

**Questions and Comments**

Q: How is this plan similar to or different from other communities? What have been some specific results? How are you defining community for the purpose of the article?

A: We don't know because the plan hasn't been developed yet; that work will be done following approval of the article. Tangible results in the construction context, saving millions of dollars; Health and Human Services in LA how community outreach to low income and infirm people helped lower health care costs because folks went to primary care rather than use emergency services. Community Engagement plan is broader than residents. Assume it is part of the by-laws, community refers to Brookline. Lots of different groups doing outreach to the people we serve to understand what they want. This will provide a blue print for us all to use. What people want to know, where they can find it, and how we can just improve engagement overall. There is too much miscommunication, cross-communication, misinformation – and angry people who don't feel listened to or don't know how to be included in town government.

Dissenting opinion – evaluation process for Town Employees would require a level of recordkeeping that would be costly and cumbersome. Making this part of people's yearly evaluation and retention means each Department would need resources to maintain these records. How is satisfaction and engagement measured?

Janice K: I like the idea but have two examples where information and greater engagement doesn't necessarily follow:

Newton has a director of community engagement and inclusion – provisionally approved a license for recreational marijuana distributor three blocks from my house. So they may have this role but they

made no effort to engage abutters. Having someone in that role doesn't guarantee you will have community engagement.

79 meetings related to the 9<sup>th</sup> School but not one in the precinct where the school is located.

Steve K: Q: How does this work? Does it inform people about the Warrant Article process?

What if for the warrant instead of having it posted and explanations in one, articles in another – resource where we could cut and paste on one page and relevant meetings are posted.

Q: How would someone in Town get that information? A: We don't know because we don't have a plan yet? Could we have precinct specific list servs?

Neil W: Q: "The CEP will apply to (Section 5) ...." What does that mean? A: If you are in a department you should be doing what the CEP requires.

Q: Could things be invalidated if some part or step was missed, does the action become invalid. A: There is no enforcement but failing to comply with the bylaw would invalidate the action.

Language related to community engagement is imbedded in the language for several Town departments already.

Susan G: Q: Who will be approving various aspects of the plan? Will we have opportunities to test run and revisit if they prove impractical? Many committees are run by volunteers not being paid and have other time pressures. There is not very much support for smaller committees, so if there is great burden being placed on them – the Town needs to budget for help otherwise you will not have people volunteering but have inadvertent mistakes made by unqualified people. Town has a responsibility to provide guidance for committee chairs if requirements are more extensive than currently required. This could be an excellent first step but I also don't think we know why people are not engaged. Many people in the Town may just not have spare time and until a decision is made that they disagree with they don't pay attention.

Carol C: Q: Why do we think setting this up will make a difference? We have Notify Me and you can sign up and get all sorts of information. How are we going to get the folks who don't know anything about anything to sign up and take advantage of what is available? All sorts of information available out there and you can subscribe to these things, go to the library and ask librarian for all documents that are relevant to one's precinct.

The co-petitioners noted that there is no plan in place yet so no purpose to tear it down or hold it up.

Carla: Q: How can we vote to make the plan part of our by-laws if we haven't seen the plan? There are potential costs. For example, if there are people for whom English is not their native language and they want to attend a meeting, could they request a translator at a meeting? We can provide that now, but it's not mandatory. If it were in the bylaw we would be required to do it and that would incur a cost. I don't think we should raise expectations only to find out that we can't fill them because we haven't

thought things through. We can't think through the implementation of a plan and what implementation will cost if we don't know what the plan is.

David L: What sort of person would we hire to coordinate or to do it? We need someone who is able to tap into existing resources and create an organized and unified front.

This warrant article won't do that.

Carlos R: This is something that has to happen both ways, you can put information out there but if people don't want to receive it they won't receive it. Some people are unaware that Town Meeting is coming up and it has nothing to do with economic levels, they are just not interested. But I do think that we do need to find creative ways to bring people in – make things graphically simple and you need to hire people who know how to simplify difficult language and create imagery. Perhaps a small department would be charged with doing this.

Cliff B: Sounds like a great idea. When I get calls from folks who are constituents who talk about something and you share more details with them and they have no idea what is going on. If we are going to obligate the Town to do something we need a budget for it. This is potentially going to have much broader expense attached to it and without understanding that we are not doing our job. In a zero sum budget environment if this requires funding it has to come from somewhere else and we need to know that before going to Town Meeting.

