

SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
7:00pm, June 1, 2022
Town Hall, 557 Main Street, Becket

Attendees

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

Staff: Mark Webber (MW), *Interim Town Administrator*; Beverly Gilbert (BG), *Administrative Assistant*;

Others: Robin Mathiesen, and Board of Health members Gale Labelle & Bob Ronzio **Via Zoom:** Lei-Anne Ellis, Shaw Israel Izikson (Editor of the Country Journal), Lee Graber (Eversource)

1. The Chairperson will call the Select Board meeting to order.

BE called the meeting to order at 7:00pm and indicated that the SB was recording the meeting.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

BE led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Discussion and possible vote on the Reorganization of the Select Board

BE indicated that the SB traditionally reorganizes at its first meeting following Town Election, and he congratulated CS on being re-elected to the SB. BE asked ML for his thoughts about assuming the Chairperson position which is a common practice for the member whose term will expire (ML's term expires June 30, 2023) at the end of the upcoming fiscal year. ML explained that after considering the commitment involved, coupled with that he is running for State Representative, he declined the Chairperson and Vice Chairperson positions. CS expressed that time constraints would make it challenging for him to serve as Chairperson at this time. During discussion initiated by ML, BE clarified that although he is amenable to placing an employee on the agenda to discuss personnel matters, the employee should go through the proper chain of command by first discussing and trying to resolve matters with his supervisor (or department head). BE emphasized that moreover, the SB is subject to open meeting law which specifies which subject matters are permitted for discussion under Executive Session. MW stated that based on today's meeting he had with a department head, he agrees that it is appropriate for that individual to meet with the SB under Executive Session since it falls under the category of Contract Negotiations, and the SB agreed this may be placed on the June 15, 2022 agenda. ML moved to nominate BE Chairperson of the SB, CS 2nd: Motion carried with BE recusing himself. BE moved to nominate CS Vice-Chairperson of the SB, ML 2nd: Motion carried with CS recusing himself. CS moved to nominate ML Clerk of the SB, BE 2nd: Motion carried with ML recusing himself.

4. 7:05 PM: Public Hearing re: NSTAR ELECTRIC COMPANY DBA EVERSOURCE'S petition dated May, 16, 2022 in accordance with the accompanying plan marked 8645794, to install eight solely owned poles and anchoes on Benton Hill Road

At 7:10pm BE read the public hearing notice for the above captioned and opened the hearing. BE and CS stated that they (individually, not together) drove by the proposed locations, and they do not see a problem. Lee Graber, Eversource Representative, fielded questions and specified the

poles will facilitate power redundancy for premises. Lee Graber agreed with BE's request to contact the Highway Superintendent to confirm that the proposed locations will not hamper road maintenance. BE explained that Highway Department's okay should be standard procedure. No one else commented during the public hearing. ML moved to approve NSTAR ELECTRIC COMPANY DBA EVERSOURCE'S petition dated May, 16, 2022 in accordance with the accompanying plan marked 8645794, to install eight solely owned poles and anchoes on Benton Hill Road. CS 2nd: Motion carried unanimously. At 7:16pm, the pole hearing ended.

7:05 PM: Public Hearing re: NSTAR ELECTRIC COMPANY DBA EVERSOURCE'S petition dated May, 16, 2022 in accordance with the accompanying plan marked 8645546, to install six new sole owned poles and five anchors on McNerney Road

At 7:16pm, BE read the public hearing notice for the above captioned. BE remarked that he drove by the proposed locations, and he does not see a problem. Lee Graber indicated that the proposed will facilitate power redundancy for premises. CS indicated that there are plans for a major rebuild (including bike lanes) of McNerney Road and per the SB's request, Lee Graber will arrange for the Highway Superintendent to review and okay the proposed. No one else commented during the public hearing. ML moved to approve NSTAR ELECTRIC COMPANY DBA EVERSOURCE'S petition dated May, 16, 2022 in accordance with the accompanying plan marked 8645546 to install six new sole owned poles and five anchors on McNerney Road. CS 2nd: Motion carried unanimously. At 7:19pm, the public hearing ended.

