



Brookline PAX Recommendations Special Town Meeting, November 18, 2008

Friday, Nov. 14, 2008

Art. 4: Terminate selectmen health insurance benefit

OPPOSE

PAX opposes any proposal with retroactive effect that “changes the rules in midstream” for any current or past selectmen. We are also uncomfortable with the prospect of a system in which some selectmen would be eligible for a benefit while others would not. And it’s hard enough getting people to run for this demanding office; if someone does so in part because buying private health insurance is a financial burden, and if they can survive re-election (and two terms) for vesting, fine. The financial amounts are not trivial, but also not major.

Art. 10: Limit use of leaf blowers

SUPPORT Petitioners’ Motion

This article would limit the use of leaf blowers to the periods March 15 - May 15 and September 15 - December 15; and from 7 am to 7 pm weekdays and 8 am to 6 pm on weekends and holidays. Leaf blowers are not just noise polluters, especially to seniors and others who are home in the daytime, but needlessly burn gasoline and oil, increasing carbon emissions and spreading dust and dirt into the air. This article, a compromise rather than the outright leaf blower ban that many residents desire, focuses in a direct way on the abuse and misuse we all see, e.g., when maintenance workers make a lot of unnecessary noise blowing debris off sidewalks when a non-polluting, non-petroleum burning and quiet tool called a “broom” would do the job as well. This proposal is far simpler, and far easier to enforce, than the untested proposal regarding leaf blowers in Article 9 (p. 9-20), which is a good start but doesn’t go far enough.

Art. 12: Require use of green cleaning products in Town buildings

SUPPORT AC vote

PAX supports the addition of Brookline to the list of municipalities and states across the country requiring the use in public buildings of general-purpose, bathroom, glass and carpet cleaners that comply with GS-37, the respected Green Seal environmental standard.

Art. 13: Downzone 12 parcels in Coolidge Corner neighborhood

SUPPORT AC vote

Over the last decade, many Coolidge Corner residents have been alarmed by an escalation of developers buying and tearing down 2- and 3-family homes in Multifamily (“M”) zones, then building up to the M level – e.g., 121 Centre, 75 & 99 Winchester, and 21 Atherton. To preserve the remaining “suburban” feel of this beleaguered neighborhood, the last three years have seen welcome progress from tightening zoning laws, with much help from the Planning Department.

Article 13’s 12 properties have long been considered important to the neighborhood but were excluded by the Planning Board & Zoning By-Law Committee from Town Meeting consideration in the otherwise successful 2007 down-zoning, overruling the partial objections of those two committees as well as a majority of Selectmen. In part due to the strong 2007 TM votes, longtime local TMM’s now propose finally addressing these 12 parcels. Now even the Selectmen recognize that preserving them is important enough to override the objections from a few owners – except for one consensus compromise, for two Winchester Street properties (67 & 71) where down-zoning seemed to create a true “hardship.” We hope this article will pass; and then that the Planning Board & Zoning By-Law Committee will finally hear what the community wants and abjure their fondness for Highest Common Denominator Development zoning.

Art. 14: Large family day care homes**SUPPORT Selectmen's vote (supplemental mailing)**

A yes vote will enable large family child care providers, licensed by the state to care for up to ten children at a time, to remain in business. Without favorable action, at least ten small businesses in Brookline will have to reduce the number of children in their care to six or close, and about 100 children in working families may no longer have the care they need for their parents to be able to work and support their families.

Art. 25: Re-submit home rule petition to allow hiring outsider as Fire Chief**OPPOSE**

PAX joins a majority of the Selectmen in opposing this proposal. Many other municipalities use our current hiring system, and no sufficient rationale has been presented suggesting that it is "broken." Hiring from within ensures that a new chief is immediately familiar with the physical characteristics of the Town's neighborhoods, community government and sentiments, and the abilities of the department's employees; and it is obviously important to employee morale. Hiring from without, on the other hand, would ensure that a new chief's learning curve would be steep. When possible, finally, unless they are far more clearly wrong, we should honor the wishes of the Fire union members – who are adamantly opposed to the article.

Art. 27: Resolution to increase resident shoveling**SUPPORT AC vote, oppose Selectmen's**

Due to the public safety need to enable residents, especially kids and seniors, to avoid walking in icy streets, PAX has for two decades tried to get Town leaders to prioritize citizen clearing of sidewalks and to do what's both needed and possible to mobilize our wonderful community to make its simple by-law successful. Having submitted two petition articles on this subject previously – both adopted but neither successful – we've helped with this one trying to identify and systematically pursue what's been lacking. If it passes, under By-Law 4.2.9 (another PAX initiative), the Annual Report will henceforth summarize the actions taken each year and their results.

The amended vote proposed by the Selectmen waters down the third "Resolved" clause, which is already very flexible. After two decades, the selectmen's wishy-washiness is excessive and should be rejected. It's time to shovel and get off the leadership pot.

Marty Rosenthal and Frank Farlow, Co-chairs

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

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