John V: Agree with all concerns but if you see who actually attended this hearing, you can see an example of what the petitioners are pointing out. How do we get people to come to their meetings or hearings? Until people are upset about something they don't go to a meeting.

Neil G: Committee to look at electronic communication – finally set up but yet to meet. If we make this a bylaw we are setting ourselves up to fail; we might get there faster another way.

Mariah: An international best practice for all public sectors, the fact that we don't have this is what is upsetting. Many things are already enshrined by law- reasonable accommodations. Why a bylaw? Because otherwise it won't get done. No unfunded mandate and Town staff have discretion to make it as onerous or not and revisit it regularly. If Town Meeting supports this it demonstrates that it is a priority and needs to be funded appropriately.

This is not one size fits all. We are lucky as a Town that our failure to have community engagement hasn't cost us money.

A **MOTION** was made and seconded to recommend favorable action on the Article 30.

A **SUBSTITUTE MOTION** was made and seconded to refer the subject matter DICR to create a draft CEP to look at other examples, and analyze budget requirements and process, and report back at fall 2020.

By a roll call **VOTE** with 17 in favor, 9 opposed and no abstentions the Advisory Committee recommends favorable action on the substitute motion.

By a roll call **VOTE** with 18 in favor, 6 opposed and 2 abstentions the Advisory Committee recommends favorable action

VOTED:

To refer the subject matter of Article 30 to the Commission for Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Relations (CDICR) to create a draft Committee Engagement Plan (CEP) and analyze other communities CEPs, analyze the budget requirements and process, and report back to the Fall 2020 Town Meeting.

BENKA	Yes/Yes	GORDON	Yes/Yes	NOBREGA	No/No
BIRNBAUM	No/No	GRANOFF	Yes/Yes	RIDRUEJO	Yes/Yes
BOHRS	Yes/Yes	HUMMEL	Absent	SANDMAN	----
BROWN	No/Abstain	JONAS	Yes/Yes	SELWYN	Yes/Yes
CARO	No/No	KAHN	Yes/Yes	SMITH	No/No
DOGGETT	Yes/Yes	KANES	No/No	STAMPFER	Yes/Yes
DOUGHTY	Yes/Yes	KNABLE	Yes/Yes	SWARTZ	Yes/Yes
FRIEDMAN	Yes/Yes	LESCOCHIER	No/No	VANSCOYOC	Yes/Yes
GELBART	No/No	LEVIN	Absent	WESTPHAL	Yes/Yes
GOLDSTEIN	Yes/Yes	LODISH	No/Abstain	WISHINSKY	No/No

**8:25 pm WA 26 – Rename the Coolidge Corner School the “Florida Ruffin Ridley School” (School Committee, Deborah Brown, Anne Greenwald, Maya Norton)**

**8:45 pm WA 27 – Rename the Coolidge Corner School the “Ethel Weiss School” (Larry Ruttman)**

**9:05 pm WA 28 – Rename the Coolidge Corner School the “Robert I. Sperber School” (Lee Selwyn, TMM13)**

The Chair gave some historic context for the renaming articles and guidelines on how to proceed.

Cliff Brown offered a summary of the Schools Subcommittee deliberations on Warrant Articles 26, 27, 28. The subcommittee met – outlined who the petitioners are for each article. They had a very extensive public hearing and period of comment. A motion was made following public comment and a motion was made and substitute motion was made for no recommendation and was passed. The subcommittee voted on each 4-1 for no recommendation. This is something Town Meeting will decide by itself and there does not seem to be much that the subcommittee or the full Advisory Committee could say or do to influence this choice. We should listen but stay out of it.

Q: Has there been any inquiry into the cost of the name change? A: None that we are aware of and subcommittee didn’t do this. There are probably just exterior signage and some stationery.

