



Select Board Minutes
Tuesday, February 3, 2026 | 5:30 PM
6th Floor Hearing Room

Present: Bernard Greene, John VanScoyoc, Paul Warren, David Pearlman, Michael Rubenstein

1. Announcements/Updates

The Select Board made the following announcements:

- Expressed condolences to families affected by the recent Davis Avenue fire and praised the Fire Department for preventing further damage.
- Highlighted Black History Month and commended Barbara Brown (Hidden Brookline Project) and Malcolm Cawthorne (METCO leader) for their work on Brookline's African American history; a video resource on Brookline's hidden history of slavery is available via Brookline BIG.

Upcoming events

Black History Month programs.

Chinese Lunar New Year celebrations.

Indigenous Peoples Committee discussions on tribal sovereignty.

Comprehensive Plan

Interactive workshop: Feb 9, 7–9 pm (town hall).

Online survey: open until march 2.

Meeting-in-a-box: toolkit for neighbors to host feedback sessions.

Goal: gather input on housing, commercial development, green space, and transportation.

2. Public Comment

1. Bruce Levin (Precinct 17): Urged comprehensive planning for Coolidge Corner, Centre Street Lots redevelopment, and warned of major consequences for traffic and commerce.
2. Linda Olson-Pehlke (Precinct 17): Opposed advancing the Center Street Lot RFI now; argued it undermines the comprehensive plan process and raised concerns about structured parking and public land control.
3. Daryl Donatelli (Chestnut Hill Village Association): Supported the proposed transfer station enclosure project, but requested an accelerated timeline to mitigate odor issues during summer months.

3. Miscellaneous

- 3a. Question of approving the meeting minutes from January 27, 2026

Approved, as amended

Aye: Bernard Greene, John VanScoyoc, Paul Warren, David Pearlman, Michael Rubenstein

- 3b. Question of approving contract No. PW/25-17-B "Amory Playground - Field House Renovations" with Northern Contracting Corp., Canton, MA. in the amount of \$391,100.00

Approved

Aye: Bernard Greene, John VanScoyoc, Paul Warren, David Pearlman, Michael Rubenstein

- 3c. Acceptance of \$1,500.00 in Grant funding from the Brookline Community Foundation for the Annual Eid Event to be held in June 2026. The grant funds from the Brookline Community Foundation will be used to cover expenses for the cultural event.

Approved

Aye: Bernard Greene, John VanScoyoc, Paul Warren, David Pearlman, Michael Rubenstein

- 3d. Question of approving the acceptance of the following three (3) grant awards granted by the US Department of Homeland Security's Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) grant program, via the Metro Boston Homeland Security Region (MBHSR) and the City of Boston Mayor's Office of Emergency Management. The Office of Emergency Management asks that the Brookline Select Board accept the following

1. FFY23 Intelligence & Information Sharing - Blue Voice software services from 1/1/2026 to 6/30/2026 in the amount of \$12,500 to support digital investigation capabilities for the Brookline Police Dept. and throughout the MBHSR.

Town Administrator Chas Carey spoke on this item, postponing it for further review due to the AI capacity involved in the software. Concerns were raised by the Police Commissioners' Advisory Committee. Their concerns will be reviewed, and the software use explained.

2. FFY23 Community Emergency Response - Policy Builders software services 2/1/2026 to 6/30/2026 in the amount of \$7,708.30 to support digital, searchable operational policies and standard operating procedures for the Brookline Fire Dept. / Office of Emergency Management.

Approved

Aye: Bernard Greene, John VanScoyoc, Paul Warren, David Pearlman, Michael Rubenstein

3. FFY24 Community Emergency Response - Policy Builders software services 7/1/2026 to 1/31/2027 in the amount of \$10,791.70 to support digital, searchable operational policies and standard operating procedures for the Brookline Fire Dept. / Office of Emergency Management.

Approved

Aye: Bernard Greene, John VanScoyoc, Paul Warren, David Pearlman, Michael Rubenstein

- 3e. Question of approving an Authorization to Hire request from the Town Clerk:

- Part-time Senior Clerk Typist (C-6)

Approved

Aye: Bernard Greene, John VanScoyoc, Paul Warren, David Pearlman, Michael Rubenstein

3f. Proclamation recognizing Black History Month, 2026.

