

Pursuant to the foregoing warrant, the Annual Town Meeting was called on May 12, 2007, 7:15 p.m. at Becket Town Hall, 557 Main Street, Becket. There being a quorum present, the meeting was called to order at 7:15 p.m. by the Moderator. There were 91 voters present and a total of 104 people attended the meeting. Town Officials Present: Bruce Garlow, Moderator; William Cavanaugh, John Murray, and Doug Walter, Selectmen; Jeremy Dunn, Michael Falk, Stephen LaBelle Sr. (arrived late), and Richard Pryor, Finance Committee Members; Jeanne Pryor, Town Clerk; Richard Furlong, Town Administrator; and Sally Bell, Town Counsel.

The Moderator opened the meeting stating the rules to be followed. He asked for a showing of hands of non-registered voters and welcomed them, indicating that they could address the meeting but could not vote. The Moderator introduced Deborah Bruneau, a long time resident of the Town. She wanted to take this opportunity to thank all of the volunteers and both elected and appointed officials of the Town for all their hard work. She especially thanked Bill Elovirta for his 30 years of service in the town. Bill received a standing ovation and thanked those present for this recognition.

Mr. Michael Falk, Chair of the Finance Committee was introduced for a brief overview of the town finances. He reported that this year there was unanimity among the Finance Committee, the Selectmen and the Town Administrator as to the fiscal 2008 budget, that it was balanced, will not reduce town services and will only result in an average property tax increase of less than 3%. The Central Berkshire Regional School District’s operating budget assessment to the seven towns is under 5%. Unfortunately, the cost to Becket is 6.7% due to the Department of Education’s formula for each town’s net minimum contribution. He noted the completion of a 2 year long planning project initiated by Superintendent Donna Harlan to evaluate possible restructuring and redistricting alternatives given the long term trend of declining enrollment. The results from this project were disappointing as no material dollar savings were found that will help the seven towns. The FY2008 CBRSD budget request provides for the current level of services at the school and has already been approved by three towns. The CBRSD has created a committee to study and plan renovations and improvements for the high school. Dr. Harlan would like each of the towns to be represented and Mr. Falk asked anyone interested in being Becket’s representative to contact Richard Furlong. Mr. Falk noted that the Town’s Stabilization reserves have increased to over \$250,000 in FY2008. He commented on the articles to change the town’s Tax Collector and Treasurer positions from elected to appointed and asked that voters support this change. He reported on the work of the ad hoc Long Range Planning Committee stating that they have reached preliminary conclusions that a new highway facility and police station are needed. A public information meeting, as part of the regular Select Board meeting, is scheduled for May 16, 2007, at 7:00 p.m. where more information will be available about the RFP for feasibility and initial project design services. A Search Committee has been established to seek a replacement for Highway Superintendent Bill Elovirta who will retire in October 2007. The results of the recent high speed internet survey indicated that more than 500 Becket homeowners would be interested in this service if it were available. The town is pursuing this and has received word that the Governor’s office would drive the process and that they will be meeting with the Legislature about a bond bill that would cover some of the seed money for broadband in the rural areas. Verizon, Comcast and Time Warner are not interested because the infrastructure cost is too great for the revenue they would expect. He also noted a positive meeting with a Los Angeles based company that has a product called Broadband Over Power Lines. They have met with WMECO and they are planning to move forward and would like to meet with the Secretary of the Commonwealth. Mr. Falk plans to work with our elected representatives to try to make that meeting happen.

Town Clerk, Jeanne Pryor, read the call of the meeting and officer’s return of service and the Moderator noted the warrant as having been duly posted. The following articles were voted on:

- Article 1:** To see if the Town will vote to allow the following boards to employ their members, pursuant to Chapter 41, Section 4A of the Massachusetts General Laws and to pay members at the listed hourly rates.
- 1.) Board of Health at the rate of \$13.00 per hour for the performance of their duties as Board of Health members.
 - 2.) Cemetery Commission at the rate of \$13.00 per hour for the performance of their duties as Cemetery Commission members in maintaining the cemeteries.
 - 3.) Conservation Commission at the rate of \$13.00 per hour for the performance of their duties as Conservation Commission members.
 - 4.) Planning Board Chairman at the rate of \$13.00 per hour for time spent doing research that is in excess of meeting time.

