

**Town of Becket
Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes
6:00 p.m., January 22, 2020
Town Hall, 557 Main Street, Becket**

Attendees

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

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

Others Present: Planning Board Member Al Blake, Steven Reiss, MLP Manager and Broadband Ad Hoc Group Member Manager Bob Gross, and Broadband Ad Hoc Group Member Jeremy Dunn

1. Call to order

BE called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. He indicated that the BOS was recording the meeting.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

BE led the Pledge of Allegiance

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

MLP Manager Bob Gross provided the following update:

Contracts – The Town signed contracts with Certex (construction), and Westfield Gas & Electric (OPM). The contracts with TriWire, subcontracted by Westfield Gas and Electric for drops, is in process (MLP Manager and BOS Chairperson signatures will be needed when the contract is ready).

The Broadband Ad Hoc Group had an encouraging conversation with Bill Ennen relating to midspan issues. Verizon, Westfield Gas & Electric, Certex, Verizon, and Eversource, agreed to conduct a coordinated drive-through to address required mid-span corrections. The timing will be based on the sequencing of other towns and Verizon must first acquire all Becket make-ready licenses.

Now that the town has signed the contract for construction, it is anticipated that the town will receive the state's next tranche of funding (\$451,500) within this week.

Underground areas as part of the network: Becket West has not replied to the MLP's letter. He will send a certified letter to each homeowner and he will notify them that the town must hear from them by March 1st in order for them to receive broadband service. Bob had not yet done so but will send a letter to Deerhaven.

Easements: Town Counsel is reviewing draft easement agreements for Parsons Way and Skyline Ridge. Becket Woods sent the town's proposed easement for their counsel's

review. The Broadband Ad Hoc Group continues developing easements for Family Court and Frederick Court.

The Broadband Ad Hoc Group has received approximately 750 survey responses. Jeremy has had positive telephone interactions and was able to provide information and alleviate concerns for those who conveyed concerns or mistrust about the project. The Broadband Ad Hoc Group will communicate on a regular basis with those who responded to surveys.

WiredWest encourages the town to link WiredWest to the town's webpage.

The Broadband Ad Hoc Group will meet with Westfield Gas & Electric on 2-10-2020 to discuss the construction sequence.

Jeremy discussed timing of signups. Other towns have suggested that it is a mistake to signup premises too far in advance and it is better to sign up premises as their specific FSA is being built so that regular status updates are available.

Jeremy Dunn and Bob Gross discussed broadband policy issues/potential financial decisions with the BOS. The Broadband Ad Hoc Group will provide a list of its recommendation for the Selectmen's 2-5-2020 meeting. Discussion included the following topics: monthly MLP Fee (debt service repayment and reserve to replace electronics), drop subsidy offered to homeowners (sign-up phase), subsidy offered to underground areas for Make-ready, cancellation policy, suspension of service, reactivation of service, service contracts, and drop installation policy.

Jeremy and Bob fielded Steven Reiss's questions re: service to his premise, underground drop options, and order of FSA builds.

4. Approval of Meeting Minutes

ML moved to approve the 1-8-2020 meeting minutes. CS seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

5. Public Input (limited to 3 minutes per person, 20 minutes total for this agenda item).

Planning Board Member Al Blake indicated that according to the Selectmen's 12-18-2019 meeting minutes, it was the BOS's understanding that the Planning Board was not amenable to revisiting the town's zoning bylaw that prohibits Connex boxes and Steel storage units. Al clarified that on 10-16-2019, the Planning Board voted to consult with Berkshire Regional Planning Commission to see how other towns are handling storage containers.

6. BOS discussion and possibly vote on appointment of members to the Citizen Advisory Committee.

CS moved to appoint George Roberts and Alvin Blake to the Citizen Advisory Committee. ML seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

BE moved to appoint Chris Swindlehurst to the Citizen Advisory Committee. ML seconded. Motion carried with CS recusing himself.