Deborah Brown and Anne Greenwald, petitioners gave a brief presentation on behalf of Florida Ruffin and Anne shared a letter she wrote to the Advisory Committee. Both are available on the Document Center <https://www.brooklinema.gov/DocumentCenter/Index/1426>

Larry Ruttman petitioners spoke on behalf of Ethel Weiss. Mr. Ruttman highlighted some of the information that committee members already had in their packets and had been shared electronically and available on the Document Center <https://www.brooklinema.gov/DocumentCenter/Index/1426>

Joyce Jozwicki, TMM Precinct 9, former School Committee Member and former Devotion Parent offered some remarks about her experience driving a school bus and racism. There is not a single school in the state of Massachusetts named for a Jew. Shared what was on the principal's blog from the Devotion School <https://www.brookline.k12.ma.us/coolidgecorner> and statistics on the school's diversity <https://www.brookline.k12.ma.us/Page/216> and offered comments about Ethel Weiss' influence on the community.

"Over 76 years, thousands of children and their parents came to Irving's again and again. They left not only with a pair of Groucho glasses or a bag of M&Ms but more importantly with love, wisdom, kindness, and joy that was Ethel Weiss. They carried her wisdom in their hearts and minds, not just back into Devotion, but into Brookline, the state, the country and the world. Ethel Weiss was not only a simple of do what is right, she lived that, she taught that, and she shared that."

Lee Selwyn, Advisory Committee member, spoke on behalf of Bob Sperber and shared some thoughts about equality and diversity. Sperber was the Founder of the METCO program which is now over 50 years old. Over that span of time thousands of children have benefited. The school needs to be named after someone who was involved in this community.

Process here is important. What we saw here was anything but community engagement. There was a public offer to accept nominations from December to January. 33 of roughly 250 nominations were for John F. Kennedy who was a student at the Devotion School. Ethel Weiss came in number 2 which underscored her involvement in this community and this neighborhood. Most of the names on the list were ignored. The School Department appointed a screening committee, then the screened list were given to another group of kids who then arrived at a decision on the 15 names, of which 14 were people of color. Two petitioners you heard from earlier were the only ones who nominated Florida Ruffin Ridley – proponents of restorative justice. It appears that the kids only met with them but there was no opportunity for them to meet with anyone else representing anyone else.

What if someone held a political viewpoint and invited kids to meet with them but then the kids were never were allowed the opportunity to meet with anyone with differing viewpoints? Find it offensive that the list was limited to a group of only one particular ethnicity and the focus was on restorative justice. All of this discussion and deliberation were held behind closed door and the process was unfair and potentially even unlawful. I will offer motions which will put this process on hold and result in a more open process with less ethnic bias.

Q: How did the list of over 225-250 names get narrowed down to 15? A: No one knows – some question as to the rubric used. Suzanne Federspiel, Vice Chair, School Committee arrived to provide some clarity

about the decision-making process. Students whittled it down to 15 then had public hearings and presentations – students were in charge of each one of the 15, there were posters and answered questions. Then they brought that down to 4, which were brought to the School Committee.

Janet spoke to the process. In May of 2018 Deborah put forth a WA to change the name of Devotion and there was a lot of pushback but this committee – we have a responsibility to remind Town Meeting of what they did before. Process is important otherwise we would have voted directly to change Devotion in 2018.

Steve agrees with both Cliff and Janet that anyone on the table would be an excellent choice but doesn't think we can add anything to add to the selection.

Claire noted that she will vote for FA for WA 26. Her comments follow.

"I will vote for favorable action for Article 26 to rename the Coolidge Corner School the Florida Ruffin Ridley School.

In 2018 Town Meeting passed a resolution presented by Anne Greenwald and Deborah Brown to remove the name the Devotion School because Edward Devotion was a slave owner. After he died he left funds from his estate to build a school in Brookline. His estate contained as property an enslaved black man whose name we do not even know. Thus the need to rename this school results from the presence of the institution of race based slavery in Brookline. This discussion is about race. Thus I do agree with the committee that we should name this beautiful state of the art school after the former Brookline resident and black woman, Florida Ruffin Ridley, whose name most of us have just learned and whose life was exemplary in the promotion of social justice and education. This is a public step that Brookline can take to acknowledge a past in which people's humanity was denied on the basis of black race and to move towards a future in which all persons' human rights are fully and universally acknowledged.

