

**Town of Brookline
Advisory Committee Minutes**

September 30, 2021

To access a recording of this meeting, click on the link below:

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Access Passcode: .Z9!@U32

Present: Scott Ananian, Carla Benka, Ben Birnbaum, Harry Bohrs, Clifford Brown, John Doggett, Dennis Doughty, Harry Friedman, David-Marc Goldstein, Susan Granoff, Kelly Hardebeck, Alisa Jonas, Janice Kahn, Carol Levin, Linda Olson Pehlke, Donelle O’Neal, David Pollak, Carlos Ridruejo, Michael Sandman, Lee Selwyn, Alok Somani, Paul Warren, Christine Westphal, Neil Wishinsky, Chi Chi Wu

Absent: George Cole, Steve Kanes, Pamela Lodish, Amy Hummel (Neil Gordon – late arrival)

Also Attending: Deputy Town Administrator Melissa Goff, Petitioner Articles 11 and 12 Mike Toffel (TMM 8), and other members of the public.

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM.

Announcements: Pursuant to this Board’s Authority under 940 CMR 29.10 (8), all Advisory Committee Members will be participating remotely via telephone or video conferencing due to emergency regulations regarding the Corona virus. The Chair has reviewed the requirements of the regulations. There is a quorum physically present and all votes taken will be recorded by roll call so all above listed Advisory Committee members will be allowed to vote.

1. 7:30 Public Comments

Mike Toffel noted that not all of the three subcommittee reports included roll call votes.
Dennis Doughty clarified that the only time a roll call was not shown was when the vote was unanimous.

2. 7:45 Public Hearing

- Article 1 - Unpaid bills (Select Board)

3. 7:50 Public Meeting

- Report, deliberation and possible vote on Article 1 (Unpaid bills)

By a roll call vote of 25-0-0 the Advisory Committee recommended No Action on Article 1.

- Report, deliberation and possible vote on Article 10 - Legislation to authorize the Town to hold Hybrid Town Meetings (Select Board)

- Report, deliberation, and possible vote on Article 11 - Legislation to exempt the Town from in-person quorums (Bastien, Toffel, et al)

- Report, deliberation, and possible vote on Article 12 - Resolution to encourage the Select Board to provide equipment and mandates to allow for the Town to hold Hybrid Meetings for all public bodies (Bastien, Toffel, et al)

Harry Bohrs gave the Administration and Finance Subcommittee report.

WA 10 seeks Town Meeting's authorization to file a petition with the State Legislature to permit Brookline to hold hybrid Town Meetings. The hybrid model would allow Town Meeting Members to attend Town Meeting and participate in person or to attend and participate remotely by means of a video conferencing platform. It is assumed that Zoom will be platform although there may be better ones. AV upgrades to the high school auditorium would be an added expense. Tablets would also be necessary. Additional staff would be required to provide support. Home rule legislation, if not unique to the requesting town or municipality, may not have support on the Beacon Hill but Brookline's request may be unique enough to attract support. Does a remote Town Meeting help or hinder civility? On the other side of this question is one of access. We have seen good attendance during remote meetings, which may allow for other voices that we may not otherwise hear from, i.e. single parent who cannot get child care to attend in person. The subcommittee unanimously recommended favorable action on WA 10.

Comment: Subcommittee Chair Dennis Doughty discussed this with Rep. Tommy Vitolo following the hearing and he thinks a resolution is preferable to a home rule petition. The Attorney General needs to be persuaded and a resolution could be crafted to encourage the legislature and the AG to relax the requirements. There still may be an opportunity to propose a substitute motion before Town Meeting.

WA 11 (essentially a companion to Article 12) is another home rule petition that seeks to exempt Brookline from in-person quorums as required by Open Meeting Law. There was again a question as to whether this should be a resolution instead. Everyone was supportive of the intent.

The subcommittee recommended favorable action on Article 11, with a vote of 4-0-1.

A **MOTION** was made to accept the subcommittee's reports (favorable action) on WA 10 and WA 11.

A **MOTION** was made and seconded to debate Articles 10 and 11. By a vote of 16-2 and X abstentions the motion carries.