Selectmen: Recommend
Finance Committee: Recommends

Majority Vote Required

Article 1 was moved and seconded on the floor. There was no discussion. **Article 1 passed unanimously.**

Article 2: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate such sums of money as may be needed to defray the expenses of the Town for the ensuing fiscal year and to fix the salaries and compensation of all elective officials as provided by Section 108 of Chapter 41 of the Massachusetts General Laws as set forth below in the attached line items:

Majority Vote Required					
TOWN of BECKET FY. 2008		BUDGET APPROVED FY. 2007	BUDGET REQUESTED FY. 2008	BUDGET RECOMMENDED FY. 2008	% Chan
<u>GENERAL GOVERNMENT</u>					
1-	TOWN COUNSEL	\$4,000.00	\$4,000.00	\$4,000.00	0.0%
2-	LEGAL EXPENSE	\$8,000.00	\$8,000.00	\$8,000.00	0.0%
3-	MODERATOR	\$100.00	\$100.00	\$100.00	0.0%
4-	MODERATOR EX.	\$50.00	\$50.00	\$50.00	0.0%
5-	SELECTMENS' SALARIES	\$4,500.00	\$4,500.00	\$4,500.00	0.0%
6-	SELECTMENS' EXPENSES	\$800.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	25.0%
7-	ADVERTISING	\$2,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	50.0%
8-	TOWN SECRETARY	\$35,750.00	\$38,480.00	\$37,895.00	6.0%
9-	TOWN ADMIN. SALARY	\$44,200.00	\$45,526.00	\$45,526.00	3.0%
10-	TOWN ADMIN. EXPENSE	\$800.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	25.0%
11	FINANCE COMMITTEE	\$2,450.00	\$2,450.00	\$2,450.00	0.0%
12	ASSESSORS' SALARIES	\$91,628.00	\$104,014.00	\$101,990.00	11.3%
13	ASSESSORS' EXPENSE	\$12,000.00	\$13,400.00	\$13,400.00	11.7%
14	TOWN TREASURER SALARY	\$30,640.00	\$32,172.00	\$32,172.00	5.0%
15	TOWN TREASURER EXP.	\$3,000.00	\$4,150.00	\$4,150.00	38.3%
16	TAX TITLE	\$15,000.00	\$32,000.00	\$22,000.00	46.7%
17	TAX COLLECTOR SALARY	\$42,703.00	\$44,115.00	\$44,115.00	3.3%
18	TAX COLLECTOR EXPENSE	\$6,200.00	\$6,275.00	\$6,275.00	1.2%
19	ASSIT. TAX COLLECTOR	\$15,080.00	\$16,000.00	\$15,500.00	2.8%
20	TOWN CLERK SALARY****	\$21,229.00	\$25,435.00	\$23,844.00	12.3%
21	TOWN CLERK EXPENSE	\$3,200.00	\$2,370.00	\$2,370.00	-25.9%
22	ELECTION-REGISTRATION	\$7,493.00	\$8,019.00	\$8,019.00	7.0%
23	CONSERVATION COMM.	\$7,000.00	\$7,000.00	\$7,000.00	0.0%
24	PLANNING BOARD EXPENSE	\$8,750.00	\$7,000.00	\$7,000.00	-20.0%
25	REGIONAL PLAN COM.	\$1,063.00	\$1,089.00	\$1,089.00	2.4%
26	BOARD of APPEALS	\$2,200.00	\$2,200.00	\$2,200.00	0.0%
	<u>SUBTOTAL GEN. GOVT.</u>	<u>\$369,836.00</u>	<u>\$413,345.00</u>	<u>\$396,645.00</u>	7.2%
<u>HIGHWAY</u>					
27	GENERAL MAINTENANCE	\$230,000.00	\$265,000.00	\$261,000.00	13.5%
28	BEAVER MAINTENANCE	\$1,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	0.0%
29	VACATION & HOLIDAYS	\$31,633.00	\$33,070.00	\$33,070.00	4.5%
30	MACHINERY ACCOUNT	\$43,000.00	\$44,000.00	\$44,000.00	2.3%
31	RECONST. of GRAVEL ROADS	\$62,500.00	\$64,000.00	\$62,500.00	0.0%
32	FUEL ACCOUNT	\$53,000.00	\$55,000.00	\$55,000.00	3.8%
33	WINTER ROADS	\$160,000.00	\$182,000.00	\$160,000.00	0.0%
34	STREET LIGHTS	\$6,800.00	\$6,800.00	\$6,800.00	0.0%
	<u>SUBTOTAL HIGHWAYS</u>	<u>\$587,933.00</u>	<u>\$651,870.00</u>	<u>\$624,370.00</u>	6.2%
<u>SCHOOLS and LIBRARIES</u>					
35	SCHOOL OPERATING	\$1,769,988.00	\$1,888,619.00	\$1,888,619.00	6.7%
36	SCHOOL CAPITAL	\$46,019.00	\$43,463.00	\$43,463.00	-5.6%
37	VOCATIONAL TUITION	\$106,000.00	\$98,000.00	\$98,000.00	-7.5%
38	VOCATIONAL TRANSPORT.	\$50,400.00	\$52,420.00	\$52,420.00	4.0%

