

Long Range Planning & Policy Subcommittee  
Article 36 Recommendation - 4/1/2021

The subcommittee met at 6:30 PM on April 1, 2021 via Zoom to consider Article 36, a resolution to establish a Moderator's Committee to report on and address the Brookline Fiscal Advisory Committee's February 2020 Report recommendations. (Toffel, et.al).

The meeting was attended online by the five subcommittee members: Carla Benka; Cliff Brown; John Doggett; Amy Hummel; and Michael Sandman (chair). They were joined by the petitioner, Michael Toffel, TMM 8; and Carol Levin, AC & BFAC member; Nicole McClelland, TMM 11; Jon VanScoyuc, Select Board; and Charla Whitney.

The petitioner, Mike Toffel explained that he expected the proposed Moderator's committee to receive status reports from Town bodies on their progress toward implementing the recommendations of the Brookline Fiscal Advisory Committee (BFAC), which delivered its final report in February 2020. The theme of the article is accountability, and the petitioner is concerned that while Select Board say they would be interested in putting the status of BFAC on their agenda, that has not happened. Thus a Moderator's committee seems like the best approach, especially since BFAC's recommendations were addressed not just to the Select Board but to a number of public bodies.

The discussion in the subcommittee centered on three main points:

- (1) Has enough time gone by for recommendations to have been implemented, given the impact of the pandemic on 2020? And do we have the staff needed to implement the recommendations?

Both the petitioner and subcommittee members acknowledged that implementation was supposed to take place over a 12-18 month period, and the petitioner contended that since 14 months have elapsed, it was reasonable to ask for status reports. A member of BFAC who attended said that some sort of body should be monitoring and reporting on the implementation of BFAC recommendations. That should be ongoing; it will take ongoing reminders of the recommendations. So a small Moderator's committee should be related to do this.

- (2) Is a Moderator's committee that is charged with seeking status reports the appropriate way to move implementation forward? Why not reconvene a subset of BFAC members, or ask for the nine public bodies to whom recommendations were made to report directly to Town Meeting?

The petitioner pointed out that BFAC dissolved after it delivered its final report in February 2021. And he did not feel that it was necessary to reconvene the entire group for the job of seeking status reports.

(3) How would the nine public bodies (including the Select Board, School Committee and Advisory Committee) to whom recommendations were addressed respond to the “scolding” implied in the last four Whereas clauses?

The petitioner suggested that the chairs of public bodies could write reports on their progress and he’d be happy, but they haven’t done that. They may or may not respond if TM asks them; they don’t necessarily feel that they report to TM. And WA 36 asks for reports on the progress made and what happens next. That’s not scolding. The proposed committee is a reporting body, not an implementation body. He also acknowledged that the various recommendation take time to implement.

Despite some doubts that asking for status reports to Moderator’s committee was the best mechanism for encouraging implementation, the subcommittee did acknowledge the need for some sort of prodding to move implementation forward. The subcommittee added the following phrase to the article, and it was accepted by the petitioner:

Add at the end of Resolved Clause (3): “and anything else the Moderator deems appropriate or helpful.”

Vote on the amendment: 4-0-1

Benka	Y
Brown	Y
Doggett	A
Hummel	Y
Sandman	Y

Recommendation for favorable action on the motion as amended: 4-0-1

Benka	A
Brown	Y
Doggett	A
Hummel	Y
Sandman	Y