Chair Greene read the proclamation.

PROCLAMATION OF THE BROOKLINE, MASSACHUSETTS SELECT BOARD RECOGNIZING FEBRUARY 2026 AS NATIONAL BLACK HISTORY MONTH

WHEREAS the Brookline Select Board believes that there is no accurate American history that does not include the history of all Americans, including Black Americans, and that teaches the reality of the intertwined history and destiny of all Americans; and

WHEREAS the teaching of American history has often failed to include or has erased the history, culture, and contributions of Black Americans; and

WHEREAS such erasures can pose a grave danger to the physical and psychological health and well-being of Black Americans when they are told that they have no history and have made no positive contributions to American or world history and when the wider society believes such untruths; and

WHEREAS today under the current administration in Washington, that danger is being exacerbated by a systematic effort to erase references to the history and achievements of Black Americans from public places; and

WHEREAS such erasure includes removing historical items from the Smithsonian Museums in Washington, D.C., including the National Museum of African American History, erasing references to slavery and other historical facts from National Park Service sites, and petty insults of Black Americans, such as eliminating Martin Luther King, Jr. Day and Juneteenth from the days that access to National Parks are free; and

WHEREAS such erasure includes attacking efforts to remedy past discrimination by attempting to ban references and initiatives for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in American cultural, educational, governmental, and business institutions, including purging National Park Service gift shops of supposedly DEI-related merchandise, and even banning words that positively describe Black Americans and other Americans and that are supportive of America's diversity; and

WHEREAS such erasure has in the history of America been the precursor to waves of White-supremacist violence, anti-Black riots and massacres, resulting in death and widespread destruction of Black communities in many parts of the country; and

WHEREAS one of the many tools available to resist such attacks against Black Americans is National Black History Month, which recognizes and pays tribute to the contributions that Black Americans have made to American history by their struggles for freedom and equality and provides morale boosting lessons of past struggles for equality and the successes that they achieved; and

WHEREAS the history of Black History Month began when historian Dr. Carter G. Woodson in 1926 organized historians and others through the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, which he founded in 1915, to encourage the teaching of Black history in the public schools and to designate a time, initially called Negro History Week, to educate people about Black history and culture as a critical component of the advancement of Blacks in America; and

WHEREAS this year is the Centennial anniversary of the founding of what is now Black History Month, which for one-hundred years has celebrated Black History and has provided examples and guides on how to resist and prevail against governmental and non-governmental sponsored erasure and re-writing of history and the hostile actions that follow an erasure of a people's history; and

WHEREAS this year is also the 250th Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, a document that includes the historically powerful and currently relevant words "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal," which should be seen as one of the many reasons to celebrate an accurate history of Black Americans as an indispensable part of an accurate and useful American history; and

WHEREAS each February the Association for the Study of African American Life and History designates a new theme for Black History Month in keeping with the practice of Carter G. Woodson and the theme for 2026 is "A Century of Black History Commemorations," highlighting a century of intentional efforts to study, preserve, and celebrate the history, culture, and contributions of people of African descent in America and around the globe.

NOW, THEREFORE, THE SELECT BOARD OF THE TOWN OF BROOKLINE MASSACHUSETTS HEREBY PROCLAIMS THAT:

Black History Month shall be celebrated during the month of February in Brookline.

In furtherance of this Proclamation, the Brookline Select Board hereby:

1. Urges Town Departments and other local governmental and non-governmental bodies to develop programs, ceremonies, and activities to recognize and celebrate Black History Month as appropriate to their missions.
2. Urges residents, visitors, and people passing through Brookline to use the month of February to start a year-round process to study, learn about, and reflect on the history, culture, and contributions of Black people in America, whether American born, foreign born citizens, or immigrants to America.
3. Urges residents, visitors, and people passing through Brookline to take advantage of the many programs being produced for National Black History Month in Brookline and in the surrounding metropolitan area, including those programs listed or linked on the webpages

of the Brookline Public Library, the Office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Community Relations, the Public Schools of Brookline, the Martin Luther King, Jr., Celebration Committee, and the Brookline Select Board.