39	LIBRARY	\$21,500.00	\$23,000.00	\$23,000.00	7.0%
	<u>SUBTOTAL SCHOOL & LIB.</u>	<u>\$1,993,907.00</u>	<u>\$2,105,502.00</u>	<u>\$2,105,502.00</u>	5.6%
	<u>VETERANS</u>				
40	VETERANS AGENT SALARY	\$1,670.00	\$1,728.00	\$1,728.00	3.5%
41	VETERANS AGENT EXPENSE	\$300.00	\$200.00	\$200.00	-33.3%
42	VETERANS BENEFITS	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	0.0%
43	MEMORIAL DAY	\$450.00	\$500.00	\$500.00	11.1%
	<u>TOTAL VETERANS</u>	<u>\$3,420.00</u>	<u>\$3,428.00</u>	<u>\$3,428.00</u>	0.2%
	<u>CEMETERIES</u>				
44	BECKET CENTER	\$3,000.00	\$3,500.00	\$3,500.00	16.7%
45	NORTH BECKET CEMETERY	\$5,000.00	\$6,000.00	\$6,000.00	20.0%
46	WEST BECKET	\$1,000.00	\$1,200.00	\$1,200.00	20.0%
	<u>SUBTOTAL CEMETERIES</u>	<u>\$9,000.00</u>	<u>\$10,700.00</u>	<u>\$10,700.00</u>	18.9%
	<u>PROTECT. PERSON & PROP</u>				
47	POLICE DEPT. SALARIES	\$143,000.00	\$156,500.00	\$156,500.00	9.4%
48	POLICE DEPT. EXPENSE	\$15,750.00	\$15,750.00	\$15,750.00	0.0%
49	HARBOR MASTER	\$960.00	\$960.00	\$960.00	0.0%
50	OUT REACH PROGRAM	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$500.00	-50.0%
51	CONSTABLE EXPENSE	\$300.00	\$300.00	\$300.00	0.0%
52	FIRE CHIEF SALARY	\$3,600.00	\$3,600.00	\$3,600.00	0.0%
53	FIRE DEPT. EXPENSES	\$17,500.00	\$17,500.00	\$17,500.00	0.0%
54	BUILDING INSP. SALARY	\$41,544.00	\$43,610.00	\$43,414.00	4.5%
55	BUILDING INSP. EXPENSE	\$5,500.00	\$3,760.00	\$3,760.00	-31.6%
56	DEMOLITION FUND	\$2,000.00	\$500.00	\$500.00	-75.0%
57	PUBLIC SAFTY INSPECTIONS	\$13,000.00	\$15,000.00	\$14,000.00	7.7%
58	CIVIL DEFENSE	\$50.00	\$50.00	\$50.00	0.0%
59	DOG OFFICER SALARIES	\$10,400.00	\$11,700.00	\$10,400.00	0.0%
60	DOG OFFICER EXPENSES	\$900.00	\$2,000.00	\$1,500.00	66.7%
61	FORESTRY	\$300.00	\$300.00	\$300.00	0.0%
62	MOTH ACCOUNT	\$100.00	\$100.00	\$100.00	0.0%
63	TREE ACCOUNT	\$8,000.00	\$8,000.00	\$8,000.00	0.0%
	<u>TOTAL PROT. PER.& PROP.</u>	<u>\$263,904.00</u>	<u>\$280,630.00</u>	<u>\$277,134.00</u>	5.0%
	<u>HEALTH & SANITATION</u>				
64	BECKET AMB. SALARIES	\$150,000.00	\$150,000.00	\$150,000.00	0.0%
65	BECKET AMBULANCE DEPT.	\$15,000.00	\$15,000.00	\$15,000.00	0.0%
66	E911 COMMUNICATION	\$8,497.00	\$8,497.00	\$8,497.00	0.0%
67	INSPECTOR of ANIMALS	\$200.00	\$250.00	\$250.00	25.0%
68	TRANSFER STATION	\$92,500.00	\$92,500.00	\$92,500.00	0.0%
69	SOUTH BERK. SOLID WASTE	\$6,000.00	\$5,880.00	\$5,880.00	-2.0%
70	BOARD of HEALTH SALARIES	\$15,000.00	\$15,000.00	\$13,000.00	-13.3%
71	BOARD of HEALTH EXPENSES	\$7,900.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	-36.7%
72	LEE VISITING NURSE	\$4,500.00	\$4,725.00	\$4,725.00	5.0%
73	MENTAL HEALTH CENTER	\$515.00	\$515.00	\$515.00	0.0%
	<u>TOTAL HEALTH & SANIT.</u>	<u>\$300,112.00</u>	<u>\$297,367.00</u>	<u>\$295,367.00</u>	-1.6%
	<u>UNCLASSIFIED EXPENSES</u>				
74	ACCOUNTING SERVICES	\$18,500.00	\$18,500.00	\$18,500.00	0.0%
75	GENERAL INSURANCE	\$71,000.00	\$74,000.00	\$74,000.00	4.2%
76	MUNICIPAL BUILDING	\$39,005.00	\$43,000.00	\$43,000.00	10.2%
77	MUNICIPAL UTILITIES	\$50,000.00	\$53,000.00	\$53,000.00	6.0%
78	TOWN REPORTS	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	0.0%

