

SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
7:00pm, March 27, 2024
Town Hall, 557 Main Street, Becket

Attendees

Select Board (SB): William Elovirta (BE), *Chair*; Chris Swindlehurst (CS), *Vice-Chair* and Jeff Piemont (JP), *Clerk*

Staff: Katherine A. Warden, *Town Administrator*; Beverly Gilbert (BG), *Administrative Assistant*

Finance Committee: Dan Parnell (remote), Ann Spadafora, Chuck Garman
Absent: Cathy Defoe, Ellen Manley

Others: Rita Furlong (Community Preservation Committee, Historical Commission), Sandy Jarvis (Historical Commission), John Garvey (Community Preservation Committee and the Historical Commission) Remote: Jeff Penn; Robin Mathiesen, Town Clerk

1. **The Chairperson will call the Select Board meeting to order. The Finance Committee will join the Select Board Meeting**
BE called the meeting to order at 5pm. He indicated the SB was recording the meeting.

2. **Pledge of Allegiance**
BE led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. **Discussion and potential votes re: Community Preservation Applications:**
 - **Town of Becket – Brooker Hill Road Stonewall Preservation \$27,000**
 - **Historical Commission – Town Hall Cupola Placement \$22,600.00**The SB discussed the above captioned applications with Rita Furlong, John Garvey, Sandi Jarvis and Jeff Penn (Jeff Penn - Cupola only), both which were submitted after February 29, 2024. BE brought up that the Community Preservation Act applications due date is listed on the website as February 29, 2024, and he expressed concern that Community Preservation Committee (CPC) did not provide sufficient notification that the CPC was extending the deadline. Rita Furlong indicated that the CPC voted to extend the application due date to April 1, 2024, and the CPC sent a news item notification to local publications. A news item appeared in the County Journal. The news item that appeared in the Country Journal, Thursday, March 21, 2024, stated that the Becket Community Preservation Committee would meet on Monday, April 1, 2024 at 9 a.m. to discuss proposed projects. Nothing was published saying the deadline for submission had been extended. Rita Furlong indicated that Stewart Saginor, Executive Director of the Community Preservation Coalition, advised that it is no longer necessary to publish public hearing notices and news item notification is adequate. BE stated that he knows of an entity that refrained from submitting an application because they thought the deadline was February 29, 2024. KW will ask for Town Counsel's opinion to determine if the town should wait until next year to present these applications for 2024 Annual Town Meeting approval or if it is acceptable to go forward with them at the 2024 ATM.

Brooker Hill Road application: BE pointed out that the application (page 11 question 13) says the Board of Selectmen supports and signed a letter of support but this had not occurred. The consensus of the SB members is that they favor addressing the stone wall/pillars located at

Brooker Hill Road, and they suggested that this application should only list Engineering services, \$10,000, and a future CPA application would list construction.

Discussion included adhering to procurement law.

Town Hall Cupola: Per BE's comment, the HC will reword question 1 on page 8 to clarify that the copper component is the original part of the cupola and the remainder is a replica.

The SB did not vote on recommendations for either of these applications.

4. 6:00 p.m. The Finance Committee will join the meeting.

The Finance Committee joined the meeting at 6:03pm.

5. Fiscal Year 2025 Budget discussion and possible votes

KW provided the following materials: Proposed FY2025 budget, Ambulance Enterprise, Unibank (UFASI) estimated borrowing rates \$390,583 (for Fire Truck), Capital Items

KW discussed her recommended budget:

- Added \$30,000 for Special Projects
- Building Inspector & Code Enforcer Salaries - \$60,000 to include funding for an additional employee or one employee for both positions
- Budget includes 20 students to attend vocational schools
- The Highway Department Salaries & Wages includes an Administrative Assistant
- The budget divides Health & Life Insurance into two amounts: 1) Employees, and 2) Retired Employees.

A discussion ensued regarding Capital Items:

- It was agreed to list a 2025 Ford 350 for the Highway Superintendent's Truck. The Ford 350 can handle a plow, chipper/hot box. The difference between a Ford 250 and 350 is \$2,000. The Highway Superintendent's current truck (number 7) 3500 GMC Pick-up will be junked due to a cracked frame.
- It was determined to recommend using stabilization rather than borrowing to pay for the Fire Truck (final payment due October, 2024) \$391,000.

