# SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
## 7:00pm, May 18, 2022
## Town Hall, 557 Main Street, Becket

**Attendees**
**Select Board (SB):** William Elovirta (BE), *Chair*; Chris Swindlehurst (CS), *Vice-Chair*;
**Via Zoom:** Michael Lavery (ML), *Clerk*

**Staff:** Mark Webber (MW), *Interim Town Administrator*; Beverly Gilbert (BG), *Administrative Assistant;* Edward Pickert, *Highway Superintendent;* Ken Bilodeau, Tax Collector; Geri Walter, *Board of Assessors* **Via Zoom:** Kristopher McDonough, *Police Chief*

**Others:** Katherine Warden, David Waldron **Via Zoom:** Harald Scheid, *Regional Resource Group*; Lei-Anne Ellis, Laurie Friedman, Fred Braun, Shaw Israel Izikson (Editor of the Country Journal)

1. **Call to order**
   BE called the meeting to order at 7pm. He indicated that the SB was recording the meeting.

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

3. **7pm, Opening and review of sealed bids (Bid #22-01) for Shim and Overlay paving project on Brooker Hill Road and Carter Road. SB to consider voting to approve the bids.**
   After announcing this agenda item, BE read the bid and addendum notices. At approximately 7:03pm, BE commenced the bid opening which yielded the following results:

| Name | Address | Total Bid |
|---|---|---|
| Palmer Paving Corporation | 25 Blanchard St., P.O. Box 47, Palmer MA 01069 | $285,340.00 |
| Northeast Paving, Eurovia Atlantic Coast LLC | 216 Mount Hermon Station Road, Northfield, MA 01360 | $326,192.00 |
| Warner Bros., LLC | P.O. Box 91 Sunderland, MA 01375 | $328,630.00 |

   BE moved to accept the lowest bid which was submitted from Palmer Paving Corporation in the amount of $285,340.00 for Bid #22-01 for Shim and Overlay paving project on Brooker Hill and Carter Roads, contingent upon further review that this bid meets all requirements and specifications. CS 2nd. Roll call vote: Bill Elovirta – yes, Chris Swindlehurst – yes and Michael Lavery – yes.

4. **General Discussion with Harald Scheid, Regional Resource Group**
   The SB conducted a general discuss regarding Real Estate Assessments with Harald Scheid of Regional Resource and Ken Bilodeau, Tax Collector. The SB advised that several staff members had received questions about large jumps in assessed real estate values. Main points of discussion:
   - Harald indicated that during reevaluation years, it is not unusual to receive inquiries.
   - He indicated that the real estate market/sales are factored into values. The market and sales have increased. Removing inconsistencies is part of the process. He believes many of properties were undervalued in the past.
   - Harald would need to review specific properties in order to comment on them.

- The town received a large number of inquiries on vacant waterfront properties. Harald indicated that due to that waterfront property tends to be a rare commodity, calculating their values is a complicated process. He briefly discussed the land residual technique.
- Abatement Requests: Due on May 20th when taxes are due. If the tax bill is not fully paid by May 20th, the property owner will forfeit the ability to go before the Appellate Tax Board to appeal the abatement decision. Harald will examine requests for abatements, and provide his recommendations. This may include reviewing property codes (buildable vs. unbuildable).
- Harald has been in contact with many property owners to hear their concerns/comments.

The SB thanked Harald for his extra efforts to attend the meeting from the Central European time zone. At approximately 7:30pm (1:30am, May 19th in Germany), Harald left the meeting.

