

Brookline PAX 60th Anniversary

NEWSLETTER

Volume XXXIII May 2022 Co-editors: Marty Rosenthal & Neil Gordon www.brooklinepax.org

ANNUAL MEETING:

September—Date: TBD

Another try for (a) “live,” and (b) “What’s Next for Mass. Incarceration after 2018’s Reforms”

Guest Speakers: Rahsaan Hall, formerly of ACLU, running for Plymouth DA, and our State Senator, Majority Leader Cindy Creem.

Chair's Column/Hopes: Collaborative Progress for Brookline and Peace/Freedom for Ukraine—Marty Rosenthal

Again, my only Chair perk, besides (proudly) being often pilloried by a small but loud (e.g. in social media, which I abjure) number of PAX attackers, is here, to annually offer my personal reflections for PAX-related affairs. 1st, PAX’s Board (as always by a super-majority vote) has enthusiastically endorsed a record number (218) of progressive candidates for May 3rd’s town election. Please take this newsletter with you to the polls, and please vote for PAX endorsees!

Ronald Reagan said, “Trust but verify.” Being more cynical, I say, “Distrust AND verify. So. why PAX? Please keep reading and spend time in our website! We now proudly enter our 7th decade of “thinking globally, acting locally,” outlasting many, maybe all MA grassroots progressive groups. (Some early PAX leaders persist, like Board Member Chobee Hoy!) And while some folk now (myopically) are critical of long-term activism/service, PAX has always valued both new idealists, and the wisdom that can only be acquired over time, as well as gratitude for public service.

Again, PAX – & I & our Board Members – are never shy about immersing ourselves in hot and controversial issues, a few mentioned below. For that, three things seem evident from my (mere)44-year perspective:

- 1st, my annual mantra, Aristotle’s “Criticism is something we can avoid easily by saying nothing, doing nothing, and being nothing,”
- 2nd, Brookline politics for the past few years has been more nasty-divisive-personal than ever before, including compared to rent control, overrides, Pledge of Allegiance, and many more.
- 3rd, I’ve been a neo-disciple of Br. David Steindl-Rast, who Ted Talks that the key to “happiness” is gratitude. See also Elie Weisel, “When a person doesn’t have gratitude, something is missing in his or her humanity; a person can almost be defined by his or her attitude toward gratitude”; and Meister Eckhart [von Hochheim]: “If the only prayer you ever say in your entire life is thank you, it will be enough.” So, I’m “globally,” as well as “locally”) very grateful for the blessings of Brookline’s community and government, and for PAX and its Board.
- 4th, while I’m not big on “hope,” preferring “action unless 100% hopeless,” being a devotee of another maxim, Ben Franklin’s “He [sic] that lives upon hope will die fasting.” Nonetheless, I’m gingerly – more than last year – wading into hopefulness waters: that we’re soon moving past divisiveness, instead to working more collaboratively/productively to improve our community and its government, and to pursue social/racial justice.

Why? (1) my 75 years here, where (I reiterate) Warren-Sanders beat Biden 64-36%, then Biden’s 87.6% over Trump; and (2) my beliefs: (a) though our activist-intense form of government always needs improvements, it’s worth its messiness, and (b) for inter alia some below examples, we’re now really approaching the aforementioned last word of my 2021 column’s title, “the Good, the Imperfect, the Ugly & the Hope.” Ben F can fly a kite

So, I'm (A) GRATEFUL for ... and (B) HOPE that:

1. (A) for PAX's Board, with its various perspectives, priorities, and passions, but all engaged, thoughtful, progressive activists, ... and (B) that all of them will help the 218 PAX-endorsed TMM candidates get elected.
2. (A) for "our" unfairly maligned Brookline COPS, who in truth are generally "excellent (albeit improve-able)" – IMHO from both my extensive statewide criminal defense career/contacts, and also both ACLU and intense BPD reform involvement; ... and (B) that (1) BPD's community-inflicted abysmal morale (starting with 2020's failed/insulting 17% BPD "defunding" proposal, then a failed effort to deny them a collectively bargained and fair raise, and more blows and more disrespect, sadly from one or two corners of the highest level of Town government - all of this tragically causing young (ethnic/gender) diverse cops to depart – let's also address shamefully non-competitive base salaries, and hire and promote the officers that Town Meeting voted to fund; and (2) the (Bernard Greene-led) Police Reform Committee's Report will, as Jeffrey Allen & I wrote in our 1987 Report, "be viewed as the beginning, not the end, of a process of Selectmen [sic] involvement in these issues.... the broad, underlying issues require[ing] constant and perpetual vigilance."
3. (A) for foreseeing post-May 3rd a less divisive, more positive/collaborative Town Meeting, as well as similar Select Board progress; ... and (B) that we'll thusly prioritize a more diverse/inclusive community, and work on (not just discuss), things like (a) our biggest challenge, additional affordable housing, but without becoming Kenmore Sq., (b) less exaggerations and hyperbolic negativity about how awful (racist and exclusive) a vocal minority, who nonetheless want to live here, very loudly assert Brookline is, and (c) retaining/promoting our excellent ethnic/gender diverse cops (see above)
4. (A) for actually putting Gerald Alston's 10+-year saga behind us, after T/Mtg (I included) voted to pay him a hugely excessive \$11 million ... and (B) that (1) while the saga has some obvious lessons, like don't promote someone who used the n-word, even if in a mere " [sic] moment of private road-rage, also that (2) it will soon be far less exaggerated by some – and misunderstood by many – as ostensible proof that Brookline's "systematically racist."

