

BROOKLINE PAX NEWS

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February 2016

Co-chairs & editors: Frank Farlow & Marty Rosenthal

Webmaster: Mark Levy

Brookline PAX 2016 Annual Meeting & Awards

Sunday, February 21, 7:00-9:00 P.M.

Martin Luther King Room, Brookline High School

(In the event of snow, check www.brooklinepax.org for rescheduling
to Wednesday, February 24, same location and time)

Admission: A voluntary donation to the Brookline Emergency Food Pantry (nonperishable food or personal care items)

Strengthening Massachusetts: THE FAIR SHARE TAX

Harris Gruman, Mass. Political Director of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), was a key leader of the 2014 Raise Up Massachusetts campaign that established the highest statewide minimum wage and the most extensive statewide earned sick time policy in the nation.

Mr. Gruman's presentation will be followed by a period of questions and answers.

Election of officers and Board members

Annual Awards

- Jack Backman Social Justice Award: **Greater Boston Interfaith Organization (GBIO)**
- Ethel Halperin Lifetime Achievement Award: **Evelyn Roll**
- Ethel & Ben Alper Progressive Activism Award: **Werner Lohe**

EARLY SPONSORS

PATRONS: Marty & Frank Farlow, Chobee Hoy; **SUSTAINING SPONSORS:** Chip & Sue Chipman, Betsy DeWitt, Ben Franco, Jane Gilman & Don Leka, Deb Goldberg, Fran & Gil Hoy, Virginia LaPlante, Julie Johnson & Rep. Frank Smizik, Jim Slayton, Steve Vogel; **SPONSORS:** Cat Anderson, Sarah Axelrod, John Bassett & Christina Wolfe, Carol & Frank Caro, Cathleen & Stanley Cavell, Sen. Cindy Creem, Phyllis Giller, Rachel Goodman, Regie Healy, Jesse Mermell, Ellen & Rich Rosen, Sarah Wunsch

Campaign Kickoff Party – Sunday, April 10, 4:00-5:30, 63 Buckminster Road

Help PAX kick off the race for Brookline's future by supporting thoughtful, progressive candidates! Share food and progressive fellowship, and meet PAX-endorsed candidates as they begin their run for victory in the May Town Elections.

Join PAX or renew your membership – See back cover

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Co-chairs' Column

Frank Farlow & Marty Rosenthal

As we launch our 54th year, we still emulate the late Sumner Kaplan, a PAX Lifetime Achievement Award recipient who quoted the Talmud: “You are not to complete the task, nor are you free to desist from it.” And we again commend PAX activists for their efforts, including on this newsletter’s topics—many fights still ongoing, but always the struggle itself that counts.

With the dysfunction in Washington, tempered by a few positive things President Obama has done on his own; with the news-dominating and near-comically frightening GOP presidential race and the more hopeful but still unfolding Sanders-Clinton race; and with our local state legislature in the midst of its inchoate two-year term, some of the most heartening political developments were right here at home:

- With the help of many PAX members and friends, after a contested selectmen’s race, with two other strong candidates, one being the progressive and highly-regarded Merelice, the victories of **Nancy Heller** (a PAX board member, who topped the ticket) and **Bernard Greene** produced a board containing no fewer than *all five* selectmen as PAX endorsees, the first time we’ve had even a majority since 1988, when Charlie Ames and Luster Delaney (a Republican, no less) won by attacking rent control. Bernard is the first ever non-Caucasian selectman! As recently usual, nearly all of our endorsed TMM candidates and this year *all* of our town-wide endorsees were elected, including three in a contested race for School Committee: newcomers **Pen-Hau Ben Chang** and **Elizabeth Jackson Stram** and incumbent **Barbara Scotto**.

- Overrides are tough everywhere, but through the hard work of many of us we got big YES votes for both the Devotion School debt exclusion (80%-20%) for major renovations, and the Operating Budget Prop 2½ Override (60%-40%) to enable the schools to cope with major enrollment increases. Public education has always been a top priority for Brookline—and for PAX.

