



ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

Saturday, May 13th, 2023

Becket-Washington School

12 Maple Street

Becket, MA 01223

MINUTES

The meeting began at 7:03P

Ethan Klepetar – Moderator

Kathe Warden – Town Administrator

Joel Bard, Esq. – Town Counsel

Michael Lavery – Select Board

Bill Elovirta – Chair, Select Board

Chris Swindlehurst – Vice Chair, Select Board

Robin Mathiesen – Town Clerk

Dan Parnell – Chair, Finance Committee

Chuck Garman – Finance Committee

Mr. Klepetar offered opening remarks and explained the rules of the meeting.

Before the meeting started Mr. Klepetar recognized Adele Levine who wanted to speak briefly about the Becket Beat; that it is in its 2nd year; that they have now set up a website and that they are hoping for feedback from the community. She then thanked the town of Becket.

There were 63 registered voters and 81 people in attendance.

Article #1 – Compensation

Moved (Bill Elovirta) and Seconded.

No discussion was had. A vote was taken by a show of pink cards.

Vote was unanimous.

Article #2 – FY 2024 Operating Budget – to raise and appropriate such sums as may be needed to defray expenses of the Town for 2024 Fiscal Year.

		FY22 Actuals	FY23 ATM Approved	FY24 Recommended	\$ Change	% Change
	GENERAL GOVERNMENT					
1	TOWN COUNSEL	11,915	20,000	20,000	0	0%
2	SELECT BOARD SALARIES	6,645	6,822	7,334	512	7.5%
3	SELECT BOARD EXPENSES	1,535	2,200	2,200	-	0.0%
4	TOWN ADMIN. SALARY	82,882	84,888	84,000	-888	-1.0%
5	TOWN ADMIN. EXPENSES	1,033	2,200	3,000	800	36.4%
6	TOWN ADMIN. ASSISTANT	48,452	49,663	55,390	5,727	11.5%
7	STAFF COVERAGE	87	3,500	0	-3,500	-100%
8	CLERK OF COMMITTEES	12,658	20,400	21,939	1,539	7.5%

9	TOWN ACCOUNTANT SALARY	25,988	26,638	28,635	1997	7.5%
10	TOWN ACCOUNTANT EXPENSES	0	400	400	0	0%
11	AUDIT EXPENSES	5,000	23,000	23,000	0	0%
12	TOWN TREASURER SALARY	48,335	49,543	59,567	10,024	20.2%
13	TOWN TREASURER EXPENSES	2,655	5,000	5,150	150	3%
14	TAX TITLE EXPENSE	24,815	30,000	30,000	0	0%
15	OUTSIDE PAYROLL SERVIES	10,418	8,000	7,000	-1,000	12.5%
16	ASSESSORS SALARIES	40,783	65,000	58,636	-6,364	-9.8%
17	ASSESSORS EXPENSES	57,227	72,000	70,500	-1,500	-2.1%
18	TAX COLLECTOR SALARY	60,260	61,757	66,389	4,632	7.5%
19	ASSIST. TAX COLL. SALARY	50,133	51,398	55,252	3,854	7.5%
20	TAX COLLECTOR EXPENSES	9,795	8,280	8,700	420	5.1%
21	TOWN CLERK SALARY	25,901	31,279	38,948	7,669	19.7%
22	TOWN CLERK EXPENSES	2,098	2,245	1,000	-1,245	-55.5%
23	ELECTION-REGISTRATION	4,255	16,543	16,300	-243	-1.5%
24	TOWN MEETING EXPENSES	1,930	6,000	3,000	-3,000	-50%
25	ADVERTISING	1,903	4,000	3,000	-1,000	-25%
26	POSTAGE	12,861	12,000	12,000	0	0%
27	TOWN REPORTS	2,920	3,500	4,000	500	14.3%
28	FINANCE COMM.	135	600	250	-350	-58.3%
29	RESERVE FUND	0	50,000	50,000	0	0%
30	CONSERVATION COMM.	16,791	20,000	21,500	1,500	7.5%
31	PLANNING BOARD	2,789	2,500	3,750	1,250	50%
32	ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS	1,056	1,500	1,500	0	0.0%
33	HISTORICAL COMM.	1,078	2,000	2,000	0	0.0%
34	BUILDINGS & GROUNDS TECH.	51,763	52,576	56,520	3,944	7.5%
35	BUILDINGS JANITORIAL	0	17,225	16,770	-455	-2.6%
36	MUNICIPAL UTILITIES	43,287	55,000	55,000	0	0.0%
37	STREET LIGHTS	9,687	9,000	9,000	0	0.0%
38	MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS EXPENSES	18,934	31,975	31,975	0	0.0%
39	BUILDINGS & GROUNDS REPAIRS	34,838	35,000	35,000	0	0.0%
40	BROADBAND-WIRED WEST	0	2,000	0	-2000	0.0%
41	BERK. REG.PLAN. COMM.	1,418	1,900	1,645	-255.00	-13.4%
	TOTAL - GENERAL GOVERNMENT	769,115	992,532	1,015,250	22,718	2.2%
	PUBLIC SAFETY					
42	POLICE DEPT. SALARIES	400,065	457,837	528,340	70,503	15.4%
43	POLICE DEPT. EXPENSE	20,887	24,954	29,264	-6,690	-26.8%
44	EMER. MGMT EXP.	0	1,000	1,200	200	20.0%
45	EMER. MGMT. TRAINING	0	1,000	1,000	0	0.0%