Harry noted that these articles do not have financial costs per se, but if we move down that path, IT would have to come to Town Meeting for appropriations.

Comment: Does the AC want to take a position on this article or do we just want to send the Subcommittee Report to Town Meeting? Asking permission does not have financial implications. The point to "reinventing" ourselves was to step aside and let Town Meeting decide when there were no financial implications. Not sure why we are making a recommendation.

It would be the choice of the AC to make a recommendation up or down to Town Meeting. We may have to reformat it to fit the template.

The subcommittee always takes votes and the chair didn't see the spreadsheet that suggested that there wasn't a need to be a vote.

Q. Knowing what you know now, would you have made a recommendation on 10 and 11?

A. Perhaps not.

Comment: We have a poor substitute for Town Meeting and committee meetings. They work on Zoom but not well. Suggests that you don't even have to show up. Terrible idea and not supporting it.

Comment: Not surprised we are having difficulty with this new format exactly because it is new. Uncomfortable with the subcommittee report being a pass through without Advisory Committee discussion. While I benefit from remote involvement, there are some concerns and down sides. There are technologies being used by voting blocks that we are not even aware of in terms of strategy. When you are at Town Meeting, every TMM is expected to hear whatever everyone else is hearing.

The Chair asked that everyone have patience as we work this out. The hope is that there will be some issues where the AC will be happy sharing the subcommittee report without adding to the debate.

Comment: Differences between live Town Meeting where votes are shown in the moment vs on Zoom where results are reported next day. Need to find a way to have real time vote reporting.

Q. Did the subcommittee explore an IT solution to allow hybrid meetings and retain the real time voting reports?

A. We did touch on that and IT is exploring and evaluating solutions for voting or any other number of things. There may be something better than Zoom.

A. When we first started the process of doing a fully remote Town Meeting, a committee was established to research that, rejected the idea of using 2 simultaneous sets of tools, one for voting and one for conferencing so it wasn't an original requirement. Lexington uses a custom software that anecdotally was well received but we don't have any firsthand knowledge of it yet.

Comment: The Addendum of what Dennis told us about his conversation with Rep. Vitolo should be included in the report. Nothing in the report related to the public's comments. Recommend the grid that was developed should be at the beginning of this. Even though we don't know the specifics of these expenses, making a recommendation would not be serving Town Meeting well. Perhaps we could offer a range but I think we (the AC) should make a recommendation on these. If we go to full participation to Town Meeting, in the foreseeable future, people will be wearing masks. The advantage of Zoom is at least get to see each other's faces. In live Town Meeting, people are often far away from you or even have backs to you. So there are pluses and minuses. I am concerned about the expiration of remote meetings especially if there are lingering issues about COVID at that time and the impact on our ability to do our work.

Comment about the structure of the report – one of things that is pointing out, it isn't clear that a subcommittee report to the AC would be identical in format in content and format as the Combined Report. Or will it be transformed in some other way for Town Meeting.

The Chair stated the intent was to give the subcommittees a template that could be used to transpose their report into a report to Town Meeting.

Comment: If these will transform into resolutions, it is important to know that before coming to Town Meeting. There are tradeoffs. We don't have a good track record predicting which articles will create the most debate at Town Meeting.

Comment: If we just send this to Town Meeting essentially saying do with it what you will, I don't think we are doing our job. Some things I would pass on but this is not one of those issues. Benefit we provide is we do our homework and bring in data and we don't guess at things when we report to Town Meeting. There is convenience to the Zoom format, but what is the balance? It doesn't mean however that we need to keep using the tools.

Comment: I liked the subcommittee reports. They were short and under one page. The idea that anyone would want to make them longer and add more material, is counterproductive. People will be less likely to read them. Also want to make a point about bandwidth and the idea that if AC spends more time talking about something that such an effort will have significance to Town Meeting. This idea that they want lots of info from Advisory, I am not seeing it. People want convenience. They have limited attention and bandwidth. I think we need to give the process a chance.

Comment: Agree reports should be short and to the point. This report I don't think would provide enough information however. I would like more bullet points of benefits and detriments. We lose a lot if we are not in person but would like to leave the option open. In most circumstances people should be in person, but options should be available if lack of child care, etc.