- And along with new-found selectmen diversity, after several decades we finally have another non-Caucasian *department head*, Lloyd Gellineau, this time for the newly formed Diversity, Inclusion & Community Relations Department. (It was a Town Meeting amendment introduced by board members Marty Rosenthal and Stan Spiegel that made this position a department head.)

Earlier in the year our Annual Meeting got off to a rousing start with the following awards:

- Jack Backman Social Justice Award: **Alice Rothchild** for her efforts toward just and peaceful relations between Israel and Palestine
- Ethel & Ben Alper Progressive Activism Award: **Lawrence Lessig** for his efforts to reduce the influence of money in politics

- Ethel Halperin Award for Exemplary Achievement: **Climate Action Brookline** for protecting and preserving the climate and environment

Our keynote speaker was **Miriam Mack**, a dynamic young Black litigation associate at Ropes & Gray, and a 2014 legal fellow at ACLU-Mass, where she did much of the work on their racial profiling report on the Boston Police. Her compelling speech, entitled “Re-imagining Justice: Confronting Race in the 21st Century,” was followed by an excellent Q&A session.

Our board and others in attendance expressed their thanks to outgoing members Ellen Zucker and Cathleen Cavell. Ellen is a former president of Mass. NOW and a busy prominent employment lawyer and statewide political activist, but has been less visible in Brookline. Cathleen, the organizing stalwart and doer of all things good within Brookline’s chapter of Progressive Democrats of Massachusetts as well as the leader of the insurgent movement of about a decade ago that swung Precinct 1’s Town Meeting contingent from nearly all-conservative (she was one of the two exceptions) to 100% PAX-endorsed, is particularly missed. We were also very pleased to gain a new member, TMM-5 and Library Trustee Puja Mehta.

The board has been concerned in recent years that the age of its members has been inching upward, but until this year we haven’t fastened upon any specific solutions other than our attempt at annual meeting time to recruit some new younger members—at which we haven’t met with a great deal of success in recent years. We have, however, had some, and two of our most recent younger members—TMM-11 Carol Oldham and Puja—agreed to form the core of a new *Younger Generation Committee*, to look into the possibilities of (a) reducing the average age of the PAX board and, at the same time, (b) increasing the involvement of the younger generation(s) in Brookline’s progressive politics.

The first substantial project to be generated by our new committee was the MLK Service Day, just carried out on January 15 in collaboration with the MLK Celebration Committee. It consisted of two separate parts: a food (and personal care items) drive to benefit the Brookline Food Pantry at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, and a book (and CD & DVD) drive to benefit More Than Words, a nonprofit centered in Boston and Waltham that collects used books to sell through their bookstores to give at-risk young people real-world work experience.

Carol and Puja recruited Chobee Hoy to captain the book drive and Kea van der Ziel, the food drive, and the expanded committee made believers of us all: many hardworking youthful volunteers worked at the Brookline Booksmith and in the Coolidge Corner Arcade, and the two teams sent off very substantial donations to the Food Pantry and More Than

Words. We co-chairs are pleased to take this occasion to express our pride in PAX's new child, er, committee. We look forward to another year of collaboration with the MLK Committee, and with the Brookline Booksmith and the shops at the Arcade, without whose great help this year's highly successful MLK Service Day would not have been possible.