46	CONSTABLE STIPEND	241	300	300	0	0.0%
47	FIRE DEPT. SALARIES/ CHIEF	7,633	7,824	8,410	586	7.5%
48	FIREFIGHTER STIPENDS	10,500	14,000	20,000	6,000	42.9%
49	FIRE DEPT. EXPENSES	10,462	38,000	39,000	1,000	2.6%
50	E911 COMMUNICATION	13,456	13,860	14,275	415	3.0%
51	ANIMAL CONTROL SALARY	5,610	5,895	6,337	442	7.5%
52	ANIMAL CONTROL EXPENSES	2,483	2,500	2,500	0	0.0%
53	HARBOR MASTER	977	1,511	1,624	113	7.5%
54	BUILDING INSP. SALARY	56,760	55,000	39,774	-15,226	-27.7%
55	BUILDING & CODE INSP. EXPENSE	145	2,350	500	-1,850	78.7%
56	DEMOLITION FUND	105	25,000	25,000	0	0.0%
57	TOTAL - PUBLIC SAFETY	529,340	651,031	706,524	55,493	8.5%
	EDUCATION					
58	CBRSO OPERATING ASSESSMENT	2,392,842	2,520,651	2,593,803	73,152	2.9%
59	VOCATIONAL TUITION	205,469	190,000	240,000	50,000	26.3%
60	VOCATIONAL TRANSPORT.	53,727	75,000	90,000	15,000	20.0%
61	TOTAL -EDUCATION	2,652,038	2,785,651	2,923,803	138,152	5.0%
	FORESTRY					
62	TREE ACCOUNT	11,210	15,000	20,000	5,000	33.3%
63	FORESTRY	0	500	500	0	0.0%
64	TOTAL - FORESTRY	11,210	15,500	20,500	5,000	32.3%
	HIGHWAY					
65	SALARIES & WAGES	206,165	251,966	277,163	25,197	10.0%
66	GENERAL MAINTENANCE	131,966	183,150	204,439	21,289	11.6%
67	MACHINERY & FLEET MAINT.	64,605	85,000	91,100	6,100	7.2%
68	FUEL	91,798	925,250	107,450	15,200	16.5%
69	HIGHWAY GARAGE	15,945	16,500	17,000	500	3.0%
70	WINTER ROADS	288,372	259,763	302,790	43,027	16.6%
71	TOTAL - HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT	798,848	888,629	999,942	111,313	12.5%
	TRANSFER STATION					
72	Transfer Station Labor	39,473	43,845	47,600	3,755	8.6%
73	Rental Compactor		13,200	13,200	0	0.0%
74	Rental Open Container (2)		4,500	4,700	200	4.4%
75	Trucking Compactor		12,250	14,875	2,625	21.4%
76	Trucking Open Container		9,750	12,750	3,000	30.8%
77	Trucking Cans & Bottles		7,350	9,000	1,650	22.4%
78	Trucking Scrap Metal		4,900	6,000	1,650	22.4%