A personal example of divisiveness: knowing Maura Healey's Machine would win the Democratic caucus, I offered to run as a Chang-Diaz delegate, but was rejected by Sonia's organizers, many known to be Raul Fernandez supporters—whose "inclusiveness" excludes anyone with more nuanced views than their (sorry) "black and white" ones. Life has many greys; and zero-sum willful blindness to them is not only reckless, but counterproductive for progressive change.

(Another, and more, personal note: PAX's Board has NOT yet endorsed people for Sept.'s contested Democrat primaries, but my personal choices are Sonia Chang-Diaz for governor, Andrea Campbell for AG, Chris Dempsey for auditor, Tommy Vitolo—a PAX Board Member—for state rep.)

We had two other wins and one big loss. The loss was the passing of PAX's longtime Treasurer, Library Trustee, and passionate liberal, Gary Jones.

The wins were: a successful, last-ditch, campaign opposing Brookline Court's shifting Juvenile cases to Dedham; and a gratifying 195-25 Town Meeting vote encouraging long-denied legal fees indemnity for 3-decade TMM, Advisory Committee, and PAX Board member, Stanley Spiegel (my client), the one financial victim of Alston's case, which (legally "frivolously") sued him, too – mostly for one 2014 conversation with another TMM in townhall.

So again, I see light – and "hope" – for the end of a 2+-year bickering tunnel. As per Jesse Jackson, let's all "keep [or resuscitate] hope alive" – and work – together/better – for social and racial justice. Finally, for (welcome!) newbies, or for others (usually upset about some specific PAX stance, often ignoring its explanation) who neo-derisively ask, "What's PAX stand for?" Again, please see our chock-full website, brooklinepax.org.



PAX Endorsement Process —Neil Gordon, TMM1, PAX Secretary

This is perhaps the most robust and most important town election ever, with, as the result of redistricting, 246 Town Meeting Seats in play. Over 300 candidates are vying for a chance to represent you.

PAX has endorsed 218 of those candidates, through a robust process that includes an extensive questionnaire, an analysis of voting records (for incumbents), personal knowledge of candidates, and more.

We don't publicly discuss individual candidates, the factors we weigh generally apply to all: We compare what we know about candidates with our core principles, but Board Members have differing priorities.

In the same spirit, we also make recommendations on Articles that come before Town Meeting. Again, our recommendations are rooted in our progressive principles. Our goal is always to support what's best for Brookline, and create a welcoming and inclusive community for everyone who lives or works here or who visits or travels through our town

Brookline PAX: A Guide Star —Terry Kwan, PAX Board

Brookline PAX has been an important guide star in navigating Brookline and Massachusetts politics since I began working for the Brookline Public Schools from 1974–1983 and later to live in Brookline and become a member of the School Committee serving six terms from 1984-2002. Over the years, I've been a member of Brookline PAX but never on the board.

So why now, have I agreed to join the PAX board? I read in the press and meeting minutes increasingly hostile and vitriolic denunciations of Brookline employees, elected officials and hardworking volunteers I had known and worked with for years and saw many leave with unjustifiably tarnished reputations or worse. This may be consistent with the style of current political rhetoric, but it is no way to address and correct problems. It is with the hope that I might share some lessons learned over the years from the leadership and insights of the Brookline community in general and the Brookline schools and PAX specifically that I acceded to Marty Rosenthal's invitation to join the board.

Brookline has never backed away from controversy or shied away from major innovations and disruptions—many times leading to changes first started here and spreading far from our borders—but most successfully in an environment of respect for passionately held diverse opinions and for the many who serve as employees and volunteers in our community. As we have tried to teach the children in our schools, change is not just important, it is necessary. But the best way to do this is to engage in critical thinking, listening, asking questions, and involving everyone in finding solutions. Terry Kwan, a "new" PAX Board Member, has also been a Board Member of both the Asian Community Development Corp. & the Massachusetts School Building Authority.

To “Lead by Liberation”

—Donelle O'Neal, Sr. — PAX Board & TMM-4 & Advisory Committee Member

Ever since I was a child, being brought up at the historic Twelfth Baptist Church in Roxbury, the Second African Meeting House, I was taught the value of humanity, and what it means to “Led by Liberation”. Humanity over isms. Twelfth Baptist Church was once deemed, “the fugitive church.” (“Church of the Fugitive Slaves in Boston,” from Anthony Burns: A History by Charles E. Stevens, 1856.)