The BOS agreed that the three above mentioned Citizen Advisory Committee (charged to make decisions on behalf of the Fiscal Year 2017 Community Development Block Grant and any future Community Block Grant) appointments are effective through June 30, 2022

7. **BOS to vote on the Highway Superintendent's recommendation for an Amended Pay Rate for Town Mechanic Tyler Chrystal who has successfully completed 180 days.**
ML moved to accept the Highway Superintendent's recommendation to amend Town Mechanic Tyler Chrystal's hourly payrate to \$22.01 seconded. CS seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

8. **BOS to vote on authorizing the Town's adoption of the Public Agencies Post-Retirement Health Care Plan and Trust (Other Post-Employment Benefits Fund)**

CS moved authorized the town's adoption of the Public Agencies Post-Retirement Health Care Plan and Trust. ML seconded. Motion carried 3-0. During discussion, BC advised that the town currently has a retirement benefits liability of approximately 4.5 million dollars. He will recommend and anticipates for the town to fund \$15,000 during Fiscal Year 2021. The Treasurer and Town Administrator selected the PARS institution to manage the retirement funds based on their streamlined process, and because they service other municipality entities within the Berkshires.

9. **Discussion and possible vote for intergovernmental agreement between Dalton, Sheffield, Stockbridge, and Becket for CDBG application**

The BOS tabled this agenda item for discussion on 2-5-2020.

10. **BOS to review Departmental Reports**

- TBA

The BOS received the Highway/Transfer Station's January 2020 report. BE commented on the BOS's expectation that departments should submit their monthly reports by the Selectmen's regularly scheduled second monthly meeting.

11. **BOS to view and possibly vote on Town Report Cover Contest Entries**

The BOS selected one out of the nine entries for the Annual Town Report Cover Photo Contest. The winning photo will appear on front cover. BG will ask the Graphics Artist if it is feasible for the other photos to appear on the back cover. All photos used will receive credit on the inside cover.

The BOS discussed the 2019 Annual Town Report Retirement Section. In addition to Robert Cooper (Highway Dept.), the BOS agreed to list three longstanding members (Madelaine Elovirta, William Elovirta, and James Atwell) of the Volunteer Fire Department who retired during 2019. BE will provide photos of Maddy, Jim Atwell and himself. New Fire Chief Paul Mikaniewicz, in the Volunteer Fire Department's 2019 Annual Report, will recognize Mark Hanford's for his many years serving as the Fire Chief. Mark Hanford continues serving as a member of the VFD. The BOS agreed with BC's suggestion to combine Albert "Bert" Goodermote's retirement as the Animal Control Officer (which occurred during

2019) along with his anticipated 2020 retirement from the Highway Department in the 2020 Annual Town Report.

ML and CS approved use of BE's draft Selectmen's 2019 Annual Report. The Selectmen agreed to add their appreciation to the Becket Highway Dept. for assisting the Parks & Recreation Committee with their repairs to the actual beach culminating with new sand.

12. BOS's Comments and Announcements

The BOS signed a letter authored by BE to Greylock Federal Credit Union to request that consideration be given to establishing a branch bank or ATM in Becket.

The BOS remain interested in arranging to buy or lease the Town Beach Parking Lot from Camp Greylock.

CS initiated discussion about energy-related topics including the potential to build a town-owned wind turbine, Town Hall Heating System, & Green Communities Grant ideas. CS and Al Blake reported on their meeting with Meredyth Babcock (MVP Representative, Conservation Commission member) and Larry Gould (Otis Building Inspector) who provided information about Otis wind turbine/solar arrays, insulation for Otis Fire Department buildings, and the Otis Town Hall heating system. CS and Al plan to view the heating system at the Otis Town Hall since they regard it as a comparable building to the Becket Town Hall. CS and Al reported that the Town of Otis, which used its own personnel for a significant portion of the work, spent approximately \$40,000 for its Town Hall heating system renovation/upgrade. CL learned that Becket will need to take Eversource's grid capacity into account when planning a Wind Turbine project: If the location lacks additional electrical grid capacity (which is the case for a large portion of the Town), we would need to factor the cost of new Eversource equipment into the project cost. BC suggested that perhaps the Town of Becket may access Chester's wind study report. The BOS would need to locate an appropriate site for a Wind Turbine. CS indicated that one of the steps along the process involves the selection of a location. He hopes to hear from Mr. Williams of Otis to discuss the possibility that Mr. Williams may donate land to the Town of Becket, or assist the Town with acquiring land for use as a Wind Turbine Site. CS suggested that the town add insulation to Fire Station 1 (perhaps as a Green Communities Grant activity).

