



BROOKLINE PAX NEWSLETTER

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brooklinepax.org

Chair's column: the Good, the Imperfect, the Ugly & the Hope

Marty Rosenthal

The only Pax Chair perk is this chance to offer my personal reflections. I've recently bemoaned an increased incivility, disagreeing with disagreeable-ness, litmus-test-ism, factual recklessness, and ad hominem-isms. After battles, e.g. supporting a 9th school, NETA, and a change in School Committee culture, I've often cited Aristotle's "Criticism is something we can avoid easily by saying nothing, doing nothing, and being nothing." But it's worse than ever.

Trump-ism sucked up too much of the not-unlimited energy of progressives, diverting attentiveness from "mere" local issues. At a 2018 fundraiser for (the fabulous) Force Multiplier, I had to beg/nag for what became a 30-second mention of Jay Gonzales' race against Faker Baker. It seemed to the sponsors a distraction.

This past year's hit a new, albeit "well-intentioned" low. Last year I wrote, citing Michelle Alexander ("silver lining ... in the election of Trump... that millions of people have been inspired to demonstrate solidarity") – that "our nightmarish national government might actually/accidentally provide a glimmer of hope ... [for] reconfiguring shameful ills ..."

The two recent Police committees, one being "Reforms" (that I and two other PAX Board Members were on), worked hard, and will lead to important policing improvements. But they've also highlighted the divisiveness, especially among self-professed "progressives." Here's what I wrote for my TMM re-election answer in the LWV Voter Guide: "[M]ost heated are well-intentioned but excessive and often governmentally/factually reckless anti-racism tactics that overly criticize and try crudely cutting "our" (excellent) Police. By cavalierly misrepresenting "complaints" like Alston's Pilot's-Zerai's, some (even our Diversity Comm'n) attack our motives, building walls not bridges – discouraging sorely-needed residential diversity. We desperately need more civility/ respect, less (yes, really) Trump Derangement Syndrome." See more in the Kate Poverman article and in Police Reform Committee's report, my "Separate Statement, "Brookline and its BPD-2021: the Good, the Imperfect, the Ugly – and the Hope." (in www.brooklinema.gov/1804/Select-Boards-Committee-on-Policing-Refo). Having worked hard for racial and social justice for 49 years, I'm thrilled that by our nationwide reckoning/awakening on USA's foundational Original Sins. And, I yearn for more productive, collaborative and respectful national and local efforts for "restorative justice." Calling out each others' deficiencies especially locally where things (for better and worse) embody "the personal is political" is surely necessary. But doing it recklessly (factually and conclusorily) not only poisons and distracts the necessary dialogues, but worse, "builds walls, not bridges," or progress.

Now, some diversity advocates are campaigning (1) to unseat Bernard Greene, our first ever Black Select Board member, and (2) for another white, male Moderator instead of Kate Poverman, who'd be Brookline's first female one. Less is good for more diversity? A most recent example: to "build bridges, not walls," i.e., community collaboration for our many shared values, Neil & I offered a PAX annual award jointly to SBM's Greene and Fernandez – for their work on the two Police committees. Raul surprised us by declining. I replied "[I]t's time for all to continue what you & BG have done – try to restore mutual respect, disagreeing w/o being disagreeable, & prioritizing moving forward."

In fact, IMHO, our most crucial community – and social/racial justice – challenge is actually our *housing exclusivity* and yuppification (since the execution of rent control 1988-9). It's also far more complex than, say, policing – given USA's abysmal economic inequality and throes of Reaganism's legacy – "Starve the Beast" & Mollycoddle the Behemoths. Then, there are "little" things like climate change, the foremost existential threat to the world, improving our historically great schools, etc. We have lots to do!

Sure, Brookline's far from perfect; but it's now "politically incorrect" to say that we ALSO have pride in what's good here. (See, e.g., our 2020 presidential votes, Warren-Sanders over Biden 64-36%, then 87.6% for Biden over Trump.) That pride's neither complacency nor (I'm sorry) neanderthal-ist/racist/whatever-ist. Working – respectfully – together, we can do far better on everything. Gratuitous bickering and reckless allegations don't help, and actually impede, maybe preclude, real "progress."

