SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
7:00pm, January 3, 2024
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*; Max Koivisto, Ambulance Co-Ambulance Director; Lisa Michaud, Co-Ambulance Director; Kristopher McDonough, Police Chief

Remote: Joe McCarthy (TRC Companies)

Others: Thomas Irwin

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. **Police and Ambulance Department Updates**
   Co-Ambulance Directors Max Koivisto and Lisa Michaud met with the SB. Mr. Koivisto stated that his background is with a private ambulance service, and he appreciates the help Ms. Michaud and KW have provided since he assumed his role (July 2024). They had oriented him to municipal operations. Mr. Koivisto indicated there have been no specific issues related to the calls. Several times, the ambulance has been out of service due to mechanical problems. The Ambulance Dept. struggles with paramedic staffing. This problem is rampant throughout the Berkshires, and the nation. Becket has difficulty attracting new members. Mr. Koivisto recently hired a new Paramedic who will begin in January (weekend shifts). Many members of the Ambulance Dept. have stepped up to ensure the community will have round-the-clock service. Mr. Koivisto stated that former Ambulance Director Ray Ferrin's leadership promoted a positive working culture and as a result, the morale at the Ambulance Department is very good, and the staff members care about going the extra mile to help during staffing shortages. During 2023, the Ambulance Department had 372 calls. In 2022, there were 395 calls. Mr. Koivisto stated he thinks the higher call volume during 2022 can be partly attributed to people delaying going to their doctors during the beginning stages of COVID. Because of COVID, second homeowners have been spending more time in Becket. Since 2022, some have resumed spending more time in the primary homes. Based on statistics in Eastern Massachusetts, Mr. Koivisto predicts increased levels of COVID through the springtime. This might impact call volume. JP asked for clarification about categories on the Ambulance Department's reports. Mr. Koivisto explained "dispatch incidents" includes when alarm companies call the Ambulance Department to respond to a wearable personal alert device that has been pressed (and the alarm company is not able to contact their customer). Ms. Michaud explained that the cardiac/death is a mixed category that includes a patient with cardiac arrest that the Ambulance

transported to the hospital and individuals who were dead when the Ambulance arrived, and they were not transported. Another topic discussed was the ambulance vehicle. Mr. Koivisto indicated it is approaching five years with approximately 67,000 miles and in our region, the standard for replacement is seven or eight years old. Ms. Michaud indicated that the trade-in value is usually not substantial. Ms. Michaud indicated that often contractors such as electricians and plumbers like to purchase used ambulances because they like the cabinets. The Ambulance Department removes reusable gear for the next ambulance. The last time the town sold its ambulance, the vehicle was 11 years old and the town received $5,000. The vendor closed orders for 2026 ambulances, and is accepting orders for 2027 ambulances. Cost increased substantially. KW will investigate USDA grants.

Police Chief Kristopher McDonough provided the following update:

- Estimates 4,000 calls for 2023 (Dispatch is finalizing the figures for 2023).

At approximately 7:23pm, due to sustained and disruptive Zoom content, the SB terminated Zoom. The SB will investigate Zoom settings to prevent Zoom-bombing.

- All three Reserve Police Officers completed the Bridge Academy to obtain the necessary training to come up to the level of full-time (which all Becket Police Officers have achieved).
- All of the Becket Police Officers are POST-certified except for Matt Virginia due to that his last name starts with V. Training is offered for him by June 30, 2024.
- Michael Hunt became Sergeant of the Police Department on July 1, 2023 and is doing well in this new role.
- Officer Nicole Miller organized another successful Annual Becket/Washington Children's Holiday Party at the YMCA Becket Chimney Corners Outdoor Center. This involves a great deal of effort, including fund-raising.
- Every year Officer Nicole Miller also does an outstanding job assisting with the One Call Away Foundation Charity Riders event.
- To be proactive, Police Officer Charlene Auger signed up for a five-day field officer training program when the town has new hires.
- Officer Nicholas Beauchemin, in addition to recently completing the Bridge Academy, completed Taser instructor school, and firearms instructor school. He will assist Police Officer Matt Virginia on the range.
- Officer Dominic Crupi will start the midnight shift on July 1st. He attended Advanced Roadside Impairment Driving Enforcement training course.
- Everyone is on a fixed schedule which is regarded as one of the benefits the town offers.
- Selecting a shift based (similar to a shift bid) on seniority is being discussed.
- One of the cruisers had mechanical issues but it was covered (about $5,000) under warranty at the Johnson-Ford dealership. All other cruisers are operating well.
- Since he has assumed the Otis Police Chief position, Otis has increased their town officer shifts, and there is less need to request mutual aid from Becket. Chief McDonough will include additional shifts in his Otis FY2025 Police Department Budget recommendation.
- He has heard other Police Departments have encountered problems with their hybrid vehicles.

4. **Select Board to consider voting to sign a Resolution in Support of State Paint Stewardship Legislation (H. 823 "An Act Relative to Paint Recycling", S. 542 "An Act to Establish Safe Paint Stewardship", and S. 551 "An Act Relative to Paint Recycling).**
   Tom Irwin, a retired engineer and physician and member of the Dalton Waste Management and Recycle Committee, advocated for Paint Stewardship Bills presently before the legislature. He explained the paint stewardship program creates a collection program of leftover paints for reuse. Mr. Irwin discussed why he thinks Paint Stewardship is a practical and beneficial way to decrease toxic waste from going to landfills and it will decrease greenhouse gases generated by the paint industry by 4%. BE moved to sign and submit a resolution in support of Paint Stewardship Legislation, JP 2nd: Motion carried unanimously.

