

**Town of Becket  
Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes  
7:00pm, March 18, 2020  
Town Hall, 557 Main Street, Becket**

**Attendees**

**Board of Selectmen:** William Elovirta (BE), *Chairperson*; Michael Lavery (ML) – via remote participation, and *Vice Chairperson* and Chris Swindlehurst (CS), *Clerk*

**Staff:** William Caldwell (BC), *Town Administrator*; Beverly Gilbert (BG), *Administrative Assistant*; George Roberts, Town Clerk

**1. Call to order**

BE called the meeting to order at 7:00pm. He indicated that the BOS was recording the meeting and due to that Michael Lavery was participating remotely, all votes will be roll-call.

**2. Pledge of Allegiance**

BE led the Pledge of Allegiance.

- 3. Peg McDonough, Planner & Age Friendly Berkshires Coordinator from the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission to discuss the Every Ride Counts Project. This project is made possible by a grant from the Central Berkshire Fund, a fund of the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation. The BOS may consider voting to participating in this project.** BC reported that Peg McDonough advised that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the above captioned program is being placed on hold. The BOS tabled this agenda item.

**4. Broadband Update and BOS to discuss and possibly vote on policies and decisions relating to the Broadband Project**

MLP Manager Bob Gross had e-mailed a report to the BOS: The report specified that there are no issues which require a vote. Other items in his report include:

1. The town continues to progress on all of the easements with the seven underground areas.
2. The Broadband website (becketbroadband.org) has been updated. In the near future, the Broadband Ad Hoc Group will add other modifications on its website, and they will add a 'Frequently Asked Question' section. They will add the town's information on the WiredWest website shortly.
3. The Broadband Ad Hoc Group is working with WiredWest to develop a system to ensure that when drops are done, the homeowner is properly billed for the work they are responsible to pay for.
4. The Broadband Ad Hoc Group is working on a recommendation to submit to the BOS concerning payment of the subsidy to the underground areas.
5. Those who have questions about Broadband may call the Town Hall to leave a message for the MLP Manager Bob Gross or may directly e-mail Bob Gross at [MLPManager@townofbecket.org](mailto:MLPManager@townofbecket.org).

BC advised that progress is being made on the mid-span issues.

**5. Approval of Meeting Minutes**

BE moved to approve the minutes for the 2020 March 4 regular session meeting, the 2020 March 6 working meeting, the 2020 March 13 working meeting & the 2020 March 16 Emergency meeting. CS seconded. Roll call: William Elovirta – Yes, Michael Lavery – Yes, and Chris Swindlehurst – Yes. Motion carried 3-0.

6. **BOS discuss and potential vote on Transfer Station Fees and Possible changes**  
BE moved to increase the secondary transfer station vehicle permit fee from \$3 to \$5 effective 7-1-2020. CS seconded. Roll call: William Elovirta – Yes, Michael Lavery – Yes, and Chris Swindlehurst – Yes. Motion carried 3-0.

The BOS will discuss and possibly vote to set tire disposal fees at the next meeting.

7. **Public Input (limited to 3 minutes per person, 20 minutes total for this agenda item).**  
Al Blake, who had trouble joining the meeting remotely, texted a message to CS to indicate his support to vote by mail.

BE received a communication from two Highway Department individuals asking if the packet re: safety concerns given to the BOS at the 3-6-2020 meeting will be reviewed. The BOS's understanding is that in keeping with personnel protocol and as specified at the 3-6-2020 meeting, the Highway Superintendent and Town Administrator are first in line to address issues relating to the Highway Department. The Town Administrator will reply to the individuals and because it is not appropriate to do so in open meeting, his reply will not be part of the meeting record.

8. **Possible BOS nomination of Madelaine Elovirta to continue as the Inspector of Animals (Appointment period May 1, 2020 through April 30, 2021)**  
BE recused himself from this discussion because Madelaine Elovirta is his wife.  
Michael Lavery moved to reappoint Madelaine Elovirta as the Inspector of Animals through April 30, 2021. CS seconded. Roll call: William Elovirta – Recused himself, Michael Lavery – Yes, and Chris Swindlehurst – Yes. Motion carried.

9. **BOS to review Departmental Reports**

- TBA

The BOS did not receive any departmental reports.

10. **BOS's Comments and Announcements**

CS stated that he wants to go on record to say the upcoming trash hauling three year contract should not be entered into without looking into the financial comparisons of owning vs. renting compactors. During discussion, BC advised that the town's trash ends up in the Pittsfield incinerator.

