

SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
6:00pm, March 22, 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 Edward Pickert, Highway Superintendent; Ray Ferrin, Ambulance Director; Kris McDonough, Police Chief; Police Officer Nicholas Beauchemin

Others: Jeff Piemont, Al Blake, Tommie Hutto Blake, Max Koivisto, Meredyth Babcock and Art Alpert, Becket Rep. – Central Berkshire Regional School Committee

1. **The Chairperson will call the Select Board meeting to order.**
BE called the meeting to order at 6:00p.m. and indicated that the SB was recording the meeting.
2. **Pledge of Allegiance**
BE led the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. **Discussion with Highway Superintendent regarding Ground Maintenance Position**
Ed Pickert, Highway Superintendent, and KW spoke in support of filling the Ground Maintenance Position which has been vacant since Dave Shorey retired. KW recommends maintaining the part-time Janitorial position (Bert Goodermote). Ed indicated that last year the town spent approximately \$13,000 to a subcontractor to maintain the cemetery. He anticipates that this year it would cost at least \$20,000. The Grounds Maintenance Position would be managed by the Highway Superintendent. Duties would include winter maintenance of town parking lots, and snow blowing, and various outdoor work during the summertime. This position would entail janitorial work as needed. Ed Pickert knows a person interested in applying. ML moved to accept the Town Administrator and Highway Superintendent's recommendation to staff the Grounds & Maintenance position as discussed, CS 2nd. Motion carried unanimously.
4. **Select Board to discuss and present comments regarding the draft Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan.**
Ray Ferrin discussed the purpose of the CEMP which is for the town to minimize suffering, loss of life, personal injury, property damage resulting from hazardous or emergency conditions, and to provide a framework for a comprehensive emergency management system that addresses all aspects of emergency prevention, preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation. This includes listing contacts responsible for delegating and delivering various responses. The CEMP is a long-term rolling plan that should be reviewed and updated. CS suggested having special training and procedures to prepare for railroad scenarios near the school and the North Becket Village. KW and Ray Ferrin will contact MEMA to arrange for a "table-top" training. KW suggested targeting October for the annual review of CEMP.

CS moved to accept the Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan, ML 2nd. Motion carried unanimously. Ray Ferrin will submit the CEMP to MEMA. Al Blake commended Ray for completing the CEMP. He recommended displaying this plan on the town website and announcing its existence at the Annual Town Meeting.

5. Preliminary discussion with Ray Ferrin, Becket Ambulance Director, regarding Otis Select Board's request to meet with the Becket Select Board for dialog pertaining to sharing Ambulance Services.

The SB asked Ambulance Director Ray Ferrin for his vision regarding sharing Ambulance Services with the Town of Otis. Ray's thoughts included:

- Sharing services should be mutually beneficial to Otis and Becket: each town can back-up to the other.
- Each town should have their own Ambulance operating twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.
- Becket and Otis would be separate Ambulance divisions with one Director
- All would have uniform training/procedures
- Shared staff
- Ray suggested learning about the structure of Deerfield, Sunderland, and Whately MA's First regional municipal EMS third-service in Massachusetts. This three-town partnership provides 24/7 ALS (Paramedic) transporting ambulance response. Each town has to accept a budget and can elect to dissolve service.
- Timeframe – can take a year to iron out the agreement between the Towns of Becket and Otis. Possible target: July 2025.

During discussion, CS expressed concern about Becket assuming retirement benefits if Becket employed all the employees. KW pointed out that regionalization does not always translate into saving money: it is a way to maintain coverage, and continue providing critical services. The SB, Ray, and KW expressed interest in beginning preliminary conversation with the Town of Otis.

6. Ray Ferrin, Emergency Management Director – Storm and State of Emergency Report

KW indicated that at this time, although it is unknown whether Becket would meet the federal threshold to receive aid for the recent State of Emergency, it is possible that state legislators may vote to give towns partial or total funding to alleviate costs, such as salt, equipment, staffing, affiliated with the recent storm emergency. Based on the recommendation of Ray Ferrin, Emergency Management Director, ML moved to end the State of Emergency effective March 22, 2023, CS 2nd: Motion carried unanimously. CS recommended that the town include a notice in the fall tax bills to ask homeowners to plow their driveways even if they are seasonally staying out of town to facilitate Fire Department response in the event of a fire.

7. Select Board to discuss and provide comments to the Open Space & Recreation Plan Advisory Committee regarding the draft Open Space & Recreation Advisory Plan

Al Blake, and Meredyth Babcock, members of the Open Space & Recreation Advisory Plan Committee discussed the draft Open Space & Recreation Advisory Plan. BE stated that he had an opportunity to talk about this with Meredyth Babcock. He had expressed concern about removing land that does not fall into the category of Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, or ACEC designations, from the tax rolls for open space that could otherwise prove buildable and useful. He referenced several tax-exempt entities that do not partake in PILOT program. CS spoke in support of arranging for the Dept, of Fisheries & Wildlife and other entities taking over vulnerable areas owned by the Town of Becket to reduce the town's liability. Discussion ensued about identifying areas vulnerable to flooding, and other hazards (for instance, close proximity to the railroad which could have a derailment with cars carrying hazardous materials). Towards that end, Meredyth indicated that perhaps she can assist the town with finding a grant to relocate the Highway Garage which is located close to the railroad and floodplain.

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

Tommie Hutto Blake reminded the SB about Memorial Bench Gathering for Bruce Garlow on April 3rd (rain date April 4th). Meredyth Babcock suggested eliminating the need for a rain date

by changing the venue from Esau's Heel trail where the bench will eventually be housed, to the Community Room. BE agreed to speak on behalf of Bruce at this event.