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

ML read the MLP Manager's 6/1/2022 update:

- FSA06 (second part of Sherwood Forest) will be released and ready for installations the end of this week.
- FSA03 is on schedule and installations should start the 2nd or 3rd week of July.
- We are in the process of planning an information session in July.
- The contract between WiredWest and Whip City Fiber expires the end of the year and is currently being renegotiated. We have full confidence in Jim Drawe, WW exec director, to negotiate on behalf of WW.
- Becket Woods:
 - 1) Network construction in the first two phases should start the end of the month
 - 2) Do not yet have a start date for Eversource's work on phase 3 but think it will be at the end of the month.
 - 3) We will expedite drop installations by doing the underground portion of the work as the network is under construction.
- The single residence in Becket on Dimmock Road has been connected and will be an Otis customer. Becket paid the cost of construction within Becket and Otis handled the rest.
- With only a few exceptions (largely scheduling issues), the drops in the released FSAs (2,1,5,9,8,4) have been completed.
- In addition to the above items, MW indicated that at today's Broadband Ad Hoc Group meeting, they specified the town is approaching a 70 percent take-rate.

6. Approval of the 5/18/2022 Meeting Minutes

CS moved to approve the 5/18/2022 meeting minutes, ML 2nd: Motion carried unanimously.

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

Gale Labelle brought up the following:

- Concerns about Quarry Road (Extreme Speeding, overgrown brush potentially obstructing traffic visibility around the corners: MW will discuss patrolling Quarry Road with the Police Chief, and MW will discuss roadside mowing with the Highway Superintendent. During discussions, Gale pointed out that the center lines are no longer on this road.
- The Board of Health will order free Rapid Home Testing kits.

The SB denied the Board of Health's request (discussion with Gale Labelle/Bob Ronzio) for the Town to conduct a property boundary survey of 36 Washington Street (owner Jeanne Mindle aka Packard). Gale and Bob reported that Ms. Mindle contends that 30 Washington Street's septic is on her property, and she had provided a survey from the 1600s. The SB stated that they regard this as a civil issue. Mark agreed the town should not occupy itself in this matter and is not obligated to provide a survey which may end up being contested in court.

8. **Appointments:**

- **Robin Mathiesen – Interim Town Clerk effective June 1, 2022 through May 31, 2023**

The SB discussed the Interim Town Clerk appointment with Robin Mathiesen. Robin has been spending time with Interim Town Clerk Allison Mikaniewicz on Saturdays (served through May 31, 2022) to learn what the position entails. Yesterday MW and BE had a phone interview with Robin that included a discussion about salary, and hours. The position has been posted as a twenty-four hour workweek. Robin is amenable to offering a work schedule that includes several evening hours after 4:30pm to accommodate those who work during the daytime and she is willing, on occasion to attend a SB meeting when the Town Clerk stamp and witnessing are required on documents. Robin advised that she wishes to attend the Town Clerk mentoring program in Boston on June 22nd. She indicated that there is a great deal of comradery and mentoring amongst Town Clerks. This includes that four or five other Town Clerks have offered to help her if needed and Allison has offered to provide guidance, alert her when there are various elections/Town Clerk related deadlines. Robin looks forward to completing the Town Census and organizing the office. The SB and MW had received Allison's recommendation to appoint Robin to serve as the Interim Town Clerk. ML moved to appoint Robin Mathiesen the Interim Town Clerk effective June 1, 2022 through the May 2023 Town Election. CS 2nd: Motion carried unanimously. BG advised Robin should contact Ethan Klepetar, Town Moderator, to arrange to be sworn in. Robin stated that she will meet with Allison to receive the keys as well as review the status of open items. Robin will determine and post her work schedule.

The SB remarked that Allison has done an outstanding job and has been extremely accommodating to the community. They will send her a letter of appreciation.

9. **SB to review and vote on approval of the Town Administrator's Appointments effective July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023**

Name	Position
Raymond Ferrin	Ambulance Director & Emergency Management Director
Gary Danko	Assistant Building Inspector
Mark Levernoch	Plumbing/Gas Inspector
Brian Middleton	Assistant Plumbing/Gas Inspector