79	Trucking Paper Cardboard		5,250	6,500	1,250	23.8%
80	Trucking Rigid Plastics		3,600	4,500	900	25.0%
81	Trucking Fuel Surcharge		1,400	2,500	1,100	78.6%
82	Disposal Solid Waste		32,400	35,400	3,000	8.5%
83	Disposal Bulky Waste		18,620	22,420	3,800	20.4%
84	Recycling Cans, Bottles, Paper		11,500	12,500	1,000	8.7%
85	Disposal Haz Mat		10,500	10,500	0	0.0%
86	Chemicals		300	300	0	0.0%
87	Permits		1,850	1,850	0	0.0%
88	MRF education		100	100	0	0.0%
89	Maintenance		1,500	1,500	0	0.0%
90	Inspections/Testing		2,500	2,500	0	0.0%
91	S. BERK. SOLID WASTE MEMB.	2,052	3,260	3,260	0	0.0%
92	Total Expenses	120,749	141,470	161,095	19,625	13.9%
93	TOTAL - TRANSFER STATION	162,273	185,315	208,695	23,380	12.6%
	CEMETERIES					
94	BECKET CENTER CEMETERY	5,413	5,000	5,000	0	0.0%
95	NORTH CEMETERY	12,670	16,500	16,500	0	0.0%
96	WEST CEMETERY	849	800	800	0	0.0%
97	TOTAL-CEMETERIES	18,932	22,300	22,300	0	0.0%
	HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES					
98	BOARD of HEALTH SALARIES	1,172	9,500	2,000	-7,500	-78.9%
99	BOARD of HEALTH EXPENSES	35,392	33,500	36,000	2,500	7.5%
100	INSPECTOR of ANIMALS	364	373	401	28	7.5%
101	NURSING SERVICES	0	5,200	3,860	-1,340	-25.8%
102	COUNCIL on AGING	3,566	3,500	3,500	0	0.0%
103	OUTREACH	0	500	500	0	0.0%
104	VETERANS AGENT SALARY	2,194	2,249	2,306	57	2.5%
105	VETERANS BENEFITS	21,380	35,000	35,000	0	0.0%
106	VETERANS AGENT EXPENSE	-	100	100	-	0.0%
107	TOTAL - HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES	64,067	89,922	83,667	-6,255	-7.0%
	COMMUNITY SERVICES					
108	ATHENAEUM	52,838	54,160	55,514	1,354	2.5%
109	BECKET ARTS CENTER	10,000	0	0	0	0.0%
110	CHILDREN'S HOLIDAY PARTY	0	500	500	0	0.0%
111	PARKS & RECREATION	49,403	32,768	39,918	7,150	21.8%
112	WEED CONTROL CENTER POND	3,000	4,500	4,500	0	0.0%
113	MEMORIAL /VETERANS DAY	157.65	1,500	1,500	0	0

114	TOTAL COMMUNITY SERVICES	115,398	93,428	101,932	8,504	8.3%
	BENEFITS					
115	HEALTH/LIFE INSURANCE	356,058	468,643	499,715	31,072	6.6%
116	COUNTY RETIREMENT	253,604	288,704	296,881	8,177	2.8%
117	PAYROLL TAX ACCOUNT	27,270	28,819	29,540	721	2.5%
118	UNEMPLOYMENT EXPENSE	3,465	5,000	7,000	2,000	40.0%
119	GENERAL LIABILITY INSURANCE	114,799	127,969	143,000	15,031	11.7%
120	OPEB LIABILITY	0	15,000	15,000	0	0.0%
121	TOTAL - BENEFITS	755,194	934,135	991,136	57,001	6.1%
122	TOTAL OPERATING BUDGET	5,876,392	6,658,443	7,073,749	415,306	6.2%
	FUNDED THROUGH WARRANT ARTICLES					
	AMBULANCE					
124	From the General Fund	305,000	338,000	355,724	17,724	5.2%
125	TOTAL GENERAL FUND BUDGET INCLUDING WARRANT ARTICLES	6,181,392	6,996,443	7,429,473	433,030	6.2%

Moved (Chris Swindlehurst) and Seconded (Bill Elovirta).

Discussion from the floor regarding line items #11 (Audit), #58 (CBRSD operating), #68 (Fuel). Jeremy Dunn steps to the mic and questions the tax rate, if this is possible. Dan Parnell, Chair of Finance, answered him.

Diana Mott steps to the mic to question the audit costs as she was an auditor – says the fee went up 450% - Kathe Warden, Town Administrator, explained there hadn't been an audit in a couple of years. Jeremy Dunn stepped to the mic again to ask about the Municipal Light Plant which Dan Parnell answered. He then asked about the Town Treasurer and why if it's a salaried position does it indicate 4 more hours. Kathe Warden answered explaining that added to her raise was the extra 4 hours due to the amount of properties that needed to be done.

Chris Swindlehurst said all town employees got a 7.5% raise.

Bill Elovirta questioned line item #58 and why it was shot down in Hinsdale – was there an explanation.

Leslie Blake-Davis, Superintendent, stepped to the mic saying the reason had more to do with the State. Windsor & Hinsdale – 4%

Mya Riemer stepped to the mic to alert everyone that there was a wrong amount in line item #68 – 925,250 as opposed to the actual number of 92,250.