BE asked BC for a report containing the carryovers.

13. Town Administrator's Report

Below is an update of several items that the Town Administrator has been working on:

- OPEB – discussed during agenda item 8
- Charging Stations – The special media event will occur on Feb. 6 at 11a.m. BC will invite the members of the Energy Committee.
- UMASS Boston forecasting document – complete
- Trails grant – working on application
- Broadband Hut – construction underway
- HVAC/Generator @ Town Hall

- MMA Conference – January 24/25
- MVP Workshop – January 11, identified many vulnerabilities. The Highway Superintendent attended.
- Budget requests – working on budget
- Building Inspector Job opportunity – advertised/posted. Applications due 1/24
- CBRSD – assessment figures received
 - New WRHS - \$110,000
- Debt Exclude new Wahconah H.S. building?
 - Ballot and TM vote required
- RFP for Assessing Service
- Investigating Community Solar through Blandford
- CDBG – 4 Towns: Dalton, Becket, Sheffield, Stockbridge
- Green Communities competitive grant released (possibly Fire House lights, insulation, TH heating system)
- New Inquiry regarding marijuana manufacturing facility. Of the other two inquiries, one withdrew his request and the other is postponing. CS heard that Heather Anello Spencer anticipates obtaining her provisional approval for recreational marijuana sales in 60 days
- Town report
- Becket Bulletin – Michael will write the February Selectmen’s Column
- Vehicle auction
 - Truck 7 – \$2,550.00
 - Rescue #4 – \$4,250.00

14. Any other business to come before the Board

CS inquired about the Building Inspector’s job description. CS learned that Otis’s Building Inspector manages Otis’ municipal building projects (including that he runs their wind turbine). He would recommend that Becket consider adding this responsibility to the Becket Building Inspector’s position description. CS has observed that the Highway Superintendent has assisted with some municipal building projects (such as the Ambulance Garage Drain) and he would like to avoid adding additional duties onto the Highway Department.

15. Correspondence:

- **White Engineering Notification of Chapter 91 Simplified License for dock on 229 South Cove Dr.**
- **1-2-2020 Mass DOT re chapter 90 apportionment \$261,059**

The BOS reviewed the above listed correspondence.

16. BOS to review and sign payable warrants.

The BOS reviewed and signed payable warrants.

17. BOS to adjourn the Meeting

ML moved to adjourn. CS seconded. Motion carried 3-0. At 8:03 p.m., BE adjourned the meeting.

Date Approved: 2-5-2020

Respectfully submitted,
Beverly Gilbert, Secretary


William Elovirta, *Chairperson*

Documents discussed at this meeting:

- 1-2-2020 Mass DOT re chapter 90 apportionment \$261,059
- Appointment app. A. Blake Citizen's Advisory Com.
- Appointment app. C. Swindlehurst Citizen's Advisory Com.
- Appointment app. G. Roberts Citizen's Advisory Com.
- BOS Agenda 2020 Jan 22
- BOS Meeting minutes 01-08-2020
- Highway Superintendent's recommendation to increase Mechanic's pay he completed 180 days
- Selectmen Amended Authorized Payrate approved 1-22-2020
- Vote for adoption of PARS -OPEB
- White Engineering Notification of Chapter 91 Simplified License for dock on 229 South Cove Dr.
- Broadband Document
- Town Administrator's Report
- Highway/Transfer Station Dept. January Report