5. **Broadband Update and Select Board to discuss and possibly vote on policies and decisions relating to the Broadband Project**

BE read MLP Manager Bob Gross's update:

1. FSA06, second half of Sherwood Forest, will be turned over to Westfield as scheduled on 5/21. It will take Westfield up to another two weeks to do their testing after which homes will be scheduled for installation
2. Installations in FSA07 are continuing and most of the ones in the other released FSAs are done or have been scheduled.
3. In the next few weeks there will be a few road closures so that splicing can be done. People will be advised in advance when the work is scheduled. All but one of the roads has two entrances so there will be minimal inconvenience.
4. Still looking into the possible drop subsidy for those people who are eligible for the monthly government subsidies. Need to know how many homes may be eligible and what the estimated cost would be. As of now, our best guess is that it will not be significant.
5. Will be planning a tech/info session the end of June.

6. **Approval of the5/ 4/2022 Minutes**

CS moved to approve the 5/4/2022 minutes. ML 2nd: Roll call vote: Bill Elovirta – yes, Chris Swindlehurst – yes and Michael Lavery – yes.

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

Per Laurie Friedman's inquiry, the SB advised that Tetrahydra Agtek LLC's proposed cannabis grow facility at 0 Quarry Road is a legally separate entity from Himalayan High LLC's proposed cannabis retail facility at 2727 Jacobs Ladder Road and therefore, Himalayan High, LLC may legitimately purchase cannabis from 0 Quarry Road for resale at 2727 Jacobs Ladder Road.

8. **Appointments:**

- **Robin Mathiesen and Tommie Hutto-Blake – Election Workers effective 5/18/2022 through 8/15/2023**
- **Robin Greenspan – Registrar of Voters reappointment effective through 3/31/2025**

In response to the Interim Town Clerk's request to appoint additional Election Workers to operate at the Town Election, CS moved to appoint Robin Mathiesen and Tommie Hutto-Blake Election Workers effective 5/18/2022 through 8/15/2023. BE 2nd. ML pointed out that although Ms. Mathiesen and Ms. Hutto-Blake's political affiliations were not, as traditionally done (for Election Workers), listed next to their names, he did not think this should delay their appointments. Roll call vote: Bill Elovirta – yes, Chris Swindlehurst – yes and Michael Lavery – yes.

CS moved to reappoint Robin Greenspan to the Registrar of Voters through 3/31/2023. ML 2nd. Roll call vote: Bill Elovirta – yes, Chris Swindlehurst – yes and Michael Lavery – yes.

9. **SB to vote on Police Chief's recommendation to increase Detail Wage Rate**
Police Chief Kris McDonough discussed his recommendation to raise Becket's Police Detail Wage Rate from $44.00 to $50.00 per hour effective July 1st. He provided a letter with a listing of surrounding towns' detail rates. Currently Becket has the lowest rate. He explained that detail rates have not increased since 2018. In order to keep broadband project costs down, he had not recommended increasing detail rates for the past four years. Police Chief McDonough acknowledged that although the detail rate is high, he thinks it is necessary to keep Becket's rates in line with other municipalities in order to attract officers to work in Becket and prevent unstaffed shifts. BE moved to increase Becket's Police Detail rates to $50.00 per hour effective 7/1/2022, CS 2nd. Roll call vote: Bill Elovirta – yes, Chris Swindlehurst – yes and Michael Lavery – yes.

10. **SB to approve Plastic Bag Ban educational handout for Becket businesses**
The SB reviewed ML's draft Plastic Bag Ban educational handout for Becket businesses. ML explained that due to COVID, the state had temporarily lifted this ban. BG will add a town logo and the 2019 Annual Town Meeting reference that created Single-Use Plastic Bag Ban bylaw.

11. **SB to acknowledge Highway Dept. Mechanic Tyler Chrystal's resignation effective 5/20/2022**
In response to Tyler Chrystal's notification that he is resigning from the Highway Department, the SB will send him a letter of appreciation for serving as the Town Mechanic for the past three years.

12. **Select Board to review Departmental Reports**
    - **TBA**

    None

13. **Town Administrator's Report**
MW has requested for Town Counsel to review a flyer to post at the Town Election that explains that due to that the Town Clerk (changing from Elected to Appointed) Town Meeting article failed, the ballot question (Shall the town vote to have its elected Town Clerk position become an appointed Town Clerk of the Town?) is moot and voters may ignore the question. Ballots were printed in advance of the ATM.

