SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
7:00pm, August 16, 2023
Town Hall, 557 Main Street, Becket

Attendees

Select Board (SB): William Elovirta (BE), *Chair;* Chris Swindlehurst (CS), *Vice-Chair;* Jeff Piemont (JP), *Clerk*

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

Others: Rita Furlong (Historical Commission, Parks & Recreation Committee, Parks & Recreation Designee to the Community Preservation Committee), John Garvey (Historical Commission), Karen Lundington, Tom Lynch, Michael Lavery Remote: Al Blake (Planning Board Member), Barbara Craft-Reiss (CBRSD School Committee Member)

1. **The Chairperson will call the Select Board meeting to order.**
   BE called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

2. **Pledge of Allegiance**
   BE led the Pledge of Allegiance

3. **Approval of the 8/2/2023 Meeting Minutes**
   JP moved to approve the 8/2/2023 minutes, CS 2nd: Motion carried unanimously.

4. **Public Input (limited to 3 minutes per person, 20 minutes total for this agenda item).**
   Because the town faces issues with Esau Heel's Trail, Rita Furlong (Member of the Parks & Recreation Committee, Historical Commission, and Parks & Recreation Designee to the Community Preservation Committee) had met with Lauren Gaherty, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, to clarify the public properties of the town as it relates to the Open Space & Recreation Plan (Lauren Gaherty is a facilitator of the Open Space & Recreation Plan Advisory Committee). Lauren Gaherty brought up that the town never classified the North Becket Park and Becket Center Park as recreational property. Lauren Gaherty conveyed that for these properties to qualify for Community Preservation Act funding, the town needs to declare them as conservation restricted or recreational land. Rita suggested addressing (investigate declaring them recreational) all three properties at the same time. Additional discussion of this matter occurred under Agenda Item 11. Town Administrator's Report.

   Michael Lavery inquired about Town Counsel's response and whether there was any forward motion regarding the Esau's Heel Trail property. KW indicated that Town Counsel has not replied so she will continue to reach out.

5. **Select Board to vote on Town Administrator's recommended appointment: Lauren Nelson, Part-time Reserve Police Officer effective 8/20/2023 through 6/30/2024**
   BE stated that this appointment was pulled for the time being.

6. **Barbara Craft-Reiss, Central Berkshire Regional School District Committee Member re: status of the Regional Agreement**

Barbara Craft Reiss, Central Berkshire Regional School District (CBRSD) Committee Member, provided an update regarding the status of Regional Agreement. The CBRSD Regional Agreement Amendment Sub Committee (RAAC) has been working on the challenging task of updating the regional agreement for about two years. Because of the varied personalities involved, the district ended up hiring a group called MARS (Massachusetts Association of Regional School Systems) to help guide them through to completion of this process. The RACC has a working document which they will discuss with the School Committee.

Barbara Craft Reiss commented on the draft agreement she provided to the Select Board:

- Some of the changes were made to clean-up language that was no longer appropriate.
- Other changes to the agreement were much more difficult to agree upon including withdrawal. For example, Cummington had requested withdrawal from the regional district but nothing has happened because Cummington has not followed the required steps of the withdrawal process.

Barbara Craft Reiss described the *Next Steps in the process*. Despite that the process appears to entail myriad tasks, the goal of the district is for completion of the agreement for 2024 Annual Town Meeting votes.

Barbara Craft Reiss indicated that JP, Michael Lavery's replacement on the RAAC, reached out to her for additional information. She acknowledged that JP is joining as this process is winding down, and she thanked him for his interest and for his willingness to help when needed.

BE inquired about Section VI – Incurring Debt. Barbara Craft Reiss explained that the wording reflects statutory requirement.

Barbara Craft Reiss indicated that after the revised regional school agreement is approved, the CBRSD will review it every five years.

7. Select Board to review and vote on appointment application:

- Karen Ludington – Cultural Council effective 8/16/2023 through 6/30/2026

Karen Ludington introduced herself and her husband Tom Lynch to the SB. They are now full-time residents of Becket, and she looks forward to participating on the Cultural Council. <u>CS moved to appoint Karen Ludington to the Cultural Council effective 8/16/2023 through 6/30/2023. JP 2nd: Motion carried unanimously.</u>

8. **Discussion with Historical Commission members John Garvey & Rita Furlong re: Town Hall Cupola restoration project Update (John Garvey, Rita Furlong)**

Historical Commission Members Rita Furlong and John Garvey discussed the project and the documents they provided to the SB: 1) Status Report that included the Tasks, target date and status (complete, in progress, not started) and 2) sketch of the Current Cupola Design on top of the Town Hall building that the architect drew, and the engineer, contractor, Historical Commission approve it. They discussed issues.

