

School Committee Government Relations Subcommittee Meeting
Wednesday, October 8, 2025
4:00 PM – 4:55 PM
Remote via Zoom

Government Relations Subcommittee Members Present: Suzanne Federspiel (Chair), Carolyn Thall, and Bob Weintraub.

Staff Present: Betsy Fitzpatrick.

Ms. Federspiel called the meeting to order at 4:00pm.

1) Discussion and Possible Vote on Relevant Special Town Meeting Warrant Articles

The subcommittee reviewed the proposed Warrant Articles for the November 2025 Brookline Special Town Meeting. The subcommittee discussed three warrant articles:

Warrant Article 18: To see if the Town will adopt a resolution to ensure that any public meeting, where there is an official video recording of the meeting, will be made available to the public by way of *CivicClerk* or the Town's current website platform within 4 business days of the meeting date.

The Government Relations subcommittee voted unanimously, with Ms. Federspiel, Ms. Thall, and Dr. Weintraub in favor, to move WA18 to the full School Committee for consideration.

Warrant Article 10: To name the baseball diamond located at the northwest corner of Brookline's Warren Field, 133 Eliot Street, Brookline to "Campagna Diamond", effective no later than January 1, 2026.

Joe Campagna is a retired school district employee; he served for many years as Assistant Athletic Director at Brookline High School. Members shared their support for this warrant article.

The Government Relations subcommittee voted unanimously, with Ms. Federspiel, Ms. Thall, and Dr. Weintraub in favor, to move WA10 to the full School Committee for consideration.

Warrant Article 11: To see if the Town will amend Chapter 2.2 of the General By-Laws (which governs the powers and duties of the Advisory Committee) as more fully described in the warrant article.

The language in the warrant article will clarify the ability of Advisory Committee members to serve on boards or committees related to the construction or reconstruction of specific town buildings or properties (for example, school building committees). The service of Advisory Committee members on such boards or committees currently conflicts with language in the By-Laws, and the intent of this warrant article is to clear-up this discrepancy.

The Government Relations subcommittee voted unanimously, with Ms. Federspiel, Ms. Thall, and Dr. Weintraub in favor, to move WA11 to the full School Committee for consideration.

The School Committee will consider these Warrant Articles at the October 22 meeting.

2) New Business

The subcommittee discussed new business, including the composition of the Pierce School Building Committee, upcoming Government Relations Subcommittee meetings and possible agenda items, and consideration of a broader role for the subcommittee that might include MASC Day on the Hill advocacy, and increased legislative awareness/action especially around school budget issues. Dr. Weintraub indicated he intends to draft a position paper that he will share with the subcommittee; that position paper will be discussed in open session at the December subcommittee meeting.

Ms. Federspiel adjourned the meeting at 4:55 PM.

ARTICLE 18

EIGHTEENTH ARTICLE

Submitted by: Heather Hamilton

To see if the Town will adopt the following resolution:

Whereas, democracy should be as transparent as possible,

whereas, the key to participation in a democracy is to be able to watch the decisions being made,

whereas, these recordings already exist and should be made available to the public,

Therefore, be it resolved that the Town will ensure any public meeting where there is an official video recording of the meeting, will be made available to the public, by way of CivicClerk or the Town's current website platform, within 4 business days of the meeting date.

Or act on anything relative thereto.

PETITIONER'S ARTICLE DESCRIPTION

In 2022, the Town invested in a software platform that integrates with the Town website in order to better communicate what meetings are happening in Town. It is an improvement from the previous interface allowing you to easily search by day or by committee. This platform allows for the upload of any video recordings for the public to watch after the meeting happened. Staff and Board Chairs are encouraged to upload the zoom files, but only about 30%-40% are uploaded afterwards. This article seeks to encourage all boards and commissions who record their meetings to upload the files in a timely manner so that they are accessible to the public.

SELECT BOARD'S RECOMMENDATION

ROLL CALL VOTE:

Aye:

ADVISORY COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATION

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ARTICLE 10

TENTH ARTICLE

Submitted by: Merrill H. Diamond

To see if the Town will vote to name the baseball diamond located at the northwest corner of Brookline's Warren Field, 133 Eliot Street, Brookline, to "**Campagna Diamond**," effective no later than January 1, 2026, or act on anything relative thereto.

PETITIONER'S ARTICLE DESCRIPTION

This warrant article asks Town Meeting to consider naming the baseball diamond at Brookline's Warren Field to honor one of the state's coaching legends, Brookline's Joseph Campagna. The Petitioner proposes the name of the baseball diamond at Warren Field be named, "**Campagna Diamond**."

Joe Campagna, until recently a lifelong resident of Brookline, has had an outsized impact on generations of the Town's youth. Teaching the game of baseball for over three decades, Coach Campagna's career spanned coaching Little Leaguers who were just learning that life isn't always fair to coaching and advising young men and women about to move forward with their post high-school lives. Further, to limit his influence to just baseball would not do Joe justice, for his background includes coaching youth football and hockey. But baseball has always been his passion and, even today and after his retirement from coaching, Coach Campagna hosts a summer baseball camp focused on improving the skills of Brookline's young people.

