

Petitioner Motion offered under Warrant Article 36
Special Town Meeting 2022
Moved by: Alec Lebovitz (TMM-8).
Seconded by Mike Toffel (TMM-8)
Version: September 20, 2022

MOTION OFFERED BY THE PETITIONERS

To see if the Town will adopt the following Resolution:

WHEREAS the Town of Brookline continues to face a “structural deficit,” meaning its projected expenditures exceed its projected revenues.

WHEREAS a structural deficit can be addressed by reducing expenses and/or by increasing revenues.

WHEREAS increasing revenues can result from new economic development (“new growth”), increased fees, operating overrides, and more resources derived from Payments In Lieu of Tax (PILOT) paid by tax-exempt property owners.

WHEREAS the February 2020 Final Report of the Brookline Fiscal Advisory Committee (BFAC), convened by the Select Board, issued many recommendations to address the structural deficit including expanding PILOT revenues by “Designing and implementing an enhanced PILOT program to increase these payments, and the execution of tax-certainty agreements, such as the one entered into with Children’s Hospital for One Brookline Place.”¹

WHEREAS the Town of Brookline’s Payment In Lieu of Tax (PILOT) Policy was adopted by the Select Board in 2007 and was most recently revised in 2011, more than a decade ago, and significant PILOT reform has been implemented in other municipalities, including Boston.

WHEREAS other municipalities’ PILOT programs more comprehensively consider how an exempt property is used and the value of any community benefits generated by the property’s usage in negotiating PILOT agreements.

WHEREAS the BFAC Moderator’s Committee, which Town Meeting created to update Town Meeting on the progress (or lack thereof) on the various public bodies’ deliberations of BFAC’s recommendations, reported on March 23, 2022 that “The [former] Town Administrator has suggested that there is little that the Town can do to increase revenue from PILOTs except when a major institution needs something from the town.”

WHEREAS Town staff continue to implement Brookline’s existing PILOT policy, limited action has been taken to conduct a strategic review of the policy, a review of Brookline’s relationships with tax-exempt institutions in terms of the services and community benefits Brookline residents receive has not been conducted since 2011, and the BFAC recommendation that called for annual disclosures of PILOT payments has not been adopted.²

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Town Meeting directs the Moderator to appoint a committee to (1) review the PILOT policies of Brookline and several other towns to identify best practices, (2) suggest improvements to Brookline’s PILOT policies that could be adopted by the Select

¹ The Brookline Fiscal Advisory Committee (BFAC) final report and presentations are available at <https://www.brooklinema.gov/2242/Important-BFAC-Documents>

² BFAC Moderator Committee reports are available at <https://www.brooklinema.gov/1978/Moderators-Committee--Brookline-Fiscal->

Board (as policy) or by Town Meeting (as bylaw), and (3) any related topics the Moderator deems appropriate or helpful. The committee shall deliver written reports to Town Meeting Members, the Select Board, the Advisory Committee, and the School Committee by August 1, 2023, timing that precedes by several weeks the date when the Warrant will likely open in anticipation of the Fall 2023 Special Town Meeting.

Comparison to petitioner's original Warrant Article:

The content of this motion is identical to the original language of Warrant Article 36 except for a minor edit in the seventh "whereas" clause and substantial revisions to the eighth "whereas" clause.