

Creating Brookline's Override Study Committee of 2013

compiled from minutes of the Board of Selectmen posted on Brookline's municipal Web site, www.brooklinema.gov, on July 30, 2014

IN BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Tuesday, May 14, 2013

<http://apps.brooklinema.gov/sirepub/mtgviewer.aspx?meetid=113&doctype=MINUTES>

OVERRIDE STUDY COMMITTEE

Selectman Benka reviewed the charge to the committee adding that most citizens of Brookline know school enrollment issues are the top concerns over the last several years, and efforts and steps have been taken to address that. The Heath and Runkle schools had expansions, and this upcoming Town Meeting addresses additional classrooms at the Lawrence School. This is an ongoing process of converting space. The BSpace Committee is dealing with the issues, and the work of the committee has lead to the consideration of an override, not be addressed within the existing budget.

He added that it is important that the citizens have the confidence that any override is necessary for both the Town and Schools, and we are the only Town Board with authority to call for an override on the ballot. I am proposing that we do that. We can begin the process by evaluating long-range demographic projections and factors driving the cost. We will also look at best practices and efficiencies and the use of capital facilities. The work will be alongside a consultant that will look at various programs and take a look at issues that the town and schools are facing.

The Board spoke about various trends that may be driving up school enrollments, but all in all it's very difficult to determine and estimate future class sizes; everything considered Brookline is a desirable community.

The Board noted that in over twenty years there have been only three overrides, and each has gone through this process. The Board invited anyone with an interest in looking at numbers, capacity, and demographics to submit their names to Board of Selectmen's office to serve on the Override Study Committee.

On motion it was,

Voted to establish an Override Study Committee with the Charge presented by Selectman Benka, and to be Chaired by Selectmen Benka.

Aye: Betsy DeWitt, Nancy Daly, Richard Benka, Kenneth Goldstein, Neil Wishinsky

Charge to Override Study Committee

Tuesday, May 14, 2013

<http://apps.brooklinema.gov/sirepub/cache/2/k0ardoufquyo0tcszhn2qbbq/2530907302014105351693.PDF>

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Selectmen seeks to conduct an evaluation to determine whether substantially more revenue capacity than what is currently anticipated is unavoidably necessary in order to maintain desired levels of services. This evaluation should be conducted through a comprehensive and thorough examination of Town and School finances, services, expenditures and capital needs, as well as the community's ability to pay. In light of the potential significance of increased School expenditures and capital needs to the Town's long-term financial picture, and the fact that Town-side services have recently been examined by an Efficiency Initiative Committee, it is expected that the evaluation will focus on the Schools' strategic plans, operations, finances and capital requirements. The Board of Selectmen — acting as the only Town body with authority to call for an override ballot question—hereby establishes an Override Study Committee.

Coordination of resources, records, information and other requirements of said Committee shall be provided by the School Superintendent and the Town Administrator, with the potential of retaining an independent consultant to facilitate the Committee's work. The following areas should be included in those studied by the Committee:

- * Evaluation of long-range financial projections, including future needs, factors driving cost projections, and revenue projections
- * Evaluation of long-range demographic projections, including particularly projected school populations
- * Examination of best practices in the delivery of School and Town services
- * Potential efficiencies in School and Town operations, programming and staffing, and in the use of capital facilities
- * Evaluation of the impacts, including operating and capital, of any recommended expansion of facilities or alternatives
- * Consideration of the impacts, including operating and capital, of non-mandated programs
- * Potential non-override revenue sources and non-override strategies, including programmatic or scheduling changes
- * Comparability of program costs, expenditures and revenues to other communities

- * Town bonding capacity
- * Taxpayer capacity for an increased tax burden
- * Recommendations relative to the need for an override and/or debt exclusion
- * If an override and/or debt exclusion is recommended, at what level and for what purposes

To the extent that override and/or debt exclusion is deemed necessary to meet FY15 budget needs, the Committee should make recommendations by March 1, 2014, with recommendations to meet longer term needs made by August 15, 2014.