PAX Endorses GREENE & HELLER for Re-Election to Select Board

Brookline PAX, proud of 59-years' backing candidates representing progressive values, reviewed public statements, voting records, and answers to our questionnaire. Our Board, by our required "super-majority" (60+%) vote, endorses re-electing incumbent Select-Board Members **BERNARD GREENE** and **NANCY HELLER**.

Since 2015, BERNARD, Brookline's first African-American Select Board Member and earlier a Town Meeting and Advisory Committee Member, has given skillful, thoughtful, and dedicated Board service. He's met every challenge with energy and practicality. As Board Chair since 2019, he's maintained Brookline's highest possible financial rating; kept Covid exceptionally low; and Herculean-ly led policing reforms (e.g. a chokehold ban, body-camera provisions, augmented civilian oversight-accountability, "zero tolerance" of profiling, and seeking more diverse officers) – practical improvements for Brookline's "very good, but of course imperfect" Police Department.

NANCY, a long and much-appreciated PAX Board Member, exemplifies PAX's longstanding value on public service/servants. She's served as a Town Meeting Member, and on the Advisory and School Committees, and since 2015 on the Select Board, an astonishing, maybe unparalleled, record. She's been unflagging in her commitments to seniors, to fight climate change, and somehow finding time to immerse herself in construction projects like Ruffin-Ridley, BHS, and Driscoll Schools. She's been especially skillful at elevating the recent low level of public discourse.

Our Town's leadership – led by the current Select Board – achieved an outstanding Covid record. Week-by-week data showed Brookline's infection/death rates far better than every nearby community – not just Boston, but Cambridge, Newton, Dedham, Somerville, Concord, Watertown, etc.! With dense housing, many seniors, and urban setting, our Town government did a great job! On that, actually the past year's most serious issue, we give them huge credit where credit's deserved.

In fact, meaningful "progress" not only is consistent with "experience" and the school of hard(-earned) knocks, but actually needs them. Yes, "new faces" are welcome in Town government; but for our Town's highest office, e.g., managing a \$365 million budget and many complex issues, broad/deep records of stellar service matter – a lot. So do proven leadership abilities – always factually accurate and civilly discoursing – on often hot-button issues.

Unfortunately, that's now all-too-far from universal, (sadly) even in Brookline. Some well-intentioned self-professed "progressive" activists now often use gratuitous *ad-hominem* attacks and/or recklessly "false facts" (like exaggerating Brookline's – yes, existing, but improve-able – faults), not only impeding sorely-needed reforms and damaging our hitherto-stellar local citizen-activist democracy; but also demoralizing hard-working public officials/servants (especially incumbents and "our" police); and (worse) excessively tarnishing the outside image of our generally very good/progressive community – surely/sadly hindering our, yes, crucial needs for lots more racial/economic diversity, maybe our most complex challenge.

Of the candidates that PAX didn't endorse, they're all smart and progressive, but sorely lacking the governmental gravitas – proven abilities for leadership and unifying the community for progress – sorely-needed for this very challenging period, including Donelle O'Neal, whom we're very pleased has been a PAX Board and Advisory Committee member, and Zoe Lynn, whose minimal track record less of us knew and whom we eagerly welcome into Brookline's (usually great) civic engagement.

Miriam Aschkenasy, a four-year TMM, is outspoken in promoting reckless anti-Police proposals – shockingly opposing the Police collective bargaining agreement with body/dashboard *cameras* and a very fair 2½% pay increase (see more in our article supporting Kate Poverman); supporting 17% (but unspecified) Police budget cuts (reckless for both public safety and Department diversity), and giving TM likely unlawful and ill-advised litigation control like over Civil Service discipline, ZBA cases, etc. (See more in *Chair's* and *Kate Poverman* articles.) All were thankfully/overwhelmingly rejected by Town Meeting.

PAX, and Brookline, has long valued *public service*. But somehow, those who (we firmly believe) *excessively* bad-mouth Brookline now seemingly embrace "throw the bums out" – and deem many years of service as, *ipso facto*, a minus.

It's not, and shouldn't be. In this atmosphere, BERNARD and NANCY have both proven their respective, stellar abilities and character, standing above the fray, passionately – but thoughtfully, respectfully, and civilly – focused on the diverse needs of, and working with, the entire community. They've earned our heartfelt thanks, a PAX endorsement, and your vote.