We are fortunate in Brookline to have many persons to honor. We should honor Ethel Weiss and Robert Sperber in another way. Supporting the naming of this new school as the Florida Ruffin Ridley School honors the volunteer work of members of our community including students who evaluated many accomplished persons and settled on her name, honors the social justice work of MS Ridley, and faces Brookline squarely with the immense work we need to do now, as a community and as individuals, to be a town which embodies racial justice and human rights."

Janice feel we should keep the Coolidge Corner School name – name rooms and playgrounds for many notable people and let kids learn about the broad range of contributions of people from the Town and not just one.

Harry said he is torn because any of these three people are perfectly fine. Reminded of what we did a few years ago to name a Cypress field for Tom Hennessey. Parks Commission said they required a

person to have a connection to the parks. Naming Committee agreed. Two months later came back to Naming and were told Parks approved because they discovered when he was on Board of Selectman he voted to give money to the parks. Now named Hennessey Field at Cypress. Process disappointing and lacking in openness. Just because there was a process doesn't mean it needs to be followed if it was inadequate.

Christine spoke against renaming the Devotion School and cautioned against picking one thing out of one person's life regardless of the times or the consequences and judging them by that one thing. There is a need for some social justice correction particularly around issues of race. This renaming process is crap. Asked kids to volunteer, set criteria and then changed the criteria – will support WA 26 because for many people it will matter. While Bob Sperber was a great guy and Ethel Weiss was a lovely person – if you want to name rooms in schools for those people, fine. But we must take an action – will it matter in 20 years, just like we have no idea what Lincoln the Lincoln schools is named after. Important statement.

Bobbie supports the naming to Florida Ruffin Ridley. Recognized the effect of having a school named after someone who owned people was deleterious. Opportunity to recognize a woman who worked on issues of change – give kids a sense of continuity of their history which long preceded the civil rights movement, giving the example that they can also be part of a change. Not that the other candidates don't deserve recognition and we should find ways to acknowledge their contributions to the Town also. It is important however to recognize Florida Ruffin Ridley, her history and contributions, given the absence of history of blacks until much too late.

Chuck commented that Bobbie's comments were very moving and compelling but process still seems somewhat clouded. Like idea keeping it Coolidge Corner School and naming rooms. What is the hurry, why not hold off. What about naming opportunity at the 9<sup>th</sup> school?

Cliff reiterated that a motion of no recommendation is not a reflection on what we may feel about any of the candidates.

Ben asked why if we have a position or favorite, why wouldn't we just vote for that person.

Cliff asked whether we are providing any valuable input to Town Meeting – don't think so, and offering a recommendation that would be based more on opinion rather than factual findings potentially detracts from when we do have findings and when our recommendation on a particular issue is based on research and findings.

TA recommendation would be our opinion, as opposed to the warrant articles that require our research and on which we offer our findings.

A **MOTION** was made and seconded for Favorable Action on WA 26.

An **AMENDMENT** was made and seconded for no recommendation on WA 26.

An **AMENDMENT** was made and seconded to maintain name Coolidge Corner School.

A **MOTION** was made to refer all three to a moderators committee to develop a public and fair naming process.

Reminder that there was already an approved and voted-on process and went through it as outlined and we should be prepared to take votes.

On the **MOTION** to refer, by a roll call **VOTE** of 4 in favor, 17 opposed, and 5 abstentions , the recommendation to refer WA 26 fails.

BENKA	Abstain	GORDON	NO	NOBREGA	NO
BIRNBAUM	NO	GRANOFF	Abstain	RIDRUEJO	NO
BOHRS	NO	HUMMEL	Abstain	SANDMAN	----
BROWN	NO	JONAS	NO	SELWYN	YES
CARO	NO	KAHN	YES	SMITH	NO
DOGGETT	Abstain	KANES	NO	STAMPFER	NO
DOUGHTY	NO	KNABLE	NO	SWARTZ	YES
FRIEDMAN	abstain	LESCOHIER	NO	VANSCOYOC	NO
GELBART	NO	LEVIN	Absent	WESTPHAL	NO
GOLDSTEIN	NO	LODISH	YES	WISHINSKY	NO

On the **MOTION** to **AMEND** to recommend No Recommendation, by a **VOTE** of 16 in favor, 11 opposed and 1 abstention the **AMENDMENT** passes.