79	POSTAGE	\$10,800.00	\$14,000.00	\$14,000.00	29.6%
80	COUNCIL on AGING	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	0.0%
81	RECREATION COMM.	\$12,300.00	\$13,633.00	\$13,633.00	10.8%
82	PARKS COMM.	\$7,000.00	\$7,000.00	\$7,000.00	0.0%
83	HISTORIC COMMISSION	\$650.00	\$650.00	\$650.00	0.0%
84	INT. SHORT-TERM DEBT	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	0.0%
85	COUNTY RETIREMENT	\$123,025.00	\$130,846.00	\$130,846.00	6.4%
86	HEALTH INSURANCE	\$202,000.00	\$221,000.00	\$221,000.00	9.4%
87	PAYROLL TAX ACCOUNT	\$14,000.00	\$15,500.00	\$15,500.00	10.7%
88	RESERVE FUND	\$10,000.00	\$12,000.00	\$12,000.00	20.0%
	<u>TOTAL UNCLASS. EXP.</u>	<u>\$568,280.00</u>	<u>\$613,129.00</u>	<u>\$613,129.00</u>	7.9%
	<u>GRAND TOTAL</u>	<u>\$4,096,392.00</u>	<u>\$4,375,971.00</u>	<u>\$4,326,275.00</u>	5.6%

**** Clerk’s Salary Account includes \$1,000.00 for being a certified Town Clerk, actual increase is 7%

Article 2 was moved and seconded on the floor. The Moderator stated that he would not read each line item but rather he would announce the heading of each section. If there were to be any questions or discussion of any item, a “Hold” would be asked to be placed on that item. At the end of the process for any line items to be held, all items not having a “Hold” put on them would be voted on. Following this, all line items having a “Hold” would then be voted on separately. The Moderator noted that we are voting on the line items in the third column, “*Budget Recommended FY. 2008*”. “Holds” were placed on the following line items:

- 28 – Beaver Maintenance
- 50 – Out Reach Program

After placing holds on the above two line items, a vote was taken to approve all line items except 28-Beaver Maintenance and 50-Out Reach Program. **All line items except 28-Beaver Maintenance and 50-Out Reach Program passed unanimously.**

Line Item 28 (\$2,000) - In response to a question, it was noted that this budget line item is only for beaver problems that affect town roads.

Line Item 50 (\$500) – Sonny Nelson explained why he felt that the amount should be changed to \$1,500. Discussion followed and Mr. Furlong explained that there was no request for this line item as the funds had not been used last year as no one was hired for the position until recently. It was moved and seconded to amend Line Item 50 to \$1,500. Discussion followed and Kevin Miller, the Out Reach Coordinator for Becket, spoke in support of the need for this funding as there are over 400 elders in Becket out of a population of 1,784 and a huge need for services. He noted a local service program to recognize WWII era veterans in Becket. An interview is videotaped and then taken to Washington, DC, and registered in the Library of Congress where it is then made available on their website and includes the person’s service record and video. In response to a question, Mr. Furlong explained the Out Reach Program is based on a formula for a matching grant that is given by the government. A vote was taken on amending the amount to \$1,500 and it passed unanimously.

A vote was taken on **Line Item 50 (\$1,500, as amended)** and it **passed unanimously**.

A vote was taken on **Line Item 28 (\$2,000)** and it **passed unanimously**.

Article 3: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$40,000.00 for the Stabilization Fund.

Selectmen: Recommend **2/3 Vote Required**
Finance Committee: Recommends

Article 3 was moved and seconded on the floor. In response to questions, Mr. Falk explained that the town’s Stabilization Fund is an account that can be used for unforeseen emergencies or capital projects and that these funds are in a separate account available from year to year; a 2/3 vote by the town is required to put money in and take money out of the Stabilization fund. The town’s General Reserve

account is used within the fiscal year to cover shortfalls in line items. A vote was taken and **Article 3 passed unanimously.**

Article 4: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$179,938.00 to fund the bond payment for the following previously debt excluded items:

Becket Washington School	\$129,720.00
Nessacus Regional Middle School	\$ 33,235.00

This must be paid and this article is put on for informational purposes.

Selectmen: Recommend
Finance Committee: Recommends

Majority Vote Required

Article 4 was moved and seconded on the floor. There was no discussion. **Article 4 passed unanimously.**

Article 5: To see if the Town will vote to accept any monies appropriated by the Massachusetts Highway Department for Chapter 90 use. These funds to be used for maintenance and reconstruction of Town roads and to fund the appropriations 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 will be reimbursed to the Town by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in accordance with Chapter 90 of the Massachusetts General Laws.