Marty Rosenthal, PAX Chair, TMM9, & former Select-Board Chair.

Neil Gordon, PAX Secretary, TMM1, & Advisory Committee Member

PAX Endorses Ehrenberg in Contested School Committee Race

"I'm a father of two daughters at Lawrence. I'm running to **make students whole** after a year of emotional, social, and academic losses. I will work to pull together the best of our community to build a more **resilient district** that exceeds the needs of every child in our schools. I have decades of experience doing just this — as a designer and director of education programs for global nonprofits, my career has been focused on how to turn policy into practice." — Steven Ehrenberg, PAX endorsed candidate for School Committee (for the one-year seat).

To learn more about Steven or to help his campaign, go to: StevenforBrookline.com.

BROOKLINE PAX THANKS ALL OUR ESSENTIAL WORKERS!

PAX Board Split on Moderator

The case for SCOTT ANANIAN

We are pleased to support Scott Ananian for Brookline Town Moderator. Town Meeting can be complicated and intimidating. We believe that Scott will work hard as Moderator to ensure a smooth, respectful Town Meeting in which everyone's voices are heard. Scott has always volunteered his assistance when anyone had a question about how our Town government worked. Scott has helped many new voices in Town government file their warrant articles. He knows the process by heart, as he has filed no less than 18 warrant articles, amendments, or petitions of his own. Scott can be helpful to so many because he knows so much about Town government. Through his active participation in Town Meeting, he has demonstrated a thorough knowledge of its rules and procedures, the Town bylaws and zoning bylaws, and relevant state statutes.

Scott would also bring a useful educational and employment background, as he works for the Wikimedia Foundation and other technological nonprofits. Showcasing his collaborative nature, and his willingness to learn and innovate, he has already reached out to Moderators in other Towns in Massachusetts to learn how they conduct their Town Meetings and to find out what Brookline can learn from their processes. His tech savvy will facilitate making concrete changes to smoothen the procedures of Town Meeting, which may continue to be conducted on Zoom from now on.

Scott is committed to a more inclusive Town Meeting and Advisory Committee. He has specific proposals to help make our government more racially, ethnically, and economically diverse, in order to better reflect and address the needs and concerns of Brookline residents and town employees. He also understands the need to make Brookline more welcoming to all those who live or work here, as well as to all those who visit our community.

Having Scott's helpful and friendly attitude leading Town Meeting will make a difference, especially for those new to the process. We believe that Scott Ananian is the change our Town needs with the expertise to ensure a smooth transition. We urge you to vote for him on May 4.

Michael A. Burstein – Library Trustee and Town Meeting Member, Precinct 12; Member, PAX Board

Marty Farlow – Town Meeting Member, Precinct 4; Member, PAX Board

The case for KATE POVERMAN

With jointly five decades as Town Meeting Members, Marty a former Select-Board-Chair, and both on Moderator-appointed committees (CTO&S/Advisory), we're among over a 2-to-1 TMM's groundswell endorsing KATE POVERMAN for the monumentally challenging Town Moderator role.

We've filed many Articles, reviewed/amended more (including those by Kate's opponent, Scott), and often speak at Town Meeting. We know well that Articles cover detailed \$365mm budgets, bonding, zoning, by-laws, structural changes, and "resolutions." Being Moderator is far harder than just/casually digesting Articles and recognizing speakers. It's twice-yearly scrutinizing amendments and dialoguing with hyperactive Town Meeting Members for legality, then running a legal, smooth, fair meeting with decorum and difficult, split-second rulings.

We know both candidates well, including Kate on a great Moderator analogy, the quasi-judicial Zoning Board of Appeals, where she's been an impeccable/professional, fair and equitable standout. Her proven/broad/deep skills, judgement, and temperament are perfectly suited for many often-excruciating Moderator challenges, including making thoughtful, diverse committee appointments from an always inadequate candidate pool. And, it's time for a woman – especially this one! – at the podium!

