

## **Susan Granoff's Report on Annual Town Meeting 2023**

Town Meeting ran for 6 nights, from May 23-June 7. This was the first in-person Town Meeting in 3 ½ years.

A **FY 24 budget** of nearly \$376 million was approved (7.4% higher than last year's). (184/2/4) This included full bonding of nearly \$210 million (which required a 2/3 vote) to fund the Pierce School reconstruction that was approved by the voters in May. Lots of debate and alternate motions were offered, but in the end the Pierce bonding passed with 85% yes votes. (197/34/9)

The Council on Aging's FY24 budget is nearly \$1.2 million (\$1,192,722), an increase of \$182,582 (18.1%) over FY23's departmental budget. This includes special funding of \$65k for a long-term strategic plan, \$35k for existing transportation options and exploring new micro-transit options, and funding for making a part-time geriatric social worker a full-time position.

**A total of 21 articles (including the budget) were debated and voted on.**

Most were not controversial and passed with overwhelming votes of approval.

**Only 2 warrant articles were voted down (Articles 9 and 10):**

Both involved bylaw changes that would add requirements to the process of submitting warrant articles (and were voted down because many Town Meeting Members saw them as being too restrictive and less democratic).

**Article 9** (as amended) would have required 25 signatures rather than the current 10 to submit an article. This got 49% yes votes and lost by just 6 votes. (113/119/6)

**Article 10** would have required the designation of a single lead petitioner. It was overwhelmingly supported by the Advisory Committee and by the Select Board, but it got just 42% yes votes. (94/130/13)

One article – **Article 24** – a resolution requesting a moderator's committee to study the MBTA Communities Act compliance requirements and to ask the Select Board and the town's State Legislature delegation to work towards modifying state guidelines for

compliance **was not moved** at Town Meeting because the SB took action to do what petitioners were requesting.

**Two articles were referred to the Select Board for further study:**

**Article 17**, which sought to a bylaw change to permit the Select Board to issue 2 additional storefront cannabis retailer licences to equity candidates (regardless of the cap of 4 approved by voters this May), which asked the Select Board or its designee to develop a plan for other approaches that would be consistent with WA 17's equity goals while taking into account the will of the voters (e.g., submitting a new ballot question to voters that expressly asked if they would approve additional equity retail licenses (by 67% of vote). (139/70/9)

**Article 19**, which sought a bylaw change to create a Brookline Black N Brown Commission (like the Commission on Women) was referred to the Select Board for additional consideration of whether the goals of the article would be best achieved through a commission or as a separate body (by 73% of vote). (168/61/12)

One controversial article that narrowly received Town Meeting approval was **Article 22**, which sought a home rule petition to establish ranked choice voting in Brookline's elections. The alternate motion that passed with 55% yes votes would apply only to town wide races, and not to Town Meeting Member races. We were told that it is not likely to get the approval of the State Legislature. (120/100/7)

**The other articles that passed received overwhelmingly large yes votes.**

Among these were:

**Article 13:** A new bylaw that creates an Office of Housing Stability in Brookline's town government to act as an information clearinghouse and to offer help, referrals, and other guidance to Brookline residents at risk of housing displacement. (225/1/4)

**Article 18:** Amendment to existing bylaws to establish greater penalties for repeat violations of requirements for solid waste refuse storage and removal for food establishments and owners of single, 2 and 3-family residences. (Buildings with 4 and higher units already are being fined at the maximum amount.) To help combat rat infestation. (227/1/3)

**Article 23:** A resolution requesting that the Select Board, Town Administrator, and

Human Resources Director work with the Police Department to adopt and implement an in-car and body worn camera policy for the Police Department. (The police union has already agreed to this in their contract with the Town.) (180/12/26)

**Article 20:** A new bylaw to protect local providers of abortions and gender transition health care from abusive litigation (to buttress state law and to clarify the requirements for Town employees). (217/0/8)

**Article 21:** A new bylaw requiring Brookline hotels to provide employee training on detecting signs of sex trafficking and to post notices in parts of the hotel frequented by employees and not by guests. (212/9/7)

**Special Town Meeting Article 1:** With some exceptions, this new bylaw would prohibit carrying of firearms on property owned or under the control of the Town (but "property" does not include public ways, streets or sidewalks). The exceptions include law enforcement officers, security guards as part of their official duties, active-duty military, and town employee who have the consent of Chief of Police. (197/4/8)