During the mid-months of the year, many of us were involved in drafting Town Meeting warrant articles, organizing support for them, attending Brookline's plethora of meetings and hearings discussing, dissecting and advocating for them, and organizing Town Meeting presentations. We co-chairs helped Lee Biernbaum file and promote Article 19, "*Resolution opposing Boston 2024's Olympics bid as a misguided civic priority*," saying the spending should go to state and local governments instead, for sorely tax-underfunded services. Helped hugely by our own TMM-6 Chris Dempsey, Herculean leader of the statewide opposition, we succeeded in getting Town Meeting to vote 111-46-7 to oppose the Olympic bid. (Globe, Metro, 5/29/16)

The fall Town Meeting contained a successful resolution opposing "high-stakes testing" by the Brookline Educators Union, Rep. Frank Smizik (a former PAX co-chair) and others. Two longtime South Brookline PAX endorsees, Irene Scharf and Richard Nangle, also filed a warrant article to ban LEAF BLOWERS, due to their environmental and health problems and noise pollution and to the perceived ineffectiveness and impossibility of enforcement of our current noise by-law. After weeks of hard effort in the face of well-financed opposition from landscaping companies, Irene and Richard decided to accept formation of a Moderator's Committee, which is now underway. To be continued.

A welcome 2015 development, actually begun in 2014 but which we neglected to mention in last year's column, has been longtime PAX board member Craig Bolon's indefatigable *Brookline Beacon*—"the open, responsive medium for circulating news and views that has been missing from our community for several years." We encourage you to check it out: <http://brooklinebeacon.com/>.

In another welcome development, the selectmen have finally given the green light to NETA's medical marijuana dispensary at 160 Washington Street, honoring the 75% public support by state-wide ballot question in 2012 and votes of 210-4 and 208-7 by Town Meeting in 2013.

Some of the biggest stories of 2015 at the national level led to local activism around civil rights issues. Brookline firefighter Gerald Alston filed a federal lawsuit against Town officials,

and police officers Prentice Pilot and Estifanos Zerai-Misgun, later joined it. Dozens of people addressed a January 5 selectmen's hearing with concerns about the Town's workforce diversity and racial climate, especially within the police department. This hearing is summarized extensively in David Klafter and Frank's article on page 6. Board members David, Marty, Abram Chipman and Kea van der Ziel were among the 40-odd people who spoke at the hearing, which can be viewed at

www.youtube.com/watch?v=4mjPNJx9Nkk. Marty's notes for his remarks are available on request, thanking the other speakers, urging the selectmen to listen, but also relating two decades of stellar efforts by Chief Dan O'Leary; and he welcomed the involvement of the newly formed Diversity, Inclusion & Community Relations Commission.

One of Marty's non-paying "day jobs" continues to be working hard on the resuscitated state Sentencing Commission under Mass. G.L. c. 211E as one of nine voting members (three judges, three prosecutors, three defense lawyers), trying to draft major changes to our sentencing laws—hopefully to here address the U.S.'s biggest civil rights travesty, *mass incarceration*. Our per capita incarceration rate here is *five times* that of the 1970's, and more than double that of all of Europe and Canada! The Commission had a November public hearing in Gardner Auditorium, at which a panel of seven DA's opposed most reforms and asserted, "[W]e incarcerate as a last resort"; so Marty asked them about those international rates, and Cape Cod DA O'Keefe replied, "[T]heir penalties are more Draconian; they kill people and cut off drug dealers' hands."

Finally, we lost two Brookline liberal giants during the year. **Herb Goodwin** was a major force in both preserving North Brookline after the Dexter Park disaster, and—with Messrs. Dukakis & Kaplan, et al.—shifting the Town's votes from Republican to Democrat; and later TMM-8, School Committee member, then Brookline Court's presiding judge. And more recently, **Bill Schlesinger**, long ago a PAX chair, a longtime TMM-12, and School Committee member and chair.

For more about our activities and history, visit our website (brooklinepax.org); and for more about Town Meeting, the Town website (brooklinema.gov). We also urge you and your friends to **sign up for PAX's listserv** to e-hear more from fellow PAX folk about upcoming events and occasionally lift a keyboard finger for grassroots lobbying. To sign up, just send an e-mail to dianaspiegel@yahoo.com with your name in the body of the message.

GLOBAL WARMING UPDATE

By Emily Kirkland

On December 12 world leaders signed an historic climate deal in Paris. Within progressive circles there has been much discussion of the deal's significance; on my Facebook feed,

reactions ranged from "The world has been saved!" to "The world is over!"

