SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
7:00pm, September 7, 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: Katherine A. Warden (KW), Town Administrator; Beverly Gilbert (BG), *Administrative Assistant;* Ray Ferrin, *Ambulance Director*; Remote: Robin Mathiesen, Town Clerk

Others: Bob Gross, MLP Manager; Bob Ronzio (Planning Board Chairperson), David VanZandt, Genevieve VanZandt, Meredyth Babcock (Wild & Scenic Westfield River and Becket Land Trust), Ron Fairchild (Manager – Bonny Rigg Campground), Ken Smith – Becket Land Trust

Others remote: Karen Karlberg, Unknown Individual

1. **The Chairperson will call the Select Board meeting to order.**
   BE called the meeting to order at 7:01pm and indicated that the SB is recording the meeting.

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

3. **Ray and Eileen Jensen regarding Zoning Bylaw 6.2.6 Use of Recreational Trailers**
   KW reported Ray and Eileen Jensen had requested interpretation concerning Zoning Bylaw 6.2.6 Use of Recreational Trailer. They had hoped to spend the entire summer in their recreational trailer at the Bonny Rigg Hill Campground. KW stated that it is not clear whether the wording within the bylaw "not to exceed thirty (30) days…" means per year or whether there may be a break and then the clock resets. Ron Fairchild, Manager of the Bonny Rigg Hill Camping Grounds, indicated that per their business contract, visitors cannot stay more than 21 days within a thirty (30) day period and they cannot stay more than sixteen (16) consecutive days in the wintertime. Mr. Fairchild stated that he wanted the SB to understand that the Jensens do not represent the campgrounds, and those affiliated with the Campgrounds recommend amending the bylaws to make them more restrictive to prevent Becket from housing trailer parks. KW explained that the Jensens did not return her call and did not specify that they were not planning to attend tonight's meeting. Mr. Fairchild indicated that the campground obeys the town's Board of Health codes and is stricter than the town's zoning bylaws. The SB took no action.

4. **Broadband Update and Select Board to discuss and possibly vote on policies and decisions relating to the Broadband Project**
   Bob Gross, MLP Manager, provided the following update:
   - Except for Becket Woods which has problems, the network is basically built. They are hoping that by October 2022 (or possibly spring 2023 in several areas within Becket Woods), service will be available to all who have signed up.
   - Dan Parnell and he will review the budget. They are confident the project is under budget.
   - Becket Woods – Sertex (the contractor), and Duraline (manufacturer of the 8-cell conduit which is causing the problem) spent two days evaluating the underground sections. They determined some sections require remediation. The Broadband Ad Hoc Group is arranging to provide estimate repair cost options: The Becket Woods Board will present this to their community and then will determine whether and where to repair underground conduits or install above ground poles, which is likely a less expensive option. Installation of poles can

be done within the next few weeks. Westfield cannot come until at least October 2022 or Spring 2023 if the ground freezes to work on the underground. There is no guarantee Sertex is available to build the network portion. There is the risk of conduits containing water. If this occurs, it is not possible to pass fiber through it. On Monday, the Broadband Ad Hoc Group will meet with Westfield Gas +Electric and Becket Woods to go over all the information. Bob indicated that ultimately it is Becket Woods' decision because Becket Woods will incur the costs (not the town). Bob is not certain where Becket Woods stands with Burke, the initial contractor that did not property do the work.

- Becket Woods' initial design used 8-cell conduits. It is up to Becket Woods to determine how much make ready it wants to prepare for future building of premises. The minimum town requirement for make-ready included in the design network must allow for service to everyone who wants it or could potentially subscribe in Becket Woods at this time. Becket Woods may wish to add additional make-ready connections for future premises. The town may wish to consider providing a subsidy in those cases. Town Counsel is reviewing an agreement between Becket Woods and the Town.

5. Approval of the August 17, 2022 Meeting Minutes, and the August 31, 2022 Working Meeting Minutes

CS moved to approve of the August 17, 2022 Meeting Minutes, and the August 31, 2022 Working Meeting Minutes. ML 2nd: Motion carried unanimously.