    MW, Highway Superintendent Ed Pickert and the SB discussed recruitment of Highway Department positions. The Highway Dept. has an opening for an Equipment Operator/Truck Driver and there will be another Operator/Truck Driver opening when Bert Goodermote retires in early July. Due to the competitive job market, coupled with that Ed received two very desirable and credentialed applicants, all agreed that it is sensible for Ed to hire both candidates. Ed advised that his department has funding due to that it is unlikely the mechanic position (Tyler Chrystal resigned effective 5/20/2022) will be filled until next fiscal year. - Ed explained that he does not recommend having pay step increases due to that the two employees are fully credentialed and in this job climate, they are likely to walk away if they are offered lower starting rates: The SB agreed.

14. **Select Board's Comments and Announcements**
ML – The SB received an e-mail from Representative Pignatelli stating that the town lacks the authority to prevent Sherwood Greens Road Maintenance District to become a member of the Berkshire County Mosquito Control Project. ML commented that this is a strange precedent as it relates to other taxation districts.

15. **Any other business to come before the Board**
The SB will discuss vacation carry-over on June 1st.

    CS moved to reappoint BE to represent the Town of Becket on the Berkshire Regional Transit Authority Advisory Board, ML 2nd. Roll call vote: Bill Elovirta – recused himself, Chris Swindlehurst – yes and Michael Lavery – yes.

16. **Correspondence/announcements:**
    - **2022.05.12 e-mail from Karen Moriarty, paralegal re: NSTAR Electric Company, dba Eversource Energy – Attachment - Notice of Filing a (D.P.U. 22-46)/Request for Comments issued by the Department of Public Utilities relating to the Petition of NSTAR's for approval of its 2022 Energy Efficiency Reconciling Factors for effect July 1, 2022. Comment period ends 6/3/2022**
    - **Copy of Planning Board Notice of Special Permit decision filed on 5/15/2022 addressed to Brian Vincent on behalf of Tetrahydra Agtek LLC re: 0 Quarry Road – Planning Board approved the application to operate a Tier 11 indoor cannabis cultivation**
    - **Copy of 2022.05.04 letter to Planning Board from Attorney Elisabeth C. Goodman re: Concerned Residents' Opposition Application for Special Permit by Hit the Road RV, LLC Property: 1342 County Road, Map 401, Lots 3 and 4, Becket, MA**
    - **2022.04.28 Becket Woods Road and Maintenance District and Becket Woods Community Association notification of Annual Meetings scheduled at 10am on May 28, 2022 with enclosed proxies.**

    The SB reviewed the above communications. BE commented that the SB customarily does not submit proxies to the districts for town-owned properties within the districts. The SB took no action on the Becket Woods proxy.

17. **Select Board to review and sign payable warrants**
    The SB reviewed and signed payable warrants.

18. **Select Board to adjourn the Meeting**
    CS moved to adjourn, ML 2nd: Roll call vote: Bill Elovirta – yes, Chris Swindlehurst – yes and Michael Lavery – yes. At 8:07pm, BE adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Beverly Gilbert, *Administrative Assistant*

**Signed by**:

William H. Elovirta / *June 1, 2022*
William H. Elovirta, *Chair* Date Approved

**Documents discussed at this meeting:**
- 2022.05.18 Select Board Agenda
- 2022.05.04 Select Board Minutes
- Correspondence – listed above Agenda Item 16.
- Bag Ban educational handout
- Tyler Chrystal – letter of resignation and SB letter of appreciation
- Bid documents and bids referenced in Agenda Item 3.
- 2022.05.16 E-mail from Interim Town Clerk - request to hire two Election Workers
- 2022.05.18 E-mail from MLP Manager – Broadband Update