It's important not to overstate what was accomplished in Paris. On its own, the deal won't be enough to solve climate change—not even close. None of it is binding, and even if all the voluntary pledges in the accord become reality, it still won't be enough to prevent catastrophic warming.

But disparaging the Paris accord as a failure misses the true significance of the deal. The agreement sends a powerful signal to investors, business leaders and politicians that whether they like it or not, the era of fossil fuels is coming to an end. Just as important, the deal shows that the climate movement has already become an unstoppable force for change. This deal simply wasn't possible in Copenhagen six years ago, and it wouldn't have been possible last month without the work of hundreds of thousands of people around the world who have organized, lobbied, marched, rallied, and taken to the streets to demand the change we need.

To me, the biggest climate news story in 2015 wasn't the Paris deal. It was the growth of the climate movement, along with a string of small but highly significant victories. Obama turned down the Keystone XL pipeline. Shell pulled out of the Arctic. New York's Attorney General is suing Exxon after a sweeping journalistic expose revealed that the company had hidden the truth about climate change from the American public for decades. Institutions with a total of \$3.4 trillion in assets have now divested from some or all fossil fuels.

Of course none of these victories in isolation will be enough to solve climate change, or even significantly alter the world's emissions trajectory. But like the Paris accord itself, the recent victories speak to the growth of the global climate justice movement, which has become a vocal, powerful force for change.

Here in New England, the movement has been growing by leaps and bounds. There are divestment campaigns at almost

every college and university, with some real signs of progress. In December, for example, the UMass system announced that it would be divesting from coal. A massive grassroots effort has also sprung up across the state to block new gas pipelines (as you in your Town Meeting, like several others around the state, have adopted two resolutions opposing such pipelines), part of a growing movement to stop the construction of new fossil fuel infrastructure across the region.

Just as important, climate activists are finally building significant bridges with other movements for social, racial and economic justice. In December, for instance, labor unions, racial justice groups, immigrants' rights groups, and climate groups came together for a massive 2,000-person march to mark the Paris accords and call for jobs, justice and climate action right here in New England.

In 2016 it will be up to us to build on this momentum and hold world leaders to the promises they made in Paris. This work has never been more important, or more urgent. As last month's record-warm Christmas reminded us, the globe is continuing to warm, and with every month that passes it becomes harder to avert catastrophic change. But for the first time, we're starting to see a movement big enough, and powerful enough, to put us on another course.

There's never been a better time to get involved. Join the movement—talk to your friends and family about climate, or join a local group like your nearest node of 350 Massachusetts! You can find a full listing at 350ma.org.

Emily Kirkland is communications coordinator for 350MA's Better Futures Project, whose executive director Craig Altemose addressed divestment from fossil fuels at our 2014 Annual Meeting.

COMMUNITY SHARED SOLAR TO BE FEATURED AT CLIMATE WEEK

By Werner Lohe

Installing solar panels on the roof of a home or business is an excellent investment—one for which the annual rate of return is usually greater than 10%. And the cost of panels and installation continues to drop. During the Town's recent SolarizeBrookline campaign, over 100 households took advantage of the benefits of converting sunlight into 100% fossil-free electricity. But going solar isn't always easy in Brookline. Many of us live either in single-family homes surrounded by trees, in apartments, or in condominiums where the board of trustees is resistant to the idea. Recently, however, an approach called "community shared solar" (CSS) has made the financial and environmental benefits of solar energy available to anyone who pays an electric bill.

CSS, in its most basic form, enables electric utility customers to purchase subscriptions that entitle them to claim part of the electricity generated from a solar installation in a different location. The electricity generated by that installation is fed into the grid, and subscribers receive credits on their monthly electric bills just as they would if the solar panels were on their own roofs.