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

Ken Smith from the Becket Land Trust and Meredyth Babcock, from the Becket Land Trust and Westfield River Wild & Scenic, provided a map and description of a 26.4 acre property (42 Lovers Lane - Map 206, Lot 20) located at the corner of Lovers Lane and Brooker Hill Road. It is along the gorge of Shaker Mill Brook, a highly quality cold water fishery brook. They notified the Select Board that per David and Genevieve VanZandt's request, the Becket Land Trust has been in dialog with groups and has found that the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife is interested in protecting this land because of its ecological significance. The Becket Land Trust is working to arrive at a plan for the VanZandts to convey ownership to the Dept. of Fisheries and Wildlife. Ken and Meredyth suggested that town may wish to consider conveying neighboring town-owned parcels (approx. 3.5 acres) at the other side of the gorge. CS indicated that he is working to remove a dilapidated house on the VanZandt's property.

7. Select Board to vote on the Town Administrator's and Ambulance Director's recommendation to hire Mark Brouillette for the full-time Paramedic position effective September 19, 2022

Ambulance Director discussed and fielded questions pertaining to the full-time Paramedic position. Mr. Ferrin explained that Mr. Brouillette would provide coverage for a weekend shift that is challenging to staff. To attract Paramedics, many Ambulance & Fire Departments are offering a 48-hour shift as an incentive. Ray indicated that he had discussed the 48-hour shift (8 hours overtime each week) with the Finance Committee which recommended the Ambulance's FY2023 budget. Mr. Ferrin recommended paying Mr. Brouillette $25.32 per hour due to his experience. CS moved to accept the Town Administrator's and Ambulance Director's recommendation to hire Mark Brouillette for the full-time Paramedic position at a $25.32 hourly payrate effective September 19, 2022. ML 2nd: Motion carried unanimously.

8. Select Board discussion and potential vote to write off uncollectable Ambulance Services bills

KW, Ambulance Director Ray Ferrin, and the SB discussed uncollectable Ambulance Services bills. He indicated that unpaid bills are examined, oftentimes sent to collections, and if still unpaid, he may suggest writing off the balance. KW explained there are a variety of factors

including various insurance caps and allowable charges, bad addresses, and billing errors. Mr. Ferrin indicated as of July 1, 2022 the account balance is $485,095. After he studies the bills, he will make a recommendation for write-off. Mr. Ferrin indicated that generally the town recoups less than $5,000 per year from collections. BE advised that the SB had voted to authorize the Town Administrator and Ambulance Director to determine Ambulance Services bill write-offs. The SB agreed to continue with this practice. KW indicated that the billing company is asking the town to provide a write-off to clean up the books. Mr. Ferrin indicated that going forward what he would like to do is write off bills sent to collections (they can always be reversed) so that they will be reflected on the overall balance. BE stated that he would like the Town Administrator and Ambulance Director to provide a quarterly report of write-offs.

9. Select Board to vote on recommendation(s) for October 1, 2022 STM Warrant Article(s), and Select Board to vote/sign the STM Warrant

KW reported that Town Counsel is available to attend by Zoom: The SB agreed to this. BE moved to approve the October 1, 2022 Special Town Meeting Warrant pending Town Counsel's changes, ML 2nd: Motion carried unanimously. The Warrant will say Select Board (not Board of Selectmen).

10. Select Board to assign a member of the Select Board or Finance Committee or the Town Administrator to represent the town's interests on the CBRSD Regional Agreement Amendment Ad Hoc Committee (Their next meeting is during the evening on September 14th (likely 6 or 7pm). ***Michael Lavery represents Becket on the CBRSD 7 Town Advisory Committee***

ML moved for KW to represent the town's interest on the CBRSD Regional Agreement Amendment Ad Hoc Committee. CS 2nd: Motion carried unanimously.

11. Select Board to vote on appointments: Karen Karlberg to the Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee effective September 7, 2022 through December 31, 2022; and Jane Markham to the Cultural Council effective September 7, 2022 through June 30, 2025

The Deputy Director of Jacob's Pillow had sent a letter to recommend appointment of Karen Karlberg to the Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee. ML moved to appoint Karen Karlberg to the Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee effective September 7, 2022 through December 31, 2022. CS 2nd: Motion carried with BE opposed.

Due to that the appointment application has not been received, the SB tabled voting on Jane Markham's appointment to the Cultural Council.

