Select Board Minutes
Workshop Meeting| Putterham Golf Course
Tuesday, March 17, 2026 at 9:00 AM
1281 West Roxbury Parkway, Chestnut Hill MA|

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

1. **9:00 AM - Select Board Arrival**

2. **9:30 AM - Opening Remarks / Purpose of Workshop / Miscellaneous**

Following any announcements from Select Board members, the Chair will lay out the agenda and timing of the rest of the meeting. Approval of miscellaneous items, licenses, and contracts.

2a. Question of approving a proclamation of recognition and congratulations to retired Brookline Police Officer, Debbie Hatzieleftheriadis on receiving the 2026 Black Excellence on the Hill Award.

Chair Greene read the proclamation.

PROCLAMATION
Brookline Select Board
Recognizes and Congratulates
Deborah Hatzeileftheriadis
On Being Selected by the Massachusetts Black and Latino Legislative Caucus as its
2026 Black Excellence on the Hill Honoree

WHEREAS the Brookline Select Board rightfully honors those Brookline residents and Town employees whose service, civic commitment, and leadership have been shining models of public service that have enriched the lives of residents and enhanced the civic life of our Town; and

WHEREAS Deborah "Debbie Hatz" Hatzeileftheriadis has been a paradigm of those qualities and a true Brookline trailblazer as a Brookline Police Officer for 16 years and her many years as a civic leader and model citizen in the Town of Brookline; and

WHEREAS Debbie Hatz was nominated by Brookline State Representative Tommy Vitolo and selected by the Massachusetts Black and Latino Legislative Caucus as it 2026 Black Excellence on the Hill Award.

WHEREAS The Brookline Select Board further acknowledges and thanks Debbie Hatz for her outstanding and sustained contributions to the Town of Brookline as a long-time resident, Police Officer and trailblazing civic leader, and specifically cites the following:

- Being an outstanding product of the Public Schools of Brookline from Kindergarten to her graduation from Brookline High School where she excelled in multiple sports and was inducted into the Brookline Hall of Fame and became the first African American member of the Hall of Fame Board.

- Being a mother who raised five outstanding children, two of whom are Brookline Fire Fighters and one of whom Debbie Hatz served as his legal guardian through high school.

- Being the Brookline Police Department's first Black female officer beginning in 1998 after graduating from the Norwood Police Academy where she broke the women's bench press record and was the president of her Academy class.

- Being a leader in Brookline's Community Policing strategy and working to divert youth from destructive behaviors and from the criminal justice system by teaching the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) program for eight years and being a leader in the ground-breaking Brookline Roundtable program that brought together Police with social workers, school administrators, probation officers, the courts, and nurses to discuss issues arising in the High School and to anticipate problems, to identify youth at risk, and to intervene to provide support, guidance, and re-direction. Also, serving as a school resource officer before that job was formally named School Resource Officer and working in the schools to develop relationships with students during good times so that she and other youth officers could intervene to prevent problems in the schools, provide role models and guidance when needed, and divert youth from the criminal justice system when possible.

- Being a tireless volunteer with youth athletic programs, serving as Town Meeting Member for Precinct 15, being the president of the Friends of Larz Anderson Park, serving as a member of the Park and Recreation Commission, being a member of Greenspace Alliance, and driving the Senior Center's bus when the regular driver was not available.

NOW, THEREFORE, IN CONSIDERATION OF THE FOREGOING, on this 17th Day of March 2026, the Brookline Select Board, on behalf of the residents of Brookline, congratulates Debbie Hatz for being nominated by State Representative Tommy Vitolo and being selected by the Massachusetts Black and Latino Legislative Caucus' as its 2026 Black Excellence on the Hill Award.

Hatzeileftheriadis thanked the Board adding it has been a pleasure to serve the town and continues to do so.

3. **9:45 AM - Override Discussion**

Review of Expenditures & Revenues Study Committee's (ERSC) final report and recommendations with members of that Committee. Discussion of potential override ballot questions, including structure and amount.

Chair Greene made the introductions and outlined the process on making a determination.

Members of the Expenditures & Revenues Study Committee began the presentation:

ERSC Presentation: Background & Structural Deficit

Why Brookline Faces a Deficit – (Cliff Brown)

• Property taxes = 73% of town revenue; constrained by Proposition 2½.
• Expenses grow faster than allowable tax increases.
• Unfunded mandates from Town Meeting and collective bargaining contracts create cost pressures.
• Inflation, health-insurance premium spikes, and required pension/OPEB funding intensify challenges.