Selectmen: Recommend
Finance Committee: Recommends

Majority Vote Required

Article 5 was moved and seconded on the floor. Mr. Elovirta made a motion to replace the wording “Massachusetts Highway Department” with “Executive Office of Transportation” and the motion was seconded. A vote was taken to amend the article and it passed unanimously. Discussion followed and Mr. Elovirta explained the delay in making repairs to the washout on Brooker Hill Road noting that progress is being made and they will soon be able to go out to bid. He also noted that, due to a collapsing arched culvert on McNerney Road, that road may have to be closed and they are awaiting an engineering report. A vote was taken and **Article 5 as amended passed unanimously.**

Article 6: To see if the Town will vote to appropriate the sum of \$54,000.00 for the Ambulance Department Salary Account and to fund the appropriation by transferring \$54,000.00 from the Ambulance Department Receipts Reserved Account.

Selectmen: Recommend
Finance Committee: Recommends

Majority Vote Required

Article 6 was moved and seconded on the floor. There was no discussion. **Article 6 passed unanimously.**

Article 7: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$11,928.00 for the purpose of providing \$5,728.00 for Becket Arts Center, \$5,000.00 for Center Pond Association Weed Treatment, \$1,200.00 Center Pond Weed Pulling Project, \$1,000.00 for Community Recreation Association to stabilize membership cost for Becket Children.

	Selectmen:	Finance Committee:
Becket Arts Center:	\$3,500.00	\$3,500.00
Center Pond Weed Treatment:	1,000.00	1,000.00
Center Pond Weed Pulling:	1,200.00	1,200.00
Community Recreation Assoc.:	1,000.00	1,000.00

Article 7 was moved and seconded on the floor. Mr. Falk made a motion to amend the article by reducing the amount from \$11,928 to \$6,700 as noted in the Finance Committee recommendations column as follows:

Becket Arts Center:	\$3,500.00
Center Pond Weed Treatment:	1,000.00
Center Pond Weed Pulling:	1,200.00
Community Recreation Assoc.:	1,000.00

The motion to amend the article was seconded. Discussion on the amendment followed. Mr. Kirchner from the Center Pond Association thanked the town for their past contributions. He stated that, following a survey, their consultant suggested that they will probably need \$10,000-\$15,000 as milfoil is spreading and he asked the town to contribute \$5,000. Mercedes Gallagher gave an overview of the progress of the hand pulling project at Center Pond and suggested that chemical treatment is not needed as under 1 % of milfoil has recurred. Mr. Cavanaugh noted that we are involved in Center Pond by virtue of the town beach being there and so are one of the owners on that lake. A vote was taken on the motion to **amend the amount to \$6,700** and it passed. Mr. Furlong moved to amend the article to change “Center Pond Weed Treatment” to “Center Pond Preservation & Protection Foundation Inc. Weed Control”. In response to a question, Mr. Kirchner explained that a number of years ago the Center Pond Association was incorporated and this is the current name. In response to a question, Mr. Kirchner

said that these funds could be used for surveys. Ms. Gallagher made a motion to replace the words “Weed Control” with “Aquatic Weed Surveys” and it was seconded. Discussion followed and the motion to replace the words “Weed Control” with “Aquatic Weed Surveys” was withdrawn. Ms. Bruneau made a motion to replace the word “Treatment” with the word “Survey” and it was seconded. Mr. Furlong pointed out that town meeting was not the place to bring your concerns about lake treatment as that should be done at a meeting of the Conservation Commission as it gives both sides a chance to have their say. He suggested that next year his recommendation to the Selectmen would be that this article does not go on a town meeting warrant unless we can clarify the whole thing before town meeting as the appropriate place to do so is with the Conservation Commission. A vote was taken to **change Center Pond Weed “Treatment” to Center Pond Weed “Survey”** and it passed. A vote was taken and **Article 7 as amended passed.**

Article 8: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$42,200.00 for the purpose of providing \$16,700.00 for computer software, \$3,000.00 for Records Binding, \$1,500.00 for West Becket Cemetery shed, \$2,000.00 for the Unemployment Account, \$14,000.00 for an audit and \$5,000.00 for Transfer Station Shed.

Selectmen: RecommendMajority Vote Required

Finance Committee: Recommends

Article 8 was moved and seconded on the floor. In response to a question, Mr. Falk noted that most cities and towns in the Commonwealth have an annual audit. Although we do not have a policy requiring an annual audit, we did an audit for FY06, we are not doing it for FY07 but this recommendation is for an audit in FY08. A vote was taken and **Article 8 passed unanimously.**

Article 9: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$14,000.00 to be used to pay volunteer firemen a \$15.00 per call response to cover their cost for responding or take any other action thereto.

