

SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
7:00pm, March 8, 2023
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: Historical Commission Members John Garvey, Rita Furlong & Sandi Jarvis Remote: Lei-Anne Ellis, Laurie Friedman, Charles Fulco, John Wallen, Jeff Penn, Amy Perlmutter

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

None.

4. Public Input

In response to the SB's January 18th meeting (Agenda Item 5: Discussion with Eversource regarding Street Lights – SB voted to convert streetlights to LEDs), Laurie Friedman invited Charles Fulco, dark sky advocate, to discuss street lighting with the SB. Charles Fulco expressed concerns about light pollution, and conserving energy. He stated that he did not regard Eversource as a valid authority for information and expressed his skepticism and dismay about signing up for the LED program without conducting further analysis. He asked for specifications about Becket streetlight LEDs: kelvin, lumens, fixtures etc. He mentioned the idea of installing reflectors in the roadbeds in place of lights. BE stated that public input is limited to three minutes, and no one had asked the SB if this topic may be included on the agenda (which is the process to conduct a lengthier discussion): the SB did not have on-hand the detailed LED information at tonight's meeting. BE indicated that after reviewing the Energy Committee's recommendation, the SB had voted on entering into the LED agreement with Eversource. CS stated that he is interested in talking to Mr. Fulco and requested Mr. Fulco's contact information.

5. Discussion regarding Historical Commission's Community Preservation Act grant application for the Cupola Project

After discussion with the Historical Commission, John Wallen (Engineer), and Jeff Penn (Architect), CS moved to send a letter of support to the Community Preservation Committee re: the Historical Commission's Community Preservation Act Grant application for the Cupola Project. BE 2nd: Motion carried unanimously. During the discussion, the Historical clarified that the application includes engineering and architectural costs. The SB conveyed that if the project is approved at the Annual Town Meeting, they wish to review and have an opportunity to comment on the detailed plans (drawings and other documents), including modifications necessary to the Town Hall structure to support the cupola before construction is sent out for bid.

Rita Furlong advised that although the Community Preservation Committee deemed the Community Preservation Act application re: Becket to contribute funding to a multi-community proposed Sixty-Five Affordable Housing Units (\$460,000 per unit) at Brushwood Farms in Lenox, satisfies CPA

criteria, the CPC wants to specify on the Annual Town Meeting Warrant that the CPC does not recommend approval of this proposed project. The CPC is concerned that although beneficial for the surrounding area, this project would not guarantee that a Becket applicant would end up living in any of these affordable housing units and the state would not recognize this project as part of Becket's Affordable Housing Inventory.

6. Resignation: Tim Sullivan, Member of the Historical Commission

The SB acknowledged Tim Sullivan's resignation from the Historical Commission.

7. Select Board to discuss/vote to increase the Transfer Station Permit Fees

BE pointed out that Transfer Station fees have never covered expenses and the town has subsidized this service. KW provided a survey listing Transfer Station fees in neighboring communities. Becket falls into the lower end of the fees. Although the town will continue to subsidize operation of the Transfer Station, due to escalating disposal costs, BE recommended for the SB to consider increasing Transfer Station permit fees. BE suggested changing the permit fees to \$80, and \$40 or \$50 for seniors (65 years or older). The SB will discuss/vote on this at the next meeting.

8. Approval of the February 27, 2023 Meeting Minutes

ML moved to approve the February 27, 2023 Meeting Minutes. CS 2nd: Motion carried unanimously.

9. Select Board to review Departmental Reports – tba

None

8. Town Administrator's Report

KW gave the following update:

