

SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
7:00pm, November 16, 2022
Town Hall, 557 Main Street, Becket

Attendees

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

Staff: Katherine A. Warden (KW), Town Administrator; Beverly Gilbert (BG), Administrative Assistant

Others: Barbara Craft Reiss, Becket Member of the Central Berkshire Regional School Committee

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

BE called the meeting to order at 7pm. He indicated that the SB is recording the meeting.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

BE led the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

Municipal Plant Light Manager Bob Gross e-mailed the below update:

1. We are in the process of closing our contract with the State. The final funds should arrive the week after Thanksgiving
2. Dan and I continue to work on the budget. We are confident that it will not be necessary to use all of the authorized debt. How the difference between what is needed for Broadband and authorized by ATM will be an issue for the Select Board to decide. We will have very firm numbers for you well before you need to make any decisions.
3. Becket Woods
 - a. Has decided to proceed with a hybrid solution to resolve the construction problems.
 - b. Still waiting for the final design from Westfield – individual doing the work has been sick for a few days
 - c. There is agreement that after the initial build is done any additional MakeReady work needed in the community will be the responsibility of the HOA. A legal agreement is being worked on.
4. Westfield is working to get all premises, other than those in Becket Woods, connected. There are owners who are unresponsive to phone calls. If they are aerial connections, the work can be done during the winter once they are scheduled.
5. We are working on the Annual Report
6. After the holiday I will start focusing on the creation of a manual for managing the network after construction is complete.

4. Approval of the November 2, 2022 Meeting Minutes

ML moved to approve the November 2, 2022 Meeting Minutes. CS 2nd: Motion carried unanimously.

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

Barbara Craft Reiss, Becket Member of the Central Berkshire Regional School Committee, advised that Richard Peters, Hinsdale, is the Chairperson, and Bonny DiTomasso, Peru, is the Vice Chairperson of the CBRSD Committee. As a way to foster communication, the School Committee

has asked its members to visit Select Board meetings on a regular basis. Barbara or Art Alpert, Becket's other School Committee member, intend to attend a SB meeting each month. Barbara expressed appreciation that the seven towns approved adding the track to the scope of the Wahconah High School building project. It is anticipated that during the springtime, reconstruction of the track will occur. The School Administration will provide a list of school building maintenance to facilitate upcoming budgeting. Barbara provided an update about the progress of the regional agreement: Lack of Regional Agreement Sub Committee quorums contributed to delays. The School Committee is exploring the idea of modifying the regional agreement by adding alternate representatives to serve/vote in the absence of a town's school committee/subcommittee representative. Kathe advised she will ask the School Committee to add regional vocational transportation to its transportation bids. It is her hope that regional vocational transportation negotiations would yield more competitive costs. She reported that it was extremely challenging to find a replacement for the longstanding vocational driver for the Towns of Washington and Becket who stepped down. Dufour Bussing company quoted the town \$575.00 per day (more than the cost of vocational tuition) to transport six students. Kathe expressed her gratitude that rather than using Dufour, Washington was able to hire a replacement van driver at a significantly lower cost. Kathe cautioned this is a short-term solution: Washington has communicated they do not want to be in the bussing business.

6. Town Hall Electrical Vehicle Charging Station (2 charging stations, each containing 2 ports) Subscription Renewal

The SB agreed with KW's recommendation to renew the Town Hall Vehicle Charging Station contract with Voltrek for another two years for \$2,640.00. A two year term is more cost effective than a one year term. Due to the potential for changes in technology, she did not suggest committing to a longer period. KW will provide an income/expense report for the Town Hall vehicle charging stations.

**7. Select Board to review Departmental Reports
Building Inspector's October 2022
Ambulance Director's October 2022
Others tba**

In addition to the above captioned, the SB reviewed the following reports: Animal Control Officer (Oct. 2022), Highway Superintendent (October 2022) and Police Chief Report (statistics through Oct. 2022). KW will ask the Fire Chief if he would consider delegating another member of the Fire Department to submit the monthly reports.

8. Town Administrator's Report

KW gave the following update:

- Update on 23 Pine Dale Circle foreclosure. The town owns the property. KW conducted a site visit and had directed the Building Inspector to secure this dilapidated property. She will explore the following options: 1) listing it on the next town properties auction 2) Asking if Construct has interest in converting it into an affordable housing unit.
- Discussion of Highway & Police wage increases: KW advised that other communities and MassDOT expressed interest in hiring several of the Highway and Police Department personnel. The town has recently lost several Highway Department employees to entities offering higher pay. She reported Highway and public safety staffing shortages in other communities. The Police Chief had told KW that two of his officers were approached by other towns that pay more than Becket. KW advised that the Police Bridge (part-time) Academy ends in December, and after that every Police Officer will have to attend the full-time academy. This will add to the shortage of Police Officers plus she indicated we should be mindful of the investment of paying for Police Officers to attend academy coupled with on-the-job training. The SB advised in order to retain our employees, they are amenable to considering adjusting pay rates for these

departments during this fiscal year. KW will gather information and report on this at the upcoming meeting(s). The SB asked KW to conduct salary/health insurance/leave (vacation & personal days) surveys in the surrounding communities. KW will provide proposed pay rates and revised budgeting costs/scenarios based on meetings she will schedule with the Highway Superintendent, Police Chief, and Town Accountant.