Scott's however been a (recently un-successful) frequent/forceful advocate, not a "plus" for this by-definition neutral job. He's recently shown very questionable *judgement*, including: (i) supporting last-minute 17% Police budget cuts (ignoring safety consequences, circumventing months-long vetting/hearings); (ii) giving Town Meeting legally-dubious control over Town litigation (including, say, disciplining officers, and zoning cases); and (iii) *shockingly* fighting a collectively-bargained Police contract with a 2½% raise and long-hard-fought (PAX supported) body cameras ("transparency, e.g. G.Floyd/D.Chauvin!) concessions!

On that, he and his allies seemed merely knee-jerk anti-police, anti-union, and anti-truth – *misrepresenting* (in a TMM letter) "a raise 0.5% more than other [contracts]," omitting Firefighters' identical raise; *distorting* out-of-context ACLU's mentioning "high potential for abuse," omitting its bottom-line "*cameras not only document violent encounters but also deter them*" (www.aclu.org/press-releases/no-tape-no-testimony-how-courts-can-ensure-responsible-use-body-cameras); citing an outlier study seemingly disputing the overwhelming consensus, "*cameras are often touted* as a means of ensuring accountability"; and faulting "[no] necessary protocols/limitations," which everywhere (including Brookline) come afterwards. [See *Chair's Column*.]

Forceful T/M advocacy is great, but not for the Moderator. Kate's exemplified "*moderate*" temperament -- and greater respect for "process" that's so crucial for local "good government." We've been blessed by three post-'70's Moderators – Wyner, Sapers, and Gadsby – all humanly fallible, all outstanding!

Brookline needs Kate Poverman to fill their shoes. She deserves – and T/M needs – your vote May 4th.

Marty Rosenthal & Neil Gordon

The View From Beacon Hill

Rep. Tommy Vitolo

The last year has been busy on Beacon Hill, even if we haven't spent much time at the State House. Covid-19 required that a slow-moving body steeped in tradition to move quickly and change its ways, and the legislature stepped up to the task.

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the legislature passed several laws that expire when the ongoing State of Emergency declaration expires. Laws were passed to require health insurance cover 100 percent of the cost of Covid-19 testing, treatment, and vaccination. Expanded mail-in voting access and early voting options were created, important for both the 2020 elections and the upcoming 2021 local elections. Rep Ciccolo (D-Lexington) and I helped ensure that virtual Town Meetings could be held during the pandemic as well. Just last month, we passed a Covid-19 relief bill ensuring workers can access paid sick leave if they contract Covid-19, are ordered to quarantine, or need time off to be vaccinated. We also passed quite a few important non-Covid bills, both small and large. Juneteenth is now a state holiday. Equity in maternal health legislation passed, focused on improving birth outcomes for Black and brown mothers and children. Finding that telehealth during the pandemic helped expand coverage options, improve outcomes, and reduce costs, we've required that telehealth be made available permanently. We passed the ROE Act, expanding access to abortion care for both pregnant people under 18 and for pregnancies with fatal fetal anomalies. A commission will study the use of indigenous imagery on the state seal and flag; another commission will study sexual violence on higher education campuses in the state.

We passed a significant police reform bill that creates professional licensure requirements for officers, bans choke holds and imposes clear limits of force regarding the use of tear gas, no-knock warrants, and shooting at fleeing vehicles. The law creates a duty to intervene and/or report when another officer is using excessive force and prohibits an officer from having sex with a person in custody. Digital surveillance is severely restricted. The law also creates several commissions focused on persons of African American heritage, Latinx heritage, and persons with disabilities, as well as the study of qualified immunity.

We passed a climate bill, overcoming numerous delay tactics imposed by a Republican senator and the Governor. The bill is comprehensive and aggressive, centered around a directive for the entire Commonwealth to reach net-zero emissions by 2050. The bill supports expanded energy efficiency, more offshore wind, improved solar PV programs including targeting low-income ownership, new workforce development programs, EV charging and support, and improved natural gas safety standards. Inspired by Brookline's fossil fuel free efforts, it includes a net-zero municipal opt-in building code, reflecting language filed as an amendment by myself and Rep Khan (D-Newton). Opposed by the Governor and real estate interests, I was proud that both leadership and rank & file voted overwhelmingly to retain the building code language in the final bill despite Governor Baker's objections.