- Additional truss supports in the roof structure are needed. This was known before the Historical Commission submitted the CPA project application. This was not included in CPA project request and there is concern about whether this task qualifies for CPA funding. The contractor has agreed to provide an estimate. Another source of funding will be needed. At this point, the Historical Commission has only committed to contracts for architecture and engineering.
- The engineer cannot find evidence that any lightning protection was previously installed. This does not qualify for CPA funding. KW will seek estimates from a lightning contractor John Garvey had contacted.
- The engineer found two broken truss supports. KW suggested for the contractor to provide a quote for repair of the two truss supports when he is at the building to provide a quote to build the additional truss supports in the roof structure. John Garvey stated that he is not certain the contractor will provide a quote for the two broken truss supports without an engineering plan. Building code requires an engineering plan for the repair. Rita Furlong stated that the engineer estimates $1,800 for the engineering plan, and a few hundred dollars for supplies. He speculates it is an easy in-house fix. This repair does not qualify for CPA funding.

  CS inquired about how the restored Cupola will look compared to how it used to look. Rita Furlong indicated that the Cupola part will be a little shorter but there will be an extra base to have it tiered (like a wedding cake). John added that the completed Cupola will be a tiny bit shorter and the base will be a little bit bitter but it will not be taller than it was.

  The SB acknowledged that until funding issues are resolved, installation of the Cupola will not be undertaken.

  JP moved to approve the design presented for the new Cupola for the Town Hall. CS stated he seconds the motion with the caveat that he would want to see the architectural drawings and understand how the whole thing works: approval is for the visual design, not the entire project. BE stated that the SB made a motion and 2nd the motion for approval of the submitted design with the understanding that the architectural final drawings will be submitted for approval. Motion carried unanimously.

9. Select Board discussion re: Cottage Court Bylaw

Al Blake stated the Williamstown Cottage Court (clustered housing) bylaw seems like a good concept and may be worth considering as an alternative for senior and low income housing, potentially for the Jacob's Well Trail area or other locations in town.

CS asked Al Blake about the process and whether it involves Planning Board proposing a bylaw for Town Meeting approval. Al Blake initially stated yes, and that a bylaw would allow the town to cluster houses on a smaller lot. Al Blake then indicated that a Planning Board would not have to change the town's bylaw law because there is a state law that supersede town bylaws. Al Blake suggested for the town to verify existence of the state law referenced in an iBerkshires article (le by Stephen Dravis – *Williamstown Planning Board Talks 'Cottage Court' Bylaw*). CS indicated that although he does not expect a vote for action at tonight's meeting, he had initiated placing this on the agenda because he thinks it is a good idea.

BE stated that a while ago the town had a hearing about creating senior and low income housing and many argued that Becket lacks stores that are walking distance, and buses. BE indicated there was not very much interest at that time. BE pointed out that Williamstown has town water and sewers. In Becket, clustered houses would require a shared well and shared septic system or

wastewater treatment plant. Al Blake stated that these utilities could be treated in a similar manner as the proposed glamping facility had addressed. CS agreed with BE's point about walkability: he would suggest placement of such housing in the North Becket Village (Library, stores, things to do). Rita stated that North Village has no extra land. CS suggested the old sawmill property. Rita said the town has been trying to acquire that parcel for the past twenty years. BE asked who could (other than the town) develop the property. Al Blake stated that he conducted research and there is a national developer who builds this type of structure, as well as a local contractor and a developer from Plymouth. CS stated that Worthington has a clustered housing development with town water. KW stated that municipalities can establish or contract a building authority to oversee the maintenance of the property. CS stated that he heard Berkshire Housing Development Corp. does a fantastic job and they own property all over Berkshire County. The SB discussed that it would likely be better for the town to take steps for an outside entity to own the property/structures. Rita thinks there are residents who have trouble maintaining their properties and would embrace the idea, and she would encourage the town to make a sincere effort to reach out to survey the community. BE stated that he agrees it would be a good idea to gauge interest. JP pointed out that those interested today may not be interested in five years. BE stated that he thinks it would be a good idea to conduct a survey. CS brought up that the town lacks sufficient affordable housing units and it would be useful for the community to have affordable housing for the workforce, and for the older population. Al Blake recommended contacting Williamstown for information about their process. JP suggested the clustered housing development can be a mix of varied valued units, not only low income units. CS asked if Al Blake would want to bring this idea about the potential bylaw to the Planning Board, and perhaps the Planning Board would ask the SB for a letter of support. JP stated that Al Blake mentioned a bylaw revision is not needed. Al Blake suggested that this idea could be part of a new master plan which we have been talking about for years. The SB agreed with Rita Furlong's suggestion to send a tax insert to survey residents if they are interested in senior/low income housing. CS will talk to Becket resident Elton Ogden, former President of Berkshire Housing Development Commission, and will also ask Elton Ogden for suggestions about what to include on the survey.

10. Select Board to review Departmental Reports

- **Police Dept. – Offense Listing & Violations through 7/31/2023**
- **Others tba**

The SB reviewed reports: Ambulance Dept. - July 2023; Highway Dept. – July 3 through 28, 2023; Animal Control Officer – July 2023; and Police Dept. – Offense Listing & Violations through 7/31/2023. The SB inquired about the timespan the "Totals" heading includes on the Ambulance Department Report. KW will ask the Ambulance Director to modify his report so that "Totals" heading specifies the period of time.

