

**BROOKLINE SCHOOL BOARD
FEBRUARY 20, 2019
PUBLIC HEARING
MEETING MINUTES**

A Public Hearing was conducted by the Brookline School Board on Wednesday, February 20, 2019 at 6:30 p.m. at the Captain Samuel Douglass Academy.

Matthew Maguire, Chairman, presided:

Members of the Board Present: Alison Marsano, Secretary
 Rebecca Howie
 Erin Sarris

Members of the Board Absent: Kenneth Haag, Vice Chairman

Also in Attendance: Gina Bergskaug, Assistant Superintendent
 Kristen Maher, Assistant Business Administrator
 Dennis Dobe, Principal, Captain Samuel Douglass Academy
 Daniel Molinari, Principal, Richard Maghakian Memorial School

PUBLIC HEARING

Chairman Maguire explained the purpose of the Public Hearing was to gather public input on the following citizens petition warrant article that will appear on this year's ballot:

“Shall we adopt the provisions of RSA 32:5-b and implement a tax cap whereby the governing body, shall not submit a recommended budget that increases the amount raised by local taxes, based on the prior year's actual amount of local taxes raised, by more than 8%?”

Chairman Maguire noted the petition was discussed during the Deliberative Session conducted on February 4, 2019. It was during that time that the petition was modified from 2% to 8%.

Chairman Maguire opened the public comment period at 6:33 p.m.

Eric Pauer, 12 Westview Road

Provided a presentation (can be viewed [here](#) beginning at tape counter 27:50) on the proposed tax cap.

Mr. Pauer reiterated the citizens proposed a 2% tax cap, which was amended at the Deliberative Session to 8%. The Article requires a 3/5 majority to pass.

He provided a listing of towns and cities as well as school districts across the State that have adopted a tax cap since the law's inception in 2013.

Mr. Pauer stated since 1995, Brookline property tax increases have averaged 3.47% annually. The CPI-U (inflation) has averaged 2.17% annually. Using his personal property tax as an example, he stated his taxes are up 127% since 1995. If property taxes tracked inflation, annual property taxes would be up only 67%, and if under 2% tax cap, 61%. Taxes paid in Town, which includes the schools, has been almost double the rate of inflation. A graph was shown depicting this historical trend.

In Brookline, an 8% tax cap will be on the ballot March 12th, in the COOP School District, voters will decide on a 2% tax cap at the District Annual Meeting March 6th - 7th, and the Town of Brookline will vote on a 2% tax cap at the Town Meeting on March 13th.

A graph was displayed depicting enrollment and budget history trajectory in the COOP District. Mr. Pauer indicated the budget is on an upward trajectory while enrollment is decreasing. The graph also showed a comparison of the budgetary increase based on the current trajectory in comparison to the rate of increase were the tax cap in place.

Mr. Pauer remarked the reason for a tax cap is to get back to zero-based budgeting; method of budgeting where all expenses must be justified for each new period. The tax cap provides the School Board with a baseline from which to negotiate future Collective Bargaining Agreements. The tax cap can be overridden by the legislative body (those voting at the Deliberative Session) at the Deliberative Session in the case of the Brookline School District.

Mr. Pauer commented Brookline has seen a lot of increases in taxes. To preserve the future of Brookline, we really need to do something about the spending. He encouraged taxpayers to support the tax cap.

Ms. Marsano questioned if there is the possibility of looking at tax caps as more targeted for a certain age group (rather than broad based). Mr. Pauer stated that to be a question of assessments and exemptions. What that does is shift the burden to the remaining taxpayers.

Peter Walker, 57 Pepperell Road

Stated his support of the tax cap proposal. He believes it to be a starting point to put downward pressure on the tax burden in Town.

Joseph Hartman, 51 Mountain Road

Commented individuals can gain access to tax information dating back to 2006 for Brookline residents on the Avitar Associates website. He went through and discovered it to be around a 3% increase each year. Some are higher and others lower. Typically those increasing at about 3% had some drastic change in assessment.

He commented on the lack of revenue sources such as commercial properties to help offset the tax burden.

He questioned specific information relative to the cities/towns that have adopted the tax cap.

Eric Pauer, 12 Westview Road

Stated he spoke with the Department of Revenue Administration and learned there are some towns that have a 0% tax cap and others than have fixed dollar amounts. Most are 2-3%. They follow it; must submit a budget that does not exceed it. There is the opportunity, at Deliberative Session or Town Meeting, to exceed that.

Joseph Hartman, 51 Mountain Road

Remarked he was trying to understand the likely average the tax rate would be lowered to as a result. He would like to understand how much this would help or if there is something else we need to be doing as a town not just to reign in the taxes but to fund the needs as the Town grows.

Ms. Marsano stated appreciation for the concern. There does need to be a way forward. She appreciates the initiative to start the discussion.

The public comment period was closed at 6:48 p.m.

The Public Hearing was declared closed at 6:48 p.m.

Date _____

Signed _____