



Brookline PAX Recommendations 11/16/10 Special Town Meeting

Art. 4: Transfer hiring/firing power from selectmen to Town Administrator

SUPPORT AC motion, OPPOSE CTOS motion, and support RECORDED VOTE

CTOS's motion would bring about one of the most dramatic changes in Brookline's government in many decades. We agree with the Advisory Committee majority that it has not been shown to be either necessary or helpful, and that it would disempower not only the selectmen, but also the 240 TMM's – and Brookline's citizens. For the reasons presented in CTOS's minority report (pp. 4-6 to 4-7) by PAX co-chair Marty Rosenthal and conservative icon Michael Robbins, we recommend rejection of the CTOS proposal, which would largely transform the Town Administrator into a *Town Manager* – a recommendation repeatedly rejected in the past by Town Meeting. Insulating the department heads from “politics” means, in fact, insulating them – and their departments – from *community values*. Instead, we **support the Advisory Committee motion**, an uncontroversial reform that responds to an actual deficiency in existing law.

Art. 5: Designate selectmen police & fire commissioners SUPPORT; and SUPPORT Rosenthal amendment

For three years, beginning with the work of the Citizen Complaint Review Committee, this has been a PAX priority: to make official the two titles that are traditional and widely used for selectmen, not only in Brookline for decades, but in many Massachusetts towns as well. This “codification” is needed only because, unlike some other communities, we have never made the titles official; and their continuing usage, including by our Chiefs, has in recent years come under a cloud of uncertainty. Not only should that be clarified, but the titles also convey and emphasize the critically important concept of “citizen control.” We also support Marty Rosenthal's amendment restoring CTOS's (unanimously approved) version (p. 5-1), which deletes the selectmen's completely unnecessary, awkward, and mildly harmful addition of the word “*civilian*” to each title. To our knowledge, no other town sees the need to do this.

Art. 9: Permit ground-mounted solar panels at Singletree Hill Reservoir

SUPPORT

PAX urges FAVORABLE ACTION on the motion offered by the Selectmen. Passage of this article meets one of the five criteria the Town must satisfy to become eligible for Green Community status under the state's Green Communities Act (and thereby become eligible for significant grant monies). Arguably, this has been the most difficult of the criteria for Brookline to meet since we are such a built-out community, and we commend the Planning Department for producing this felicitous solution.

Art. 10: Amend residential parking requirements

SUPPORT Fischer amendment; SUPPORT referral

PAX commends TMM-2 Linda Pehlke for her prodigious research and analysis in bringing forward this article. Relaxation of the parking requirements is needed. To what degree, however, needs to be resolved, for reasons stated well in the Combined Reports. We have no preference as to moderator's or selectmen's committee, but in either case we urge that the committee composition include (**Ms. Pehlke and affordable housing advocates?**).

Art. 11: Require roll-call votes for board/committee decisions presented in Combined Reports SUPPORT

PAX has favored this idea for some time, beginning a few years ago when it was proposed for the Advisory Committee but ultimately narrowed to include only the selectmen. Simple “transparency” and “responsibility” demand lifting our committees' curtain of anonymity – the same rationales as for the Open Meeting Law and the Public Records Law, both of which frequently meet with resistance. All meetings of these boards, committees and commissions are currently subject to the Open Meeting Law, so this article would not result in any new information being made public; it would merely make more widely available information that's already public.

Art. 14: Permit permanent legal residents to vote in Town elections

SUPPORT AC motion

Article 14 asks the selectmen to file a Home Rule Petition that would allow legal permanent Brookline residents (that is, non-citizens with “Green Cards”) to vote in Town elections. PAX feels that while such a petition is unlikely to pass in the State House, it would make a strong positive statement, much like Town Meeting's earlier action declaring Brookline a sanctuary community standing boldly in opposition to the strongly xenophobic anti-immigrant rhetoric that is all too prevalent throughout the country today.