

PETITIONERS' ALTERNATIVE MOTION UNDER ARTICLE 12
Nancy Heller and Sean Lynn-Jones

MOVED: That the Town adopt the following resolution:

A Resolution to urge the Department of Planning and Community Development to study proposals to reduce the number of demolitions in Brookline

WHEREAS, many buildings are being demolished in Brookline; and

WHEREAS, demolitions contribute to carbon emissions and have negative effects on climate change and the environment, leading many experts to say that “the greenest building is the building that already exists”; and

WHEREAS, demolitions often eliminate moderately priced housing and replace it with more expensive units without increasing the overall number of housing units; and

WHEREAS, demolitions eliminate attractive buildings that contribute to the overall look and feel of the streetscape and often replace them with buildings that are out of scale and do not contribute to an attractive and welcoming public realm; and

WHEREAS, demolitions often include removing all the trees on a property; and

WHEREAS, demolitions often eliminate greenspace or open space; and

WHEREAS, demolitions sometimes destroy buildings with architectural or historical significance; and

WHEREAS, recent state legislation (Section 3A of M.G.L. Chapter 40A) calls for MBTA communities to adopt zoning for “as of right” multifamily development in areas near transit no later than December 31, 2023; and

WHEREAS, Brookline’s Department of Planning and Community Development will develop the Town’s response to Section 3A of M.G.L. Chapter 40A with the goal of submitting recommendations to the November 2023 Town Meeting; and

WHEREAS, any new policies and bylaws to reduce the number of demolitions in Brookline need to be carefully integrated with one another and Town’s response to Section 3A of M.G.L. Chapter 40A; and

WHEREAS, the Town has just begun a comprehensive planning and zoning reform effort to define a community driven vision for our future land-use, and we need to minimize the loss of significant structures in the interim.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that Town Meeting urges the Department of Planning and Community Development, to (1) study the trends and location of demolition activity in Brookline; (2) identify the main contributing factors precipitating demolitions; (3) review Section 5.09 paragraph 4 in relation to how these standards could be applied to improve development outcomes in the case of demolitions; (4) prepare changes to the General By-Laws and the Zoning By-Law that are consistent with sound land use planning goals and that would reduce the number of buildings that are demolished in Brookline, and (5) submit relevant warrant articles for consideration at a future Town Meeting.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Town Meeting urges the Department of Planning and Community Development to consider measures to reduce the number of demolitions in Brookline including, such as:

- Reducing the allowable floor area ratio (FAR) in certain zoning districts where the allowable FAR significantly exceeds the FAR of current structures.
- Developing neighborhood-sympathetic form-based zoning.
- Allowing a greater number of housing units—including affordable units—than the underlying zoning allows, if the principal structure is preserved, perhaps through a preservation restriction.
- Allowing the creation of Neighborhood Conservation Districts and a related design review board under M.G.L. Chapter 40A (Zoning) to replace the Town's disallowed Home Rule based Neighborhood Conservation District bylaw.
- Extending the current 12 month and 18 month demolition delays respectively to 18 and 24 months.
- Requiring demolition applicants to make a documented good faith effort to sell the property to someone who will use or repurpose it without demolition, as required in some locations in the state.
- Extending the special permit for demolition required in Section 5.09 2a of the Zoning By-Law to certain other parts of Brookline. (According to that section, all properties on or within 100 feet of Washington, Harvard, Beacon, and Boylston Streets, and Brookline Avenue or any structure or outdoor use on a lot any part of which is located in the G-1.75 (CC) or L-0.5 (CL) Districts requires a special permit and design review for demolition and subsequent construction.)
- Extending the design review/special permit requirement that applies to any substantially complete demolition of a principal structure in the Coolidge Comer Design Overlay District to certain other parts of Brookline.