BENKA	YES	GORDON	YES	NOBREGA	NO
BIRNBAUM	NO	GRANOFF	YES	RIDRUEJO	YES
BOHRS	NO	HUMMEL	Abstain	SANDMAN	----
BROWN	YES	JONAS	NO	SELWYN	YES
CARO	NO	KAHN	YES	SMITH	NO
DOGGETT	YES	KANES	YES	STAMPFER	NO
DOUGHTY	NO	KNABLE	NO	SWARTZ	YES
FRIEDMAN	YES	LESCOHIER	YES	VANSCOYOC	YES
GELBART	NO	LEVIN	Absent	WESTPHAL	NO
GOLDSTEIN	YES	LODISH	YES	WISHINSKY	YES

NOW THE MAIN MOTION By a roll call **VOTE** below of 18 in favor, 9 opposed with 1 abstention, the Advisory Committee has no recommendation on Warrant Article 26.

BENKA	Yes	GORDON	Yes	NOBREGA	NO
BIRNBAUM	Yes	GRANOFF	YES	RIDRUEJO	Yes
BOHRS	No	HUMMEL	Abstain	SANDMAN	----
BROWN	Yes	JONAS	NO	SELWYN	Yes
CARO	NO	KAHN	Yes	SMITH	NO
DOGGETT	Yes	KANES	Yes	STAMPFER	NO
DOUGHTY	Yes	KNABLE	NO	SWARTZ	Yes

FRIEDMAN	Yes	LESCOHIER	Yes	VANSCOYOC	Yes
GELBART	No	LEVIN	Absent	WESTPHAL	NO
GOLDSTEIN	Yes	LODISH	Yes	WISHINSKY	Yes

A **MOTION** was made and seconded for no recommendation on WA 27. By a roll call **VOTE** below of 22 in favor, 4 opposed with 1 abstention, the Advisory Committee has no recommendation on Warrant Article 27.

BENKA	Yes	GORDON	Yes	NOBREGA	NO
BIRNBAUM	Yes	GRANOFF	YES	RIDRUEJO	Yes
BOHRS	No	HUMMEL	Abstain	SANDMAN	----
BROWN	Yes	JONAS	Yes	SELWYN	Yes
CARO	NO	KAHN	Yes	SMITH	NO
DOGGETT	Yes	KANES	Yes	STAMPFER	Yes
DOUGHTY	Yes	KNABLE	NO	SWARTZ	Yes
FRIEDMAN	Yes	LESCOHIER	Yes	VANSCOYOC	Yes
GELBART	No	LEVIN	Absent	WESTPHAL	---
GOLDSTEIN	Yes	LODISH	Yes	WISHINSKY	Yes

A **MOTION** was made and seconded for no recommendation on WA 28. By a roll call **VOTE** below of 22 in favor, 4 opposed with 1 abstention, the Advisory Committee has no recommendation on Warrant Article 28.

BENKA	Yes	GORDON	Yes	NOBREGA	NO
BIRNBAUM	Yes	GRANOFF	YES	RIDRUEJO	Yes
BOHRS	Yes	HUMMEL	Abstain	SANDMAN	----
BROWN	Yes	JONAS	Yes	SELWYN	Yes
CARO	NO	KAHN	Yes	SMITH	NO
DOGGETT	Yes	KANES	Yes	STAMPFER	Yes
DOUGHTY	No	KNABLE	NO	SWARTZ	Yes
FRIEDMAN	Yes	LESCOHIER	Yes	VANSCOYOC	Yes
GELBART	Yes	LEVIN	Absent	WESTPHAL	---
GOLDSTEIN	Yes	LODISH	Yes	WISHINSKY	Yes

Bobbie noted that in the past, we have never decided that we would not make our views known on anything that was brought before us. We need to have some discussion on what basis we are going to make these choices and if to do so is appropriate.

**NEXT MEETING:** THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10

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Upon a **MOTION** made and seconded to adjourn, and voted unanimously, the meeting was adjourned at 10:26 pm.

**Documents Presented:**

- Capital Subcommittee Report on Warrant Article 11
- Personnel Subcommittee Report on Warrant Article 30
- Schools Subcommittee Report on Warrant Articles 26, 27, 28
- Other supporting documents available  
<https://www.brooklinema.gov/DocumentCenter/Index/1426>