SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
7:00pm, December 20, 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*; Geri Walter, Board of Assessors; Jessica Perotti Assessing Clerk & Board of Assessors, Margaret McClellan, Town Accountant; Edward Pickert, Highway Superintendent; Christine Bleau, Tax Title Custodian & Town Treasurer; Joseph Haskell Jr., Highway Department Laborer

Remote: Robin Mathiesen, *Town Clerk,* Chris Cozzagio (Assessor – Regional Resource Group), Nicole Scarbro (Eversource), Adele Levine, Paul Aube, Kathy Dickinson, Bonnie Giles

Others: Maurice Vandesteene (Route 8 Pub); Heather Anello (Becket General Store), Larry Goetz, Joe McCarthy (TRC Companies)

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

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

3. **Select Board to approve the Town Administrator's and Highway Superintendent's recommendation to hire Joseph Haskell, Jr. effective December 18, 2023**
   CS moved to approve the Town Administrator's and Highway Superintendent's recommendation to hire Joseph Haskell, Jr. effective December 18, 2023. JP 2nd: Motion carried unanimously.

4. **Public Hearing In accordance with MGL Chapter 166, Section 22, regarding NSTAR ELECTRIC COMPANY DBA EVERSOURCE, AND VERIZON NEW ENGLAND, INC.'S petition November 9, 2023 for permission to erect a line of poles (install underground conduits and cables) on Bonny Rigg Hill Road, Becket, MA 01223 as specified in the accompanying plan marked 13799544.**
   BE read the public hearing notice for the above captioned and commenced the public hearing at 7:07pm. Nicole Scarbro, from Eversource and Joe McCarthy from TRC Companies (engineering firm contracted by Eversource) discussed the petition. Joe McCarthy indicated there is a 3-phase power line (overhead) that goes through the woods outside the road. The plan is to remove a couple of the wires but keep in place and maintain the line servicing the local neighborhood. Eversource proposes to install a three-phase underground duct-bank for electrical cables on Bonny Rigg Hill Road, and hand-holes flush to the ground on the shoulder of the eastside (closer to Chester) of Bonny Rigg Hill Road.

   JP pointed out that the drawing does not include the existing poles, and state that they will remain active. JP asked if Verizon and Eversource will continue with their obligation to maintain the right of

ways and polls. Joe McCarthy stated yes. JP asked where the work will occur (middle of the road? Or on the side of the road?). Joe stated that the proposed handheld boxes will be on the side of the road (not in the pavement and will get buried flush to the ground as best as they can). JOE MCCARTHY stated the intention is to put the conduit underneath the pavement in a concrete case. Ed asked about the size of the excavation. Nicole Scarbro stated that plate is approximately five inches in diameter and she thinks the excavation will be a foot or two, depending on the size of the excavator.

BE asked after the conduit is buried, will Eversource repave the whole road. BE expressed concern that patching only without repaving the entire road would lead to structural distress of the road from compaction by the transitions. BE stated that he would want Eversource to repave the entire road for consistency and to avoid problems. Nicole Scarbro stated that usually, they repave over the trenching areas only. Since she is not authorized to agree to BE's request she will relay this request to those at Eversource who are authorized to make this decision. CS expressed concern that patching would cause a frost heave hump all the way up the road.

CS asked for the drawing to contain more details (vertical and horizontal plan dimensions) regarding the duct boxes/underground items. He brought up JP's comment, and agreed the drawing should include the existing poles servicing the neighboring homes, and the fact that they're not going to be removed. JP explained that the town and state spent a great deal of money constructing the town-owned broadband which is connected on those poles and both the state and town paid Eversource a great deal of money for make-ready. JP stated the town would like to preserve its investment, and not have the Broadband's life shortened. Joe McCarthy agreed to modify the sketch to show the poles will not be abandoned and to provide additional dimensions.

BE inquired as to what is the estimated time for construction (excavating 3,800 feet). Joe McCarthy stated he is not familiar with the duration as to how long the construction would take.

BE asked if Eversource will hire a detail officer. JOE MCCARTHY stated Eversource will arrange for a detail officer. BE asked if the trench will be closed at the end of the day to allow for 2-way traffic. Nicole Scarbro indicated during digging, there will be one-way traffic and at the end of the day, they will place metal plates over the trenching areas and try to re-open for two lanes. BE commented that the road is heavily traveled (granite trucks coming from the curbing company, BE estimates 50-60 per day).

BE acknowledge the SB received input from one of the neighbors, Jim Schaefer (e-mail dated 12/20/2023) of Bonny Rigg Hill Road. BE inquired whether others wish to comment. No one did.

