SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
7:00pm, November 1, 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, *Town Administrator*; Beverly Gilbert (BG), *Administrative Assistant*; Robin Mathiesen, *Town Clerk*

Others: Bob Ronzio, *Planning Board Chairperson*

1. **The Chairperson will call the Select Board meeting to order.**
   BE called the meeting to order at 7:03pm. He indicated the SB was recording the meeting.

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

3. **Dept. Head Update: Town Clerk**
   Robin Mathiesen, Town Clerk, provided an update to the Select Board and fielded the SB's questions. Topics of discussion included: workhours, work duties, concern about zoning enforcement, concern about low voter registration, concern about low census participation, organizing the Office of the Town Clerk's Office, the need to have a succession plan to fill positions of those who will retire within the next five to ten years, generating youth interest to enter the municipal field, and promoting volunteerism. Ms. Mathiesen is up to date with processing dog license applications/submitting turnovers to the Town Treasurer. She thinks it is important to continue having an open door policy to meet the needs of our residents.

4. **Public Input (limited to 3 minutes per person, 20 minutes total for this agenda item).**
   Bob Ronzio, Chairperson of the Planning Board, affirmed Robin Mathiesen's comments about the need for the town to address zoning enforcement. The SB agree this warrants additional discussion at another SB meeting.

   The SB and Bob Ronzio discussed the format of the joint Planning Board/Select Board meeting scheduled on 11/15/2023 to appoint a Planning Board member to serve through the 2024 Annual Town Election. All candidates will be invited to attend this meeting, and will be asked to submit a brief statement indicating why they wish to serve. Candidates will present in alphabetical order of their last name. In order to avoid peer pressure, each member of the Planning Board and each member of the Select Board will receive a form to rank the candidates. The Town Administrator will collect the forms, and tabulate the rankings. The form will list the member's name on it. The candidate with the highest level ranking will be appointed. In the event of a tie, there will be another form to select one of the tied-candidates. Members attending remotely will read aloud their rankings after the other forms are collected. Due to Open Meeting Law, the SB/PB will not ask

candidates to stagger their presence: they may attend at the same time during the presentations. In accordance with Town Bylaws, both boards will conduct a roll call vote.

Bob Ronzio suggested having a "Meet the Candidates Night" in May prior to the Town Election since the Town no longer has a caucus.

5. **Approval of the 10/4/2023 and 10/18/2023 Minutes**
   JP moved to approve the 10/4/2023 and 10/18/2023 minutes. CS 2nd: Motion carried unanimously.

6. **Select Board to vote to forgive or require $23,215.80 reimbursement to the Town of Becket for the FY2017 Community Development Block Grant lien affiliated with 157 Washington Street**
   KW explained that the above captioned agenda is necessary because the owners need to resolve the lien in order to obtain a reverse mortgage and KW stated that the owners expressed they do not want subordination. The SB were in consensus not to forgive any portion of the remaining lien because there are other homes with CDBG liens who could request forgiveness, and the balance owed will be placed in an account designated for home rehab assistance. JP made a motion (as a condition for the Town to lift the lien affiliated with the FY2017 Community Development Block Grant) to require the owners of 157 Washington Street to comply with the terms of the FY2017 Community Development Block Grant and they will need to pay the current balance of the grant in the amount of $23,215.80 to the Town of Becket, as reimbursement for the unreduced balance part of the grant. CS 2nd. Motion carried unanimously.

7. **Select Board to review and vote to endorse the Draft Open Space and Recreation Plan (revised September 2023)**
   JP moved to endorse the Draft Open Space and Recreation Plan (revised September 2023) with the below listed corrections:
   - Page 14: The report should indicate that Becket has an Environmental Justice population due to that the annual median household income is not more than 65% of the statewide annual median household income. KW provided documents to support this.
   - Page 29: A small unnamed impoundment that flows into Upper Goose Pond has a few residences on the north shore and no public access. It is the source of Higley Brook which runs **into Goose Pond before entering into the Town of Lee.**
   - Page 31: Crystal Pond is a 10-acre, artificial pond located across the road and to the **east** of the Town Hall.
   - Page 54: BE requested confirming that Fletcher is the owner of records for 10 acres Chapter 61 Land on Jacobs Ladder Road.

   The SB agreed that BE will sign a letter to the Open Space and Recreation Advisory Committee to document the SB's vote and corrections.

8. **Central Berkshire Regional School District Agreement Process: The next step is for the member towns and their legal counsel to review the agreement (On 10/23/203, the CBRSD mailed a copy of the agreement to member towns)**
   BE acknowledged receipt of the above captioned agreement and stated that he objects to the last portion (denoted in bold below) of Section VI. INCURRING OF DEBT. BE brought up that the School Committee had used the provisions in subsection n to call a regional popular vote that passed with eighty votes to approve debt for the Wahconah Regional High School Construction Project.:

"...The Committee may vote to incur debt consistent with the terms and conditions of M.G.L. c 71, Section 16. At the time of taking action to incur debt, and except for the incurring of debt in anticipation of revenue, the Committee, shall follow the process that appears in subsection (d) of M.G.L. laws c. 71, Section 16, **unless by a two-thirds (2/3) vote the Committee chooses to follow the process that appears in subsection (n) of M.G.L. c 71, Section 16.**

During discussion CS indicated the district is required to follow Massachusetts General Laws and may not eliminate the potential for use of subsection n.