- Discussion of Ambulance weekend shift stipend: In order to alleviate difficulty filling weekend Ambulance Department personnel shortages, ML moved to authorize a \$2.00 per hour pay increase for Ambulance Per Diem workers scheduled to work midnight, Fridays, through 6:00am on Monday, effective the next pay period starting November 27, 2022. CS 2nd: Motion carried unanimously. KW indicated that unexpended funds from the Building Inspector's account may be considered to fund the Ambulance weekend Shift differential pay.
- Discussion of returning host community fee to Spencer House LLC - KW followed up on the SB's discussion and vote that occurred on October 19, 2022. She conveyed that Town Counsel provided its recommendation that in order to keep the impact fee, it would need to document expenses that linked to impact. The SB and KW agreed that to date, Spencer House LLC's operating activity does not warrant analyzing impact costs. The SB authorized KW to return the \$10,000 impact fee to Spencer House LLC. Town Counsel had suggested revising the host agreement for negotiation with Spencer House LLC that includes the new state rulings. The SB agreed for KW to arrange for Town Counsel to draft the revised host agreement.
- Community solar to benefit town – KW will discuss this at the next meeting.
- Grant Awards– MIIA - \$3000 for four tower lights on stands (come with batteries, portable and collapsible – highly recommended for placement at roadside scenes to get rid of dark zone)
- Community Compact IT Grant Award - \$40,070 server upgrade, new computers and software. KW advised that this grant to help save the town money that was budgeted for FY23 IT (\$15K). The servers will allow employees to work offsite when needed.
- The SB agreed with KW's suggestion to continue the tradition by closing Town Hall next week at 12:30pm on Wednesday (employees will leave 1pm) through Friday (reopen Monday) for the Thanksgiving Holiday. This falls in line with last year's Thanksgiving closing.

9. Select Board's Comments and Announcements

ML indicated that the Mass. Trails Conference was informative. Links to videos are available.

CS would like to be present when the Plumber demonstrates how to operate the heat pump system in the Town Hall

BE advised that the Parks & Recreation Committee will send a letter re: proposed changes to the Town Beach Permits.

10. Any other business to come before the Board

In response to Officer Miller's report of the Becket Police Association's December 19, 2021 Children's Holiday party, and update regarding this season's party, the SB signed a letter of appreciation.

The SB authorized the Town Administrator to sign a letter of support for the Regional Economic Development Organization FY2023 Grant Program (1Berkshire to promote regional businesses).

11. Correspondence/announcements:

- 2022.10.31 Planning Board Notice of Public Hearing scheduled on December 14, 2022 re: Special Permit application for 609 Main Street (Map 212, Lot 31) to reestablish the convenience store and diner

- 2022.10.26 Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing & Economic Development re: Congratulations on success of Grant application (Full-FY23-Becket-Town of Be-00917 for Rural and Small Town Development funding (One Stop for Growth).
 - 2022.11.07 Jewel Environmental Corporation re: Submittal Phase I Initial Site Investigation & Tier Classification I90 West @MM16, Becket, MA
- The Select Board reviewed the above listed communications.

12. Select Board to review and sign payable warrants

The SB reviewed and signed payable warrants.

13. Select Board to adjourn the Meeting

CS moved to adjourn, ML 2nd. Motion carried unanimously. At 8:07pm, BE adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Beverly Gilbert, *Administrative Assistant*

Signed by:

 / December 7, 2022
 William H. Elovirta, *Chair* Date Approved

Documents discussed at this meeting:

- ✚ 2022.11.16 Select Board Agenda
- ✚ 2022.11.02 Select Board Meeting Minutes
- ✚ Correspondence as listed above - Agenda item 11
- ✚ Town Administrator's report
- ✚ Departmental Report(s) listed above Agenda item 7
- ✚ Letter to resident re: Transfer Station
- ✚ 2022.11.16 MLP Manager e-mail
- ✚ 2022.11.07 E-mail Request from 1Berkshire, and 2022.11.16 Letter of support for the REDO Grant
- ✚ 2022.11.16 Letter of Appreciation to Officer Nicole Miller/Becket Police Association, 2022.11.11 Becket Police Association letter – update Annual Children's Holiday Parties
- ✚ 2022.11.16 letter from the Office of the Governor: Notice of award (\$40,207) - Community Compact Cabinet Info. Technology Grant Program