• Even with an override, Town and Schools project cutting 5 and 22.1 positions respectively.
• Three-year structural deficit: $26M (Town $8M, Schools $18M)

Capacity to Pay Analysis (Dick Benka)

Key findings:

Housing Cost Burden

• 25% of homeowners pay over 30% of income toward housing.
• An even larger percentage among senior homeowners.
• Nearly 40% of renters exceed the 30% burden threshold; 50% of senior renters.
This affects override feasibility.

Rapid Property Tax Growth

Between FY15–FY26:

• Condo taxes up 53% (vs. 37% inflation).
• Two-family: +85%, three/four-family: +78%, single-family: +97%.
• Dollar increases are substantial (e.g., single-family +$10K since 2015).
ERSC focused on minimizing override failure and minimizing household hardship (including displacement risks).

ERSC Override Options (Sadaf Kazmi)

Option 1: Full $23.25M Override, Phased Collection

• Town collects its 3-year need in year 1 and banks it. (%5.31M for Town Services and %17.94M for Schools)
• Schools collect gradually (pay-as-you-go).
• More gradual tax increase for taxpayers.
• Override levy +6.99%; total tax increase 18.27% over 3 years.
• Stabilization fund used to smooth multi-year usage.

Option 2: Full Need Collected Up-Front ("Front-Loaded")

• Both Town & Schools collect 3-year need in year 1.
• Lowers the technical override request to $18.6M instead of $23.25M.
• Raises taxes sharply in year 1. (The overall number is lower, but dollars raised is higher due to immediate increase in levy)
• More complex to explain to voters.
• Creates a stabilization reserve that helps soften FY30 transition.

Option 3: Tiered Override (ERSC Recommended)

• Multiple dollar amounts on one ballot question (“tiers”).
• Voters choose the highest amount receiving a majority.
• Requires Town & Schools to produce lists of cuts at lower tiers.
• Strengthens transparency and voter choice.
• Includes a recommended MOU setting expectations for cost reforms and long-term efficiency efforts.
• Prevents an all or nothing choice on the ballot

Review of override ask summary -Schools

- Efficiencies
- Restorations
- Improvements
- Other adjustments

Baseline (Even with Override)

• 22.1 FTE cuts already included.
• Some restorations (data systems position, curriculum, etc.).
• Some reallocations to rebalance accounts.

If Override Fails

FY27 cuts: 58 FTEs including:

• Grade 1 paraprofessionals
• Middle school world languages
• Classroom & guidance positions
• Central office positions

FY28–29 cuts: 130 FTEs mainly classroom teachers, plus:

• Middle school sports
• South Brookline bus service
• Potential legal/compliance impacts.

School Subcommittee Long-Term Recommendations

Nine major reforms including:

• Negotiating healthcare premium contribution changes.
• Managing wage growth to match revenues.
• Possible redistricting / school model changes.
• Completion of financial system alignment (MUNIS).
• Ensuring fair-market third-party facility use.

• Facilities governance pilot.
• Evaluating BEAT program finances.
• Continued enrollment forecasting improvements.
• A possible Special Education reserve fund.

Town Department Overview (Janet Gelbart)

Even with override funding:

• Town must cut 5 FTEs.
• Freeze/adjust fees; reduce CIP contribution from 6.6% → 6%.
• Level-fund OPEB contribution.
• Use surplus in elections fund.
• Increase certain parking fees.

Town Override Request ($5.31M) Supports

• Fire Dept: contractual increases, overtime needs.
• Police Dept: restore 3 positions; software upgrades; pay adjustments.
• DPW: tree bylaw enforcement; sustainability positions.
• Council on Aging: permanent medical transportation funding.
• Building Dept: maintenance and plumbing staff.
• IT: licensing increases.
• Collective bargaining reserves.

Without an Override

• FY27: 17.4 FTE cuts, services, supplies and part-time staff in 2027.
• FY28: could require cutting an entire engine company (20 firefighters).
• FY29: at least 5 more FTE cuts.
The Town subcommittee fully supported the Town request for $5.31 million in an override.

Future Subcommittee (Longer-Term Reforms)

Major opportunities:

Solar Initiative
Electrical Demand Management

School Model Analysis

• Explore consolidating middle-grade models (not one mega-middle-school).
• Potential academic, social, and financial benefits.

