

# **Brookline PAX Recommendations**[\[1\]](#)

**Fall Town Meeting, Nov. 13, 2007**

**Art. 6, Electronic meeting notices, agendas, and minutes:**

**SUPPORT**

This purpose of this proposal by PAX leaders is to bring the Open Meeting Law into the 21st century and increase not just the quantity, but especially the quality of citizen participation. The article has been improved by the AC, and we now urge its passage. The delayed implementation date gives the Information Services Department plenty of time to prepare and even offer further improvements. We preferred numerical, albeit non-binding, time deadlines; but in the interest of consensus we're willing to see how well committees comply.

**Art. 7, Revise graffiti by-law:      **SUPPORT****

PAX has twice successfully urged prior Town Meetings to refer this general subject due to drafting issues. After working with the Town Counsel's Office and Selectman Mermell, who in turn worked with the main petitioner, we are pleased to now support the current article, which requires removal of graffiti by property owners and creates a procedure for the Town to remove it and assess a fine to an owner who fails to remove it after notice. This is especially needed on commercial buildings where graffiti degrades neighborhoods. The revised article addresses earlier procedural and due process concerns. It may contain one or two minor policy issues deserving of future fine-tuning, but none fatal to immediate passage of the article.

**Arts. 10, Coolidge Corner District Council:                      **SUPPORT petitioner's motion,****

**OPPOSE referral**

**11, Add 18 parcels to Coolidge Corner 3-family zone:                      **SUPPORT AC motion,****

**OPPOSE a shorter list**

**12, Require demolition design review in Coolidge Corner 3-family zone:                      **SUPPORT****

**13, Limit development of townhouses in T zones:                      **SUPPORT****

PAX supports all of articles 10-13, each a helpful and important step towards arresting the recent, dangerous, and hitherto inexorable trend of inappropriate, profiteering development – well past the "tipping point," especially in North Brookline and more especially near Coolidge Corner. We appreciate the hard work of the Planning Department on this multi-pronged strategy, and we still believe more must be done – and done sooner – than some Town Hall officials, particularly on the Planning Board, seem to believe. (See following two paragraphs.)

Articles 12 and 13 seem to have been well received, which again we appreciate, and are well described in the Combined Reports. However, two of the articles are apparently more controversial. Article 10 (Coolidge Corner District Council) has generated much opposition regarding both its overall need and several specifics. We believe, however, that the specifics are not seriously flawed and if necessary could be improved at a subsequent Town Meeting, if need be with the help of the Committee on Town Organization and Structure. And the overall goal is both more urgent and more specific to Coolidge Corner than Town officials yet recognize.

Art. 11 (Add 18 parcels to Coolidge Corner 3-family zone) has also been somewhat controversial. Town officials have for two years resisted adding properties to this list, raising various objections to adding more properties (like “spot zoning,” which doesn’t pass the straight face test). Neighborhood groups and TMM’s have, indeed, urged the inclusion of 11 additional properties, but to resistant and unhearing ears. Some individual owners have objected to the

re-zoning of their parcels, and without showing any real “hardship” have received excessive protectiveness from some Town officials who are too pro-development and insufficiently concerned about the public good – preserving precious, deteriorating private greenspace in North Brookline. It is time to both do what is right for Brookline and send to those Town officials the appropriate message.

**Art. 14, Revise public benefits qualifying for FAR bonuses:**

**SUPPORT**

Like the foregoing articles, but of somewhat broader applicability, this is a long overdue update – in this case, of the public benefits section of the Zoning By-Law. Under this amendment, any FAR bonus granted to a developer must be commensurate with the public benefit provided. No longer will a developer receive a large bonus for small public benefits – or, in the extreme, a bonus simply for providing what is legally required, such as underground wiring and 15% affordable units.

**Art. 15, Authorize property exchange with Red Cab site developer**

**OPPOSE**

PAX urges a NO vote unless the motion on page 15-7 of the Combined Reports is amended. The proposed development has excessive AND AVOIDABLE shadows on houses on White Place, just across the T tracks. The developer has known of this concern for 17 months but has not altered the design. However, massing studies have shown that it would be easy to erect a building of the same size with less shadow on White Place. A Design Advisory Team has just been appointed, and we are optimistic that it will help produce a much better design with less shadow impact. In that event, we would support authorization of sale of this parcel at the May 2008 Town Meeting. A six-month delay in authorizing the land sale won’t kill the project and will give added incentive to the developer to use the DAT process to produce a better design.

**Art. 16. Authorize 30-yr lease of 86 Monmouth St to Brookline Arts Center**

**SUPPORT**

PAX happily supports this proposal.

**Art. 18, Clarify Transportation Board's authority to regulate valet parking:**

**SUPPORT**

PAX supports the strongly expressed wishes of the residents of the neighborhood surrounding the restaurant in question.

**Art. 20, Resolution on electronic voting in Town Meeting: SUPPORT BoS motion**

This article urges eventual electronic voting at Town Meeting. TMM's would be provided with transponders allowing them to vote by pushing a button. This would save approximately three-quarters of the time currently required for roll call votes and would also provide greater accountability and transparency, which PAX has long urged. At present, the only recorded votes are roll calls, which take place less than once a year. With electronic voting, every time there is a challenge to a voice vote, the tally could be taken in about six minutes, and the vote would be recorded. Electronic voting is used at every level of government. This article "encourages" the Selectmen to include funding, estimated at \$30,000, in the FY2009 budget, to begin the process of implementing electronic voting.

**Art. 21, Establish Selectmen's committee to study the taking by eminent domain of lands adjacent to Hoar Sanctuary**

**SUPPORT**

PAX supports the strongly expressed wishes of the residents of the neighborhood surrounding the Hoar Sanctuary.

**Arts. 22, Resolution to encourage statewide legislation promoting the use of alternative energy sources:**

**SUPPORT**

**23, Resolution to encourage statewide legislation promoting the use of fuel-efficient vehicles:**

**SUPPORT**

PAX recommends favorable action on the two environmentally motivated resolutions presented in Articles 22 and 23. The first supports statewide enabling legislation that would allow municipalities to offer very modest tax incentives for the installation of alternative, clean power sources such as solar, wind, or geothermal. And the second endorses statewide legislation, written by the Selectmen's Clean Car Committee as directed by Town Meeting last spring, that creates economic incentives to encourage drivers to buy more fuel-efficient cars. Both articles are thoughtful efforts to reduce the generation of greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming. They deserve our support – and their petitioners, our thanks.

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[1] Marty Rosenthal and Frank Farlow, co-chairs. “BoS” indicates Board of Selectmen, and “AC,” the Advisory Committee.

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