CSS is not an entirely new concept; the basic enabling structure was put into place by the Green Communities Act in 2008. But only recently has it begun to grow dramatically. Massachusetts is one of the leaders—along with California, Colorado, and Minnesota—among 24 states that have some community shared solar facilities in operation. A recent industry study predicts that

in 2015 and 2016, 600% more community shared solar capacity will be installed than was installed from 2011 to 2014.

What makes CSS work is a combination of regulatory policy and government subsidies. Most critical is virtual net metering. Massachusetts is one of over 40 states that permit net metering. This permits generators of electricity to feed the power generated by CSS back into the utility grid and receive fair compensation. (What constitutes fair compensation is ultimately a political question determined by the state legislature; see the following article by John Harris.) But more important, Massachusetts allows *virtual* net metering. That is, credit for the power fed into the grid may be transferred to an account for a meter *at a distant location*. So, for example, Brookline apartment dwellers or owners of tree-shaded homes who are CSS participants could receive credits on their utility bills for electricity generated on a large commercial roof. Subsidies that help in financing the project include Solar Renewable Energy Certificates (SREC's) issued by the state Department of Energy Resources and a federal tax credit—recently renewed through 2019 by the Obama administration and Congress—that equals 30% of the costs of building the solar facility.

There are dozens of variations in the mechanisms that can be used to finance a CSS installation and to structure financial participation by individuals in the community (see below). As with all investments, financial benefits are proportional to risk. On one hand, the greatest financial rewards will be available to individual participants if we can locate a site and structure the financing. On the other hand, both risks and benefits will be

lower if individuals simply take advantage of retail CSS products already on the market.

Ideally, we in Brookline would develop our own CSS project, because in doing so we would maximize the financial benefits and keep them within the community. But finding a site that is suitable and large enough is difficult. A town-owned site could be considered—for example, the new Devotion School's roof will be capable of accepting solar panels—but it may well be to the Town's advantage to capture all of the financial advantages for itself, as it is currently doing by installing solar panels at the DPW facility behind Skyline Park. A more likely scenario would be taking advantage of the provision in the state's virtual net metering rules that permits us to develop a project on a site in any of about three dozen surrounding communities. Alternatively, individual Brookline residents could sign up for any of a number of retail offerings. These would result in smaller cost savings, but if chosen carefully could provide similar or identical environmental benefits.

Nearly a year ago, members of the selectmen's Climate Action Committee and of Climate Action Brookline formed an *ad hoc* group that has been studying these various options available to Brookline residents. This group will present the results of its work to the community during Brookline Climate Week on the evening of Wednesday, March 30. Please join us then to learn more about specific options that are available to take advantage of community shared solar.

Werner Lohe, a co-founder of Climate Action Brookline (CAB), is a Precinct 13 Town Meeting Member and a member of the selectmen's Climate Action Committee

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THE PHOTOVOLTAIC INDUSTRY IN MASSACHUSETTS IS IN CRISIS

A strong program of **net metering** of solar electricity would return us to a program of rapid growth.

By John Harris (with content from the Net Metering Working Group of the Selectman's Climate Action Committee)

Since its invention late in the 19th century, the electrical grid has worked as a system of "centralized production." A small number of large generating plants powered by oil, coal, natural gas, hydropower or nuclear power send enormous amounts of electricity into huge trunk lines that transmit it vast distances to millions of users: households, office buildings, factories, and so forth, spread out over thousands of square miles.

Photovoltaic (PV) panels, invented in the mid-20th century, convert the sun's energy directly into electricity. They make it possible to generate electricity anywhere the sun shines. In the last decade or so, technological improvements and economies of scale made possible by large factory-scale production have greatly reduced the cost of manufacturing PV panels.

With a favorable regulatory structure, we now have the potential to create a truly stable and sustainable system of **distributed electricity generation**, in which a substantial percentage of our electricity is produced by many widely

distributed generators, producing small or medium quantities of electricity, very close to where it is needed. The goal, as Nathan Phelps of the advocacy group Vote Solar says, is "to allow every individual, family, business and public entity to access solar power, whether they can site solar on their own roof or not."