IN BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Tuesday, June 11, 2013

<http://apps.brooklinema.gov/sirepub/mtgviewer.aspx?meetid=119&doctype=MINUTES>

OVERRIDE STUDY COMMITTEE

Question of revising the Charge to the Override Study Committee.
Selectman Benka stated that the charge has been slightly revised.

On motion it was,

Voted to reconsider the Charge to the Override Study Committee.

Aye: Betsy DeWitt, Richard Benka, Kenneth Goldstein Neil Wishinsky

Absent: Nancy Daly

Selectman Benka stated that he has had a conversation with the School Committee Chair and it has been recommended to appoint a School Committee member to co-chair the committee.

The Committee will be building on the data and research made available by the BSpace Committee. The Board welcomes applicants that feel they are a good fit for this committee.

Charge:

In light of the many issues that have arisen during the FY14 budget deliberations, especially those concerning enrollment pressures in the Public Schools of Brookline (PSB), the Board of Selectmen seeks to determine whether substantially more revenue capacity than what is currently anticipated will be necessary to maintain desired levels of services and fund future liabilities of the Town and PSB, and, therefore, whether a voter-approved override or overrides of Proposition 2 ½ will be necessary to raise that revenue. The Board of Selectmen — acting as the only Town body with authority to call

for an override ballot question — hereby establishes an Override Study Committee (OSC) to perform this assessment, to be co-chaired by a Selectman and a School Committee Member, appointed by their respective boards.

The OSC evaluation should be a comprehensive examination of Town and PSB finances, services, expenditures, and capital needs, building on similar investigations of the OSC of 2007, the findings of the Efficiency Initiative Committee (2009), the Facilities Master Plan for the Schools (2008/2010), and the findings and recommendations of the Brookline School Enrollment and Capacity Exploration (B-SPACE) committee (2013). The committee should consider the following, among other possible areas:

- * Evaluation of long-range financial projections (including future needs & liabilities, factors driving cost projections, and revenue projections)
- * Evaluation of long-range demographic projections, particularly projected PSB enrollments and potential impact of residential development/expansion
- * Potential efficiencies and best practices in PSB and Town operations, programming and staffing, and in the use of capital facilities
- * Evaluation of the impacts, including operating and capital, of any recommended expansion of facilities or alternatives
- * Examination of costs (operating and capital) and potential non-override revenue sources (including costs, feasibility, potential savings, and impacts of potential changes in PSB non-mandated areas)
- * Comparability to other towns of Town and PSB programs/expenditures/revenues
- * Review of Town bonding capacity
- * Examination of Town/taxpayer capacity for an increased tax burden

To the extent that the OSC concludes that an override and/or debt exclusions are deemed necessary to meet FY15 and longer-term needs, the Committee should make its recommendations to the BoS by March 1, 2014 specifically with respect to FY15 needs and , to the extent feasible, projected longer term needs and/or plans for further examination with respect to longer-term needs, including 1) the level(s) and purpose(s) of any override(s) and/or debt exclusion(s), and 2) an analysis of the impact of failure of those recommendations to win public support.

On motion it was

Voted to approve the above Charge to the Override Study Committee

Aye: Betsy DeWitt, Richard Benka, Kenneth Goldstein Neil Wishinsky

Absent: Nancy Daly

IN BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Tuesday, July 9, 2013

<http://apps.brooklinema.gov/sirepub/mtgviewer.aspx?meetid=122&doctype=MINUTES>

OVERRIDE STUDY COMMITTEE - INTERVIEWS

Selectman Benka stated that the OSC will follow on the recommendations of the BSpace Committee, looking at the assumptions that underlie some of their work and the basic need for additional space in the schools, and also address the anticipated population growth in the schools. We will get a better look at what the future looks like by reviewing data. We will also be looking at efficiencies in the Schools and the Town as done in the past. The recommendations will help point us towards a recommendation of an override, or debt exclusion.