The SB asked that Eversource will completely pave the road. The Highway Superintendent agreed paving (at least patched and sealed over the top and shim and overlay), rather than patching, would be needed to prevent the road from coming apart.

BE suggested for Eversource to conduct a few test borings to determine if ledge needs to be addressed (blasting).

The Highway Superintendent indicated plowing will not be a problem.

The SB will continue the public hearing at their next SB meeting: 7pm on Jan. 3, 2023. The public hearing ended at 7:22pm.

5. **Finance Dept. (Board of Assessors, Tax Collector, Tax Title Custodian, Treasurer, Town Accountant) Update**

The SB indicated the primary purpose of inviting department heads to periodically attend the SB meetings, is to keep the line of communication open, and to provide an opportunity for updates. The Board of Assessors (Geri Walter, Jessica Perotti, Beverly Gilbert), Tax Collector (Ken Bilodeau), Tax Title Custodian/Treasurer (Christine Bleau), Town Accountant (Margaret McClellan), and Chris Cozzaglio (Regional Resource Group Assessor) were in attendance.

The primary topic discussed was Tax Title (Treasurer/Tax Title Custodian). Christine Bleau indicated that approximately twenty parcels have been redeemed, several are on payments plans, and she and the Tax Title Assistant are preparing mailings. Margaret McClellan and Christine Bleau stated they are in the process of reconciling the ledger which entails balancing the list of Tax Title Properties with the amount of taxes owed. After the amount is reconciled, they will provide a figure for adjustment that represents the amount that is not collectable. Christine Bleau indicated that her office differentiates properties categorized as tax title (liens on property) vs. possession (town owns the property). KW stated that she is asking Conservation Commission to review delinquent parcels as part of the analysis to determine a practical course of action. Sometimes an abutter may wish to acquire the land to their property. The Conservation Commission may advise if a parcel is not buildable (wetland determination), and may recommend for the town to vote at Town Meeting to accept it for green space. A brief discussion ensued regarding Land of low value ($25,000 or less) of which the town must take possession in land court. JP inquired about the audit. He asked if the auditors provided recommendations, and whether there were any findings that would compromise the town's ability to borrow. Margaret McClellan indicated the auditors have not found any major deficiencies and auditors always find something that should be corrected as the nature of audits is education. Margaret McClellan and KW indicated that the auditors are adjusting their reporting letter to the town, and the audit will be discussed at a future meeting. JP inquired about the town's investments. Christine Bleau advised that she is researching certificate of deposit terms of interest, currently approximately 6%. The interest earned is placed into general funds.

6. **Board to consider Annual License Renewals:**
   - **<u>Becket General Store Inc. (d/b/a Becket General Store)</u>: All Alcoholic Beverages Package Store, All Alcoholic Beverages Restaurant, Six Day Entertainment, Sunday Entertainment, and Common Victuallers**

Heather Anello, owner of the Becket General Store, Inc. discussed operations at 3235 Main Street, Becket as it relates to the licenses issued by the Select Board.

- Becket General Store Inc.'s dba will remain unchanged (dba: Becket General Store). Heather Anello is the Manager of the liquor license.
- Heather Anello is disputing Department of Revenue assessments. After they arrive at a settlement, and she receives a Certificate of Good Standing, she will apply to transfer her liquor license to Moe Vandesteene. Moe Vandesteene has purchased restaurant equipment from

Heather Anello, and created his own business entity called Route 8 Pub. Route 8 Pub employs and pays their staff.

- Becket General Store provided a liquor liability insurance certificate.
- Hurshel Langham from the Alcoholic Beverages Control Commission Licensing Department had conveyed to Heather Anello it is acceptable for the Workers Compensation Certificate of Insurance to list Route 8 Pub as the insured; however, the liquor liability certificate of insurance must list Becket General Store Inc. as the insured.
- Eastern Holdings LLC leases the premises to Route 8 Pub.
- JP mentioned he saw the Oct. 4th 2023 Board of Health minutes indicating the state DEP ordered Route 8 Club closed. The SB indicated this is not the SB's jurisdiction, and Heather Anello should contact the Board of Health.
- BE stated that he had received complaints regarding outdoor entertainment, and he pointed out that their entertainment license is only for inside entertainment and changing the parameters requires a public hearing. Moe Vandesteene and Heather Anello stated entertainment will be indoors only.
- Heather Anello is not renewing Becket General Store Inc.'s All Alcoholic Beverages Package Store License.