This can be done (as explained in Werner Lohe's preceding article on page 4) through a system of **net metering**. By connecting your PV array to the electric grid, when you need electricity, the grid provides it. And when the sun shines brightly and your PV panels produce more electricity than you need, *the surplus is fed back into the grid*. Under the fairest and best arrangement, the utility company then credits your surplus at the same rate they charge you when they send you electricity, perhaps minus a modest servicing fee. Our state has had great success with net metering ever since the world's first net-metered solar project was installed in Carlisle in 1979, designed by pioneering solar engineer Steven Strong.

The Green Communities Act of 2008 codified a very strong program of net metering. As a result, PV arrays have since sprouted on residential, commercial and municipal properties throughout the state. Massachusetts currently has over 900 megawatts of installed solar capacity—well on the way to its proclaimed goal of 1600 megawatts by 2020. The state’s solar economy employs 12,000 people as solar engineers, system installers, etc. Massachusetts has become a leader in solar development, surpassing even states with much stronger and more plentiful sunshine.

It won’t surprise you to read that we here in Brookline have stepped up to the PV plate. The Town has issued permits for more than 600 kilowatts of privately owned residential solar. In May 2015, Town Meeting voted unanimously to approve the installation of a 1.4-megawatt solar array at the DPW transfer station in South Brookline. A citizen-led Community Shared Solar group described in Werner’s article is investigating sites where residents whose own roofs are not be appropriate for solar can band together to purchase or lease off-site PV panel space. It is clear that the policy framework established by the Green Communities Act is serving us increasingly well.

However, proposed changes in the net metering policy could put future projects at risk. Under utility company pressure, the legislature imposed caps—limits—on the amount of surplus electricity the companies are required to accept back into the grid from small providers, such as photovoltaic installations. (Projects the size of the rooftop of a single-family home are exempt from the caps, but experience has shown that relatively few Massachusetts rooftops are appropriate for solar, due to incorrect roof angles or blockage by trees or other obstructions to the south.) The caps have already been reached in the parts of the state serviced by National Grid and another utility, Unitil. So project proposals

in 175 of the 351 cities and towns in Massachusetts have been canceled or put on hold. A number of solar installation companies, many of which are mom-and-pop operations, have been forced to lay off skilled employees and are at risk of going out of business. Soon projects in other areas, including Brookline, will hit their cap limits as well.

In addition, the rate at which the utility credits you for excess electricity returned to the grid must be kept at a reasonable level. As mentioned above, current policy credits solar generators at the same rate as it charges them when they draw from the grid. Several bills under consideration by the state legislature would substantially decrease the crediting rate, thus greatly reducing the incentive that small-scale producers have to generate electricity—and therefore the incentive to invest in solar power in the first place.

Also, the Solar Renewable Energy Credit (SREC) II incentive program expires once Brookline reaches 1600 megawatts. It is essential that a comparable or improved program be extended, so the solar industry in Massachusetts can continue its rapid rate of growth.

Your support is needed to (1) eliminate the caps on net metering, (2) require the utility companies to credit locally generated solar electricity at a fair value, and (3) extend the Solar Renewable Energy Credit program. Net Metering is a critical part of solar development financing. A strong policy of Net Metering is the best way to ensure that Massachusetts will be able to meet its ambitious solar energy goals.

John Harris, a Precinct 8 Town Meeting Member, is a member of the PAX board and was a member of the Net Metering Working Group of the Selectman's Climate Action Committee.

WHOSE LIVES MATTER IN BROOKLINE?

By David Klafter and Frank Farlow

In a dramatic development in the case of the two Brookline Police officers who have charged that they face a climate of racial hostility from fellow Brookline officers, a boisterous crowd of about 150 attendees filled all available space in the Board of Selectmen’s hearing room and overflowed into the hall outside for an open comments session on the case at the January 5 selectmen’s meeting. With about 40 people signed up to speak, the crowd responded to comments, almost all critical—often sharply—of the local police or Town authorities’ handling of this and other racial incidents, with repeated loud applause, and put the Selectmen on notice that they expected this roiling issue to be dealt with in a fair, transparent and expedient manner.