Janet Gelbart - has a 30 year career in nonprofit organizations, with an interest in budgets. She has been involved in many team endeavors, and has recently retired; she feels she has the time to devote to this task. She has worked in many public organizations and is skilled in public forums. Ms. Gelbart has strong analytical skills, budgeting and accounting practices, and strategic planning. She hopes to help find a long-term solution putting the student's future in the forefront. She is against using the Amory Park as a potential future school site.

Michael A. Glover - is a recent resident and a parent of two young daughters and is concerned with their future education and has a general interest in public service. Mr. Glover works for the Massachusetts Department of Transportation as Deputy Counsel. He is involved with municipal bond financing and complicated financial transactions, which relates in regard to financial principals. He hopes to look at the entire picture to see what's best for everybody, and is aware of the redistricting option that may be on the table, which could relate to his family.

Mark Lowenstein - is a new Town Meeting Member in precinct 12. Works in the wireless industry, and has been involved in a number of organizations in Town mainly as a parent of two Brookline students. He feels this is an opportunity to review the town and its funds and how technology can enhance education. He would like to study the operational aspects of this situation and look at long-term programming and operational needs within the school system. He would hesitate to consider any disruptions to the high school grade configurations. He feels they are an important structure within the school system.

Michael Sandman - is a BSpace Committee member. He has worked in the manufacturing business and has a good understanding of budgeting and business models. He has worked on the Brookline Community Foundation and is a current member of the Advisory Committee, as well as a former member of the Transportation Board. He acknowledges that there will not be a perfect solution that will appease everyone to come

out of the BSpace Committee. Mr. Sandman does not feel that his role on the BSpace Committee would interfere with opinions on the OSC, and realizes that there is a need for financial support to address the issues. He would be able to provide what BSpace has reviewed and its findings to the OSC which would be helpful.

Lee Selwyn – is a 45 year resident and a professional economist specializing in economics, technology and taxation. Mr. Selwyn is an Advisory Committee and Town Meeting member and has sat on various town committees providing him with a good understanding of Town finances and issues. He would like to review economic trade-off in relation to evaluating the alternatives. He supports a K-8, 9-12 solution acknowledging that there are potential costs to this, and that nothing is obsolete.

James Stergios – is a parent of a Brookline student. He is the Executive Director of the Pioneer Institute and was a policy director for the State's Office of Environmental Affairs. He was a Headmaster of a Prep School in Japan, and understands school policies and administration. He is interested in the operations portion and being able review the potential impact regarding new taxes on the taxpayers. Demographic analysis is something he has experience in.

Timothy Sullivan – is a Brookline native recently returned with children in the school system. He is the Deputy Director for Finance and Rental Operation with experience with State budgeting and finance policies and administrations, forecasting and modeling in way that is easily understandable. He is interested in looking at spending and efficiencies as well as revenue options. Mr. Sullivan supports the K-8 model, and the town and school administration staff. Mr. Sullivan feels it is important to review any tax dollar spending, and look closely at line items that could be explored.

John Bassett – is a Town Meeting member and has worked on various Town Committees. He feels that the enrollment increase is cyclical but likely that there will be a need to spend money which he would like see done fairly and approved by the voters. He would like to help with the political work that would be needed. He understands that a review of buildings may be needed; he is a carpenter/builder and has worked as an architectural draftsman. He does not support the Old Lincoln School being used as a K-8, and supports walkable districts.

Werner Lohe - is a Town Meeting Member and has experience in land issues, most notably the Webster Street Hotel task force in Brookline where there was an extensive public process. Mr. Lohe is the Chair of the Conservation Commission and is employed as Chairman of the Massachusetts Housing Appeals Committee. Mr. Lohe favors a mixed use strategy of buildings.

IN BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Tuesday, July 23, 2013

<http://apps.brooklinema.gov/sirepub/mtgviewer.aspx?meetid=123&doctype=MINUTES>

OVERRIDE STUDY COMMITTEE - INTERVIEWS

Selectman Benka stated that there were an extraordinary number of qualified applicants. He is interested in what the candidates would like to carve out in regard to their expertise if appointed. This is the second of three groups of applicants. Appointments will be made on August 13th, and he hopes to make a brief introductory meeting before that and the Committee will begin in earnest in September.

