

BROOKLINE COMMUNITY AGING NETWORK
Livable Community Advocacy Committee (LCAC)
November 8, 2021

Attending: Susan Granoff (Chair), Susan Park and Alok Somani (Guest Presenters), Paul Warren (Guest Presenter), David Trevvett (Presenter), Carol Seibert (Note-taker), Janet Gelbart, John Seay, Melissa Trevvett, Ruth Seidman, Susan Cohen, Matt Weiss, Yolanda Rodriguez, Elaine Bakal, Lou Crimmins, Lydia Kaufman

1. Presentation of Final Report of Select Board Committee on Pedestrian-Friendly Lighting

Presenter: David Trevvett, Chair, Pedestrian Advisory Committee.

Background: Some years ago, Frank Caro and the LCAC undertook to identify Brookline sidewalks in need of improved lighting to promote safer conditions for pedestrians. WA 22 passed unanimously in Spring, 2019, and resulted in a Select Board Committee on Pedestrian Friendly Lighting. More recently, in Frank Caro's absence, David Trevvett volunteered to help the committee complete its final report. He presented the committee's final report to the Select Board in August, 2021. Currently sidewalks are served primarily by "cobra" fixtures on tall poles spaced 150 feet apart. This works reasonably well for cars, but is not designed to provide the lighting that pedestrians need. Solving these problems will require commitment, good design, sustained effort, and money over a period of many years. The final report of the Committee calls for an explicit Town commitment to long-term improvement in pedestrian-friendly lighting and a dedicated Town body to oversee the decades-long process. Every street reconstruction project should include consideration of pedestrian lighting. The report proposes a \$200,000/year addition to the Capital Improvement Plan, hiring a professional lighting design firm to create a master lighting plan, leveraging available funding from Federal, State, and other sources, and involvement by multiple Town bodies. There is a sense of urgency because a number of large planning processes are already underway. Brookline should not miss the opportunity offered by American Rescue Plan Act funding. Although those funds are short-lived, the proposed investments require little long-term maintenance once the initial costs are covered.

Discussion: We should think about who are our natural allies. For example, climate action groups would likely support proposals that favor walking and

reduce reliance on cars. Might the parents of school children take an interest in solving this problem if the PTO hosted a presentation on the Committee report? This is a broad community issue with multiple stakeholders. How can LCAC support this effort? Write to the Select Board asking how they plan to address the recommendations of the Committee. How do they propose to move it to an action plan? Please send thoughts and ideas to Susan Granoff and David Trevvett. LCAC will continue to focus on the pedestrian-friendly lighting project at future meetings. David will send a link to the final report to those on the LCAC mailing list and will alert LCAC when an opportunity to advocate at a public hearing is scheduled by the Transportation Committee.

2. Presentation on Warrant Article 9 (Resolution Seeking Study Committee on Town's Policy Goals Regarding the Sale of Recreational Marijuana in Brookline)

Guest Presenters: Co-Petitioners Alok Somani (Advisory Committee Member and Susan Park (Town Meeting Member).

Brookline has already approved four licensed recreational marijuana (RM) stores and several delivery and courier licenses. Do we need more? Warrant Article 9 proposes that before deciding that question, we should create a diverse Moderator's Committee to undertake a thoughtful conversation about our policy goals and to consider data from emerging studies in preparation for issuing recommendations on Town policy. Because the number of permitted RM stores is tied to a percentage of the Town's liquor licenses, there is a potential for a fifth RM outlet in Brookline which the Select Board has considered as a way to achieve its social equity goals. What are the implications of additional licenses? Other local towns and cities appear to want to look at the ramifications of expanding RM and are opting for a moratorium. Others have opted out of hosting RM retail stores altogether. Some of the concerns raised in Brookline include the fact that today's marijuana may be more potent than in the past; more enticing products are available, such as flavored edibles appealing to younger users; well-known public figures and performers are popularizing and advertising marijuana; promotional flyers have been mailed to private homes. Studies on the impact of marijuana on the brain and potential harms are underway, but may not yet have been fully analyzed. In short, these petitioners hope that Brookline can take a step back and carefully consider how we deal with recreational marijuana.