We also passed several budgets and bond bills over the past year, and I'm proud that Brookline did well thanks to the efforts of Senator Creem and Reps Moran, Coppinger, Elugardo, and myself. We were successful in securing funding to support rezoning in Brookline's commercial districts, renovate several Brookline Housing Authority properties, support Steps to Success, the Brookline Center for Community Mental Health, and the Brookline Senior Center, and fund the preparation of meals for food banks by Brookline independent restaurants.

In the upcoming session I look forward to helping build back our state better, serving as the newly appointed Vice Chair of Election Laws.

We're hoping for a post-COVID "annual" meeting in September, with guest speakers **Rahsaan Hall, Director of the ACLU's Racial Justice Program**, and our **State Senator, Cindy Creem** on "What's Next for Mass. Incarceration after 2018's Baby Step Reforms." We will also present the following awards:

JACK BACKMAN & FRANK FARLOW SOCIAL JUSTICE AWARD: To **Barbara Scotto**

ETHEL & BEN ALPER PROGRESSIVE ACTIVISM AWARD: To **Mothers Out Front** and **Brookline Community Aging Network**

ETHEL HALPERIN LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD: To retiring Town Clerk Pat Ward, and Moderator Sandy Gadsby, each for decades of invaluable service to Brookline.

TOWN MEETING UPDATE

Neil Gordon

Covid changed the traditional look and feel of Town Meeting, in both Spring and Fall, but it didn't change the diligence with which our Town Meeting Members did the Town's business. We approved a sensible budget, defeating wrong-minded and yes, irresponsible last minute budget amendments that bypassed any process of reasonable review. We approved a police union contract that provided a fair wage increase and gained a major concession from the union on body/dash cameras. We defeated the wrong-minded notion that Town Meeting, in semi-annual sessions and without the benefit of executive sessions, could manage litigation better than the Select Board. We amended bylaws that provide more inclusion, and more transparency.

Our upcoming Town Meeting, virtual, as well, will surely have a new look and feel, as long-serving Moderator Sandy Gadsby steps down. In a competitive race to replace Sandy, either Kate Poverman or Scott Ananian will pick up the gavel for the first time. They'll preside over debates on a third of a billion dollar budget, zoning changes related to short-term rentals and micro-units, marijuana delivery, and more. The full Town Meeting warrant, and article explanations, can be found at <https://www.brooklinema.gov/1020/Town-Meeting-Files>. Of special note, PAX board members remain active in bringing legislation to Town Meeting: WA12, requiring added roll call votes, and WA22, requiring the posting of meeting agenda packets on the Town website, both co-petitioned by Neil Gordon (with Mike Toffel, TMM8), resuscitating a 2017 Article by PAX that we agreed to refer for efforts by the Town Administrator's Office, which has since worked on it, but far too slowly; WA25, requiring new buildings in the "Emerald Island Special District to be Fossil Fuel Free, co-petitioned by Michael Zoorob (with seven others); WA34, a resolution pertaining to the adoption of a voluntary Payment in Addition to Tax" program, petitioned by Paul Harris, Jane Gilman and Bob Miller (and five others); and, WA 35, a resolution to encourage voting in Brookline, petitioned by Michael Zoorob and Amanda Zimmerman (and four others).

JOIN BROOKLINE PAX OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP TODAY!

Please make your dues check payable to Brookline PAX. Return dues (\$30 for singles; \$50 for families; \$20 for students or fixed income) to Gary Jones, Treasurer Brookline PAX P.O. Box 470525 Brookline, MA 02447-0525 or go to BrooklinePax.org for info about giving via ActBlue. Thank you!

HOUSING POLICY AND A BROOKLINE FOR EVERYONE

Jeff Wachter

One of the most pressing challenges facing many of Brookline's residents is the increasing unaffordability of housing. More than a quarter of Brookline households spend over 30% of their income on housing; and an average family of 4 earning more than twice our median income, more than \$200,000, can't comfortably afford to raise a family in Brookline without help. **Brookline for Everyone** was established in 2019 to focus attention on the issue of housing affordability. An increasingly large body of research points to a handful of problems that have brought us to this point – from exclusionary zoning, increasing economic stratification, and regulatory barriers that prevents our housing supply from keeping up with demand. While the local housing market is clearly linked to metro-wide dynamics, Brookline can and should do our part to both eliminate obvious barriers to housing that have been erected throughout the 20th century and once again show itself to be a progressive leader for the region by implementing policies that can move the needle on environmental sustainability, racial justice, and economic inclusion by legalizing more housing opportunities. Closer to home, we can create the environment where our kids and grandkids can afford to live in Brookline to raise their families, residents new and old can maintain and strengthen the community vibrancy that brought so many of us here in the first place, and we can avoid becoming a community only accessible to the super-rich and the handful of low-income people lucky enough to win the housing lottery.

