Select Board Meeting Minutes
7:00pm, February 17, 2021
Town Hall, 557 Main Street, Becket

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

Staff: William Caldwell (BC), *Town Administrator*; Beverly Gilbert (BG), Administrative Assistant

Others: Bob Gross, MLP Manager **Remote participation**: Shelby Macri, Country Journal; Rob Benton, Destin Heilman

1. **Call to order**
   BE called the meeting to order at 7:00pm. He indicated that the SB was 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**
   MLP Manager Bob Gross discussed the following:
   - Sertex is not working this week due to inclement weather. Since the beginning of construction, Sertex lost 13 days because of snow.
   - MassDOT work involving the Werden/Johnson Road overpass is nearly complete with a small amount of work needed on Johnson Road.
   - As soon as CSX receives the town's payment, it will sign and return the agreement to the Town. Plans are being created for the connections on the railroad crossings.
   - The Broadband Ad Hoc Group, based on the town's subsidy policy, has configured a preliminary subsidy for the resident on Dimmock Road. Sertex awaits Eversource's pole petition with the Town of Becket. Once Eversource's costs are known, Sertex will have a final cost for the Dimmock Road premise.
   - The Broadband Ad Hoc Group has given Westfield Gas & Electric approval to work with MBI to tie into the town's connection located at the Becket/Washington Athenaeum. Anticipated date of completion for this is March 1st.
   - It is likely that the first FSA group will light up in the middle of March or the beginning of April.
   - The Broadband Ad Hoc Group's recommended sequence conveyed to Westfield Gas & Electric: FSA 8 (Indian Lake), Sherwood Forest FSA, FSA 4 (North of Sherwood Forest before Becket Woods), FSA 3 (South Western part of Becket), and Becket Woods.
   - The Broadband Ad Hoc Group is generating proposed extension/suspension policies. Bob received an inquiry from an individual who wants the connection but does not want service due to that their current service is less expensive than the town's broadband monthly service fees. The town's policy requires taking service in order to

receive the town's subsidy. Due to the cost, it is more economical for the customer to close the account if suspension spans longer than 4 months.

4. **SB to discuss and vote on Westfield River Wild and Scenic Advisory Committee's Coordinator Meredyth Babcock's request for a letter of support for the release of the Highlands Foot Path funds in the Bond Bill**
CS moved to send a letter of support (requested by the Westfield River Wild and Scenic Advisory Committee's Coordinator) for the release of the Highlands Foot Path funds in the Bond Bill (2018 Environmental Bond Bill under the Exec. Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs' line item 2000-7078). ML 2nd: unanimous.

5. **Approval of the February 3, 2021 Meeting Minutes**
ML moved to approve the 2/3/2021 meeting minutes: CS 2nd: unanimous.

6. **Public Input (limited to 3 minutes per l**
Rob Benton and Destin Heilman described noise and safety concerns relating to significant increases in truck traffic (many associated with Tonlino & Sons, Williams Stone businesses) over the past few years. Concerns include use of compression brakes and speeding on Algerie and Bonny Rigg Hill Roads. Mr. Benton and Mr. Heilman intend to submit a Citizens' Petition for an ATM Warrant article to restrict use of compression brakes, and to post a lower speed limit on those roads. They will forward information from the MassDOT District One Office and they would like this matter to be placed on a Select Board's agenda.

7. **Select Board possibly vote to accept a donation to the town from a homeowner.**
BC indicated that a resident, assuming this comes to fruition, will be making a making a sizeable donation to the Ambulance and Fire Departments. BE moved to accept a donation into a town gift account from an anonymous Becket homeowner with the intention that the funds will be allocated for the Fire and Ambulance Department's use under the direction of the Fire Chief, Ambulance Director, Town Administrator and member of the Finance Committee. CS 2nd: unanimous.

The SB indicated its wishes to send a thank you letter to the anonymous donor.

8. **Select Board to review Departmental Reports**
   - **tba**

The SB received Fire Department's 2020 Annual Reporting.

9. **Town Administrator's Report**
BC provided an update on several items that he has been working on:
   - Broadband – discussed under agenda item 3.
   - Complete Streets – Tier 2 - prioritization plan
     - Had kick-off meeting Friday
   - DER Grant – BETA engineering – Benton Hill
   - FY22 Budgets – 1st draft was forwarded to the Fin. Com. The School's new building capital expense increased approx. $16,000. All other town debt will be removed except for the new truck and broadband.

