



Brookline PAX Recommendations

Annual Town Meeting, May 24, 2016

Article 6 – Annual increase in property tax exemption for disabled veterans, the blind, etc.

SUPPORT

This article, championed early on by PAX board members TMM-7 Mark Levy and TMM-2 Stan Spiegel, has been approved annually since FY1989. It provides for doubling the mandated property tax exemptions for a small number of residents who are surviving spouses, blind, elderly or disabled veterans. The categories, base amounts and permissible doubling of the exemptions are determined by state law. PAX has always endorsed this article.

Art. 8 – FY17 Budget

SUPPORT, encouraging TMM questions

PAX always encourages TMM’s to ask questions of department heads or their governing citizen committees, and not simply to rubber stamp the budgets prepared by our hard working but not infallible officials. For example, we hope to hear from Info Tech or our Town Administrator about our Art. 13 concerns below, and many TMM’s might be interested in updates on issues like racial diversity and the current Schools-BEU contract impasse. On the latter, there seems to have been little progress made since we expressed our pre-election “frustration with the School Committee for failing to resolve negotiations with the Brookline Educators Union, and a perception that it has not taken seriously enough the union’s proposals concerning scheduling, workload, and enabling educators to address the unique needs of each child.” Bargaining is traditionally private, but the public deserves better answers.

Line item 41 (pp. 8-70 to 8-72), Beacon Street bike lane: PAX believes that ongoing investment in bicycle access improvements is in the best interests of public safety, the environment, and the overall quality of life in Brookline—and at times justifies the unfortunate traffic slowdowns for cars. Accordingly, we support the \$36,000 Special Appropriation for bicycle access improvements, accepting (albeit somewhat reluctantly) the conditions for further study likely to be imposed by the Advisory Committee and/or the Board of Selectmen.

Art. 13 – Neighborhood notification for Major Impact Projects

SUPPORT, and want more/better notices

We support this article improving neighborhood notification for Major Impact Projects. But we also have a broader concern about notices for many meetings of Town committees, commissions and boards. Under the by-law initially proposed by PAX, §3.21, *Readily Accessible Electronic Meeting Notices, Agendas and Records*, which initiated the emailed agendas that many of us now value highly:

Meeting Notices, ...[t]o the extent possible ... shall include (i) an agenda that is reasonably descriptive of the intended business of the meeting, subject to later revisions as needed, and (ii) the name of a contact person along with contact information for further inquiries, ... for obtaining background information to the extent readily available, and for obtaining contact information (or a website link containing such information) for all members of the governmental body.

We see now that more is needed, e.g., when proposed development or traffic plans are to be discussed at public meetings, *online access to each such proposal* should be made part of the notices to citizens.

Art. 14 – Accept provisions of Sec 148C of state Earned Sick Time Law

SUPPORT

When the petitioners filed this article for a second time in March 2016, neither the town nor the schools had implemented the sick leave policies for formerly “non-benefited” employees they had promised they would in the fall of 2015 when the article was first debated.

Proposed

- Employees may use up to 40 hours of accrued sick time per year for preventative medical care (screening, check-ups, counseling) for themselves or immediate family members.
- Employees may (with some exceptions) use sick time in hourly increments.

Current policies

This use of sick time is prohibited. Instead, formerly “non-benefited” employees (part-time, seasonal & temporary) may use only up to 8 hours per year of personal time for such visits.

Employees may use sick time only in half-day increments unless otherwise allowed by individual departments.

- Employers are required to keep records of employees' sick time and to post notices about employees' sick time rights. They are prohibited from retaliating against employees for using sick time or filing a complaint for alleged violations of the law.
- The Attorney General has the authority to go to court to halt violations and to issue civil citations against employers.

The town and school policies provide none of these employee protections.

In November 2015, Town Counsel advised Town Meeting that in her opinion a favorable vote on this article would bind the schools (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AUZGUn2wXVA>, about 1 hr and 30 min into the video). Currently her view is that a favorable vote would *not* bind the schools. However, at the Advisory Committee hearing of this article, its subcommittee chair informed the Committee that the schools had been advised by labor counsel that favorable action by Town Meeting *would* bind the schools.

Because of the stronger protections provided by the state law, PAX recommends support of the petitioners' motion. We expect that wrinkles in this realm can be worked out over time in union negotiations without the great degree of difficulty currently being forecast by the Human Resources Department.

Art. 19 – Resolution to honor Roland Hayes

SUPPORT

This is Brookline's opportunity to honor probably its most illustrious African American resident, Roland Hayes, who lived here with his family for almost fifty years. Hayes grew up on a farm where his mother had been enslaved, yet he rose to become one of the world's greatest tenors, breaking racial barriers at Symphony Hall, across the United States and throughout the world. He was a trailblazer for others like Marian Anderson and Paul Robeson. Always proud to be African American, he brought Spirituals into the classical repertoire. We commend the Hidden Brookline Committee once again for their continuing good work.

Arts. 20 – Resolution to end the embargo of Cuba

SUPPORT PETITIONER'S MOTION

Whether or not you disapprove of the embargo/blockade because it is inhumane and in violation of international conventions, or demonstrably ineffective, an overwhelming majority of Americans want to see it lifted, and the Selectmen and Advisory Committee agree. Although they want to remove the resolution's call for repudiation of USAID's illegal covert regime-change programs and an end to their funding, we believe this part of the petitioner's motion is centrally important to the resolution and encourage you to support its inclusion by supporting the petitioner's motion (assuming he moves it). We commend the petitioner for his initiative.

Art. 21 – Resolution affirming Town's commitment to solar energy

SUPPORT

The legislature's repetitive baby-step approach to solar energy of recent years must at some point be replaced by a rational solar energy policy. The petitioners have laid out in overview many aspects of what is needed in this regard in their multi-part single Whereas clause. Three of the petitioners, highly informed in this complex area, have persuaded the selectmen and Advisory Committee to support their resolution, and PAX is pleased to climb aboard.

Art. 22 – Resolution opposing the Trans-Pacific Partnership

SUPPORT PETITIONER'S MOTION

At the behest of the Advisory Committee's subcommittee, the petitioners reduced the number of Whereas clauses from 16 to 11 and reworded the primary Resolved clause to focus the resolution more narrowly on ridding the TPP of the investor-to-state dispute settlement (ISDS) system. The Advisory Committee recommends deleting the first Whereas of the new version, but we (and the selectmen) urge you to support the petitioners' motion, which leaves it in with some additional wording and changes the title of the resolution to comport with the reworded Resolved clause.

Frank Farlow (TMM-4) and Marty Rosenthal (TMM-9), Co-chairs

PAX supports: Excellent public education and services, Respect for public employees and organized labor, and Advocacy for the environment, diversity and social justice.
Think globally, act locally