His high school coaching career began as the Varsity Baseball Coach at Trinity High School in Newton while simultaneously coaching The Brookline High Freshman football team and serving as the BHS Assistant Varsity Football Coach. In 1993, Coach Campagna became the Varsity Baseball Coach at Brookline High School and carved his name into local baseball history until 2020. Almost three decades of coaching baseball and teaching life lessons, while receiving regional recognition and a plethora of awards.

These awards include, but are not limited to the following:

- 1996 D-1 Coach of the Year by The Boston Globe
- 2015 Mass Baseball Coaches Hall of Fame
- 2018 Brookline High School Athletic Hall of Fame
- 2020 Brookline High Coach of the Year
- Bay State Conference Lifetime Achievement Award

In addition to coaching, some of you may know Joe Campagna as the long-time sports reporter for the *Brookline Tab*. He has also served as the Brookline High School Assistant Athletic Director and was a member of the school's Hall of Fame Committee. For the last

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11 years of his coaching career, Coach Campagna was the Bay State League Baseball Coordinator.

SELECT BOARD'S RECOMMENDATION

ROLL CALL VOTE:

Aye:

ADVISORY COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATION

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ARTICLE 11

ELEVENTH ARTICLE

Submitted by: Select Board

To see if the Town will amend Chapter 2.2 of the General By-Laws (which governs the powers and duties of the Advisory Committee) as follows, with additions underlined:

Section 2.2.1. Appointment of Members

[...]

- B. At least one elected Town Meeting member shall be appointed from each precinct, to the extent practicable. At least one Committee member shall be a resident of each precinct, to the extent practicable. But no more than four members of the Committee shall reside in the same precinct. The number of Committee members who are not Town Meeting members shall not exceed 10. No member of the Committee shall be an employee of the Town or a member of any standing board or committee having charge of the expenditure of money, with the exception of a Board or Committee related to the construction or reconstruction of specific Town buildings or properties, whether or not the construction or reconstruction is being funded in whole or in part by the Commonwealth; but this restriction shall not disqualify from appointment to the Committee, members of special committees, which may be created from time to time by Town Meeting, the Moderator or the Select Board to report on specific matters.

or act on anything relative thereto.

PETITIONER'S ARTICLE DESCRIPTION

The Advisory Committee is Brookline's "finance committee" as that term is defined in state law. Brookline has given the Committee a broad mandate, requiring it to "consider any or all municipal questions, including appropriation requests and proposed action under all articles in the warrant for a Town Meeting, for the purpose of making reports or recommendations to the Town" in addition to submitting the annual budget warrant article to Town Meeting. To that end, Advisory Committee members are expected to have or develop detailed knowledge of municipal finance more generally and Brookline's finances specifically.

Advisory Committee members have historically served on committees that direct and oversee major capital construction projects in the Town. This is in keeping with the requirements of the Massachusetts School Building Authority (“MSBA”), which mandate a “municipal budget official” (specifically defined to include “a member of the [municipal] Finance Committee”) serve on any school construction project committee receiving MSBA funding.

This service, however, conflicts with the current text of the By-Laws, which prevent Advisory Committee members from serving on “any standing board or committee having charge of the expenditure of money.” This is intended to avoid conflicts of interest and accusations of self-dealing that could arise if a member of the committee that promulgates the budget used their influence to steer money to a body that they could then expend for their own purposes.

Past interpretations of this clause have classified capital construction project committees as non-standing because they are created for a specific purpose and typically disband once the project is closed out. In reality, however, these committees exist for years, and do more than “report on specific matters.” Town Counsel has opined that service on such a committee is incompatible with the current language of Section 2.2.1(B) of the General By-Laws.

Accordingly, at the request of the Moderator and Advisory Committee leadership, the Select Board is submitting this amendment to Section 2.2.1(B) that would provide for a narrow exception allowing Advisory Committee members to serve on boards or committees related to the construction or reconstruction of specific Town buildings or properties, such as school building committees.

The rationale for this exemption is twofold. First, as discussed above, Advisory Committee members are members of the public who typically possess in-depth knowledge about the Town’s finances and municipal finance more generally. They are often experts in their fields whose backgrounds (architects, accountants, etc.) provide valuable insight to other committee members in reaching decisions on how a complex capital project should proceed. They have often advocated for design choices that take ongoing maintenance and operational costs into account. Their presence on these committees provides a valuable public voice and has contributed to Brookline’s track record of completing these projects on time and on or even under budget.

Second, the potential for conflicts of interest or self-dealing is minimized given the size of and public scrutiny faced by building committees. School building committees typically have as many as 15 members, including professional staff and members from other boards. Their meetings, particularly at the outset of projects where major decisions regarding budgets and spending are made, are well-publicized and well-attended. The state Conflict of Interest Law and Town Policy on Fraudulent Conduct, Misappropriation and Corruption would still apply to Advisory Committee members, forbidding them from voting or opining on matters in which they had an actual or perceived interest. And the exception itself is narrowly tailored: Advisory Committee members still may not serve on general-purpose

standing committees related to real property that can expend money, such as the Building Commission.

Given the historic benefits of having Advisory Committee members serve on capital project committees, the negligible potential for abuse of those positions, and the continued protections of state and local laws and regulations that serve as guardrails against public corruption, the Select Board respectfully asks Town Meeting to adopt this narrow exception by amending the General By-Laws.

SELECT BOARD'S RECOMMENDATION

ROLL CALL VOTE:

Aye:

ADVISORY COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATION

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