Comment: I am in favor of these articles because not sure what facts or details can be added to the reports already. An example of what Arlington has been doing already for two years now. Need to advance this to the State level.

Comment: Concern with what Paul said about people using technology to develop strategy. Idea that we know more than Town Meeting and we have to spoon feed them doesn't serve us. It just comes down to the effectiveness of the report and listing of plusses and minuses. Regarding costs – when something doesn't have enough of a financial impact to warrant a vote – if we get permission, then we have to decide that we are going to do it; at that point in time 12-24 months from now, then the costs would be evaluated. It is incorrect to suggest that this group could come up with any estimate to implement either of these two articles. That is why this group said these reports should be reports only with no recommendation.

Comment: I support these articles and these reports. Thanks to Kelly for coming up with the format. Helps focus and clarify our thinking and make us a more persuasive participant in Town Meeting. We are kidding ourselves if we believe long narratives are something that people read and respond to.

Comment: Stilted and confining for some, but it can make a difference to others with limited time and ability to get to physical meetings.

Comment: I have no problem moving to a method where we make no recommendations to Town Meeting. What I have a problem with is that I don't think subcommittees are representative of the full AC.

The chair offered some history about the moderator's committee on Virtual Town Meeting. We looked at a number of options for voting applications. Some of us sat in on the Lexington Town Meeting. If there is not yet a solution, there will be since there is a demand in the market. We had a hybrid meeting on March 10,

2020. We had a majority present – some people joining by Zoom and members of the public and that went well. Until the laptop I was lent ran out of battery but we have done this before.

Melissa Goff representing the Select Board on WA 10 noted that this is the first step of the process based on requests and the draft crafted by the former Town Moderator. Lexington is not exploring hybrid just yet.

A **MOTION** was made and seconded to amend to issue an expanded subcommittee report with relevant commentary from this meeting in the template provided by Kelly and without a recommendation. By a **VOTE** of 16-5-3 the Advisory Committee recommends a report without recommendation.

A **MOTION** was made and seconded for favorable action on **WA 10 AS AMENDED** a report based on the subcommittee's report and what was heard here without a recommendation. By a **VOTE** of 23-1-0 the Advisory Committee recommends a report without recommendation.

A **MOTION** was made and seconded for a report without a recommendation on **WA 11**. By a **VOTE** of 23-1-0 the Advisory Committee recommends a report without recommendation.

Harry gave an overview of WA 12 which is a resolution asking the Select Board to equip every conference room and municipal hearing room with video and audio technology within 12 months. The Town has committed to pursuing this and the Town and IT have been looking into this already and are piloting with the Select Board's hearing room initially. The Town is already evaluating systems and equipping hearing rooms with technology for remote meeting participation. Cost estimates range from \$20K to \$160K based on room sizes, etc. These are for the initial purchase of equipment, installation and training. Does not cover maintenance or replacement costs, or the cost of additional staff needed to provide technical support for each meeting (+\$70K potentially). The estimate also did not cover the costs of any additional laptops, monitors or projectors that would be needed. We don't have to convince the Town to do this as they are moving on this but they haven't figured out what equipment is needed and have limited experience.

The subcommittee changed language in the article asking that the Town come to Town Meeting with an outline of cost estimates for these upgrades. See below.

1. Brookline Town Meeting calls on the Select Board **to provide an outline including estimated costs** to equip **all** municipal conference and hearing rooms with audiovisual equipment to enable **all** public bodies meeting under OML to provide audiovisual participation access for attendees and members **to Town Meeting** by no later than November 1, 2022; and
2. Brookline Town Meeting calls on the Select Board, Moderator, and others who appoint public bodies to, once the legal and technological hurdles are surmounted, insist that Brookline public bodies meeting under OML **provide for** hybrid **meetings** rather than **only** via the tradition of meeting in-person **and** providing only telephone access to those seeking to participate remotely; and
3. The Town of Brookline should consider using non-traditional funding sources to fund the technology and training necessary to support public bodies meeting in a hybrid manner.