Dan Parnell will contact the Department of Revenue to discuss the process and timings to transfer MLP Broadband proceeds into the town's free cash so that the town can use it to pay Broadband Build debt.

The SB would like to invite the Board of Assessors to present an assessment listing report at a meeting.

Discussion ensued regarding use of stabilization/free cash/borrowing.

Next Meetings: 7pm, April 3rd - Select Board only; 5pm, April 10th - Select Board / Finance Committee to vote on the budget and Annual Town Meeting warrant articles. The SB is scheduled to have its regular meeting 7pm on April 17th but if necessary, will also meet with the Finance Committee on that night with the time TBA.

6. The Finance Committee will adjourn

The Finance Committee left the meeting at 7:25pm.

- 7. Public Input (limited to 3 minutes per person, 20 minutes total for this agenda item).**
None.

8. Town Administrator's Report

KW discussed project being worked on:

1. Police Agreement – met with Officer Auger, President of the Police Association, and Sergeant Hunt to review a draft agreement. They will modify the agreement and meet again with KW. When the draft is completed, KW will discuss this with the SB for feedback and a potential vote. The SB discussed Police Department staffing and shifts. Matthew Virginia will remain part-time because returning full-time will interfere with his Berkshire County Retirement benefits. KW will discuss overnight staffing with the Police Chief to see if it is possible to fill-in the gaps during the next few weeks.
2. Becket Washington Ambulance Agreement– The Washington Select Board decided to present this service at Washington's Annual Town Meeting. KW will present to the Washington Community on April 13th at 1:00pm.
3. Becket Otis Ambulance Shared – Work in Progress (WIP)
4. County Rd & Yokum Pond Rd full depth
5. Benton Hill Culvert Replacement – being reviewed by Gill engineering. KW mentioned the Farmington River Wild & Scenic Group approached her to collaborate on a culvert grant for Route 8. KW will place this on hold to avoid competing with the Benton Hill Culvert replacement grant application of which the Westfield Wild & Scenic Group and she has submitted.
6. Leonhardt Rd upgrade to pavement front side: wetlands tagged and core sampling done in approximately two weeks.
7. Records Destruction and Management project – on hold until funding source is decided.
8. Beach Property Issues – KW will meet with Lucas Horn next week
9. FY2023 Audit and Capital Asset – WIP. KW has scheduled working on this after ATM warrant is complete.
10. DCR Forestry Grant – working with Conservation agent. This involves removal of dead trees in the Town Park, and replacement with a trees on their list of approved trees.
11. Employee Handbook Revision – WIP – KW has scheduled this project for after July 1st.
12. Auction – KW set up an account with Muni-Bid, and is assembling the list of properties.
13. The Town of Washington accepts the Town of Becket's Fire Department proposed agreement (with escalators).
14. The Town of Otis remains interested in shared Ambulance Services.
15. The Treasurer and Diane Sturtevant will discuss the tax title status with the SB on May 1st.

9. Approval of the March 6, 2024 Meeting Minutes

CS moved to approve the March 6, 2024 minutes. JP 2nd: Motion carried unanimously.

10. Select Board's Comments and Announcements

None

11. Any other business to come before the Board

None.

12. Correspondence/announcements:

- 2024.03.15 Central Berkshire Regional School District (CBRSD) Treasurer re: Becket's Proportionate share of the capital and operating budget for Fiscal Year 2025 (Total Assessment: \$2,887,173.00)
- 2024.02.05 Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, Notice of Approval of the Eversource Energy, Western MA (Vegetation Management Plan 2024 through 2028) as modified

The SB reviewed the above listed communications.

13. Select Board to review and sign payable warrants

The SB reviewed and signed payable warrants.

14. Select Board to adjourn the Meeting

JP moved to adjourn. CS 2nd: Motion carried unanimously. BE adjourned the meeting at 7:47pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Beverly Gilbert, *Administrative Assistant*

Signed by:

William H. Elovirta / April 3, 2024
William H. Elovirta, *Chairperson* Date Approved