5. **Continuation of 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.**
   Due to that Joseph McCarthy, a contractor for Eversource, had attended via Zoom (which was terminated), the Select Board rescheduled the above captioned for January 17th.

6. **Select Board to vote on approving Papa Bob's LLC's Alcoholic Beverages License application for Amendment - Change of Officers/Director/LLC Manager and Change of Ownership Interest (LLC Members)**
   BG indicated that because Robert Benns, an officer/owner of Papa Bob's LLC, had passed away, Papa Bob's liquor license needs to be updated. BE moved to approve Papa Bob's LLC's Alcoholic Beverages License application for Amendment – Change of Officers/Director/LLC Manager and Change of Ownership Interest (LLC Members). CS 2nd. Motion carried unanimously.

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

8. **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.**
   The SB will discuss this at a future meeting due to that Town Counsel has not yet provided a recommendation pertaining to this matter.

9. **Select Board to discuss MGL Chapter 41, Section 56 Warrants for Payment of Bills. Potential vote to authorize one member of the Select Board to approve bills, drafts, orders and payroll; provided, however that the member shall make available to the board, committee or other department head, at the first meeting following such action.**
   KW indicated that Becket never adopted Massachusetts Finance Reform, MGL Chapter 41, Section 56 Warrants for Payments of Bills, a mechanism the SB may employ to prevent backlog of bills during the weeks that the SB does not meet. This was one of the changes allowed under the 2016 Municipal Modernization Acts. KW explained that the SB may designate one of its members to review the payables during weeks it does not meet, and the member would authorize the town

treasurer to send payments. This will help prevent backlog of payables. The other members of the SB would still review and sign the payable register when the SB holds its meetings. JP pointed out that the SB assigned to review the bills is the one performing the review function, and in doing so assumes an obligation to justify and explain approval of the payables to the others. KW indicated that if someone has questions, that person may always inquire at the next SB meeting, and request additional backup. JP is permitted to red-line any payables he does not wish to approve. CS moved to accept MGL Chapter 41, Section 56 Warrants for Payments of Bills, JP 2nd: Motion carried unanimously. CS moved to designate JP, Clerk of the SB, to sign warrants for payment on bills based on MGL Chapter 41, Section 56. BE 2nd: Motion carried unanimously.

10. Approval of the December 20, 2023 Meeting Minutes

CS moved to approve the December 20, 2023 meeting minutes as amended by JP. BE 2nd: Motion carried unanimously.

11. Select Board to review Departmental Reports

None.

12. Town Administrator's Report

- Town Hall Security survey. Those that answered indicated they do not want internal cameras but would appreciate cameras outside of the building. JP asked KW to make sure we can add inside cameras in the future if we change our mind.
- Transfer Station vehicle permit check: Last Saturday, the town had additional employees checking permits. 10 vehicles were turned away for not having stickers. KW stated that she and the Transfer Station Manager will discuss and continue to tweak traffic flow and placement of the Attendants to facilitate permit checking.

  BE brought up that he confronted an individual who habitually removes items from the steel bin. BE warned that person if this behavior does not cease, he will be banned from the Transfer Station. KW received a complaint about this from another Transfer Station user. BE indicated he is concerned about liability. The insurance company does not want anyone in those containers.
- Free Cash was certified as $1,200,867.00. KW suggested for the SB (town) to determine how much it should build up its stabilization account. It is now almost $478,521.00. KW will bring this up with the Finance Committee.
- Cannabis tax received Sept – Nov $13,504.53 and Short term rental tax received Sept – Nov $8,527.63. BE requested copies of the Community Host Agreements (they were sent to Town Counsel for review).
- Washington fire assessment is due to expire in June. KW proposed a 2.5% increase and that money should be set aside and then be matched by the free cash and set aside for future Fire Department needs. JP moved to approve 3% annual increases (effective July 1, 2024, July 2025, July 1, 2026, July 1, 2027 & July 1, 2028) to the Town of Washington for Fire Department Assessment, BE 2nd: Motion carried unanimously.
- FY25 budget: KW discussed her proposal to issue a 5% raise for all employees with the exception of Ambulance who should receive the bump of 10% to bring them up to the level of other Ambulance Departments to prevent losing staff.

13. Select Board's Comments and Announcements

None

14. Any other business to come before the Board

A brief discussion ensued with Bob Ronzio, member of the Board of Health, regarding the Board of Health's responsibility regarding taking action for DEP orders as they pertain to the Route 8 Pub.

15. Correspondence/announcements:

None

16. Select Board to review and sign payable warrants

The SB reviewed and signed payable warrants.

17. Select Board to adjourn the Meeting

JP moved to adjourn. CS 2nd. The Select Board disbanded at 9:10pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Beverly Gilbert, *Administrative Assistant*

Signed by:

/ *January 17, 2024*

William H. Elovirta, *Chairperson* Date Approved

Meeting documents:

- Town Administrator's Report, Becket Proposal for Washington Fire Assessment FY2025 to FY2028, Fire Department Appropriations to Expenses FY2020 to FY2024
- Agenda
- 12/06/2023 meeting minutes
- Resolution in Support of Paint Stewardship Legislation, Handout on Paint Stewardship Bills, H.823, S. 542 , and S.551, Paint Stewardship Summary, Handout: What to do with Leftover Paint.
- MGL Chapter 41, Section 56 Warrants for Payment of Bills