Mike Toffel doesn't have any detail beyond the aggregate numbers. I believe staff has in mind the Select Board to use as a pilot for hybrid meetings. Reluctant to meet in person until mask mandate is lifted. Perhaps we should use a different board or commission to pilot this such as the Advisory Committee. Not inventing new technologies just figuring out what is best for us. The amendments made by the subcommittee softens the resolution and weakens it. Previously it was let's just get this done in a year.

Melissa said they shared estimated low and high ends based on what information they have. Not sure what current staff capacity is for after-hours support.

12 meeting rooms in addition to Select Board and School Committee and not all are in Town Hall. We need to get clarification on this before submitting to Town Meeting. Dennis will get a list from Devon.

Comment: Nothing that relates to costs to maintain, manage or operate this equipment.

Comment: I think those numbers are pretty low. There are companies with huge IT departments that manage all of these types of systems. There are people who specialize in this and it might be worthwhile to engage a consultant with expertise. Pilot this in a smaller room such as in 103. Make sure the equipment works, people can be heard, etc. Installation, training and ongoing support are key. We should just go into our meeting and run it. With a lot of home automation, a consultant will tell you if the system is too complicated for the user to use it. If a user can't use it, you don't have a system. Engage someone, try it and when we see it works, deploy it throughout the Town.

Comment: Remove the date in the first paragraph of the resolution. That doesn't follow with what the subcommittee is suggesting and it may take more time before we even are ready to have meetings that are hybrid. Remove or change it. Consideration about this purchase – is it contingent upon getting around the quorum requirement? Is it worth the investment if we can't get around the quorum?

The Chair commented that, even if we have to have a quorum in the room with the chair in the room, we can have people still attend remotely by phone (though not preferable) but more fully when people join by Zoom.

Comment: The one component we are missing here is the public. It is about engagement in the democratic system. One remote hearing this morning had upwards of 30 people involved and engaged.

Comment: Regarding the date, just want to know the plan and costs before we jump in with both feet.

Comment: Hardware costs can be covered by ARPA a source of federal funding.

A **MOTION** was made and seconded to move as Amended by the Subcommittee. By a **VOTE** of 21-3-0 the motion carries.

A **MOTION** was made and seconded to revert to the petitioner's original language. By a **VOTE** of 7-17-1 the motion fails.

Mike Toffel noted that a sense of urgency is missing around this issue. COVID provisions expire April 2022 so recommend we install equipment so we don't lose access. Consider need to preserve access for elderly, and others. Get some rooms equipped appropriately. To back off from the proposed deadline seems inconsistent with prior concerns about equity.

Comment: If we revert to the original language, it is almost equivalent to no access. Need to be thoughtful and get correct equipment and ensure a quality experience otherwise we will be wasting a lot of money in addition to failing to fulfill the objective of this article.

4. 8:30 Update on Pierce School Project

Carol Levin gave a brief update on the Pierce School Project. Design Team presented in depth analysis on how you gauge environmental impact of different design options and cost differentials. Regardless of the option, we are looking at a cost of \$190M to \$200M in today's dollars. Any reduction for these price tags does not appear promising.

Q: Is that our share after MSBA funding? A: It will depend on options. Reusing historic Pierce Building and the amount the MSBA gives for renovation is different for new construction. Leave building empty, carrying cost needs to be lined up.

Q: They are holding on to old Pierce and rest of building is being demolished? A: Bringing the 1970s building up to code won't work. Leaving portions of the existing school intact and filling in with new buildings. Two other options propose a demo and two different designs for new construction.. They talk about three options but they are focused on four at this time.

We have asked how much space is being provided by number of students based on current enrollment and projected enrollment and what would those costs be and we are still waiting for that data. They hope to have an option selected by Thanksgiving so they can submit their plans to the MSBA.

Comment: Those \$190M costs include soft costs; Driscoll didn't have to relocate the kids but this will be part of the Pierce project. Relocation costs are typically built into the project but not eligible for MSBA reimbursement.

\$150M for construction costs. Interesting how narrow the range of costs are.

Q: What is the minimum number of students that all options accommodate and how does that compare to the max enrolment at Pierce in past years? A: Basically still trying to get this information. Don't know current enrollment or projections so waiting to hear. Next meeting is in 2 weeks.