12. Select Board to review Departmental Reports

- **tba**

The SB reviewed the Building Inspector's August 2022 Report.

13. Town Administrator's Report

KW discussed the following update:

- KW received paperwork to arrange for a one-year extension for the Small Bridges Grant - Werden Road Project.
- Benton Hill Road Project permitting & construction cost – KW will apply for a grant from Wild & Scenic for final permit funding. Working with MEMA for a possible Hazard Mitigation Grant and DER to cover the $900,000 cost
- KW is working with BETA (engineering firm) to bring the Werden Road (Small Bridge Grant) and McNerney Road (Masterworks Grant) to bid for the December/January timeframe.

- Received a letter yesterday from the Federal Government advising they did not receive the reporting for the first part of the ARPA funds. Before producing the report, KW will contact former Town Administrator Bill Caldwell.
- Ambulance Director Ray Ferrin and KW received an e-mail indicating the Ford Hybrid car they had ordered for the grant is no longer available because it was recalled. The factories have shortages of parts (chips, electronics) and are producing 2023s which, will be available in February or March (no guarantee) and will cost an additional $4,000 or $5,000. Mr. Ferrin searched and reported the only interceptor available is a 2021 with a gas engine and it would be available in weeks. He is concerned his current vehicle will not last much longer. The SB stated that they want the town to purchase a hybrid. KW will contact USDA and mentioned the town has a buffer from the heart monitor of about $2,500. Mr. Ferrin emphasized there is no guarantee on the timeframe and he mentioned operations have changed. In the past, the Ambulance Department was not was not going to the hospital once a week for exchanges and the capabilities of service have significantly increased over the past three years. He stated that there is an increased need for an additional vehicle and he wants to prevent an issue.
- KW met with the Otis Town Administrator. Otis is very happy with the shared Police Chief Services.
- Palmer Paving provided a preliminary estimated because they are working on Brooker Hill and Carter Roads estimated at 1.3 – started today.

14. Select Board's Comments and Announcements

ML attended a Becket Arts Center Gala at Camp Watitoh. At this event, Another Round business served beer and wine but the SB had not issued a one-day liquor license. Per the SB's request, KW will send a letter to the Another Round to advise them that they were in violation of the town's liquor license policy.

15. Any other business to come before the Board

CS is not able to attend the December 7th and 21st meetings. The Select Board will add a meeting in November on the 30th (all three members) since November is a five Wednesday month and during December, the SB will meet on the 14th (BE and ML only).

Bob Ronzio, Planning Board Chair, entered the meeting and the SB updated him about agenda item 3. Mr. Ronzio agreed the town should not immerse itself in private business matters.

16. Correspondence/announcements:

- **2022.08.30 Notification from the Central Berkshire Regional School District Superintendent that the CBRSD Committee, on 8/25/2022, voted to incur debt in the amount of $900,000.00 for the purpose of repair and/or replacement of the Wahconah Regional High School Track. In accordance with Massachusetts General Laws, each town may have a special town meeting to vote on adding up to $900,000.00 to the scope of the existing building project, and any town not conducting a special town meeting within the 60 day period, will implicitly vote in favor of funding this project. Enclosure: Certificate of the Secretary**
- **Tba**

The SB reviewed the above listed correspondence.

17. Select Board to review and sign payable warrants

The SB reviewed and signed the payable warrants.

18. Select Board to adjourn the Meeting

CS moved to adjourn, ML 2nd: Motion carried 3-0. At 8:18pm, BE adjourned the meeting.

Signed by:

William H. Elovirta / *September 21, 2022*

William H. Elovirta, *Chair* Date Approved

Documents discussed at this meeting:

- 2022.09.07 Select Board Agenda
- 2022.08.17 Select Board Meeting Minutes, and 2022.08.31 Select Board Working Meeting Minutes
- Building Inspector's August 2022 Report
- 2022.08.10 Parks & Recreation Letter
- Correspondence as listed above - Agenda item 16
- Appointment Application Karen Karlberg, Letter of Support from Jacob's Pillow
- Ambulance Department Revenue Summary Report
- Becket Land Trust - Description of the biological and natural significance of Shaker Mill Brook, Map of the VanZandt Property