Dana Spring	Wiring Inspector
Jim LaPier	Assistant Wiring Inspector
Doug Mann	Veterans' Agent
William Mulholland	Veterans' Grave Officer
Kristopher G. McDonough	Police Chief
Matthew Virginia	Sgt. - Police Dept.
Daniel McClellan	Probationary Full-time Police Officer
Nicole Miller	Probationary Full-time Police Officer
Michael Hunt	Full-time Police Officer
Nicholas Beauchemin	Probationary Part-time Reserve Police Officer
Charlene Auger	Part-Time Reserve Police Officer
Frank Murphy	Part-Time Reserve Police Officer
Kenneth Pettibone	Part-Time Reserve Police Officer
Nicole Miller	Animal Control Officer
Margaret McClellan	Town Accountant
Nicolas Pietroniro	Conservation Agent
Paul A. Mikaniewicz	Fire Chief

BE indicated that in addition to the above captioned appointments, Edward Pickert (Highway Superintendent/Tree Warden/Pest Control) should be included. BE asked ML and CS if they wished to place a hold on any of the above captioned appointments (including Highway Superintendent/Tree Warden/Pest Control)) before voting collectively on the list of Town Administrator's recommended appointments. BE stated he wished to place a hold on the Fire Chief's position. CS moved to appoint the above captioned Town Administrator's recommended names/positions, with the addition of Edward Pickert (Highway Superintendent/Tree Warden/Pest Control) and to hold on the Fire Chief's appointment, effective 7/1/2022 through 6/30/2023. ML 2nd: Motion carried unanimously.

Discussion ensued about the Fire Chief position:

BE stated that he would like the Fire Chief to provide monthly reports to the SB, and BE is not certain that the Fire Chief had received reminders. BE explained that the purpose of the hold is not specific to Paul Mikaniewicz: BE wishes to have an opportunity to consider the idea of having future discussion to explore and review staffing options to address coverage. Topics of discussion may include employing a full-time Fire Chief, departmental coverage, shared services with another municipality, and combining this position with that of the Ambulance Director. CS, a member of the Becket Volunteer Fire Department, spoke in support of reappointing Paul Mikaniewicz, citing his knowledge, leadership, and ability to create a welcoming environment for the firefighters. CS stated many outside trainings were not offered due to COVID. BE agreed with CS's suggestion to discuss raising the stipend amount (to keep up with COLA) issued to qualifying firefighters during the FY24 budget cycle. ML moved to accept the Town Administrator's recommendation to reappoint Paul Mikaniewicz Fire Chief, effective 7/1/2022 through 6/30/2023. CS 2nd: Motion carried unanimously.

10. **SB to acknowledge Michael Lavery's resignation from the Open Space and Recreation Plan Advisory Committee effective May 18, 2022.**

The SB acknowledged Michael Lavery's resignation from the Open Space and Recreation Plan Advisory Committee effective May 18, 2022. ML explained that when he had agreed to serve on this committee, he was under the impression that this appointment would be for a shorter duration and the committee would disband after the survey. He stated that given his family, work schedule, and that he is running for State Rep., attending the meetings is no longer feasible. ML and BE indicated that due to other commitments, they are not able to serve as the SB's representative on the Open Space & Recreation Plan Advisory Committee.

11. **SB to respond to employees' requests to rollover vacation days**

CS moved to approve the list of employee vacation rollover requests as presented, ML 2nd.

Motion carried unanimously. CS stated that although he normally encourages staff members to not have many vacation days carried over into the next fiscal year, he understands that the real property reevaluation contributed to extenuating circumstance that prevented Tax Collector Ken Bilodeau from using his vacation leave. MW and the SB members expressed appreciation for Ken Bilodeau's dedication to the town and agreed that approval of his requested rollover is warranted.

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

- tba

The SB received the Building Inspector's May 2022 Report.

13. **Town Administrator's Report**

MW reported on the following items:

- The Highway Superintendent reviewed and confirmed the SB's vote (May 18th) to award the paving bid to the low bidder, Palmer Paving in the amount of \$285,304. MW will coordinate arrangements with the Highway Superintendent.
- The TA Screening Committee is meeting Friday evening and will conduct interviews of potential candidates. MW will attend the meeting. It is anticipated the Committee will continue to meet following the interviews and come to an agreement on the individuals to send forward to the Select Board as finalists. The SB tentatively agreed to meet for interviews at 6pm on June 13th.
- Has been speaking with June Wolfe from Construct who came before the SB a while back to discuss a grant program to convert a derelict property into a useful home to sell to a qualified family. The grant, if awarded, will partially offset the cost of the renovation. The grant application is now completed and will be submitted by the end of the week.
- Mentioned under public comments: Per MW's request, the BOH will apply to the State for free COVID test kits for the town (number of kits is based on the town's population).
- Ed Pickert had suggested that the best use of the awarded pothole funding would be chip sealing one or more town roads. He will bring his ideas to the SB for discussion. The town has until June 30, 2023 to spend this \$188,237 award.
- Help wanted ad for the Highway Department mechanic position was placed in the Berkshire Eagle, Country Journal, and on-line Beacon. The close out date is June 10th. BG and MW have not received applications.