While many expressed dismay that this could be happening in Brookline, others pointed to a long history of alleged harassment and abusive treatment of people of color by

Brookline police, including employees of the police and fire departments, and to the fact that similar tensions are coming to the fore in cities and towns all over the country. The Selectmen kept to their ground rules for the session by not taking direct questions or responding to the comments, but they were clearly paying close attention to the proceedings.

A young man named Shantu Salvi calmly and eloquently described his former work in Steps to Success at Lincoln School, encouraging the selectmen “to recognize this for what it is, which is institutionalized and systemic racism... I would like to know what is going to be done to start making some real changes,” he said, “and some dents in institutionalized racism in this town.”

The officers who made the allegations of racism, Prentice Pilot and Estifanos Zerai-Misgun, both currently on unpaid

leave, also spoke to the packed room. Pilot described an incident in which he had pulled up in his cruiser to say hello to a superior officer on detail who was aware that Pilot had recently applied for another job. This officer, he said, replied, “Do some nigger jumping jacks, and I’ll put in a good word for you.” Pilot said he had immediately gone to O’Leary, who told him he would investigate the allegations. Less than two weeks later, Pilot said he received a letter saying the internal investigation’s results were inconclusive (since the other officer claimed he had said something different); the letter ordered him back to work and did not mention the concern he had raised over his safety in the workplace.

Zerai-Misgun testified that he had gone to the Chief more than a year ago and told him that he was in an unmarked cruiser when a lieutenant walked by and said, ‘Who would put a black man behind one of these?’—just one of several racially charged remarks Zerai-Misgun said he had heard from fellow officers. (He also told 7News that fellow officers referred to him repeatedly as an “FI” (field interview, or suspect).

Probably the most strongly expressed sentiment by those who took to the podium, including the officers themselves—this was reflected by the intensity of the supportive applause—was one stated repeatedly, urging the selectmen to use their power as police commissioners to place the two officers on paid administrative leave until the independent investigation is concluded (for which there is Town precedent).

Other memorable moments during the hearing included statements by several speakers familiar with the outstanding work of officer Pilot with students in the schools over the years; a description of the long-term nature of the racial hostility problem by a former Brookline police officer; a chilling statement concerning the limited utility of sensitivity training sessions by a professional who had previously conducted such sessions for the police department; and the testimony of a Latina resident concerning abuse which she said she and her husband had been subjected by the Brookline police about a parking issue as she stood with a three-week-old babe in arms. The latter event resulted in the arrest of her husband and the new mother being referred to the Department of Children & Families. Another speaker familiar with this case then stated that she had spoken with the DCF caseworker involved, who said that the case had been promptly dismissed. The caseworker’s explanation to the new mother, she said, had been: “[T]he problem is the color of your skin. Everyone knows that Brookline is very racist.”

The Diversity, Inclusion and Community Relations Commission had heard testimony from the two police officers five days before. It now weighed in unanimously with a statement delivered by its chair, Alex Coleman: “The Board of Selectmen as an institution of Town government has allowed a culture of institutional racism to exist through its past hiring practices. In the past five years the Town has allowed a firefighter who, without dispute, used the ‘N word,’ to be promoted to a supervisory position. And the culture that

such actions foster has led to situations that have brought us here today. The commission... calls upon you, as elected leaders of this town, to exercise your responsibilities and duties...to stamp out this culture. There is a history in this town of not taking action on these matters in a timely manner. You must not repeat this history.”