Cathy Terwedow stepped to the mic to question why the BOH salaries (#98 and #101) had decreased. Kathe Warden, Town Administrator, said they had spent very little and so she felt they had been overfunded.

Kasha Mysliwiec stepped to the mic regarding the Animal Control salary #51. Kasha spoke of a dog at the dump in a kennel cage that didn't seem to be cared for. She had called a few times about it with no response from the Animal Control Officer.

Diana Mott stepped up to speak again regarding #62 Tree Account and she wondered what that was. Kathe Warden, Town Administrator, responded by saying it was for the cutting down of trees and the need to catch up after the big snowstorm that had caused many issues. Dan Parnell added that during the snowstorm he was following a plow and that the driver had to get out and cut the trees out of the way.

Joan Goldberg stepped to the mic to ask why Kathe Warden's salary had decreased. Bill Elovirta explained that she was being taken care of.

Nancy Chassman spoke next and asked who the auditor was. Kathe Warden, Town Administrator, said it was Adelson & Co out of Pittsfield that had just come on board in January and would be finishing 2022 in August.

Chris Swindlehurst asked about previous audits on the website.

Phillip Gear got up to speak about line item #56 which is the Demolition Fund. It was explained to him that it is money used regarding properties that the town owns, have been condemned and abandoned and so might be needed for demolition purposes.

Vote was unanimous.

Article #3 – Debt Service – To see if the Town will raise and appropriate the sum of \$636,292 to fund debt service due in FY 2024 for previously approved borrowings.

Debt	FY2024 Amount	Maturity Date
Becket Washington School	\$89,874	FY2025
Wahconah RHS Doors	\$8,418	FY2029
Wahconah RHS New Construction	\$167,275	FY2047
High speed Broadband	\$262,045	FY2024
Highway Truck #2 <i>FY21approved</i>	\$62,520	FY2025
Highway Truck #5 <i>FY22approved</i>	\$44,660	FY2024
Interest on Short Term Debt	\$1,500	

Bill Elovirta moved and Chris Swindlehurst seconded it.

Jennifer Beasley got up and asked about the Broadband Project. Dan Parnell answered saying they have not yet spent ongoing debt expense.

Jeremy Dunn then went to the mic to ask how much money will actually hit the tax rate?

Vote was unanimous.

Article #4 – Capital Expenditures – To see if the Town will vote to transfer from available funds, including Free Cash (FC) of \$210,000 and Stabilization Fund (ST) of \$519, 613, or any other sum, to be used to fund the FY 2024 Capital Plan for the Town of Becket. Total being \$801,613.

Project	Amount
Ambulance – new radios	\$22,000 (FC)
Town Hall – upgrade and rewiring of CAT 6 ports	\$20,000 (FC)
Athenaeum - repairs	\$10,000 (FC)
Cultural Council – grant match with State allocation	\$3,000 (FC)
Parks & Rec – resurfacing and lining tennis court	\$35,000 (FC)
Highway – 19’ Boom Mower	\$110,000 (FC)
Highway – Tree Work – additional 1 year	\$10,000 (FC)
Fire Dept – First payment of FY23 Fire Truck	\$381,613 (ST)
Fire Dept - SCBA packs	\$210,000 (ST)

Bill Elovirta moved and Chris Swindlehurst seconded.

Jeremy Dunn asked why the stabilization fund was being used and not free cash.

Cathy Terwedow asked for \$3,000 for Cultural Council. She says they get more requests than the money they have for cultural events. She is asking for all for us to consider it.

Meredyth Babcock got up to say that maybe we’re being a bit overzealous since we have a new “toy” for cutting trees and so asks us to please think about it.

Jen Beatty asked about capital projects.

Jodi, the Director from the Atheneaum got up to say that plans for the money are afoot.

The motion passed with a 2/3 vote.

Article #5 – Purchase of Highway Truck – To see if the Town will appropriate \$350,000, or any other amount, to pay costs of purchasing a Western Star 47X dump truck to be used by the Highway Dept, and for the payment of all costs incidental and related thereto: to determine if this amount shall be raised by borrowing or otherwise provided, or take any other action thereto.

Robin Mathiesen moved and Bill Elovirta seconded.

No discussion.

No opposition.

Vote was unanimous.

Article #6 – Transfer to the Stabilization Fund – To see if the Town will transfer from Free Cash the sum of \$739,318 to be deposited into the Stabilization Fund; or take any other action relative thereto.