Q: Use of historic portions of Pierce – historically flawed design where walls didn't go up to the ceiling. Can we assume that fundamental flaw will be corrected in all options that want to use portions of historic Pierce?
A: Really talking about just the 19th century brick building. Other portions using the ones that work for them, not the ones that have been problematic.

5. 8:45 Other business

Meeting next week at 5:45 pm and will have possibly three amendments to consider.

Upon a **MOTION** made and seconded to adjourn, and voted unanimously, the meeting was adjourned at 10:13 pm.

Documents Presented:

- Admin and Finance Subcommittee Report on Warrant Articles 10, 11 and 12

VOTES

| | Vote 1 | Vote 2 | Vote 3 | Vote 4 | Vote 5 | Vote 6 | Vote 7 | Vote 8 | Vote 9 |
|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| # Votes Yes | 24 | 16 | 0 | 16 | 23 | 23 | 0 | 7 | 21 |
| # Votes No | 0 | 2 | 0 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 17 | 3 |
| # Votes Abstain | 0 | 6 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Vote Description: | Article 1 - no action | Motion to debate 10 & 11 | Favorable action on 10 | Article 10: Amend to issue a report without a recommendation | Main motion | Article 11: Move to report without a recommendation | Article 12: Move the motion as revised by the subcommittee | Amend to the petitioner's original language | Main motion - per the subcommittee |
| | <i>Enter Y, N or A</i> | <i>Enter Y, N or A</i> | <i>Enter Y, N or A</i> | <i>Enter Y, N or A</i> | <i>Enter Y, N or A</i> | <i>Enter Y, N or A</i> | <i>Enter Y, N or A</i> | <i>Enter Y, N or A</i> | <i>Enter Y, N or A</i> |
| 1 Scott Ananian | Y | N | | N | Y | Y | | Y | Y |
| 2 Carla Benka | Y | Y | | Y | Y | Y | | N | Y |
| 3 Ben Birnbaum | Y | Y | | Y | Y | Y | | N | Y |
| 4 Harry Bohrs | Y | Y | | A | Y | Y | | N | Y |
| 5 Cliff Brown | Y | A | | Y | Y | Y | | N | Y |
| 6 George Cole | | | | | | | | | |
| 7 John Doggett | Y | Y | | N | Y | Y | | N | Y |
| 8 Dennis Doughty | Y | A | | A | Y | Y | | N | Y |
| 9 Harry Friedman | Y | Y | | Y | Y | Y | | N | N |
| 10 David-Marc Goldstein | Y | Y | | N | Y | Y | | N | Y |
| 11 Neil Gordon | | | | | | | | N | Y |
| 12 Susan Granoff | Y | Y | | N | Y | Y | | N | Y |
| 13 Kelly Hardebeck | Y | Y | | Y | Y | Y | | N | Y |
| 14 Amy Hummel | | | | | | | | | |
| 15 Alisa Jonas | Y | Y | | Y | Y | Y | | Y | Y |
| 16 Janice Kahn | Y | Y | | Y | Y | Y | | A | Y |
| 17 Steve Kanes | | | | | | | | | |
| 18 Carol Levin | Y | A | | Y | Y | Y | | N | Y |
| 19 Pam Lodish | | | | | | | | | |
| 20 Linda Olson Pelhke | Y | Y | | Y | Y | Y | | N | Y |
| 21 Donelle O'Neal | Y | Y | | Y | Y | Y | | Y | Y |
| 22 David Pollak | Y | A | | Y | Y | Y | | Y | Y |
| 23 Carlos Ridruejo | Y | Y | | Y | Y | Y | | N | Y |
| 24 Lee Selwyn | Y | Y | | Y | Y | Y | | N | N |
| 25 Alok Somani | Y | Y | | N | N | N | | Y | N |
| 26 Paul Warren | Y | Y | | Y | Y | Y | | Y | Y |
| 27 Christine Westphal | Y | A | | A | Y | Y | | N | Y |
| 28 Neil Wishinsky | Y | A | | Y | Y | Y | | N | Y |
| 29 Chi Chi Wu | Y | N | | Y | Y | Y | | Y | Y |
| 30 Mike Sandman | | | | | | | | | |

