

SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
7:00pm, January 4, 2023
Town Hall, 557 Main Street, Becket

Attendees

Select Board (SB): William Elovirta (BE), *Chair*; Michael Lavery (ML), *Clerk*

Remote: Chris Swindlehurst (CS), *Vice-Chair*

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

Others: Bob Gross, Municipal Light Plant Manager Remote: 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 provided the below update:

1. Dan Parnell and he have been working on the budget which they have discussed with the Town Accountant and Treasurer. It appears the town will need 2.6 million for the debt instead of 3.8 million. Additional state funding contributed to this reduction. In August, the Broadband Ad Hoc Group will provide recommendation for financing (bonds, notes). Municipal Light Plant fees (anticipate a couple of hundred thousand dollars a year in excess revenue) may assist with retiring the debt early.
2. The one-time initial sign-up drop subsidy of up to \$2,000.00 is available during the initial promotional period which will end after all fiber service areas of the Broadband project build have been completed. After Becket Woods fiber service area is built (anticipated summer 2023), the town-wide Broadband system will be completed. The Broadband Ad hoc Group has been exploring the idea of offering an initial sign-up \$750.00 drop subsidy after the promotional period ends
3. Progress of Becket Woods: The revised design has been completed. Becket Woods is responsible for payment of the make-ready. The Town is responsible for paying for construction. Bob anticipates Westfield Gas+Electric, and Sertex are in the process of coordinating the work schedule which will likely occur in May 2023 through the early summer.
4. Since the Broadband Ad Hoc Group no longer needs weekly meetings, they will meet on an as needed basis.
5. Bob is been working with other MLP Managers to help create a document that describes the MLP Manager's role and duties.
6. In the next few months, Bob will work on contracts, and may create RFPs:
 - WiredWest contact ends summer of 2024. Bob commented that regards WiredWest to be a good value since Jim Drawe (WiredWest's Executive Director), and the other MLP Managers are good resources.
 - Westfield Gas+Electric (Internet Service Provider Network Operating System) contract expires end of 2024.
7. The SB asked KW to check with the State Ethics Commission about using MLP funding:

- As a way to bring the community together for a happy reason, the Broadband Ad Hoc Group would like to organize an event (barbecue) to celebrate completion of the Broadband Project.
- The Broadband Ad Hoc Group would like to have celebratory dinner for members of the Broadband Ad Hoc Group and their spouses. The SB expressed their appreciation of the Broadband Ad Hoc Group's bounty and achievements, and that they strongly favor for this to occur.

4. Approval of the December 7, 2022 Meeting Minutes

ML moved to approve the December 7, 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, reported that the district is working on the budget, and the contract for paraprofessionals. She will return to a SB meeting in February. Per ML's inquiry, she advised all seven district towns approved the Wahconah H.S. track. She will forward a communication to him.

6. Select Board to acknowledge W. Katherine Hoak's resignation from the Energy Committee effective December 20, 2022

The SB acknowledged W. Katherine Hoak's resignation from the Energy Committee effective December 20, 2022 and signed a letter of appreciation.

7. Select Board to review Departmental Reports

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The SB reviewed the following reports: Animal Control Officer (November and December, 2022), Highway Superintendent (December 5 through 30, 2022) and Police Chief Report (statistics for the year 2022). The SB were not able to hear CS due to static.

8. Town Administrator's Report

KW gave the following update:

- Reappointment of Rita Furlong to Historical Commission – KW explained that this reappointment was inadvertently not included on the Select Board's June 2022 agenda list of reappointments. ML moved to reappoint Rita Furlong to the Historical Commission effective 7/1/2022 through 6/30/2025. CS was no longer present at the meeting. BE stated that this will need to be tabled.
- Cruiser Sharing with Otis – needs approximately \$1,500.00 (2 new tires and a new exhaust) – Otis' cruiser was totaled in an accident. Their new cruiser is on order (estimated arrival - one year). The SB agreed that KW may convey to the Otis Town Administrator they are welcome to borrow the cruiser until they receive their cruiser and she will discuss an agreement that Otis will pay for upkeep and repairs, including the above mentioned tires and exhaust.
- Route 20 and Wells Rd reaching out to MASS DOT for a solution for the drainage problem.
- Al Blake – maintenance of Esau Trail: The SB indicated that the town does not have staffing to maintain Esau Trail. BE advised that Parks & Recreation Committee cannot assume additional duties. The SB pointed out that they have noticed private citizens/non-profit organizations/informal groups, as opposed to municipalities, maintain hiking venues in the Berkshires. Based on this, the SB would suggest that private citizens may consider forming a Friends of the Esau Trail Committee. ML will talk to Al Blake. He plans volunteer his time during the next weekend to cut brush on this trail.
- Meeting Schedule for February & Select Board annual town report. Upcoming meetings: January 18th, February 8th, February 22nd, and March 8th.

- Future discussion about Select Board endorsing the Short term rental tax. KW conveyed that after discussion with Dan Parnell and Al Blake, she would like the SB to consider submitting an article at ATM to create a 6% short term rental/lodging/bed & breakfast/hotel/motel local excise tax. BE will place discussion of this item on the Jan. 18th agenda.

9. Select Board's Comments and Announcements

ML brought up that Sherwood Greens Road District is planning to send a mailing to its property owners regarding the impact of abatements on recent town's tax bills. BG advised that the treasurer of SGRD, Kathleen Borden, had called to mention they will be submitting a letter to post on the SGRD's page of the town website. The SB advised that the letter would be subject to the Town Administrator or SB's review and approval before it may be posted on the town website. BG will convey this to Kathleen Borden.

10. Any other business to come before the Board

KW advised that Becket Police Officer Daniel McClellan graduated from Police Academy.

None.

11. Correspondence/announcements:

- 2022.12.20 Kerry L. Thomas, Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Preparedness Grant Division: e-mail notification that the town's FY 2021 Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program application did not score high enough to receive further consideration for funding. FEMA received over 8,179 applications.
 - 2022.12.09 letter from MassDOT Highway Director: MassDOT Highway personnel may need to enter upon town property 1379 Chester Road - Map 417, Lot 38) to gather survey information. This relates to the Blandford Road over Walker Brook, Bridge C-11-045 Bridge Replacement Project No. 612515.
 - 2022.12.08 letter from Becket Police Chief: Police Officer Francis Murphy resigned from the Town of Becket (last day worked is December 17, 2022).
 - 2202.12.13 letter from Constellation re: Change in Law Notice – Massachusetts Clean Energy Standard (CES) and Clean Energy Standard Expansion (CES-E) Changes – The average price impact of CES and CES-E costs on MunEnergy member electricity bills is approximately 2%.
- 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

ML moved to adjourn, BE 2nd: Motion carried unanimously. At 7:46pm, BE adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Beverly Gilbert, *Administrative Assistant*

Signed by:



William H. Elovirta, *Chair*

/ January 18, 2023

Date Approved

Documents discussed at this meeting:

- ✚ 2023.01.04 Select Board Agenda
- ✚ 2023.12.07 Select Board Meeting Minutes
- ✚ Correspondence as listed above - Agenda item 11
- ✚ Town Administrator's report

- ✦ Departmental Report(s) listed above Agenda item 7
- ✦ 92023.01.04, Select Board's letter of appreciation to W. Katherine Hoak
- ✦ 2022.12.20 E-mail from W. Katherine Hoak to the Energy Committee to tender her resignation from the Energy Committee effective December 20, 2022.
- ✦ 2022.01.04 Al Blake E-mail regarding Esau trail clean up
- ✦ Draft citizen's petition re: Short Term Rental Tax