50% of Free Cash in Stabilization \$399,684 (per Town policy), returning of Storm Money \$165,900 (July 21), along with the remainder of Free Cash \$173, 734.

Bill Elovirta moved. Robin Mathiesen seconded.

Vote was unanimous.

Article #7 – FY 2022 Unpaid Bills – To see if the Town will transfer from Free Cash the sum of \$15,914.86 for the following unpaid bills in FY 2022.

BOH - L. Burgwardt mileage	\$76.05
Highway - Morton Salt (3 inv.) not billed in FY22	\$15,703.00
Memorial Day parade- Dufour Tour	\$135.81

Robin Mathiesen moved. Dan Parnell seconded.

Vote was unanimous.

Article #8 – Acceptance of Chapter 90 Funds – To see if the Town will accept any monies appropriated by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation for Chapter 90 use; these funds to be used for maintenance and reconstruction of Town roads and to fund the appropriation by transferring said amounts from available funds with any unspent funds to carry over from year to year until spent by the Town ; these sums to be reimbursed to the Town by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in accordance with Chapter 90 of the Massachusetts General Laws; or take any other action relative thereto.

Bill Elovirta moved. Michael Lavery seconded.

Ethan Klepetar asks how much in Chapter 90 funds are we receiving?

Kathe Warden answered that the State hasn't funded their budget yet.

Vote was unanimous.

Article #9 – Establishing a Highway Stabilization Fund – To see if the Town will vote to create a Highway Stabilization Fund for the purpose of funding the maintenance of public ways within the Town and purchase and repair equipment in accordance with Chapter 90 regulations. And to appropriate from Stabilization the sum of \$235,000 for the Highway Stabilization Fund.

Michael Lavery moved. Bill Elovirta seconded.

Vote was unanimous.

Article #10 – Ambulance Budget – To see if the Town will raise and appropriate or transfer from available funds the sum of \$530,174 for the salaries and expenses of the Ambulance Enterprise; and to fund said appropriation, to raise and appropriate \$355,724 from General Fund, to transfer \$10,000 from Ambulance Sterilization, and to transfer \$164,450 from Fiscal Year 2023 Ambulance Receipts; or take any other action relative thereto.

Bill Elovirta moved. Chris Swindlehurst seconded.

Vote was unanimous.

Article #11 – Ambulance Stabilization -To see if the Town will transfer the ambulance retained earnings funds sum of \$15,000 to the ambulance stabilization account; or take any other action relative thereto.

Robin Mathiesen moved. Dan Parnell seconded.

No discussion.

Vote was unanimous.

Article #12 – Revolving Funds – To see if the Town will vote to authorize the use of the following revolving funds for departmental operations which shall not exceed the noted sums for each fund, which shall be under the control of the Town Treasurer, which shall be accounted for separately, and to which shall be credited only the receipts received in connection with the departmental operations supported by the revolving fund; further to authorize the Town Treasurer to expend from such funds in accordance with MGL Chapter 44, Section 53E1/2 provided however that said expenditures for the revolving funds shall not exceed the receipts for said fund or take any other action relative thereto.

Program or Purpose	FY 2024 Spending Limit
Ambulance Training	\$10,000
Ambulance Details	\$15,000
Plumbing Inspector	\$10,000
Wiring Inspector	\$15,000
Gas Inspector	\$10,000
Police Details	\$20,000

Robin Mathiesen moved. Dan Parnell seconded.

No discussion.

Vote was unanimous.

Article #13 – FY 2024 Community Preservation Authorization – To see if the Town will vote to appropriate or reserve from community Preservation Fiscal Year 2024 estimated annual revenues the amounts recommended by the Community Preservation Committee for Committee administrative expenses, community preservation projects and other expenses in Fiscal Year 2024, with each item to be considered a separate appropriation as set forth.

Appropriations:

Committee Administrative Expenses \$500

Reserves:

Historical Resources Reserve	\$7,049.00
Community Housing Reserve	\$7,049.00
Open Space Reserve	\$7,049.00
Undesignated Reserve	\$54,912.00

Bill Elovirta moved. Robin Mathiesen seconded.

Vote was unanimous.

Article #14 – Community Preservation Funding for recreational land – Esau walking path extension & bridge building – To see if the Town will vote to transfer the sum of \$8,700 from Community Preservation Recreational Land Reserves for a trail extension and to build a bridge as part of Esau’s Heel walking path at Jacob’s Well; or take any other action thereto. Dan Parnell moved. Robin Mathiesen seconded.

Jeremy Dunn asked if language could be amended to say “Open Space” instead of “Recreational”. All in favor.