Selectmen: RecommendMajority Vote Required

Finance Committee: Recommends

Article 9 was moved and seconded on the floor. John Hall made a motion to take no action on Article 9 and it was seconded. Mr. Hall explained that he would like to meet with his department to discuss this before this is brought for a vote. Discussion followed. Mr. Furlong noted that there may not be any identified funding source for this item if it was put off until July. Mr. Falk gave an explanation of how this article was proposed. **A vote was taken to take no action on Article 9 and it passed.**

Article 10: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$30,000.00 to replace the body on a 1996 International Highway Truck; new body to be stainless steel.

Selectmen: RecommendMajority Vote Required

Finance Committee: Recommends

Article 10 was moved and seconded on the floor. Ms. Swindlehurst referred to the 1996 International Dump Truck #2 on the inventory list that was slated for replacement in 2008 and asked if we are postponing the replacement. Discussion followed on the condition of the truck and why it has been proposed that the body be replaced with stainless steel. A vote was taken and **Article 10 passed.**

Article 11: To see if the Town will vote to appropriate the sum of \$64,503.00 from Free Cash and apply this amount to lower the tax rate.

Selectmen: RecommendMajority Vote Required

Finance Committee: Recommends

Article 11 was moved and seconded on the floor. Following a brief discussion of free cash, a vote was taken and **Article 11 passed unanimously.**

Article 12: To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Board of Selectmen to take by eminent domain, in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 79 and Chapter 45 of the General Laws (Ter.Ed) as amended, or by any other enabling act, or to acquire by purchase or gift, an easement to install, construct, and repair a sanitary sewer in and through and upon land described in the Berkshire Middle District Registry of Deeds in Book 3155, Page 194, including the right to lay, construct, and use said sewer, with all necessary manholes, pumps, and appurtenances, including the right to install a fence or other protective device necessary to secure the installation, including the right to change grade and slope in, through and upon the land heretofore described, together with the right to enter upon the land with vehicles, machinery and materials to inspect, repair, maintain and improve said sewer, and to appropriate the sum of \$3,000.00, or any other amount, to be paid as damages, or take any other action relative thereto.

Selectmen: RecommendMajority Vote Required

Finance Committee: Recommends

Article 12 was moved and seconded on the floor. Mr. Furlong made a motion to amend the article by deleting the words “\$3,000, or any other amount,” and substituting it with “no more than \$4,000” and it was seconded. Coleen O’Connor of 21 Maple Street stated that this was her yard. She said that she would appreciate it if you would vote to take no action as the property is in litigation. The meeting was referred to the Selectmen’s minutes of 12/20/06 in which it was stated that “the Town could not take the

property by eminent domain because it is using part of it”. Mr. Furlong briefly explained the article and said he would not answer any more questions due to litigation. Discussion followed about the sewer pipe on and the taking of this property. It was asked if this could be tabled until after this is settled in court. Ms. O’Connor described the location of her well and septic and the School’s septic field and explained that her well is in failure. A vote was taken on the motion to **amend the article by deleting the words “\$3,000, or any other amount,” and substituting it with “no more than \$4,000” and it passed.** A vote was taken on Article 12 as amended and a hand count was called for. Ms. O’Connor asked about her request for no action but no second had been heard. A hand count was taken and the result was Yes=43, No=29. Article 12 as amended passed.

*Following the meeting it was determined that, by statute, Article 12 required a 2/3 vote which it did not receive so **Article 12 did not pass.***

Article 13: To see if the Town will vote to have its elected Tax Collector become an appointed Tax Collector of the Town in accordance with Chapter 41, Section 1B of Massachusetts General Laws. If approved and an office or board becomes appointed, any incumbent serving at the time of voter acceptance continues to serve until the remainder of their term expires. If a person is elected to the position or board at the same time the change to an appointed status occurs, the newly elected office holder serves until an appointment is made.

This article is contingent on the passing of a ballot question at the Annual Town Election.

Selectmen: Recommend	Majority Vote Required
Finance Committee: Recommends	

Article 13 was moved and seconded on the floor. The Moderator said that he would entertain discussion on Articles 13, 14 and 15 as they relate to the same issue. A voter suggested that this is gerrymandering and would change these positions to political appointees. Others spoke in favor of being able to hire the most qualified person for the job. Ms. Swindlehurst asked for an explanation of the relationship between Articles 13 and 14 which are subject to passing a ballot question and Article 15 that asks to amend our charter. Mr. Furlong indicated that Article 15 would authorize the Selectmen to petition the general court to change the charter and, if only Article 13 or 14 pass, the Selectmen would then petition the general court for only that change to the charter. Discussion followed on the pros and cons of changing these positions from elected to appointed. The recommendation from the DOR’s recent Financial Management Review was stated as follows: “We recommend that the treasurer and tax collector be converted from elected to appointed positions. The individuals currently holding these positions are competent and knowledgeable in their respective duties. However, an organization’s structural composition transcends the individuals in a given position. In Becket’s case, should one or both of these officials resign or choose to not seek reelection, the town would likely have to recruit candidates from a narrow applicant pool to subsequently run for office. Also, there is no guarantee that those possessing the necessary knowledge and capabilities will, in the end, win what has the potential to be a contested election”. It was also noted that this change has been discussed with the individuals involved. In response to a question, Mr. Furlong noted that there are job descriptions for these positions and training requirements for both positions that have to be met and that training is overseen by the Department of Revenue. A vote was taken and **Article 13 passed.**