Four PAX board members spoke at the hearing. Psychologist Abram Chipman observed that in Brookline “attitudes of bigotry are not looked at.” Drawing an analogy with the denial practiced by alcoholics, he said, “The first step is to stop denying and admit that one is in the grip of a profound and destructive disease, and begin acknowledging it and then finding ways to stop it.” Diversity Commission member Kea van der Ziel, referring to the broader of two primary questions she said faced the selectmen, asked them to deal with the fact that “almost every time I’m somewhere speaking to people of color, especially men, there’s a story like many of those being told tonight.”

David Klafter noted that the Town commonly says that it’s really hard to recruit good department heads of color, “but my experience in the private sector is that it’s usually not that hard to solve problems when you really want to.” And co-chair Marty Rosenthal called attention to a number of instances in which Chief O’Leary and his department have been recognized for exemplary work, e.g., leading toward deescalating tense situations and addressing racial profiling.

“I want to happen what’s happening now,” Pilot told the TAB before the meeting, referring to the concern among the residents. “I believe there are civil rights abuses that happen on the regular. What I want to see is this town stop saying it’s going to hire an investigator. You can’t legislate racial attitudes out of people. You can make all the policies you want, but that’s not going to change the zeitgeist of a place.”

Pilot and Zerai-Misgun both told the TAB they had not participated in the recent independent diversity survey among police and firefighters following the incident in which black firefighter Gerald Alston’s white superior left a voicemail using an extremely strong racial epithet. (According to the official summary of the survey, few Black officers did.) Nevertheless, both said they wanted to continue working with the police and would ultimately like to be included in bettering race relations.

Public testimony during recent months—clearly the tip of an iceberg—has made it increasingly obvious that resentment, cynicism and anger have been building up for a long time in town. They have had few venues in which people of color who have felt abused could righteously voice their indignation and feel that they have been heard and treated fairly by their neighbors and their community leaders. This, among other things, must change.

,David Klafter is a Precinct 12 Town Meeting Member and a PAX board member, and Frank Farlow is a Precinct 4 Town Meeting Member and a co-chair of PAX.

**For more information about PAX, visit www.BrooklinePAX.org
and join us on **February 21** for our **53rd Annual Meeting and Awards!**
Join Brookline PAX or renew your membership today!**

Send this coupon with a dues check payable to **Brookline PAX** to: Brookline PAX, P.O. Box 470525, Brookline MA 02447-0525

- Regular: single \$30, couple \$50 Student or fixed income: single \$20, couple \$30
 Sustaining Member \$50 Patron \$100

I'd like to get more involved in PAX activities. Please call or e-mail me.

Name(s) _____

Address _____

E-mail _____ Phone (____) _____

BROOKLINE PAX SUPPORTS:

Outstanding Public Education — PAX is committed to the public schools. The organization and the political candidates it supports have a proven record in support of public education, from early childhood through graduate school.

Excellent Public Services — PAX supports sustained state and local investment in quality municipal services such as police and fire protection, public health, libraries, schools, parks, recreation, and public works, as well as state services such as social programs, transportation and environmental protection. PAX and its endorsed candidates pursue policies of support for basic human needs, including healthcare for all, affordable housing, and services for both children and senior citizens.

Respect for Public Employees and Organized Labor — PAX stands up for fair labor practices and for policies that show respect for the dedicated people whose competence and commitment make Brookline and this Commonwealth work.

Respect for the Environment — PAX is committed to keeping Brookline and this Commonwealth livable and environmentally responsible – by supporting recycling; energy conservation; the maintenance and enhancement of parks, play-grounds, and green space; and sound environmental regulation.

Diversity, Social Justice, and Peace — PAX works to preserve and increase ethnic and economic diversity and social and economic justice for all, through affordable housing, universal health care, and fundamental civil rights and liberties. We respect the human rights of all people, regardless of ethnicity, nationality, or location; and we support multilateral solutions to international affairs. We oppose the unilateral use of military force except when applied defensively under international law and clear and convincing evidence exists of a serious and imminent threat of aggression, and then only force no more than commensurate with the magnitude of the threat.



www.brooklinepax.org
Brookline MA 02447-0525
POB 470525
Brookline PAX