TOWN OF BROOKLINE
ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Administration and Finance Subcommittee

The Administration and Finance Subcommittee held a public hearing for Articles 10,11 and 12 on September 20, 2021 at 5:00 p.m., via Zoom. The public hearing was attended by Melisa Goff, Deputy Town Administrator; Feng Yang, Chief Information Officer; Ben Kauffman, Town Clerk; subcommittee members Harry Bohrs, Dennis Doughty (Chair), Neil Gordon, Kelly Hardebeck and Alok Somani; petitioners Mike Toffel (TMM 8) and Bonnie Bastien (TMM 5), and members of the public.

ARTICLE 10

Submitted by the Select Board

Article 10, a home rule petition, calls for special legislation that would allow Brookline to hold Hybrid Town Meetings. For the purposes of the requested legislation, “hybrid” is defined as having participants attend in-person and remotely. The requested legislation would allow the Select Board to decide if a Town Meeting will be a hybrid meeting, allow participants (other than the Moderator, the Town Clerk and members of the Town’s information technology staff needed to operate systems) to attend in-person or remotely via video conference or telephone.

Discussion of Article 10

With no apparent objection to continuing to hold hybrid Town Meetings, the subcommittee’s discussion focused on the technology needed to support them, additional staffing required, whether the legislature or other towns were pursuing similar legislation and the limitations and challenges of Town Meeting with both in-person and remote participation.

As background, Brookline has held three remote Town Meetings, using Zoom technology for participation and voting. For the last two, Town staff has provided all support to Town Meeting participants before, during and after each session.

Hybrid meetings would require additional staffing from both IT and the Town Clerk’s office, to support in-person and remote check in, distribution of materials, technical support and disability accommodations. A new voting system would be needed as (i) the current transponders do not support remote participation and (ii) Zoom is designed for remote-only participation. Ms Yang noted that the Town is investigating systems and devices to support hybrid Town Meetings. The audiovisual systems in the High School auditorium have not been evaluated as to how well they would support a hybrid Town Meeting; they will likely need to be updated. Members of the subcommittee and the public recommended the Town’s CIO connect with other towns, including Arlington and Concord, and inquire about the systems they are using.

Neil Gordon and Harry Bohrs asked Melissa Goff about legislative initiatives to remove the in-person requirement for Town Meeting, and other Towns considering similar home rule petitions. Ms Goff said she was unaware of any current initiatives. Neil Gordon noted that regarding home rule petitions, the legislature was more inclined to make exceptions for unique circumstances, but that more general exceptions to policy were less likely to be received favorably. Mr. Gordon did note that relatively few towns have representative Town Meeting, in which case legislative approval might be more likely.

Subcommittee members raised concerns that the experience of remote participation in a hybrid meeting would be different from fully remote participation, and that the desired equity goal may not be achieved by hybrid meetings. Overall, though, the subcommittee felt that expanding Town Meeting participation beyond in-person meetings would allow for greater participation and, accordingly voted to recommend favorable action on Article 10.

Recommendation

The subcommittee recommends FAVORABLE ACTION on Warrant Article 10 by a vote of 4-0.

TOWN OF BROOKLINE
ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Administration and Finance Subcommittee

ARTICLE 11

Submitted by: Bonnie Bastien (TMM 5), Mike Toffel (TMM 8), Elizabeth Schafer (TMM 10), Marissa Vogt (TMM 4), Jeffrey Benson (TMM 3), Anne Weaver (TMM 11)

Article 11, a home rule petition, calls for special legislation to exempt Brookline from in-person quorums as required by Open Meeting Law. Chapter 30, Section 20(d) currently allows for remote participation, but requires a quorum and the chair be present at the physical meeting location. The petitioners petitioned Articles 11 (and 12) so as to allow the Town to continue to hold fully-remote meetings when temporary COVID provisions allowing remote meetings expire, on April 1, 2022.

