



Katie Weatherseed in front of the Brookline Town Offices. Shot by Meghan Bohannon

BROOKLINE – When the Brookline Department of Public Works and the Solid Waste Advisory Committee created a Zero Waste Framework, drafting a plan to reduce waste in Brookline, it became clear that a specific position was needed to carry out the framework. That person would be Katie Weatherseed, a Newton resident who began the position in March.

“I was particularly interested in this position because investing in zero waste is one of the most effective and efficient means of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and building a climate-resilient Brookline is something I care deeply about,” said Weatherseed, who has short, brown hair and a warm demeanor.

The Zero Waste Program Manager, a grant-funded position with funding acquired by Commissioner of Public Works Erin Chute Gallentine, oversees various policies and programs that help move Brookline toward a zero-waste future. Weatherseed’s first action item was expanding lunchroom compost collection and back-of-house compost collection in all of Brookline’s public schools.

During her first month on the job, Weatherseed spent her time getting acquainted with existing programs, policies, and initiatives. While she is currently trying to learn as much as possible about the position, the future of her work will include much time in the field, including overseeing and monitoring recycling and composting operations, conducting cost analyses, measuring environmental impacts, developing and implementing campaigns and zero-waste initiatives, acquiring grants, and developing outreach and educational materials.

Over the years, Weatherseed has learned many valuable lessons about environmental work, and her role in combating climate change, which she says can cause “eco-anxiety” and other frustrations given the scale to which it is an issue.

“On the days when I feel discouraged and exasperated, I’ve learned it’s important to take a step back, take note of the things I *have* accomplished, and remind myself that we’re in this together and I have an incredible team of colleagues, passionate residents and committed community partners who are similarly determined to finding solutions and making change,” said Weatherseed, who graduated from Middlebury College in 2016.

While studying environmental studies, conservation biology, and theater in college, Weatherseed was able to implement her belief that story-telling and art are crucial to inclusive environmental work. Since college, she has worked in a variety of different jobs and internships, including taking care of endangered Sumatran orangutans, developing content for the TV show, “Animal Planet,” and assisting several different production companies.

Although Weatherseed may be new to her position as zero waste program manager, she is not new to working in Brookline. Before this, she worked as a conservation assistant for the Brookline Parks and Open Space Division, where she learned about what makes for successful climate resiliency and sustainability work.

“While working with the Parks and Open Space Division as their conservation assistant, I experienced firsthand how essential community engagement and education are in regards to sustainability and conservation. I think this new role as zero waste program manager will require comprehensive and equitable outreach and education strategies, as well as a great deal of creative thinking, as we work towards shifting individual behaviors and cultural mindset towards interest in and support of zero-waste initiatives,” said Weatherseed, who was born in England, grew up in Connecticut, but moved to Massachusetts four and a half years ago.

While Weatherseed, who has four older siblings and one younger sibling, currently resides in Newton, her parents and sister live in Connecticut. Meanwhile, her brothers are scattered across the globe, living in England, Thailand, and North Carolina.

As conservation assistant for Brookline from 2018 to 2022, Weatherseed led the development of Brookline's first Urban Forest Climate Resiliency Master Plan, a plan that assesses the effects of climate change on Brookline's urban tree canopy while creating goals to protect it. During the development of the plan, she collaborated with the “Tree Team” of Mothers Out Front's Brookline branch, a grassroots coalition of mothers, grandmothers, and others committed to a clean, sustainable future, through a racial equity lens.

In an Instagram post dedicated to honoring Brookline's climate heroes, Mothers Out Front recognized Weatherseed, noting, “Katie is a talented & hardworking member of the Department of Public Works team, supporting Brookline's open space and tree programs and now serving as Brookline's first Zero Waste Manager.”

In addition to her duties as zero waste program manager, Weatherseed helped to organize the Brookline Department of Public Works' Spring Fest, which was co-sponsored by Mothers Out Front and held on May 7th. During the event, Brookline residents celebrated Brookline's trees and learned about Brookline's Front Yard Tree Planting Program.

Outside of work, Weatherseed considers herself a homebody, who loves spending her time sewing, knitting, cuddling with her cat, Peter, watching movies, and gardening. She hopes to one day have her own self-sustaining garden, complete with vegetable plots, fruit trees, animals, and a compost pile.

Working to combat an issue as complex and global as climate change, Weatherseed has learned valuable insight about overcoming the frustrations that one is not doing enough to contribute to a zero-waste future and encourages Brookline residents to start small. She says whether it's signing up for a curbside composting service or using a reusable water bottle, getting accustomed to small changes can help build immense progress.

"I deeply care about building climate resilient communities," Weatherseed said. "My goal for my career is to have the knowledge and experience to support communities as they work to incorporate sustainability and resiliency into their everyday operations."