The SB's meeting packet included the Building Inspector's July 2023 report.

11. Town Administrator's Report

KW provided the following update:

- Werden Rd update – paving started today. After guardrails are in (not anticipated to occur before school begins), the road will reopen to general traffic.
- McNerney Rd update – paving starting tomorrow
- Essau's Trail – KW awaits update from Town Counsel. She sent two emails (including maps). Tomorrow she will follow up with phone call. KW asked Town Counsel about the process to classify the trail to conservation or recreation land, and cutting out ten acres at the front right

corner to save it for municipal property. BE stated that he would prefer to classify the N. Village Park, Becket Village Park and Esau Heel's trail as recreational land. JP brought up questions about town ownership as it relates to Esau Heel Trail since the town took it for taxes. Jeff inquires whether the town will be allowed to keep the land given the recent Supreme Court case that seems contrary to Massachusetts law.

- OPEB Fund update – before a deposit will be made, KW is reviewing with the Auditors about how to handle past years' appropriations which were not deposited.
- Becket Quarry update - working on meeting for late September due to vacation schedules. The SB will invite the Trustees of Reservation, owners of the Quarry, to attend the Oct. 4th meeting.
- FY24 Community Compact Grants for Regionalization will be opening in January 2024 – would like to apply for the Ambulance Regionalization at that time. Otis is interested in applying for a joint grant with Becket.
- Highway Department Truck financing. KW indicated that the town ordered a Highway Department truck which is scheduled to arrive in November 2023. The Town approved Annual Town Meeting 2022 Warrant Article 4 to borrow $295,000 for this capital purchase. KW and the SB discussed funding options:

  1) Putting the loan out to bid. KW had asked UniBank, an approved municipal financial institution that has financial advisory services, to provide one through five year term scenarios for Bond Anticipation Notes (handout provided to the SB). KW advised that currently the interest rates are high, 4.65% - 6%. If interested in pursuing this route, the Town Treasurer would direct UniBank to conduct a borrowing bid for the specified time period and principal.

  2) Taking out a short-term note and asking voters at a Town meeting to borrow from the stabilization fund

  3) Leasing

  It was agreed that KW will continue to research financing options (including MMA) and discuss this further with a UniBank advisor. During discussion, JP brought up scenarios for various bond products (municipal issued/federal and state tax free). KW asked the SB for their thoughts about the payback period (up to 10 years). BE stated that he does not recommend going past a 5 year payback term due to vehicle lifespan/aging conditions. JP suggested for KW to work with a financial advisor.
- Fire Truck Cab and Chassis arrived in PA to start the build for Becket.
- Resignation of per diem Ambulance EMT Roseanna Lacas
- Office Space Change: KW and the Building Inspector will swap offices.
- KW received a Quotation for the Becket Center Park Pavilion (Wilkinson Building & Remodeling, Inc.: $23,700.00 includes labor only to construct 20'x24' addition to existing pavilion, removal old roof, reroof entire structure including the addition, and debris removal).
- Congratulations to BG for completing Assessors Course 200.

12. Select Board's Comments and Announcements

None

13. Any other business to come before the Board

None

14. Correspondence/announcements:

- Public Notice received 8/4/2023 – Dept. of Environmental Protection Waterways Regulation Program – Notice of Simplified License Application to maintain a dock in the waters of Center Pond at 293 Old Pond Road, Becket (Permittee: Robert L. Fowler)
- Others tba

The SB reviewed the above captioned.

15. Select Board to review and sign payable warrants

The SB reviewed and signed the payable warrants.

16. Select Board to adjourn the Meeting

JP moved to adjourn the meeting, CS 2nd: Motion carried unanimously. At 8:44pm, BE adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Beverly Gilbert, *Administrative Assistant*

Signed by:

_____ / *September 6, 2023*
William H. Elovirta, *Chair* Date Approved

Meeting documents:

- Agenda
- Town Administrator's Report, 2023.08.05 Roseanna Lacas' letter of resignation to Becket Ambulance, UniBank handout; 2023.08.16 Wilkinson Building & Remodeling Inc. Quotation for Pavilion Construction
- August 2, 2023 Meeting Minutes
- Departmental reports listed agenda item 10
- Correspondence listed agenda item 14
- CBRSD Agreement documents: 1) KW forwarded 2023.08.16 e-mail from Todd Emerson, member of the Regional Agreement Amendment Committee; 2023.07.26 email from Town Administrator forwarding the RAAC-Final Draft of Proposed Regional Agreement (documents: next steps in the process, final draft of the proposed regional agreement)
- Cupola Discussion documents: 1) Becket Town Hall Cupola Restoration Project 2) Drawing of proposed Cupola on top of the Town Hall
- iBerkshires Article by Stephen Dravis – *Williamstown Planning Board Talks 'Cottage Court' Bylaw*
- Appointment Application: Karen E. Ludington – Cultural Council

DRAFT