Town/School Financial Model

- Subcommittee formed in summer never completed its work
- Recommend reviving group to evaluate options
    - Is our approach optimal?
    - Provide more clarity and transparency with above and below the line costs
    - Provide more accountability
    - Evaluate consolidation of departments and establish clear relationships across departments via MOUs
    - Evaluate utility of establishing Special Ed reserve fund

Economic Development

• Need for Select Board leadership role focused on economic development.
• Zoning modernization aligned with upcoming Comprehensive Plan.
• Improve permitting efficiency (potential special permit delegation).
• Support commercial vitality and business environment.

OPEB Strategy

• Pension fully funded by 2030 → $35–40M shifts toward OPEB.
• Should evaluate flexibility to reduce OPEB funding pace *without* jeopardizing AAA bond rating.
• Key risk: misunderstanding in public that "extra money will be available."
• Recommendation: form a committee to evaluate policy options by 2031.

Select Board Discussion

Complexity & Voter Communication

• Concern that front-loading is too hard to explain.
• Some believe front-loading is beneficial long-term; others worry about early tax shock.
• Universal emphasis on clarity and simplicity for voters.

Tier Structure Debate

Major questions:

• Two tiers or three?
• Should tiers be percentage-based or fixed amounts?
• How to avoid a minority-supported high tier winning via plurality?
• Some members prefer two tiers (simple high/low).
• Others emphasize maximizing voter choice.
• Town Counsel will explore legal formats.

Importance of Transparency

• Board members stress need for clear consequences at each tier:
– Staffing
– Programs
– Safety impacts
– School programs
• School Committee will need to return next week with cut lists for a reduced scenario.

Value of an Override-Related MOU

• Ensures commitment to long-term reforms and cost controls.
• Intended to increase voter trust.

Deciding Specific Dollar Amounts

The Board discussed:

• High tier: keep full request ($23M).
• Lower tier: something around $19M (86% of full request).
• Staff will model cuts required to reach $19M.
• Schools/Town will return next week with implications.

Closing

The Board thanks the ERSC for extensive work and noted that a decision on the ballot questions is due by midnight March 31, 2026.

4. **Special Town Meeting**

Question of calling a Special Town Meeting on one of several potential dates (Tuesday, May 26, 2026; Wednesday, May 27, 2026; Thursday, May 28, 2026; Tuesday, September 15, 2026; Wednesday, September 30, 2026; or a date identified by the Select Board) at 7:30 p.m. at the High School Auditorium and Zoom remote meeting; to waive the requirements of Sections 2.1.2 through 2.1.4 of the Town's By-Laws to the extent necessary; to open and close the Warrant if feasible to do so; and, if the warrant is being opened/closed, to insert in the said Warrant the following articles:

STM 1 - Article 1 - Amend the Zoning By-Law and Zoning Map to establish and accommodate a Chestnut Hill Commercial (CHC) Overlay District. (Select Board).

STM 1- Article 2 - Authorize the Select Board to enter into any necessary agreement(s) and/or amendments to existing agreements, including a Memorandum of Agreement, and to accept a related restrictive covenant in the form of a Tax Certainty Agreement, related to the development of 1280, 1290, 1300, and 1330 Boylston Street within the proposed Chestnut Hill Commercial (CHC) Overlay District. (Select Board)

Presentation from Meredith Mooney, Economic Development Director

Status of Developer Outreach

• EDAB member George Cole engaged with Growth Companies to explore zoning amendments addressing their concerns.
• Staff collaborated with Cole to prepare proposed amendments; both tracked-change and clean versions were provided to the Board.
• Growth Companies indicated they are prepared to support advancing the warrant article in May, pending resolution of remaining concerns (primarily setback requirements).

Summary of Proposed Amendments

Three main zoning adjustments to accommodate Growth Companies:

1. Setback Flexibility (East Block / 4.0 District)
   • Growth Companies requested reducing the 25-ft Heath Street setback to 12.5 ft.
   • The Planning Department instead proposes allowing the setback to be reduced via special permit, giving flexibility while preserving community review.
2. Floor-to-Floor Height Adjustment
   • Growth Companies asked for flexibility allowing 10-ft floor-to-floor height for structured parking (current zoning requires 10.5 ft).
   • Amendment incorporates this change specifically for garage uses.
3. Open Space Flexibility
   • Amendment clarifies developers may distribute required open space between their Boylston Street and Heath Street lots.

