

PETITIONERS' MOTION UNDER WARRANT ARTICLE 3
(SPECIAL TOWN MEETING 2)

Petitioners: Anthony Ishak TMM1, Sassan Zelkha TMM14, Sean Lynn-Jones TMM1, Charles Swartz TMM9, Kimberley Richardson TMM2, Kate Silbaugh TMM1, Don Weitzman TMM8, Carolyn Goodwin TMM8, John Margolis TMM7

VOTED: That the Town adopt the following resolution:

A Resolution to Urge that the Town of Brookline Devote More Resources to
Trash Management and Rodent Control

WHEREAS reports of rat sightings in Brookline have increased over 300% since 2019, according to the Department of Public Works and the Department of Public Health and Human Services; and

WHEREAS the rat infestation has been observed in many parts of Brookline, including but not limited to commercial districts in North Brookline and nearby and abutting residential properties, areas along Beacon Street, Brookline Housing Authority properties, and parks and playgrounds; and

WHEREAS the increased level of rat infestation is the result of many factors, including but not limited to warmer winters, demolition and construction activity, the increased availability of rodent food sources due to poor trash management, and changes in behavior due to the COVID pandemic, such as an increase in outdoor and take-out dining and greater use of parks and playgrounds; and

WHEREAS rats can cause infections, property damage, and food loss; and

WHEREAS rat infestation has reduced the quality of life for Brookline residents who encounter rodents in or near their residences and have had to endure the stench of rat urine and feces, dispose of rat carcasses, and remove flowers and vegetables from their backyards to make their properties less attractive to rats; and

WHEREAS many Brookline residents have spent thousands of dollars to control rat infestation or to repair the damage inflicted by rats on their property and vehicles; and

WHEREAS addressing Brookline's rat infestation problem will require a multi-pronged, long-term program of action, including increased inspections and enforcement, hiring additional staff, procurement of equipment such as a trash compacting vehicle, installing rodent-resistant trash receptacles in parks, playgrounds, and public spaces, and enhanced public education on the best practices for managing solid waste and eliminating rodent habitats; and

WHEREAS on October 12, 2022, the Town released a proposed Rodent Control Action Plan, which the Select Board discussed and voted on at its October 18, 2022, meeting; and

WHEREAS the Rodent Control Action Plan is an important first step toward controlling the rat infestation in Brookline, but by itself is unlikely to address all dimensions of the problem; and

WHEREAS Town Meeting could amend Brookline's fiscal year 2024 budget if that budget does not include adequate appropriations for rodent control and trash management, including but not limited to the appropriations recommended in the Rodent Control Action Plan.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Town Meeting thanks Town staff, particularly the Department of Public Works and the Department of Public Health and Human Services, for their efforts to combat Brookline's rat infestation and for their work in preparing the Rodent Control Action Plan; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Town Meeting urges the Town Administrator to prepare a FY-2024 Financial Plan that includes sufficient funding for fighting rat infestation, including inspections, enforcement, rodent-resistant trash receptacles, education and communication, rodent baiting, trapping, and removal, and any other best practices for rodent control; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Town Meeting urges the Select Board to review all fees, fines, and penalties related to trash management and rodent control with the goal of increasing revenues for efforts to combat the rat infestation and providing much stronger incentives for compliance with sanitation regulations and bylaws; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Town Meeting urges the Department of Public Health and Human Services and the Department of Public Works to revise regulations pertaining to solid waste and any other regulations related to rat infestation to ensure that there are stringent requirements that will help to reduce rodent infestation and penalties that are severe enough to ensure compliance; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Town Meeting urges Town boards, commissions, and committees to consider the need to fight the rat infestation as they make decisions regarding the allocation of American Rescue Plan Act funds, Community Preservation Act revenues, and any other relevant available funds; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Town Meeting urges Brookline businesses, restaurants, residents, property owners, and property managers to follow Town sanitation regulations and to take all necessary steps to minimize rat infestation.