JP indicated that the Regional Agreement Committee discussed the concern that a larger town containing the majority population could overwhelm other towns through a popular vote. One of the changes in the agreement is that the school committee cannot call a popular vote unless the School Committee achieves a 2/3 vote to do so. JP stated he thinks this agreement addresses a way to proceed in case a stalemate occurs.

The BE agreed with JP's suggestion to have Town Counsel, in addition to providing a generally of the regional agreement, to focus on Section 6 to ensure it is sufficiently protective of Becket's interest? "Is this as good as we can do?"

9. **Update: Establishment of Fire department Inspection Fee: Camps/Jacobs Pillow**
KW reported that the Becket Fire Chief proposes a flat $100.00 fee to inspect the Camps, and Jacobs Pillow. Currently the Fire Chief does not have a fee for when he conducts inspections along with the Building Inspector at Camps, and Jacobs Pillow. JP moved to establish a $100 Fire Department Inspection fee for Camps/Jacobs Pillow, and similarly sizes, effective 11/1/2023, CS 2nd: Motion carried unanimously.

10. **Town Administrator's Report**
    - MIIA Insurance for retirees will increase 2% medical part A&B and 6.55% for part D. Employee health insurance could increase up to 10% in the next fiscal year. This will be revisited in February 2024. The health insurance representative will add a less expensive tier option.
    - Fire Truck financing will come up in January. We will look to finance approximately $573,577.00. Total cost was $762,029.00. The chassis cost $198,619.00 (Town paid for this.). KW will discuss a lease purchase option (The Town of Becket would own it at the end of the lease period.) with the dealer. JP asked KW to compare tax-exempt and taxable borrowing rates.
    - FY25 Budget: Capital Requests are due November 9th.
    - Ambulance: The Otis Select Board will discuss how they will proceed with exploring a joint Becket/Otis Ambulance Squad.
    - The Fire Protection Agreement for the Town of Washington will expire June 30, 2024. KW is considering proposing a five-year contract with a 3 percent fee increase each year. Given mandatory equipment upkeep, she thinks this is a reasonable ask. For instance, KW anticipates the town will spend approximately between $100,000 and $130,000 in the next fiscal year on Police and Fire radios. This is needed to continue being able to operate within the State and County radio systems.

- In the next few weeks KW will meet with the Town of Washington Select Board to discuss the Town's proposal for ambulance service.
- Handout: Conservation Restrictions 101: the Rules on Conservation Restrictions on CPA Acquired Land (June 2021)

11. Select Board to review Departmental Reports

The SB tabled review of the Ambulance Department, and Building Inspector's October 2023 reports

12. Select Board's Comments and Announcements

BE brought up that the Becket Police Association submitted a letter requesting $500.00 for the December 2023 Children's Holiday Party. An appropriation for this was approved at the 2023 Annual Town Meeting. The SB will submit this request for payment to the Town Accountant.

The SB asked KW to arrange for a deed search for the Town Beach property.

BE reported that the Parks & Recreation Committee tabled taking action relative to construction of a kayak storage rack at the Town Beach due to concerns about liability.

JP asked BG to post information on the town website re: the Council on Aging's luncheon/bingo meetings (Tuesdays/Thursdays). BG will post details on the website: 1) Community Calendar and 2) Council on Aging's section.

13. Any other business to come before the Board

BG reported she received requests from Stoney Brook and Jacobs Hollow Homeowners Associations asking for the Town to maintain their roads. BG gave the SB a copy of John Gerson's 2023.10.30 e-mail asking that the town take over maintenance of Jacob's Hollow Road.

The SB agreed to hold a contest for the 2023 Annual Town Report Cover Photo.

14. Correspondence/announcements:

None

15. Select Board to review and sign payable warrants

The SB reviewed and signed payable warrants.

16. Select Board to adjourn the Meeting

CS moved to adjourn. JP 2nd: Motion carried unanimously. At 7:51pm, BE adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Beverly Gilbert, *Administrative Assistant*

Signed by:

William H. Elovirta / *November 1, 2023*
William H. Elovirta, *Chairperson* Date Approved

Meeting documents:

- Agenda
- 10/4/2023 and 10/18/2023 meeting minutes
- Town Administrator's Update
- Any Other Business – Administrative Assistant
- 2023.10.30 e-mail from John Gerson re: Jacob's Hollow Road
- Annual Town Report Contest Flyer
- 2023.11.01, Becket Police Association's request for $500.00 for the Annual Children's Holiday Party
- Draft Open Space & Recreation Plan, 2023.07.03 letter to Berkshire Regional Planner from Massachusetts Environmental & Energy Program Manager re: Open Space & Recreation Plan
- Handout: Conservation Restrictions 101: the Rules on Conservation Restrictions on CPA Acquired Land (June 2021)