- Annual Reports
- 3.5% local aid
- MIIA: 2.05% medical, -2.36% dental, may add vision with no town contribution
- MVP Grant
- Green Communities Grant – Streetlight conversion – will wait for fall. Have not officially closed out current grant
- Community One Stop – grant portal
- Truck #1 replacement was received today
- Caucus, election and ATM – The Select Board will need to file a special act with the Legislature if they wish to cancel this year's caucus. A town meeting vote is required to permanently do away with the caucus. ML moved to submit forms to the Legislature to cancel the 2021 caucus due to COVID-19: CS 2nd: unanimous. The SB will discuss the date of the ATM and ATE at another SB meeting.
- Vaccines 65+, those with 2+ comorbidities starting tomorrow
- Police Reform Bill and how that may impact the budget: At the March 3rd meeting, Police Chief McDonough will discuss Police Department staffing.
- The CBRSD scheduled a school district budget presentation meeting for Feb. 25th. The Finance Committee will meet at Town Hall to attend virtually.
- The owners of Camp Greylock will attend the Select Board's March 3rd meeting to discuss the Town Beach parking lot.

10. Select Board's Comments and Announcements

CS initiated discussion about whether summer camps in Massachusetts will be permitted to operate this year. BE indicated that the Western Mass Camping Association is trying to work with the Baker Administration to determine summer 2021 operations.

ML brought up an application he is submitting to the Community Preservation Committee. BL moved for the SB to sign a letter of support voted to support Mr. Michael Lavery's application to the Community Preservation to request $10,000 funding for Esau's Heel Trail (Jacob's Well, CS 2nd: unanimous.

BE indicated COVID-19 cases have been declining. The SB agreed with BE's suggestion to open the Town Hall to the Public on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10am till 2pm, effective March 2, 2020.

CS provided an update of information he is gathering to explore collecting returnables at the Transfer Station with the idea that the proceeds may be donated to the Food Pantry. CS conveyed that Bill Mulholland of the Food Pantry would welcome additional donations.

CS received calls from several seniors who encountered difficulty signing up for the COVID-19 vaccine. BC advised that BG and he have passed along to several callers that the Governor's office announced the use of the 2-1-1 system to help those that do not have internet or those having problem schedule a vaccine appointment.

CS suggested that the town consider managing the (for instance, entering into a forest management program) town-owned land behind the Becket Washington school (89 acres). BE indicated that this acreage is land-locked and the town encountered a title dispute (the town may not own the land) when the town tried to sell it to the federal government. BC stated that he thinks determining ownership may be an expensive process. CS suggested that the town consider managing other land parcels it owns. BE suggested the Jacob's Well property. CS indicated that this property had already been cleared pretty well. ML suggested surveying the 89 acres. BC indicated that the surveyors he called for the Town Beach property have either not responded to his messages or are encumbered with other work for the next few months.

11. Any other business to come before the Board

The SB approved the Annual Town Report cover and captions, and did not have any changes to the list of town officials/employees.

12. Correspondence:

- **2021.02.03 Eversource Energy letter with Transition Vegetation Management Plan for Becket Right of Way MAW-WT-33**

The Select Board reviewed the above correspondence.

13. Select Board to review and sign payable warrants.

The SB reviewed and signed payable warrants.

14. Select Board to adjourn the Meeting

ML moved to adjourn, CS 2nd: unanimous. BE adjourned the meeting at 8:19 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Beverly Gilbert, Administrative Assistant

Signed by:

_____ / *March 3, 2021*
William Elovirta, *Chairperson* Date Approved

Documents discussed at this meeting:

- 2021.02.17 Town Administrator's Report
- 2021.02.03 Select Board Minutes
- Correspondence (See agenda item 12)
- Departmental Reports (See agenda item 8)
- 2021.02.17 Select Board Agenda – Revised
- E-mail FW Letter of support for the release of the Highlands Foot Path funds in the Bond Bill
- letter of support FY' 2022 CAPITAL BUDGET FUNDING FOR THE HIGHLANDS FOOTPATH COLLABORATIVE
- letter of support - showing vote for ML's CPA application
- Michael Lavery's e-mail and attachments re: CPA application