Discussion of Article 11

The petitioners' desire is for all meetings of boards, commissions and committees subject to the Open Meeting Law to have an option for remote participation and petitioned Articles 11 and 12 as "companion articles," to encourage Brookline to permanently offer remote participation options for all meetings. During the discussion, the question was raised about whether each individual board, commission and committee would need an accompanying piece of legislation to allow for remote participation. Petitioner Mike Toffel said the article had been reviewed by Town Counsel who had not raised that as a concern. Neil Gordon asked whether the state was considering revising the OML to allow remote participation past COVID or whether other towns had similar legislation pending. The petitioners had no knowledge of other towns considering similar petitions, and expressed their view that Brookline's effort would influence both the state (to enact statewide legislation) and other towns (to similarly submit home rule petitions).

The subcommittee discussed converting Article 11 to a resolution that could be used in connection with lobbying the legislature to remove the in-person requirements from the OML. After discussion, the subcommittee recommended favorable action on Article 11 as printed in the Warrant, by vote of 4-0-1

Recommendation

The subcommittee recommends FAVORABLE ACTION on Warrant Article 11 by a vote of 4-0-1, with Bohrs, Doughty, Hardebeck and Somani voting Yes, and Gordon abstaining.

TOWN OF BROOKLINE
ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Administration and Finance Subcommittee

ARTICLE 12

Submitted by: Bonnie Bastien (TMM 5), Mike Toffel (TMM 8), Elizabeth Schafer (TMM 10), Marissa Vogt (TMM 4), Jeffrey Benson (TMM 3), Anne Weaver (TMM 11)

Article 12, a resolution, calls on the Select Board to equip all municipal conference and hearing rooms with audiovisual equipment to enable all public bodies meeting under the Open Meeting Law to provide remote participation by November 1, 2022. The article encourages the Town to seek alternative sources of funding for the technology and necessary training to use the necessary equipment. The petitioners provided a cost estimate of \$160,000 for the equipment needed. They did not provide an estimate of staff time or training costs.

Discussion of Article 12

The petitioners' desire is for all meetings of boards, commissions and committees subject to the Open Meeting Law to have an option for remote participation, and petitioned Articles 11 and 12 as "companion articles," to encourage Brookline to permanently offer remote participation options for all meetings. As written, Article 12 encourages the Select Board to equip every conference room and municipal hearing room with video and audio technology within 12 months. Melissa Goff and Feng Yang shared that the Town was already evaluating systems and equipping hearing rooms with technology for remote meeting participation. Ms Yang shared that the estimate she provided to the petitioners was only for the initial purchase of equipment, and does not cover maintenance or replacement costs, or the cost of additional staff needed to provide technical support for each meeting. The estimate also did not cover the costs of any additional laptops, monitors or projectors that would be needed.

The subcommittee supports encouraging the Town to provide greater access to meetings by outfitting conference rooms to enable remote participation. However, the subcommittee felt the language resolution as printed in the Warrant was too directive, and without consideration of other budget priorities. The subcommittee recommended an amended resolution, as follows (changes underlined and in bold; no changes to the "whereas" clauses, which remain unchanged):

1. Brookline Town Meeting calls on the Select Board **to provide an outline including estimated costs** to equip **all** municipal conference and hearing rooms with audiovisual equipment to enable **all** public bodies meeting under OML to provide audiovisual participation access for attendees and members **to Town Meeting** by no later than November 1, 2022; and
2. Brookline Town Meeting calls on the Select Board, Moderator, and others who appoint public bodies to, once the legal and technological hurdles are surmounted, insist that Brookline public bodies meeting under OML **provide for** hybrid **meetings** rather than **only** via the tradition of meeting in-person **and** providing only telephone access to those seeking to participate remotely; and
3. The Town of Brookline should consider using non-traditional funding sources to fund the technology and training necessary to support public bodies meeting in a hybrid manner.

Recommendation

The subcommittee recommends FAVORABLE ACTION on Warrant Article 12, as amended, by a vote of 5-0.

WA 12: cost estimates from the Office of the Select Board

The Select Board Hearing Room has audiovisual equipment already installed.

Audiovisual equipment in 12 municipal conference rooms and the School Committee Hearing Room:

Initial cost: \$160,000 Equipment purchase & installation, and funding staff time to learn how to use it.

Annual cost: \$70,000 Fund two new part-time positions to provide after-hours on-call technical support during public meetings.