Rita Furlong asked if \$7,000 could be put to future use for care of parks, affordable housing and historical preservation.

Vote was unanimous.

Article #15 - Community Preservation Funding for Historical purposes – Town Hall Cupola restoration – To see if the Town will vote to transfer the sum of \$20,000 from the Historical Preservation Funds and \$8,613 from the Undesignated Funds to restore and replace the cupola at Town Hall; or take any other action relative thereto.

Robin Mathiesen moved. Rita Furlong seconded.

Vote was unanimous.

Article #16 - Community Preservation Funding – Community Housing – 50 Dawn Drive – To see if the Town will vote to transfer from Community Housing Funds the sum of \$25,000 to assist in funding of the Construct affordable housing project located at 50 Dawn Drive; or take any other relative action thereto.

Chris Swindlehurst moved. Michael Lavery seconded.

No discussion.

Passes by a majority.

Article #17 - Community Preservation Funding – Undesignated Funds for Becket Arts Center – To see if the Town will vote to transfer \$8,000 from Undesignated Funds and \$2,000 from Historical Preservation Funds, to fund an engineering study to assess the water damage situation at the Becket Arts Center; or take any other action thereto.

Robin Mathiesen moved. Dan Parnell seconded.

Lee Ellis got up to ask since the building is owned by the Town how does this work with the water damage?

Jen Beatty, Executive Director of the Becket Arts Center, wanted to thank the Town for the money given towards a new heating and cooling system. Also, water is seeping into the entryway which Bill Caldwell and the Finance Committee had been made aware of. The Finance Committee suggested the CPA for funds.

Vote was unanimous.

Article #18 - Community Preservation Funding – Affordable Rental Housing Development in Lenox, MA – To see if the Town will vote to transfer \$10,000 from Community Housing Funds, to support a regional affordable rental housing development in Lenox, MA requested by PennRose LLC; or take any other action thereto.

Robin Mathiesen moved. Kathe Warden seconded.

Dan Parnell wanted all to know, who were attending the meeting, that this was not recommended by the Select or the Finance committee.

Cindy DelPapa stated that they had originally asked for \$100,000 but are now asking for \$10,000. It's on the warrant for affordable rental housing. Becket residents can't be favored but our businesses could be helped in that workers would have an affordable place to live. There would be 65 rental units. Other towns have given larger amounts of money.

Barbara Wacholder got up to ask how this would benefit Becket? It's not a non-profit if people want to donate their own money.

Mark Hanford said he doesn't understand how this ever got this far onto the warrant.

Rita Furlong replied saying that because of a dire shortage of housing this was meant to be a token amount offered as a contribution to show that we accept the reality.

Mark Hanford replied saying he understands that but feels we are all doing our part.

Cathy Terwedow asked if this will incur other \$10,000 requests or was this a one time only request?

Meredyth Babcock got up to say she was glad to see a collaborative effort in the Berkshires to provide housing.

Dan Parnell stated that he echoed Mark Hanford's opinion and would like to see CPA funds go to rehabbing places in Becket with Construct.

Vote does not pass.

Article #19 – Select Board Petition to establish a local excise tax on short term rental properties – To see if the Town will vote to accept the provisions of MGL Chapter 64G, Section 3A which will authorize the Town to impose a local excise tax upon the transfer of occupancy of any room or rooms in a bed and bath establishment, hotel, lodging house, short term rental or motel located within the Town of Becket by an owner/operator at a rate of six (6) percent of the total amount of rent for each such occupancy, or taken any other action relative thereto.
Chris Swindlehurst moved. Bill Elovirta seconded.

Diana Mott, who owns Lakeside Lodge, got up to say that she feels the tax is targeting certain people. It's a band-aid and okay, the Town needs the money and so is grasping for it but consider the real reason why we need this money for the Town. If the Town was willing to bring in more business they should form a group to consider this.

June Babcock got up and asked if the camps were included in this?

Larry Goetz got up to say that State Law says camps are not included.

Purr McEwan did research for Kathe Warden on this subject and read her results.

Julia Grace got up to say that she owns 3 Air BnB's in the house she lives in. She is not in favor of this tax and feels it's unfair to the little people.

Mark Hanford got up to say that Becket is playing catch up on this compared to other towns but did feel that some properties are not properly regulated.

Wednesday Sorokin got up to say she has an Air BnB. She thinks the tax could be smaller than 6%. Children and other services are being charged for which only makes it cost more money.

Julia Grace got up to ask why larger corporations are not getting charged and just the people using them get charged.