Review of a larger policy fix related to timing and phasing of commercial vs. residential components, which is a significant concern for Growth Companies.

Select Board Discussion

Board members asked whether special-permit flexibility should include limits (e.g., only down to 12.5 ft). Meredith explained:

• Limiting reductions now could create “scope issues” at Town Meeting.
• Leaving the special-permit system open allows refinement during warrant article review.

- Board members confirmed the revised zoning would be brought back to the community advisory group for review.
- The revised zoning allows parallel development by City Realty and Growth Companies under consistent terms (balanced commercial/residential mix).
- Some members view City Realty’s communication as “realities of development,” not a threat•
- Highlighted substantial good-faith compromise by the neighborhood and the value of Janice Kahn’s (Community Advisory Group member) proposal for improving consensus.

- Town Administrator Carey assured equal access to all residents, noting he routinely meets with residents

Paul Warren relayed his concerns:

1. Process: Community advisory group majority did not support current proposal; this raises procedural concerns.
2. Access: Developers gained rapid staff access; residents should have equal opportunity (referenced Janice Kahn proposal).
3. Threat: Interprets City Realty's communication about delaying STM as an inappropriate threat.
4. Override Messaging: Override committee and YES campaign rely on showing commitment to commercial tax-base growth; May STM timing is important.

Member Warren noted support of placing the zoning articles on the May Special Town Meeting warrant.

MOU Discussion

Michael Rubenstein and Meredith Mooney reviewed whether Growth Companies required an MOU now:

• They do not yet own all parcels; an MOU would require further steps.
• Zoning language includes mechanisms requiring developers to return to the Select Board for relief, creating leverage for future MOUs.

On motion, it was,

Voted to call a Special Town Meeting on one of several potential dates (Tuesday, May 26, 2026; Wednesday, May 27, 2026; Thursday, May 28, 2026; Tuesday, September 15, 2026; Wednesday, September 30, 2026; or a date identified by the Select Board) at 7:30 p.m. at the High School Auditorium and Zoom remote meeting; to waive the requirements of Sections 2.1.2 through 2.1.4 of the Town's By-Laws to the extent necessary; to open and close the Warrant if feasible to do so; and, if the warrant is being opened/closed, to insert in the said Warrant the following articles:

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

On motion, it was,

Voted to execute the Warrant for the May 26, 2026 Special Town Meeting.

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

5. **Lunch**

6. **Department Budget Reviews**

6a. Review of the following FY27 Departmental Budgets:

6b. Recreation Department – Recreation Director, Tim Davis

The Recreation Department reported a largely stable FY27 budget, with minimal changes to the general fund aside from shifting one full-time salary into the revolving fund. Most departmental operations continue to be financed through fees, as Recreation is a self-sustaining enterprise. The revolving fund will see increased expenses—approximately $461,862, bringing total revolving expenditures to just over $5.7 million—due primarily to the integration of Adult & Community Education (including a new full-time staff member), higher part-time instructional costs, expanded programming demand, and adjustments tied to rising wages and vendor-based services. On the revenue side, these increases are matched by expanded programming and anticipated fee growth. The golf enterprise fund also reflects higher personnel and operating expenses, including course improvements, seasonal wage adjustments, and infrastructure projects, bringing that budget to about $3.5 million, partially offset by a $450,000 transfer from retained earnings. Overall, the Recreation budget maintains core services, supports expanded community programming, and continues capital improvements while remaining fully fee-supported.

The Board praised Recreation's strong presentation and self-funded model. Questions focused on fluctuating facility use—especially reduced driving range and ice rink activity due to severe winter weather—winter staffing coordination with Parks, and the removal of high-cost vendor programs from financial aid (with in-house alternatives added). They also discussed rising aquatics demand, whether an outdoor pool would help, and the plan to use about $450,000 in golf course retained earnings to offset growing expenses.