11. **Town Administrator's Report**

BC provided an update of several items that he has been working on:

- Broadband Hut – build-out is nearly complete.
- HVAC @ Town Hall
- Budget:
  - 2.5% COLA and other salary adjustments
- RFP for Assessing Service – getting input from assessors will advertise soon
  - Assessor's proposal
- Green Communities competitive grant - The grant application will include 2 heat pumps, insulation for the Fire House and possibly LEDs
- Getting easement for septic in village for Athenaeum/BAC/MH
- USDA Grant
- Finance Committee 3/26, Joint meeting 4/2
- Constellation - BC signed a 3 year contract which will be less expensive than Eversource for the town buildings

- Aggregation - DPU There will be public meeting in November – Notices to customers will be sent after the December 1<sup>st</sup> meter read. New rates will be effective January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020.
- Land combination 21 Maple and Park – Town Counsel recommends keeping separate because of their categories (one is general municipal and the other is recreational), but he advised that the parcels may be treated as one in applications. BC to arrange the process with the Assessors.
- Name change – ATM article for special legislation
- Nursing services – Due to that Porchlight VNA is closing, the town will use the Berkshire Boards of Health.
- Meeting with public safety departments again Friday for update

## 12. Any other business to come before the Board

In light of the unpredictable nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, Town Clerk George Roberts discussed concerns and how we may prepare for the Caucus, Town Meetings, and Elections.

Ideas explored during discussion:

- Staggering voters: Only allowing a few individuals in the Town Hall and Polling areas at a time.
- Additional Police presence to assist with staggering
- Possible shortage of Election Workers
- Delaying or cancelling caucus
- Safety of workers and participants
- Tyvek Suits for workers
- Paramedics on site to require voters to take temperature voters are allowed entry to the polls.
- supplies to distribute to each voter: Safety Masks, gloves, own pen
- mail-in voting for caucus and elections
- use of security cameras during elections
- drive through elections
- Timing of the elections – can they be delayed, is the caucus necessary? Will the state and federal Government Issue take action for relief?
- outdoor elections/Town Meetings and setup
- adhering the Governor's state of emergency space requirements
- sanitizing tables during elections

BE moved to authorize the Town Administrator, with the advice of Town Counsel, and with deliberations from Town Clerk to investigate and have the power to postpone or employ other necessary measures for upcoming elections during this emergency crisis. CS seconded. CS amended the motion to include that the town will be as inclusive as possible. Roll call: William Elovirta – Yes, Michael Lavery – Yes, and Chris Swindlehurst – Yes. Motion carried 3-0.

## 13. Correspondence:

- Porchlight VNA letter dated 3-6-2020 to advise that they are closing their doors and the last day they will provide services is on 3-31-2020
- MassDOT letter dated 2-28-2020 advising that pending final passage of the bona authorization, Becket's Chapter 90 apportionment for Fiscal Year 2020 is \$236,736. This apportionment will automatically be incorporated in the town's existing 10-year Chapter 90 contract.
- MassDOT letter dated 3-11-2020 bridge inspection report McNerney Rd / Shaker Hill Brook B-03-016 (B78) dated 11-01-2019
- 3-13-2020 Planning Board Notice of Public Hearing scheduled on April 1, 2020 re: Permit application submitted by Spencer Romano to operate a Tier 2 indoor

cannabis cultivation and manufacturing facility at 0 Tanglewood Circle (Map 406, Lots 30-34)

- Wood Environmental & Infrastructure Solutions, Inc. letter dated 3-12-2020 with enclosed Massachusetts Dept. Of Agricultural Resources notice of Public Hearing re: CSX Transportation, Inc. Railroad Rights-of Way in Massachusetts Vegetation Management Plan. Public Hearing is scheduled on 4-24-2020 from 11am to 12:30pm in the Westfield Town Hall. Contact – to request a copy of the plan or to submit comments: [stephen.herzog@woodplc.com](mailto:stephen.herzog@woodplc.com)

The BOS reviewed the above captioned correspondence.

**14. BOS to review and sign payable warrants.**

The BOS reviewed and signed payable warrants.

**15. BOS to adjourn the Meeting**

ML moved to adjourn. CS seconded. Roll call: William Elovirta – Yes, Michael Lavery – Yes, and Chris Swindlehurst – Yes. Motion carried 3-0. At 7:50pm, BE adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,  
Beverly Gilbert, Secretary

Signed by:



William Elovirta, Chairperson

/ 4-1-2020

Date Approved

**Documents discussed at this meeting:**

- Town Administrator's Report 3-18-2020
- Correspondence as listed above
- Age Friendly Berkshires Grant Information – Agenda Item 3
- BOS Agenda 2020March18.pdf
- BOS minutes 2020Mar13 Working Meeting
- BOS minutes 2020Mar16 Emergency Meeting
- BOS minutes 2020March4 Regularly Scheduled Meeting
- BOS minutes 2020March6 Working Meeting
- Declaration of Emergency (voted BOS 3-16-2020 meeting) document in signature folder
- e-mail transmittal from Peg McDonough - power point project outline for Agenda Item 3
- MDAR Re Nomination Animal Inspector, not discussed – tabled for the 4-1-2020 meeting
- MLP Manager's update