The SB indicated the Building/Fire Safety inspection certificate must be provided to the town (Select Board's Office) by Dec. 29, 2023. BE moved to approve Becket General Store's (d/b/a Becket General Store) application for renewal of the following annual licenses (operation during 2024): All Alcoholic Beverages Restaurant, Six Day Entertainment, Sunday Entertainment, and Common Victuallers with the stipulation that all required documents (Building/Fire Inspection Certificate) are submitted by December 29, 2023. CS 2nd: Motion carried unanimously.

7. **Approval of the December 6, 2023 Meeting Minutes**
   JP moved to approve the December 6, 2023 Meeting Minutes. CS 2nd: Motion carried unanimously.

8. **Public Input (limited to 3 minutes per person, 20 minutes total for this agenda item).**
   None

9. **Select Board to review the Town of Dalton's comments/suggested changes to the Central Berkshire Regional School District Agreement. Select Board discussion and potential to vote to provide feedback to the school district's member towns.**
   Because the SB awaits Town Counsel's comments on the proposed CBRSD Agreement, the SB will discuss this agenda item on Jan. 3, 2024.

10. **Select Board to review Departmental Reports**
    - Building Inspector – October 2023, November 2023
    - Ambulance Department – November 2023
    - Police Department – Statistics through 11/30/2023

    The SB reviewed the above captioned reports. BE expressed concern about not receiving the Fire Department's report. The SB and Town Administrator indicated they think it is fine for the Fire Chief to delegate this responsibility. CS, a member of the Volunteer Firefighter, requested templates or copies of previous reports. CS will convey to the Fire Chief that he is available to assist with producing the Fire Department's Reports. BE will provide copies of some of the reports his wife,

Madelaine Elovirta, and he had produced when they served as officers on the Fire Department. KW stated that the Ambulance Director can provide a draft template that may be helpful for producing the Fire Department's report.

11. Town Administrator's Report

- Town Hall Security (quote $9,930): KW will survey Town Hall Employees to ask if they favor cameras inside the common areas. The SB will discuss this after the holidays.
- Transfer Station: On Saturday, December 30th, additional staffing will check vehicle permits. KW indicated this is necessary in response to those abusing the system.
- Tax rate: set at $9.77
- The Cannabis Control Commission requires review of Cannabis Host Community agreements before March 24th. KW will reach out to KP Law, Inc. to review the agreements.
- Due to the Staff Holiday Luncheon, Town Hall will close Noon on Friday.
- FY25 Employee Wages: KW reminded the SB to consider their COLA recommendation.

12. Select Board's Comments and Announcements

BE sent the SB's Fiscal Year 2025 Operating budget recommendation to the Town Administrator. Except for requesting the same COLA that the other employees will receive, the proposed budget is level-funded.

BE complimented the Highway Department's recent repairs on Leonhardt and Tyne Roads.

CS recommends for Becket to arrange to offer Fire Department trainings and to invite surrounding Fire Departments to attend. He thinks this would be a positive step to help attract and retain its members.

13. Any other business to come before the Board

None

14. Correspondence/announcements:

- 2023-12-11, MassDOT letter signed by the Governor and Lieutenant Governor certifies that Becket's Fair Share apportionment for Fiscal Year 2024 is $152,417.00. The state allotted a total of $100 million for Fiscal Year 2024 from the Fair Share Amendment to support local infrastructure across the Commonwealth's 351 cities and towns.

KW advised the Fair Share money added to Becket's Chapter 90 brings Becket's balance to $842,000.

15. Select Board to review and sign payable warrants

The SB reviewed and signed payable warrants.

16. Select Board to adjourn the Meeting

JP moved to adjourn. CS 2nd. The Select Board disbanded at 9:03pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Beverly Gilbert, *Administrative Assistant*

Signed by:

William H. Elovirta / *January 3, 2024*

William H. Elovirta, *Chairperson* Date Approved

Meeting documents:

- Agenda
- 12/06/2023 meeting minutes
- 2023-12-12 e-mail Joe Diver, Dalton re: 7 Town Advisory Regional Agreement
- Correspondence – listed agenda item 14
- 2023.12-20 email James Schaefer, PE – comments on Eversource Underground
- Department report – listed agenda item 10
- NSTAR ELECTRIC COMPANY DBA EVERSOURCE, AND VERIZON NEW ENGLAND, INC.'S petition November 9, 2023 for permission to erect a line of poles (install underground conduits and cables) on Bonny Rigg Hill Road, Becket, MA 01223 with accompanying plan marked 13799544.