Dan Parnell stated that the expectation is that there will be a tax.

Dan was about to read a letter written by Bob Healey, who instead got up to say he has been involved with this tax issue for years, and has had no complaints from customers.

Al Blake got up to say that he and Dan Parnell had done a lot of investigative work on this subject and wanted to note that there are a lot of BnB's we are not aware of.

Dan stated that a 3% community impact fee could give us a whole list of things that will benefit Becket for all the things we spend money on and for all the things people want.

Bill Elovirta backed what Dan said regarding the costs of services and so emphasized the Town could use the revenue.

Vote was unanimous.

Article #20 – Citizens Petition Resolution to support changing the State flag and Seal of Massachusetts –

Whereas the history of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is replete with instances of conflict between the European Colonists and the Native Nations of the region, who first extended the hand of friendship to the Colonists on their shores in 1620, and helped them to survive starvation during the settlers first winters on their land;

Whereas members of the Native Nation for whom the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is named were ambushed and killed by Myles Standish the first commander of the Plymouth Colony, at Wessagusett (now Weymouth) in April of 1623, barely two years after the Pilgrims arrived;

Whereas the Colonial broadsword held by a white hand above the head of the indigenous person on the Massachusetts Flag and Seal is modeled after Myles Standish's own broadsword, borrowed for that purpose from the Pilgrim Hall in Plymouth by the illustrator Edmund Garrett in 1884;

Whereas the belt binding the Native's cloak on the Flag and Seal is modeled after a belt worn by Metacomet known to the English as King Philip who was among the Indigenous leaders that resorted to a mutually destructive war in 1675-1676 in defense of Native lands against Colonial encroachment;

Whereas the proportions of the body of the Indigenous person on the Flag and Seal were taken from the skeleton of an Indigenous person unearthed in Winthrop; the bow modeled after a bow taken from an Indigenous man shot and killed by a colonist in Sudbury in 1665; and the facial features taken from a photograph of an Ojibwe chief from Great Falls, Montana, considered by illustrator to be a "fine specimen of an Indian" though not from Massachusetts;

Whereas the history of relations between Massachusetts, since Colonial times, and the Native Nations who continue to live within its borders includes the forced internment of thousands of so-called "praying Indians" on Deer Island, in Boston Harbor, where they died by the hundreds of exposure in the winter of 1675, the enslavement of Indigenous people in Boston, Bermuda, and the Caribbean Islands, the offering of 40 pounds sterling as bounty for the scalps of Indigenous men, women, and children in Massachusetts beginning in 1686 increased to 100 pounds sterling for the scalps of Indigenous adult males by 1722, half that amount for Indigenous women and children;

Whereas Indigenous people were legally prohibited from even stepping foot into Boston from 1675 until 2004 when that Colonial law was finally repealed;

Whereas the 400th anniversary of the landing of the Colonists at Plymouth Plantation, which gave rise to the long chain of genocidal wars and deliberate government policies of cultural destruction against Native Nations of the continent, occurred in the year 2020, affording every citizen of the Commonwealth a chance to reflect upon this history and come to an appreciation of the need for better relations between the descendants of the Colonial immigrants and the Native Nations of the Commonwealth;

Whereas the land area once now known as the Town of Becket, shares a rich Native History with modern tribal nations such as the Mohicans and the Abenakis, who lived there for thousands of years before the first colonial settlers arrived in 1740;

Now, therefore, BE IT RESOLVED that the Town of Becket hereby adopts this resolution in support of the work of the Special Commission on the Official Seal and Motto of the Commonwealth, established by a Resolve of the General Court in 2021 and appointed by the Governor to recommend changes to the current flag and seal of Massachusetts, and in support of a new flag and seal for the Commonwealth that may better reflect our aspirations for harmonious and respectful relations between all people who now call Massachusetts home. The Town Clerk shall forward a copy of this resolution to Senator Paul Mark and Representative Smitty Pignatelli, with the request that they continue their strong advocacy and support for the work of the aforementioned Special Commission and a new flag and seal for the Commonwealth.

Robin Mathiesen moved. Michael Lavery seconded.

Al Blake, who submitted this petition, got up to read a statement about the history of the flag and seal.

Vote was unanimous.