Clifford Brown – is an 18 year resident and works in finance and investment banking, mainly corporate finance and strategic planning. He currently has two children in the school system where he has been involved in many committees and programs. Mr. Brown is a Town Meeting Member and Advisory Board member. He has heard from many constituents and the politics has already begun. He feels that the taxpayers need a transparent process and an understanding of any potential impact. He would look for costs savings and alternative override revenue sources, and develop a better understanding of the demographics.

Thomas Downs - is a professor of economics at Tufts University working in education finance and policy. He has done a lot of work in Massachusetts and other states, all in an academic perspective, but designed to be assessable to policy makers. He would like to look at how to finance schools in way that are no property tax. He has been involved in numerous school committees when his children attended. Mr. Downes noted that there is a lot of misinformation out there and it is important to have in place all the relevant information and get a good knowledge of what we know. A tax increase will affect everyone if there is an override, and be a burden on some residents, the risks of keeping up school quality and property values. He has worked on efficiencies at the State level, and is interested in seeking alternative revenue sources. although there is not big numbers to be found in fees, the more revenue received from outside sources the less is asked for an override. Mr. Downes has written numerous publications on economics and school finance reforms.

William Geller - is a new resident of four years with a daughter entering kindergarten, and plans to stay in Brookline and do what he can to support the community. He has worked in private and non-profit sectors and has experience in budget and financial management, in companies of all sizes. His strengths include maximizing effectiveness in investments. He holds an engineering degree and works in technology as well. Mr. Geller is aware of the significant external factors here; demographics. He finds the BSpace debate interesting, it is driven by numbers, and he is interested in finding a solution to what is best for both the students and the taxpayers.

Steven Harvey - is a 14 year resident, and up until recently had a heavy travel schedule. He has thirty years of experience in municipal bond finance and portfolio management.

He understands the process of capital borrowing and noted that Brookline has held a successful bond rating. This is a very important decision and the more information that is available the better the outcome will be. He would be helpful in gathering and disseminating information. Mr. Harvey's children attended private school prior to moving here.

Nate Hinchey - is a new resident and works as the Assistant to the Dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Education where he is at the heart of the debate on how best to invest in education. He understands that these decisions will affect the community for years to come. Mr. Hinchey serves on the Governing Board of Common Cause Massachusetts and participates in budget and strategic planning. He is a Town Meeting Member and values transparency, and an open and honest process and will judge the issues based on merit and the data presented, and not political advocacy.

Tom Johnson - a resident since 2000 was introduced to this committee by neighbors of the Amory Park. He is a partner in an investment company specializing in the management of real estate. He feels that his objective mind set, project and financial management and being a generalist will be some use on the committee. He noted the importance of understanding the environment in which you are operating and communicating the analysis to the community. He would keep an open mind in terms of what the best approach to take is.

Sergio Modigliani - is a 33 year resident and has been involved in various community committees. He is an Architect mainly focusing on homes and hospitals. He has been involved in school building and construction projects in Brookline, is a member of the Planning Board, and has served on the Schools Facilities Task Force, various zoning committees, the Preservation Commission and the Finance and Advisory Committee among numerous other local committees. He understands the importance to come equipped with ambiguity to gather the facts and waiting until everything is settled before making any decisions.

Susan Silberberg - is a 14 year resident with a child entering the third grade. She is a city planner and urban designer specializing in community revitalization, and a lecturer at MIT urban studies and planning program. She has been involved in school issues for many years and noted that there are a number of opportunities to look at the bigger issues. Brookline has a low proportion of commercial tax base, and we need to look at what opportunities may come out of this. She understands people concerns and interests, and fringing common threads.

Beth Jackson Stram - is a resident of two years with children in the school system. She understands this is a difficult and critical problem facing the town. She works as a nonprofit advisor and has works on numerous plans including MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education –the Commonwealths Race to the Top proposal, and developed budgets for statewide education reform initiatives. Ms. Jackson Stram has worked in revenue and cost analysis as well as the social sector, she has experience in public process at the State level.

