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**Sent:** Monday, October 10, 2022 8:29 PM

**To:** Lisa Portscher <lportscher@brooklinema.gov>; Lisa Cunningham <lisaclimatebrookline@gmail.com>

**Subject:** Golf Course WA-39

Hi Lisa - could you please forward these comments to the committee for me in advance of the meeting this week?

Many thanks,  
Lisa

**To the AC Capital Subcommittee: Comments RE the Golf Course WA-39**

The petitioners have created a website which starts off with this paragraph (**bold**, **highlights** and *italics* are mine:

***“The biggest concerns voiced by our community and community leaders in the last five years are equity, climate crisis, and limited physical resources (e.g., land) to meet the needs of our growing population. Our Town Meeting and community have deemed necessary a set of policies and practices that increase green space, protect watersheds, reduce carbon emissions and provide these things equitably across all community members.*”**

I look at everything through the lens of climate, equity, protection of our open and natural green spaces, including our protected (and non-protected) watersheds – and first and foremost on our critical and urgent need to reduce our carbon emissions. Therefore I am both perplexed and massively disappointed that the petitioners chose to cloak the description of their resolution using these important concepts, while the resolution itself could not go further away from these objectives. **This resolution is anti-climate and anti-green space. It will increase carbon emissions – significantly - not decrease them. It will invade open green space and natural habitats for wildlife and animals, and trees and plants, rather than preserve it.**

**One of the least important things about Putterham Park is that it is a municipal public golf course. Golf happens to be the best-suited use to this property. But not just wealthy people should have access to the game of golf – everyone should.** I don't have time to get into this particular argument, although I think it is extremely important, and I hope others will.

1. **Our climate crisis and reducing carbon emissions.**

- a. **Putterham is a wildlife sanctuary** for many animals, deer, coyote, raccoons, rabbits, foxes, etc. and numerous large (and small) birds including hawks, owls, and geese. It is a sanctuary for these animals and birds precisely because it has abundant woods all over the property for the animals to hide and nest, abundant vegetation for them to eat, a rich diversity and shelter from development. The woods also provide a much-needed carbon sync for the rest of Brookline.

**b. The geography of Putterham is unique and must be protected.** (Please see the excellent environmental impact statement commissioned by the planning committee for the golf course [BROOKLINE GOLF COURSE](#) – see page 17 especially). The open areas of Putterham are mostly comprised of a flood zone, and have many protected streams and waterways all over them. You don't have to look at a map to see this, although there are FEMA maps on our own Brookline website. You simply have to walk the golf course at any time other than the middle of a drought. The water table is equal to or 1 foot below the water table on most of the non-wooded golf course, and in the average spring it is routinely flooded – all of which the petitioners should have known before filing this resolution.

**c. Putterham is also covered in peat.** [Peatlands keep a lot of carbon out of Earth's atmosphere, but that could end with warming and development \(theconversation.com\)](#) [Peatlands](#) are a type of wetland where dead plant material doesn't fully decompose because it's too soggy. In these ecosystems, peat builds up as spongy dark soil that's sometimes referred to as sod or turf. Over thousands of years, **yards-thick layers of peat accumulate and trap huge amounts of carbon, hundreds times more than regular soil and many times more than the many wooded areas on this property,** helping to cool our climate. Just as importantly, peat, when disturbed, releases tons of carbon emissions into the environment. **It is also a highly unstable substrate,** so difficult to impossible to build anything on.

d. Aside from being covered in peat and protected streams and waterways, many areas of Putterham are also covered with Roxbury puddingstone, in other words rock ledge.

**e. The plentiful woods – including the area called “Putterham Woods” also provide a much-needed carbon sync for the rest of Brookline.**

**2. The many current recreational use of Putterham.** This course is used by residents of this neighborhood and well beyond year round, and not just for golf. It is used routinely for running, walking, dog-walking, x-country skiing, snow-showing, and sledding. This area is not just a nature sanctuary, and a golf course, it is recreational open space used by many in the South Brookline community and beyond. My neighbor goes running on the golf course every morning, and I also used to run there every day (I now go to the Arboretum because it is much bigger and more challenging.) This is not a private club, this is land that is ALREADY treasured by our community.

### **3. Next let's talk about access to Putterham.**

a. Public transportation – when you hear the phrase “bus stop”, don't think of Brookline Hills T stop. I challenge you to get from Brookline hills to the 51 bus stop any day of the week.

b. Traffic – unbearable during the weekdays, particularly rush hour.

c. Safety

i. Cars travel at high speeds (when not in commuter gridlock)

ii. The sidewalks are not contiguous and many long gaps. As good as having none.

iii. There is no way to cross the street – which is dangerous, as there are no crosswalks

iv. Resulting in very unsafe road, creating dangerous conditions for walkers and bikers.

d. Consolidating our town rec facilities: we are supposedly building a hockey rink at Larz Anderson. If we are also building a pool, then why don't we put the pool there, and supply public transportation from all over Brookline to this facility so that traffic, which is already terrible in the Putterham area because of commuter traffic and a lack of public transportation, won't get even worse.

4. **Let's also mention finances while we are at it.** The golf course is self-supporting. If it was turned into a 9 hole golf course, aside from the fact that there are no other good uses for this property, it would make it impossible for the course to get the attendance and volume needed to support itself. Aside from all the other issues, where's the town money to support such a project?

5. **The proposal for a supposed bike path on the golf course is nothing short of ludicrous.** (Putting playing fields in a flood zone made up of peat is so outlandish that it's not worth commenting on.) A path on Putterham is a bridge to and from nowhere. It would **never** be used from anyone trying to get from South Brookline to North Brookline. Please do, however, spend all these funds to put in dedicated biking lanes – in two separate directions - on Newton Street and Lee Street, which would lead to the Reservoir and then across Route 9 by Walnut Street. In addition, please also install safe biking lanes from the Hancock Village and Baker School area and the surrounding neighborhoods to connect up to this route. We need those biking paths, but a bike path on this golf course is unbridled folly. By safe, I mean dedicated and separated bike lanes which cars cannot use.

6. Lastly – there is a proposal to build pickle ball courts in one area of the Putterham property which would actually involve minimal environmental impact because of its proposed location. If this works financially into the self-sustaining model of the golf course, it sounds like a workable idea. The courts would serve our local community. **But we cannot fund pickle ball courts without funding sidewalks, crosswalks, speed bumps and lower speed limits that would make this location safe for our community, and not just those driving in from other locations, bringing even more traffic, more danger, and more pollution and carbon emissions to our area.**

Thank you for your attention to these concerns.

Lisa Cunningham

Architect, lifelong resident of Brookline, former P15 TMM, non-golfer (but avid runner, x-country skier, snow-shoer, and sledder), open space advocate, and climate activist.

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