Article #21 - Citizens Petition Resolution protecting adult access to plant medicines & prioritizing public health responses to controlled substance possession –

WHEREAS: “entheogenic plants,” a term originally classified by anthropologists and ethnobotanists in 1979, are herein defined as the full spectrum of psychedelic plants, fungi, and natural materials containing indole amines, tryptamines, phenethylamines, including psilocybin mushrooms, ayahuasca, cacti, and iboga; and

BE IT RESOLVED that the Town of Becket hereby maintains that the use and possession of all controlled substances should be understood first, and primarily, as an issue of public health by town departments, agencies, boards, commissions, and all employees of the town; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Town of Becket hereby believes that it should be policy of the Town of Becket that the arrest of persons for using or possessing controlled substances for personal, adult therapeutic, shall be amongst the lowest law enforcement priority for the Town of Becket; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Town of Becket hereby recommends it should be the policy of the Town of Becket that the investigation and arrest of persons for planting, cultivating, purchasing, transporting, distribution by caregivers, engaging in practices with, and/or possessing entheogenic plants, for the purpose of therapeutic purposes, listed in Classes A-E of Chapter 94C § 31 of Massachusetts law or Schedules I-V of 21 U.S.C. § 812 of the Controlled Substances Act shall be amongst the lowest law enforcement priority for the Town of Becket; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this resolution does not authorize or enable any of the following activities: commercial sale of entheogenic plants and fungi, cultivation for large scale distribution, possessing or distributing these materials on school grounds, use or distribution of these plants to individuals under 21 years of age, driving under the influence of these materials, or public disturbance; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Town of Becket calls upon the town's officials to work in support of decriminalizing entheogenic plants and approaching all controlled substances first and primarily through the lens of public health and restorative racial justice initiatives when representing the town in conversations with state and federal agencies as well as state and federal lawmakers; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Town of Becket expresses support for HD 3829, An Act Establishing Task Force to Study Equitable Access to Entheogenic Plants, which will convene 21 experts in science, drug policy, economic and racial justice, and state government to recommend legislation to legalize entheogenic plants as well as expunge records and create equity initiatives for victims of the entire war on drugs. This task force requires the study to be done through the lens of racial justice, sustainability, and consideration for BIPOC, veterans, and people with disabilities; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Clerk of the Town of Becket shall send a copy of this Resolution to Representative William "Smitty" Pignatelli and Senator Paul Mark, Governor Maura Healey, Attorney General Andrea Joy Campbell, Berkshire County District Attorney Timothy J. Shugrue, Berkshire County Sheriff Thomas Bowler and Becket Police Chief Kristopher McDonough.

Michael Lavery moved. Robin Mathiesen seconded.

Michael Lavery spoke about magic mushrooms, PTSD and hospice care. He talked about the legalization in the states of Washington and Oregon. Cambridge, and other towns in Massachusetts, have decriminalized psilocybin – the lowest priority for our police force. The House and Senate have a bill for them right now regarding the possession of 2 grams of mushrooms.

Mark Hanford thinks Becket should step away from this until we have more information.

Kris McDonough, Police Chief, opposes this petition feeling it puts undue decision making on the police.

Michael Lavery responded saying that the Commonwealth has decided cannabis is legal which is a reason why it would not be a major problem for the police or the law.

Jeremy Dunn stated he is neither for or against this petition but would like to hear legal counsels' opinion – would there be any risk to Becket?

Joel Bard, legal counsel, stated it's not legalizing anything. It's just asking police to make it a lower priority and telling the police that the Town Meeting supported this idea. It doesn't violate any laws.

Linda Benton got up to say she was sympathetic to helping people with this but wonders how the Police can determine the differences – she was confused as to the solution and missing the connection.

Michael Lavery said he didn't think it was a huge controversial issue.

Ethan Klepetar ended the debate and asked for any more questions.

The motion did not pass.

Article #22 - Annual Election – Requirement of notification and a warning to the inhabitants of Becket, who are qualified to vote in Town elections, that they meet at Precinct 1 in Becket Town Hall at 557 Main Street, Becket on Saturday, May 20th 2023 then and there to bring in their votes for the election of the following Town Officers.

Robin Mathiesen moved. Chris Swindlehurst seconded.

Motion passed.

1 Member, Select Board
1 Member, Board of Health
1 Member, Cemetery Commissioner
1 Member, Cemetery Commissioner (2 yr term)
1 Member, Finance Committee
1 Member, Planning Board
1 Moderator
1 Town Clerk

All of said officers to be voted for on the official ballots furnished at the polls. The polls will be opened at 10AM and closed at 7PM.

It was moved and seconded that the meeting adjourn to the Annual Town Election which will be held one week from today on May 20, 2023, starting at 10AM. A vote was taken and the motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 8:56 p.m. The Tellers were Election Workers Lawrence Goetz and Alvin Blake.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin C. Mathiesen
Town Clerk