Article 14: To see if the Town will vote to have its elected Treasurer become an appointed Treasurer of the Town in accordance with Chapter 41, Section 1B of Massachusetts General Laws. If approved and an office or board becomes appointed, any incumbent serving at the time of voter acceptance continues to serve until the remainder of their term expires. If a person is elected to the position or board at the same time the change to an appointed status occurs, the newly elected office holder serves until an appointment is made.

This article is contingent on the passing of a ballot question at the Annual Town Election.

Selectmen: Recommend	Majority Vote Required
Finance Committee: Recommends	

Article 14 was moved and seconded on the floor. There was no additional discussion. **Article 14 passed.**

Article 15: To see if the Town will vote, pursuant to the provisions of Section 8 of Article 89 of the Massachusetts Constitution, to authorize the Selectmen to petition the General Court for special legislation to amend Chapter 662 of the Acts of 1989, as most recently amended, with said amendments to become effective upon the passage of the Act by the Legislature, as follows:

To delete from Section 2 (the list of elected officers and boards) Items **(h) Treasurer** and **(i) Tax Collector** and renumbering the remaining items to take into account those deletions.

and to

add to Section 4 (the list of officers and boards appointed by the Selectmen) Items **(w) Treasurer** and **(x) Tax Collector, each for a term of three years.**

or take any other action in relation thereto.

Article 15 was moved and seconded on the floor. Ms. Swindlehurst made a motion to **amend Article 15 by inserting after the words “to authorize the Selectmen”, the words “subject to and constrained by the results of the ballot questions referenced in Articles 13 and 14”** and it was seconded. Discussion followed on the proposed amendment. A vote was taken on the amendment and it passed unanimously. **Article 15 as amended passed unanimously.**

Article 16: To see if the Town will vote to amend the General Bylaws of the Town by adding Article 16A, which reads as follows:

Article 16A –Finance Committee

Section 1. The Finance Committee shall have all duties and powers given to it under Massachusetts General Laws and the Town of Becket By-Laws, including but not limited to MGL Chapter 39, Section16.

Section 2. The Finance Committee shall consider any and all municipal questions for the purpose of making reports or recommendations to the town. It shall be the duty of the committee to investigate all proposals in the articles of the warrant for any town meeting that shall in any way affect the finances of the town and to recommend to the town at the time of said meeting a course of action thereon, and in general to make recommendations to the town in regard to any financial business of the town. The committee shall make recommendations on each warrant article involving an appropriation. The committee may or may not endorse warrant articles, as it deems appropriate, where there is no appropriation requested.

Section 3. At the request of the Town Administrator and/or the Board of Selectmen, the committee may by majority vote authorize a transfer within or between department accounts for personnel services, expenses and capital outlay notwithstanding that the line item(s) has previously been voted by Town Meeting. The committee shall have the authority to vote transfers from the Reserve Fund per MGL Chapter 40, Section 6. The Treasurer and the Town Accountant are to be notified of any action or transfer of fund requests.

Section 4. The Committee shall annually elect its own chairman, clerk and other necessary officers. All vacancies in the membership shall be filled by a majority vote of the combined Select Board and Finance Committee; the term to be until the end of the term of the member whose seat was vacated.

Section 5. The Finance Committee shall report annually in the Town Report, the financial condition of the town.

Article 16 was moved and seconded on the floor. Mr. Furlong made a motion to **amend the article by deleting the words “until the end of the term of the member whose seat was vacated” and replacing it with “until the next election”** and it was seconded. In response to a question, Mr. Falk noted that the existing bylaws only specify the term of office and this bylaw was proposed to clarify the role of the Finance Committee. A vote was taken on the amendment and it passed. **Article 16 as amended passed unanimously.**

Article 17: To see if the Town will vote to accept Sections 3 to 7, inclusive, of Chapter 44B of the General Laws, otherwise known as the Massachusetts Community Preservation Act, by approving a surcharge on real property for the purposes permitted by said Act, including the acquisition, creation, and preservation of open space, the acquisition, rehabilitation, preservation, and restoration of historic resources, the acquisition, creation and preservation of land for recreational use, the creation, preservation and support of community housing, and the rehabilitation and restoration of such open space, land for recreational use and community housing that is acquired or created as provided under said Act; that the amount of such surcharge on real property shall be 1.5% of the annual real estate tax levy against real property and that the town vote to accept the following exemptions from such surcharges as permitted under section 3(e) of said Act: property owned and occupied as a domicile by any person who qualifies for low income housing or low or moderate income senior housing in the Town, as defined in Section 2 of said Act, class three, commercial, and class four, industrial, properties as defined in G.L. c. 59, paragraph 2A, \$100,000 of the value of each taxable parcel of residential real property.