4. Urges residents, visitors, and people passing through Brookline to use National Black History Month as an opportunity to visit the exhibitions, performances, and lectures related to African American history, literature, and art at local museums, universities, and concert halls.
5. Urges residents, visitors, and people passing through Brookline to study the works of the many creative and intellectual African Americans with connections to Brookline, including:
 - Florida Ruffin Ridley a pioneering civil rights leader, suffragist, and Harlem Renaissance writer who, with her husband Ulysses Ridley, was one of the early Black homeowners in Brookline at 131 Kent Street and the namesake of the Ridley Elementary School in Brookline
 - Roland Hayes, an American tenor who was hailed as having one of the greatest voices of his time and the namesake of the Hayes Elementary School in Brookline
 - Artist John Wilson, a renowned sculptor and artist who lived and worked in Brookline for over 50 years and whose maquette bust of Martin Luther King, Jr. is displayed on the first floor of Brookline's Town Hall
 - Marita Bonner, who wrote for the Brookline High School newspaper, the Sagamore, and became an influential African American short-story writer, essayist, and playwright of the Harlem Renaissance.

Approved

Aye: Bernard Greene, John VanScoyoc, Paul Warren, David Pearlman, Michael Rubenstein

4. **Calendar**

Review and potential vote on Calendar Items.

5. **Boards and Commissions – Interviews**

Zoning Board of Appeals

Lark Palermo

Lark Palermo has previously served on the Zoning Board of Appeals for many years. Palermo resigned when moved to another community, and has since returned to Brookline.

Professional Experience and Expertise

- Extensive experience in affordable housing was highlighted as a distinguishing qualification.
- Served as General Counsel at The Community Builders, focusing on subsidized rental housing and mixed-income developments, and later as CEO of Habitat for Humanity, which emphasizes affordable homeownership.
- Familiarity with federal funding, grants, and private fundraising was noted as an asset for evaluating development proposals and affordability strategies
- Stressed the importance of collaboration with the Planning and Development Department and Town Counsel's office to ensure smooth operations and effective decision-making.
- Emphasized readiness to contribute specialized knowledge in affordable housing to enhance deliberations on zoning appeals and development proposals.
- Familiar with Brookline's Zoning Bylaws

6. **Chestnut Hill Commercial Area Study**

Presentation of the Chestnut Hill Commercial Area Study recommendations.

Economic Developer Director, Meredith Mooney, made a presentation.

Overview and Purpose

Economic Development Director, Meredith Mooney outlined a transformative vision for the Chestnut Hill commercial corridor along Boylston Street. The study originated from recommendations in the 2005 Comprehensive Plan, which identified Chestnut Hill as a “Gateway West” area with untapped potential compared to Brookline’s other vibrant commercial districts like Coolidge Corner and Brookline Village.

The current effort seeks to:

- Incentivize significant net new commercial tax growth to address Brookline’s structural budget deficit.
 - Enhance livability and identity of the Chestnut Hill commercial area.
 - Establish a long-term vision and organizing framework for redevelopment, acknowledging that full realization could take decades
- **Key Components of the Vision**
 - Mixed-Use Development: A dense, walkable district combining commercial, residential, and retail uses.
 - Commercial Priority: Strategies to maximize commercial square footage and tax revenue, including minimum commercial use requirements and ground-floor activation rules.
 - Design Cohesion: Adoption of design guidelines to ensure a unified aesthetic and district character

The presentation included:

Review of the existing conditions

Review of the proposed Zoning Overlay components

Review of commercial use requirements

Review of design guidelines

Review of the various sites that make up the proposed developed

Review of Public Benefits & Mitigation (approx. \$24 million total):

Review of Transportation and Infrastructure (Conceptual improvements adopted by the Transportation Board)

- **Fiscal Impact:**
 - Estimated **\$5.6 million net new annual commercial tax revenue** (after subtracting current \$1.1 million contribution).

The Chair of the Community Advisory Group, Mike Sandman, reviewed that there are only three sites in Brookline that could handle development of this size. Chair Sandman spoke about the importance of commercial tax revenue that could provide some relief to residential taxpayers. Also addressed was the high cost of living in Brookline making the town unreachable for many.