Discussion: The Select Board has made a motion to refer Article 9 to the Cannabis Mitigation Advisory Committee. Is that the right move? Mr. Somani suggests that the mitigation committee was set up for a different purpose, i.e., to assist with some of the impacts on neighbors of the initial retail outlets and to advise on spending of the impact fees. They may not have the expertise to advise on the broader policy issues addressed in WA 9. It was reported that some of the early votes in committee hearings on this WA have not supported favorable action. Concerns have been expressed that the undertaking is too broad and the time frame too short. The latter has been addressed in later iterations of the WA which have doubled the time to completion. Another concern is that Town staff will be asked to assume new tasks. Mr. Somani replies that that is not the intent; the work of the study would be done by experts in medicine, education, etc. A motion that LCAC support this WA was debated and declined. Even though more than a majority of the LCAC members favored supporting Article 9, it was decided that the LCAC would support an article only if a supermajority of members voted in favor of it. Some of those present felt they would need more time to consider the Article before making a decision. Those who wish to weigh in can individually lobby their Town Meeting Members. (Note that the Advisory Committee has voted Favorable Action on Article 9 by a vote of 20 in favor, 7 opposed, and 2 abstentions.)

3. Presentation on Warrant Article 26 (Resolution Seeking Study Committee to Plan an Inclusive Zoning and Planning Reform Process

Guest Presenter: Co-Petitioner Paul Warren (Advisory Committee Member and Town Meeting Member).

This is a resolution to begin the process to transform our planning and zoning for the next generation. There are many plans being generated in Brookline, e.g., Open Space, Parks and Recreation, Schools, Housing Production Plan, Boylston Corridor, Climate Action Plan, Complete Streets, and others. The authors of this WA are concerned that there are many plans but no vision. Some 600 residents have petitioned the Select Board to initiate a more comprehensive and inclusive community planning process. WA 26 now puts the issue before Town Meeting. This Article asks for “A Plan for a Plan.” It asks that the Select Board appoint a Planning Process Study Committee that will seek input from all stakeholders at open meetings. The Committee would consider the 2005 Comprehensive Plan,

and seek best practices for modern planning tools and community engagement. The Committee would develop a work program, budget, and scope for an inclusive, community-driven planning and zoning reform process. The proposal envisions a new revamped zoning code covering all land uses, developed transparently with a broad-based governance committee. Why now? The most recent Comprehensive Plan dates to 2005. Many pressing concerns such as equity, climate and sustainability, housing affordability, and others were not contemplated 16 years ago. These modern problems are not addressed by our “antiquated” zoning.

Discussion: It is reported that the Advisory Committee, the Planning Board, Economic Development Advisory Board, and the Select Board are all supportive of WA 26. Brookline has had four Comprehensive Plans since 1959. Creating a Comprehensive Plan is time-consuming, 4-5 years. We are long overdue to address this and this proposed committee can jump-start the process. No moratorium is planned. Developments underway will be on-going with the current zoning regulations until a new code is ready. Those present unanimously voted to support favorable action on WA 26.

4. Announcements.

Reminder to sign up for advocacy sessions on the Housing Production Plan and Brookline Community Foundation ARPA fund allocation. Please email Susan Granoff <susangranoff@msn.com> if you need a link.

Tommy Vitolo, Brookline Representative to the State Legislature is following two home rule petitions on property tax relief for seniors. The Joint Committee on Revenue will be holding public hearings. If we want to have a voice, it is helpful to send letters and emails to the Chairs of that committee. Susan Granoff will notify us when the time is right to advocate.

5. No Other Business

NEXT MEETING: MONDAY, JANUARY 10, 2022 at 3:00 PM

We will not have a meeting in December.