Brookline PAX knows what it means to be humane, which, “Encompasses the best qualities of mankind.”

Brookline PAX advocates against ism, “an oppressive and especially discriminatory attitude or belief.” I became a member of Brookline PAX over two decades ago, to continue advocating for those oppressed. As a BIPOC member of the Brookline PAX Board, I will always advocate for humanity over isms.

View from Beacon Hill—*Tommy Vitolo, State Rep. & PAX Board Member*

I have worked to make Massachusetts more equitable, strengthen our education system, and protect our environment.

We invested ARPA funds in affordable housing, direct payments to low-income essential workers, and refugee resettlement. I supported House-passed legislation to allow all residents to apply for driver's licenses regardless of immigration status. The Legislature also passed laws to strengthen voter access, reduce racial inequalities in maternal health, and require colleges to appropriately address campus sexual assault.

This year's budget invests in education, making good on the promises of the Student Opportunity Act. We continue to pass legislation like the Genocide Education Bill and the Women's History Trail Act, that will help educate students on social justice issues. This work is only effective if students show up to class, ready to learn, which is why the House is poised to fully fund universal free school meals.

The House passed its off-shore wind bill, paving the way for renewable energy and creating thousands of good-paying, union jobs. I continue to advocate for the electrification of our buildings. With the Senate passing its climate bill last week, I look forward to supporting a strong companion bill in the House. —Tommy Vitolo represents Brookline's 15th Norfolk district

www.tommyvitolo.com tjvitolo@tommyvitolo.com 617.872.8

On the Climate Crisis—*John Harris, PAX Board & Co-Chair of Climate Action*

Brookline

At Climate Action Brookline's April meeting, theoretical physicist Rich Rosen, told us that to meet the IPCC's climate goals, Brookline needs to reduce its greenhouse gases (GHGs) by 6% a year for each of the next 19 years.

42% of greenhouses gas (GHG) emissions in MA comes from the transportation sector, 32% from buildings, and 19% from electricity generation. So as soon as we implement - ASAP - strategies to decarbonize our transportation, buildings, and electricity generation - that is, generate electricity through renewable sources and "electrify everything," we will have made great strides.

Brookline residents have been working on solutions to the climate crisis for some time. Since Climate Action Brookline was founded in 2000, Mothers Out Front and Elders Climate Action have opened up local branches. The Brookline Chamber of Commerce and Rotary Club have held events dealing with the climate crisis. Brookline High

School has long had a club for student environmentalists. The Select Board Climate Action Committee (SBCAC) has morphed into the Zero Emissions Advisory Board. We have been attending lectures, buying cargo bikes, electric cars and induction cooktops, signing petitions, tabling, demonstrating, and proposing the occasional environmental warrant.

Brookline's Town Administrator, the Planning, Public Works, Building and Transportation Departments, and others, understand the urgency of the climate crisis). It's all good. Now we need to up our game. We need to get organized so we can all work together.

We ALL need to keep an open mind, to innovate, to coordinate and synergize our efforts, to respect each other's work and to NOT step on each other's toes - there's enough work for everybody. Let's get busy!

Affordability and Density: –Stanley Spiegel, PAX Board, TMM-2

Despite what some assert, allowing more housing density will not necessarily produce more affordable housing. It could mean less. Due to supply and demand, more units will cause prices to drop only if supply grows faster than the demand. In today's economy, there's zero incentive for developers to allow that. Why overbuild when it's more profitable to simply meet the growing demand for high-end housing?

That's the real purpose our GOP governor's housing bill (allowing upzoning for more density by a simple majority vote): to provide more housing for new, high-paid, high-tech workers — not for affordable housing. Its motivation was to assist corporate growth — largely white male, highly skilled and

salariated new hires.

With corporate expansion providing that influx, developers will keep building luxury units for them — except the few below-market units mandated by our inclusionary zoning. In fact, since upzoning for more density makes land more valuable (for greater development), higher costs will make it even tougher for non-profit developers to build affordable housing. For more affordable housing, we need a thoughtful plan, like increasing our inclusionary zoning's affordable component from 15 to at least 20%, and dedicating money for affordable units' construction. Simply focusing on upzoning and greater density will only make Brookline worse for everyone.

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Brookline Votes Tuesday, May 3rd



Polls Are Open from 7 AM until 8 PM

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For Town Meeting
Pages 6 & 7 Inside

For

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Helen Charlupski, Steven Ehrenberg, Kelly Frias

SCHOOL COMMITTEE—2 Years

Nancy Rhei Gorer

CONSTABLE

Regina Frawley, Neil Gordon, Deborah Hatzieleftheriad