- Town Counsel okayed that the Police Chief and Highway Superintendent can have a contract. BE inquired about the Town Charter. KW will forward Town Counsel's e-mail to BE.
- The Otis Select Board wishes to meet with the Becket Select Board to discuss a shared ambulance service. The SB members will schedule a working meeting with the Becket Ambulance Director to prepare for a meeting with the Otis Select Board. When the SB has its meeting with the Ambulance Director, the agenda will include discussion and recommendations regarding the Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan.
- Buildings and Grounds position: KW suggested including mowing at the North Becket Cemetery, along with previous duties but leaving the janitorial duties to the current employee handling it. The SB expressed interest in exploring hiring a contractor vs. an employee to fulfill mowing duties. Due to potential restructuring of the Highway Dept. to include the Building & Grounds position, the SB will invite the Highway Superintendent to discuss this at the March 22nd meeting.
- Due to recent issues the Treasurer has had regarding researching lost paychecks, ML moved that effective July 1, 2023, Town employees must receive their wages through direct pay, CS 2nd: Motion carried unanimously. KW will send a memo to employees.
- The SB agreed that KW will draft a policy stating that before the Town of Becket is obligated to pay for a student's vocational tuition and vocational education transportation, the legal guardian(s) of the student must be listed on the town census. The policy will list a cut-off date for being listed on the town's census and include language that addresses students (guardian/s) who relocated to Becket after the cut-off date.
- Follow-up: The Conservation Agent is paid \$30.00 per hour.
- CS moved to request an Assessing Dept. audit from DLS/DOR, ML 2nd: Motion carried. During discussion, KW had explained that because the town has an outside vendor for Assessing

Services, and there were numerous abatement applications in response to the town's re-evaluation, she recommended this audit.

- Opioid Settlement Fund – The SB directed KW to respond to the Division of Local Services – Bureau of Accounts, that Becket does not plan to list a 2023 Town Meeting Warrant Article re: adopting a Special Purpose Stabilization fund for Opioid Settlement funds with a dedication of the opioid funds directly to the stabilization fund. The Ambulance and Police Department will still be able to use opioid settlement funds for drug prevention education programming, drug abuse counseling, addiction treatment, overdose prevention, and Narcan purchases/training.
- The Police Chief advised that a recently hired Police Officer has resigned to accept a higher paying position in Southwick, MA. The town sponsored this individual to attend Police Academy. KW pointed out that a contract requiring an employee to remain employed with a specific municipality for a specific period after the municipality pays for that employee's education & training, is not enforceable. Nick Beauchemin, part-time reserve Police Officer, expressed interest in assuming the full-time position.
- Seven Contractors attended the mandatory pre-bid meeting for the McNerney Road project.

9. Select Board's Comments and Announcements

BE commended KW for promptly submitting a well-written letter, in response to the Massachusetts Municipal Association campaign, to advocate, along with local officials across the state, at the March 7th hearing before the Joint Committee on Transportation, for the Governor to support increasing MassDOT Chapter 90 funding. KW acknowledged BG for her editing assistance.

BE brought up that the Governor is suggesting allocating 60 percent of the special millionaires' tax receipts towards education and 40 percent toward transportation. The SB stated that they wonder after the millionaire taxes are collected, how much will be provided to our region and our town. CS remarked that he heard the Governor is proposing tax cuts in those areas, which would contradict the intention behind the millionaires' tax: ML added that Paul Mark will advocate against that.

CS thanked KW for attending the Volunteer Fire Department's meeting.

10. Any other business to come before the Select Board

The SB will invite the Finance Committee to a joint meeting (FY2024 budget, ATM Warrant) 6pm, on April 5th, 2023.

11. Correspondence/announcements:

- tba

The Select Board received a letter dated Feb. 28, 2023, from the Governor's Office, indicating that contingent upon legislative approval of the \$200 million annual bond authorization, Becket's Chapter 90 apportionment for Fiscal Year 2024 is \$234,226.04.

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, CS 2nd: Motion carried unanimously. At 9:15pm, BE adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Beverly Gilbert, *Administrative Assistant*

Signed by:

 / March 22, 2023
William H. Elovirta, *Chair* Date Approved

Documents discussed at this meeting:

- ✦ Select Board Agenda
- ✦ 2023.03.08 Select Board Meeting Minutes
- ✦ Correspondence listed agenda item 11
- ✦ Town Administrator's report
- ✦ Departmental Report(s) – none
- ✦ Historical Commission handout – Becket Town Hall Cupola Replacement Project
- ✦ 2023.03.08, e-mail from Deborah Wagner re: Special Purpose Stabilization Fund – Opioid Settlement Funds
- ✦ 2022.10.13 e-mail from Andrea Llamas re: STAM – Opioid Settlement Payments and Accounting Best Practices
- ✦ Transfer Station Survey
- ✦ 2023.03.06 forwarding e-mail from Town Administrator re: HC resignation