Ann Tolhoff – is a forty plus resident looking she would like to make sure that any design gets it right, looking at the Pierce School renovation many years ago, she was against the design and the many exits the school has. Ms. Tolhoff is the co-founder of City on a Hill Charter School, and has worked on various committees in the community over the years. Ms. Tolhoff understands that it is time to put everything on the table and to take a new look at the schools and education . Ms. Tolhoff is a retired teacher with experience in finance, school construction, public relations, lobbying and public policy.

IN BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Tuesday, August 6, 2013

<http://apps.brooklinema.gov/sirepub/mtgviewer.aspx?meetid=124&doctype=MINUTES>

OVERRIDE STUDY COMMITTEE - INTERVIEWS

Clark Bruno - is a recent resident with two children in the school system. He has previously served as special counsel to New Jersey Governor Corzine as a lawyer in governmental affairs. He now works in the private sector in business development for large electricity transmission projects. He has experience in legal, policy, political and communications strategy, looking at projections, building large scale projects and financing.

Alberto Chang - is a five year resident with two children in private school, his children did attend Brookline School system in grade school. He would like the opportunity to work in the community in financial modeling, forecasting and data analysis. He has no bias as to any solution. Mr. Chang has a flexible schedule, and is used to jumping into various business scenarios as a consultant. His clients are pharmaceutical companies at this time, although he has worked for various industries in strategic financials, and operational improvements.

Rina Cohen - is a resident for over 40 years, and has raised her children here and has 5 grandchildren in the school system. She is a retired teacher at the Maimonides School in Brookline. Now that she is retired she is interested in giving back to the community. Ms. Cohen is interested in keeping a balance in doing for the children all we can give, while facing fiscal challenges. Most importantly she supports a good education system

Chad Ellis - is an eight year resident with children in the school system, and a Town Meeting Member. He was involved with the Runkle School renovation process. He feels that the quality of the schools and education is more important than the location. He has worked in finance, projections, he is a generalist and runs a small company and is also a mediator, working with others to understand the financial process. It is important to mesh a broad set of interests with various stakeholders. His mediator skills could be a benefit for the committee.

Carol Kamin - moved here 6 years ago after living in Arizona where she spent many years working in the Government, primarily State government, where she was involved in advising on child welfare and education. For the last twenty she was the president of the Children's Action Alliance of Arizona and a teacher prior to that. She has always admired Brookline's school system and supports neighborhood schools. Ms. Kamin sits on various Boards in the Commonwealth including Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center, Massachusetts Kids Count Advisory Council, and Massachusetts Women's Forum. She understands the issues on the table and has no preconceived idea of what should happen. Ms. Kamin has worked on financial projections, city government, human services and education, and demographic projections.

Kevin Lang – is a professor of economics at Boston University, with a focus on labor economics. He served on the Brookline School Committee for thirteen years and was a long-term Town Meeting Member. He has been involved in reviewing Brookline's financial and administrative practices, and other focuses due to an override strategy. Mr. Lang has numerous publications addressing economics in the workforce, social economics and education policies. He has also been involved in numerous civic positions.

Carol Levin - is a 23 year resident with two graduates of BHS. She was very involved in their PTO has been looking for a way to get involved in a different capacity. Her background is in commercial real estate finance, as an investor and a borrower, working for private developers. Ms. Levin is currently working as a real estate consultant in the hospital industry, helping them learn how to utilize facilities in real estate. She feels that in this process, it is important to challenge the status quo and think outside the box, looking at an approach to the problems that may not have been considered previously. She is satisfied with neighborhood schools, and noted this is not a blank check, we will need to get a good return on the investment; some in non financial aspects.

Andrew Shalit - is a 7 year resident with children in the school system. He has worked in the technical and creative field, which involves communication. He wants Brookline to have the best schools in the country. His wife works in low income housing and is aware of the fact that not everyone has the means to support a major tax increase; this is the difficulty the committee faces. Mr. Shalit has experience in explaining that.