6c. Police Department – Chief Paster

The Police Department's FY27 budget is driven overwhelmingly by personnel costs—over 92% of total spending—and focuses on sustaining essential operations rather than expanding services. Overtime remains a major pressure point, though the department reports significant progress, reducing discretionary overtime by roughly $500K year-to-date compared to FY25, with total overtime expected to finish slightly under $2 million for FY26. Staffing challenges continue: although recruitment pipelines have improved (with 8 candidates headed to the May 2026 academy), the department still faces 12–14 effective vacancies, which drives forced overtime to maintain safe coverage levels. Operating costs also reflect increased market-driven expenses in technology, dispatch systems, communications infrastructure, contracted services, and fleet/equipment replacement. Revenue streams saw modest positive trends; parking violations increased about 4% and detail revenue rose 52% to over $480,000, but these do not offset core operating expenses. The requested budget largely restores department capacity to 2020 operational levels (before inflationary cost pressures), prioritizing staffing stabilization, training, technology modernization, and maintaining service quality in the face of rising call complexity and sustained operational demand.

The Select Board reviewed Police Department staffing and overtime strains, noting overtime will hit about $2 million due to vacancies and minimum staffing rules. They also raised concerns about slower response times in South Brookline and the challenges of creating a satellite substation.

Traffic enforcement dominated public complaints, with the Board pushing for stronger action on speeding and blocked bike lanes. The Chief cited cultural reluctance among some officers but said clearer expectations and more educational stops could help.

The Chief said the six override-funded positions would cut forced overtime, stabilize staffing, strengthen detective and community services, and provide evening mental-health response coverage.

6d. Fire Department – Chief Sullivan

The Fire Department's FY27 budget reflects a continuation of long-term capital commitments and operational stabilization efforts, emphasizing major station renovations and rising compliance obligations. The department is nearing completion of the full renovation of Station 4 and will immediately begin the 16–18-month renovation of Station 1, funded through prior CIP appropriations. Operating pressures remain tied primarily to personnel, including managing overtime and reducing long-term injury leave, though the FY27 budget also includes a reduction of one full-time position, with the Chief recommending that any required cut come from the Training Division rather than Fire Prevention. Capital planning includes future replacement of Station 5 (now confirmed to require a full rebuild), an eventual feasibility study for Station 7, and upcoming major equipment replacements such as the self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) fleet in FY31 and ongoing PFAS-free turnout gear. Operational priorities center on completing emergency management plan updates, standardizing departmental procedures through new policy software, and supporting the continuation of multi-year station modernization—all while maintaining service levels within the constraints of a budget that remains largely dictated by labor, safety requirements, and inflationary cost increases.

The Fire Department's FY27 budget continues long-term capital and stabilization efforts, with major station renovations underway. Station 4 is nearing completion, and the 16–18 month rebuild of Station 1 will start next, funded through prior CIP allocations. Personnel costs, overtime, and injury leave remain key operating pressures. The budget removes one position, which the Chief recommends cutting from Training rather than Fire Prevention.

Long-term capital needs include a full rebuild of Station 5, a feasibility study for Station 7, whose historic constraints prevent expansion, and major equipment replacements such as SCBA in FY31 and ongoing PFAS-free gear purchases. Operational priorities focus on updating emergency management plans, standardizing procedures through new policy software, and supporting multi-year station modernization.

The Select Board discussed overtime drivers, injury-related absences, facility constraints, and the importance of planning for significant upcoming capital obligations.

7. **2030 Roadmap**

Update and discussion on the 2030 Roadmap with Consensus Building Institute's Abby Fullem.

During the Roadmap presentation, Abby Fullem focused on establishing a formal structure for how the Select Board will track, update, and implement the 2030 Roadmap each year.

- Proposed that the Select Board conduct a full annual review every March, before setting fiscal-year goals, and that the Select Board Office update KPIs (Key Performance Indicators), action statuses, and progress tables ahead of that workshop.
- A draft tracking tool, including a sortable spreadsheet and a timeline chart was previewed, illustrating how goals, strategies, and actions could be monitored across departments.
- Because the list of Select Board actions is lengthy, Board members agreed they should identify quarter-one priorities, centered on fiscal health and economic development, and handle the rest using an asynchronous survey to assess which actions are truly strategic or should be trimmed.
- The Board also briefly discussed improving constituent-response protocols but deferred changes until a later review. This included the idea of assigning a “secretary role” for constituent response, but agreed instead that the communications protocol should simply be reviewed and updated later. The “secretary” item will be removed from the roadmap draft.
- The consultant will incorporate feedback, sequence first-quarter actions, and return with a refined version of the roadmap for final adoption in April.

8. **End of Day**

There being no further business, the Chair ended the meeting at 3:30 pm.

ATTEST