Becket's Representative to the School Committee Art Alpert brought up that the School Committee approved the budget on March 9th. Due to an increase in Chapter 70 State aid, Becket's local contribution decreased. CS asked Art about protocols for emergencies at the Becket Washington School. Art will report on this next time he attends a SB meeting. CS suggested for a school official to reach out to the Fire Chief.

9. **Select Board to discuss/vote to increase the Transfer Station Permit Fees**
CS moved that effective July 1, 2023, Transfer Station permits will cost \$80 for the primary permit, \$40.00 for the primary permit for those 65 years or older, and \$10.00 for the 2nd permit. ML 2nd: Motion carried unanimously.
10. **Resignation: Full-time Police Officer Daniel McClellan effective 4/11/2023**
The SB acknowledged Daniel McClellan's resignation from the Becket Police Department effective 4/11/2023, and the SB signed a letter to express appreciation for his service to the Town of Becket.
11. **Select Board to vote to nominate Madelaine Elovirta to continue serving as the Becket Animal Inspector through April 30, 2023**
CS moved to nominate Madelaine Elovirta to continue serving as the Becket Animal Inspector through April 30, 2023. ML 2nd: Motion carried with BE recusing himself because Madelaine Elovirta is his spouse.
12. **Select Board to vote on the Town Administrator's recommended appointment: Nicholas Beauchemin – from Part-time Reserve Police Officer to Probationary Full-time Police Officer effective 4/2/2023 - Payrate: \$30.62 per hour.**
Police Chief McDonough and KW spoke in support of changing Part-time Reserve Police Officer Nicholas Beauchemin to a full-time probationary Police Officer. Police Chief McDonough stated that Officer Beauchemin has been doing an excellent job, completed bridge academy and will require no additional field training to move into this position. ML moved to approve the Town Administrator's recommendation to appoint Nicholas Beauchemin to Probationary Full-time Police Officer effective 4/2/2023 with a payrate of \$30.62 per hour, CS 2nd: Motion carried unanimously.
13. **Approval of the March 8, 2023 Meeting Minutes**
ML moved to approve the March 8, 2023 meeting minutes, CS 2nd: Motion carried unanimously.
14. **Select Board to review Departmental Reports**
 - **Building Inspector – February 2023**
The SB reviewed the above captioned report.
15. **Town Administrator's Report**
 - OPEB update: met with the Actuaries and Treasurer, the OPEB account has not been set up. They were emailing some companies that would be good to work with. The money that over the last four years has been in place in free cash and not rolled over so that the account when established will be started with \$15,000.
 - The Firetruck will arrive between November and January. KW stated that due to that nothing was set up for funding it, she recommends using Free Cash to pay for the first year (approximately \$96,520.00 to be set aside 10%).

- Text My Gov is an alert program that would send our messages via a texting platform. We could begin this for approximately \$3,500.00 - no set up fees. The SB asked KW to survey the Berkshire County Managers group, and the City of Pittsfield to see what services they use.
- Franklin Regional Council of Governments received bids today at 3pm for the Becket McNerny Road Reconstruction Project (IFB 2023-2069). The low bidder was Northeast Paving, Northfield, MA: Total of Extensions: \$1,168,650.00 structure, adjustment \$850.00 each.
- BE moved to recommend 7.5% COLA for Town Employees (this excludes the Highway and Police Departments because they recently received pay increases), CS 2nd: Motion carried unanimously.

16. Select Board's Comments and Announcements

ML asked KW to forward the 2019 Annual Town Meeting Minutes to the Attorney General's Office. He is following up on the Plastic bag ban bylaw, approved at the 2019 ATM.

ML will submit a Citizen's petition regarding "entheogenic plants" - a resolution protecting adult access to plant medicines & prioritizing public health responses to controlled substance possession.

The SB will invite the Highway Superintendent, Ambulance Director, Fire Chief and Police Chief to the March 31st meeting to discuss the Fiscal Year 2024 budget.

17. Any other business to come before the Board

The SB approved the Annual Town Meeting postcard with QR codes for the ATM Warrant and Annual Town Report.

18. Correspondence/announcements:

- **2023.03.10 Treasurer of the Central Berkshire Regional School District re: Certified FY2024 Operating and Capital Assessment**

The SB reviewed the above captioned.

19. Select Board to review and sign payable warrants

The SB reviewed and signed payable warrants.

20. Select Board to adjourn the Meeting

CS moved to adjourn, ML 2nd: Motion carried unanimously. BE adjourned the meeting at 8:37pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Beverly Gilbert, *Administrative Assistant*

Signed by:

 / April 19, 2023
William H. Elovirta, *Chair* Date Approved

Documents discussed at this meeting:

- ✦ Select Board Agenda
- ✦ 2023.03.22 Select Board Meeting Minutes
- ✦ Correspondence listed agenda item 18

- ✦ Town Administrator's report; Free Cash Disbursement listing
- ✦ Departmental Report(s) – agenda item 14
- ✦ Bid sheet from Franklin Regional Council of Governments IFB 2023-2069
- ✦ ATM Postcard
- ✦ Daniel McClellan letter of resignation dated 3/9/2023; Police Chief cover letter dated 3/9/2023 concern Mr. McClellan's resignation; SB letter of acknowledgment to Daniel McClellan
- ✦ Police Chief letter dated 3/9/2023 recommendation to appoint Nicholas Beauchemin Probationary Full-time Police Officer
- ✦ Select Board Amended authorized payrate for Nicholas Beauchemin
- ✦ Draft Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan
- ✦ Draft Open Space & Recreation Plan
- ✦ MDAR Nomination of Inspector of Animals letter dated March 3, 2023