Lisa Sheehan - is a parent of two in the school system. She is a real estate consultant involved in land use decisions and capital planning. Her position in predevelopment work, financial analysis feasibility, financial structure and public outreach could fit well in the committee. She has worked on the Board of Appeals, and understands that rising taxes is a sensitive issue, and could be approached by finding a solution and how to address it best.

Stanley Spiegel - is a Town Meeting Member for thirty two years and an Advisory Committee member. He has been active in four override campaigns, and feels that the members of this committee should know the town and its political structure, construction and time tables, balance, skepticism and collegiality, which make a committee. Mr.

Spiegel spoke about finances and how switching some funding strategies could work better. Brookline taxes are already high, and it is important to craft an override that is defensible, and what tax payers will support and at what cost. He spoke about administration cost in the school system and based on a comparables he reviewed, Brookline's costs came in significantly higher than comparable communities. Brookline's cost per student is higher than Newton, Wellesley, and Lexington, in some cases 98% higher per student, adding that there may be a reason for this but it should be looked at. He favors neighborhood schools but noted that is not a task of this committee.

Sundar Srinivasan – is a six year resident with children in the school system. His wife is a Brookline native that went through the school system. His neighborhood has recommended him for this committee; they trust him to help work out the problem. He has served on many boards both public and private, and understands the process and that the committee will be armed with skills sets so there will be a return to the town. Any decisions should be analytical and forthright. Mr. Srinivasan is an investment advisor and has worked in various financial institutions.

OVERRIDE STUDY COMMITTEE

Discussion of the process to be followed for the appointment of the Override Study Committee.

Co-Chair Susan Wolf Ditkoff spoke about appointing 9 to 11 candidates, to make up a committee of a manageable size. It is a difficult task because there are many qualified applicants. One approach could be to categorize the candidates by their qualifications. Once there are separated into groups we could pull from each category.

Chairman DeWitt added that it could be organized into sub groups with defined tasks, a larger number of members can be beneficial.

The Board spoke about different categories. Education, finance, modeling, architecture and construction management, and how to overlay these skills, keeping in mind that the committee should look like the town, blending the approach with spirit of inquiry instead of advocacy, having parents and non parents, those concerned with schools and those concerned with tax burdens, while adding new comers to the process.

Selectman Daly suggested a rating or score type of slate to review the candidates.

Town Administrator Mel Kleckner suggested that breaking up the candidates into categories of expertise and perhaps then breaking it down into smaller tasks. He will review the options

Tuesday, August 13, 2013

[No agenda or minutes posted on the Brookline municipal Web site for a meeting this day, when minutes from August 20, 2013, say a vote occurred appointing members of the Override Study Committee]

IN BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Tuesday, August 20, 2013

<http://apps.brooklinema.gov/sirepub/mtgviewer.aspx?meetid=127&doctype=MINUTES>

OVERRIDE STUDY COMMITTEE CHARGE

Chairman DeWitt stated that after some thought and consideration on the lack of woman appointed to the Override Study Committee, the two Co-Chairs have agreed to become non-voting members, allowing more members to participate on the Committee. The Charge will reflect the two additional members.

On motion it was,

Voted to reconsider the vote of the Charge to the Override Study Committee as previously presented on June 11, 2013.

Aye: Betsy DeWitt, Nancy Daly, Richard Benka, Kenneth Goldstein, Neil Wishinsky

On motion it was,

Voted to amend the charge of the Override Study Committee with the addition of two appointed members.

Aye: Betsy DeWitt, Nancy Daly, Richard Benka, Kenneth Goldstein, Neil Wishinsky

On motion it was,

Voted to reconsider the vote of August 13, 2013

Aye: Betsy DeWitt, Nancy Daly, Richard Benka, Kenneth Goldstein, Neil Wishinsky

On motion it was,

Voted to add the following two new members to the Override Study Committee:

Lisa Sheehan

Ann Tolkoff

Aye: Betsy DeWitt, Nancy Daly, Richard Benka, Kenneth Goldstein, Neil Wishinsky