So, what can we be doing to achieve the goal of addressing housing unaffordability? Many of the proposals we support fit right in with proposals from Senator Warren's presidential platform, HUD Secretary Marcia Fudge's recent comments before Congress, and President Biden's "American Jobs Plan." According to the White House's American Jobs Plan fact-sheet, "exclusionary zoning laws – like minimum lot sizes, mandatory parking requirements, and prohibitions on multifamily housing – have inflated housing and construction costs and locked families out of areas with more opportunities." Secretary Fudge argued before the Senate that the zoning policies targeted by Biden administration proposals have served as barriers that lock people out of neighborhoods with greater opportunity. This history and these arguments are why Brookline for Everyone has advocated for reallowing small apartments, notifying renters about land use meetings, eliminating minimum parking requirements, and robust multifamily housing and mixed-use development along major thoroughfares in Brookline.

Please join us in the fight for housing affordability at www.BrooklineForEveryone.com. We believe Brookline can live up to the progressive identity we claim, and ensure a socially and racially just, environmentally sustainable, and accessible community for everyone.

Brookline PAX
87 Ivy Street
Brookline, MA 02446

Brookline PAX endorses:

SELECT BOARD: BERNARD GREENE and NANCY HELLER

SCHOOL COMMITTEE: JENNIFER MONOPOLI, DAVID PEARLMAN, and DIMITRY ANSELME STEVEN EHRENBERG (1-YEAR)

TOWN CLERK: BENJAMIN KAUFMAN

HOUSING AUTHORITY: MICHAEL JACOBS

TRUSTEES OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY: REGINA HEALY, CAROL LOHE, KRISTIN HUNG and SASSAN ZEHLKA

**BALLOT QUESTION 2:
VOTE YES FOR THE COMMUNITY PRESERVATION ACT**



For Town Meeting, Brookline PAX endorses:

Precinct 1

Cathleen Cavell*
Neil Gordon*
Carol Hillman*
Sean Lynn-Jones*
Amy Evenson

Precinct 2

Linda Olson Pehlke*
Livia Schacter-Kahl*
Christopher Kahl
Jaqueline Baum

Precinct 3

Dennis Doughty*
Gary Jones*
Jane Gilman*
Don Leka*
Marie Gina Hahn
Michael Zoorob

Precinct 4

Sarah Axelrod*
Sarah Boehs*
Martha Farlow*
Daniel Fishman*
Marissa Vogt
Jennifer Raitt (2yr)

Precinct 5

Robert Daves*
William Reyelt*
Claire Stampfer*
Anthony Flint

Precinct 6

John Bassett*
Christopher Dempsey*
Daniel Saltzman*
Liam Hafter

Precinct 7

Christi Electris*
Susan Granoff*
Jonathan Margolis*
Chi Chi Wu
Amanda Zimmerman

Precinct 8

David-Marc Goldstein*
Anita Johnson*
Edward Loechler*
Michael Toffel*
Tracie Burns

Precinct 9

Martin Rosenthal*
Judith Vanderkay*
George Abbot White*
Sarah Kitterman
Gerald Tuckman
Thomas Marton (2y)

Precinct 10

Linda Davis*
Prinz Dela Cruz
Roslyn Feldberg

Precinct 11

Shira Fischer
Jonathan Golden

Precinct 12

Mark Lowenstein*
Harry Margolis*
Petra Gospodnetic Bignami

Precinct 13

Chris Chanyasulkit*
Ada Tadmor*

Precinct 14

Sassan Zelkha*

Precinct 15

Eileen Berger*
Barbara Gutman*
Janice Kahn*
Ira Krepchin*

Precinct 16

Scott Gladstone*
Alisa Jonas*
David Day (2 years)

***Incumbent**