- Bob Ronzio, Planning Board Chair, advised that 9 interested parties attended the Community Outreach Meeting for the proposed marijuana retail facility on Jacobs Ladder Road. During discussion, it was mentioned that of the attendees, 6 were opposed and three are in favor.
- The Assessors have received approximately 100 tax abatement applications, and these are being forwarded to the town's Assessing Services, Regional Resource Group. The filing deadline for abatement application has passed.

14. Select Board's Comments and Announcements

ML reported on the plastic bag ban. He added the town logo and bylaws to the flyer which he distributed to all local businesses (except for Berkshire Berries which did not appear to be operating). This was well-received, and the Sherwood Shoppe is using paper bags and boxes. CS and BE thanked ML for his efforts on this behalf.

ML announced that Esau Heel Trail's Kick-Off Ceremony will occur at 10:00am on Saturday, June 18th. He will create a press release, and this has been announced in *The Becket Beat* newsletter. ML has ordered a special sign for this trail.

ML spoke about how Somerville, Cambridge, Northampton, and Easthampton decriminalized medicinal plants (Entheogenic plants). He is interested in helping Veterans and others with medical issues, including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, by making Entheogenic Plants an option. ML will investigate whether towns can pass resolutions through a Select Board vote or via Town Meeting

CS received an update from June Wolfe: 1) to show what a difference the SB is making in town, she forwarded letter she received in support of the Becket Receivership Affordable Housing Program Grant penned from a person whose family was awarded an Affordable Housing Unit in Becket and 2) the real estate closing of 2442 Main Street unit is anticipated to occur on June 15th 3) She received unanimous support from the Shawnee Shores Civic Association for the 50 Dawn Drive project, a perc test is slated for June 9th and per the Building Inspector's recommendation, she is working on a special permit.

CS donated his time and materials to replace the American flags at Fire Station 2 and at the Town Hall (this included repairing the pulley).

BE commented that the Memorial Day Celebration was a meaningful event.

15. Any other business to come before the Board

None.

16. Correspondence/announcements:

- **2022.05.19 Planning Board Notice of Public Hearing scheduled on June 8th to review Timothy and Melissa Garthwaite's Special Permit application to build an extension to the existing structure at 32 Williams Road (Map 211, Lot 55).**
- **Received 2021.05.17 Wood Environment and Infrastructure Solutions, Inc. re: CSX Transportation, Inc.'s 2022\ Yearly Operational Plan for Railroad Right-of-Way Vegetation Management and maps are available upon request from stephen.herzog@woodplc.com**

The SB reviewed the above listed communications.

17. Select Board to review and sign payable warrants

The SB reviewed and signed payable warrants.

18. Select Board to adjourn the Meeting

BE moved to adjourn, CS 2nd: Motion carried unanimously. At 8:22pm, the SB adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Beverly Gilbert, *Administrative Assistant*

Signed by:



William H. Elovirta, *Chair*

/ June 15, 2022

Date Approved

Documents discussed at this meeting:

- ✦ Select Board Agenda for this meeting
- ✦ 2022.05.18 Select Board Minutes
- ✦ Correspondence – listed above Agenda Item 16.
- ✦ 2022.06.01 E-mail from MLP Manager – Broadband Update
- ✦ Public Hearing notices/Petitions/Plans listed under Item 4
- ✦ 2022.06.01 Town Administrator's Report
- ✦ List of Employee Requests for Vacation Rollover into Fiscal year 2023
- ✦ 2022.04.26 Police Chief's Memo to Town Administrator – Officer Reappointments for fiscal year 2023
- ✦ 2022.05.18 Michael Lavery's letter of resignation from the Open Space Committee addressed to Cara Farrell, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
- ✦ Building Inspector's May 2022 Report