Michael Rubenstein thanked Town staff, advisory boards, and community members for their work and engagement on the Chestnut Hill Commercial Area Study, noting that the recommendations reflect the Select Board’s goals of supporting commercial tax growth while enhancing livability and neighborhood identity, highlighted that the proposed zoning overlay and related warrant articles combine a clear long-

term vision with an economically viable redevelopment project. Member Rubenstein emphasized that the recommendations reflect careful balancing of competing interests, and encouraged continued community and Town Meeting engagement.

Discussion Highlights

- **Board Concerns:**
 - Building heights (12–14 stories) raised significant neighborhood opposition.
 - Risk of failing to achieve two-thirds vote at Town Meeting without adjustments.
 - Need for outreach to Newton and vetting of traffic mitigation by the Transportation Board.
 - How committed is City Realty, and protections if the developer sells to another entity?
 - What happens if the market changes and the parcel is vacant, or gets sold to a non-profit?
- **Town Counsel:** First Assistant Town Counsel, Jonathan Simpson
 - Explained the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) and Tax Certainty Agreement (95-year term, in increments), to preserve tax revenue even if property transfers to a tax-exempt entity.
 - The town cannot mandate that City Realty to build this project, however, we can say if you want to take advantage of the zoning, you have to build the project and sign this agreement with the town.

City Realty Proposal – Cliff Kensington (City Realty)

- **Site:** Chestnut Hill Office Park (largest redevelopment opportunity in Brookline’s commercial areas).
 - commercial space (including a 200-room hotel, medical offices, and retail).
 - Approximately 250 residential units.
 - Committed to being a part of the development, and seeing it through; will most likely be seeking partners. They are a local company and want to do business here.
 - Kensington reviewed their portfolio
 - They have been in discussions with potential tenants – seeing hotel and medical office interest
- **Next Steps:**
 - Public hearing recommended before warrant article filing.
 - Possible refinements to height and density to broaden support
 - Review of Traffic mitigation Plans – Transportation Board review
 - Review by the Economic Development Advisory Board

7. Continuation Centre Street Lot Project

Continued discussion of Centre Street Lot Committee report and presentation, and possible vote on directing staff to proceed in developing a Request for Information per that Committee’s recommendation.

Summary of Presentation:

The Economic Development Division presented the recommendation from the Center Street Lots Committee

to advance a Request for Information (RFI) process based on the “side lot” concept. The RFI would solicit developer feedback on economic viability, partnership opportunities, and potential refinements to the concept. Planning staff noted that available funds from vacant positions could support technical consulting for the RFI this fiscal year. If they move forward with an RFI, it would take months to complete.

Chair Greene clarified that if the side lot is determined to be infeasible, the town could request cleanup of the parking lots as they are.

Board Discussion:

- **Concerns Raised:**
 - Lack of clear community consensus on the proposal.
 - Policy implications of market-rate housing on public land.
 - Potential impact on Coolidge Corner merchants and shoppers during construction.
 - Risk of signaling premature commitment to a concept that may require significant changes.
 - Is the side lot economically viable?
 - The Economic Development Board (EDAB) raised concerns and is seeking to review the plans
 - The Transportation Board Chair requested involvement due to parking and traffic implications. Does not support a parking garage
 - The Housing Advisory Board and Planning Board are identified as critical stakeholders for housing and zoning considerations
 - How informative will the RFI be was questioned. What is the role of the RFI?
 - The committee charge did not include a housing component
 - How does the Babcock Street lot fit into the RFI?
- **Arguments for Delay:**
 - Time is not a pressing factor given current market conditions.
 - Need for a strong foundation and broad support before advancing a major redevelopment initiative.
 - Allow the other identified Boards and Commissions time to review the recommendations.
- **Counterpoints:**
 - Staff clarified that the RFI would not commit the town to any specific plan and would include opportunities for public input and revisions

On motion, it was,

Voted 4-1 to direct the Economic Development Advisory Board, Transportation Board, Housing Advisory Board, and Planning Board to hold public hearings and provide written feedback on the side lot concept before any RFI is issued.

Aye: John VanScoyoc, Paul Warren, David Pearlman, Michael Rubenstein
Against: Bernard Greene

There being no further business, the Chair ended the meeting at 9:05 PM.
ATTEST