The Moderator indicated that there was a typo in the last line of Article 17 and that the word “and” should be added after the words “paragraph 2A”. **Article 17** was moved and seconded on the floor. The Moderator recognized Neil Toomey, the sponsor of the article, and Mr. Toomey presented information about the CPA. The Community Preservation Act is a state law that would enable cities and towns to create a dedicated fund for open space, historic preservation projects, and recreation. The decision to adopt the CPA is made by each community in Massachusetts. Any town can enact a surcharge of 0-3% on property tax bills to create the CPA. The money raised locally is matched by the state and the combined funds are spent in 3 core areas: open space preservation, affordable housing and historic preservation. Each of these areas must receive at least 10% of the total fund but the remaining 70% can be used in any of the 3 core areas as well as in an additional area of public recreation. For Becket, the proposal is for 1½% of the annual real estate levy against real property. Since there are so few opportunities for municipalities to access long term reliable state funds for such projects, the CPA will be an increasingly important and consistent resource for the future. The community also has control over how the money is spent as each disbursement of CPA funds needs to be approved by town meeting.

With the approval of the voters of Becket for the CPA, including the exemptions, the average cost to Becket residents would be \$14.00 and the town would raise approximately \$19,000 per year and these funds would be matched by the state at the current rate of 100%. The CPA does not affect the property tax rate only the property tax bill. This relatively small amount will bring in some important and valuable results in Becket. If approved at tonight’s town meeting it will be voted on, not at this year’s town election, but at the town election in May 2008. This timeline will allow residents of Becket to learn as much as they can about the CPA. The source of state matching funds is increased fees at the Registry of Deeds. The rate of the surcharge can be raised or lowered at any time through a ballot vote. If there aren’t any prospective projects for the core areas, the money can be saved for future projects. Mr. Toomey asked those present to vote for this important source of money for our town. Mr. Gorden encouraged those present to vote for the CPA as this could provide funds for the preservation of Becket town records, tombstones, and historic signs. Mr. Elovirta expressed his concerns about open space and the amount of non-taxable open space in town. Mrs. Furlong suggested that CPA funds could help maintain town parks. Discussion followed on the cost of the CPA to residents, the proposed exemptions, including industrial and commercial, the possibility of obtaining other grants, the possible impact on town offices, the continued availability of matching funds, concerns about community housing and how the program would be administered. Robert Capeless made a motion to amend the article by deleting the exemptions for class 3 commercial and class 4 industrial and it was seconded. Discussion followed. In response to a question, Mr. Toomey answered that, after 5 years, the CPA remains in place until voted down or out by the same process it was adopted. A vote was taken on the amendment and the amendment failed. A vote was taken on Article 17 and **Article 17 passed.**

Article 18: To see if the town will vote to adjust the exemption amount from \$500 to \$750 for the property exemption for senior citizens under General Laws Chapter 59, Section 5, Clause 41C, in accordance with Section 51 of Chapter 184 of the Acts of 2002, to be effective beginning in fiscal year 2008, or take any other action relative thereto.

Selectmen: RecommendMajority Vote Required

Finance Committee: Recommends

Article 18 was moved and seconded on the floor. There was no discussion. **Article 18 passed unanimously.**

Article 19: To see if the Town will vote to decline the Town of Becket’s interest in a purported gift under the will of Anita L. Borgnis of a parcel of land containing 12.98 acres of land, to the Town of Becket and Washington or take any other action in relation thereto.

Selectmen: RecommendMajority Vote Required

Finance Committee: Recommends

Article 19 was moved and seconded on the floor. It was stated that this property is a former garbage dump. **Article 19 passed unanimously.**

Article 20: To see if the Town will vote to make the following request for legislation:

This article was petitioned by a group of interested citizens.

Whereas, there exists, both within the United States and internationally, substantial scientific dispute about the safety of food products derived from genetically engineered (GE) organisms; and,

Whereas, in situations where scientific experts are divided about the safety of a particular food product, consumers ought to easily be able to choose whether or not to purchase and consume food products derived from GE organisms;

Now, therefore, be it resolved that the Becket Town Meeting:

- 1) requests that our United States Senators, Edward Kennedy and John Kerry, our Congressional Representative, John Olver, our Governor, Deval Patrick, our State Senator, Benjamin Downing, and our State Representative Denis Guyer, sponsor and support legislation that would enact mandatory labeling by manufacturers and processors of all GE food and seed; and
- 2) additionally requests that the Becket Town Clerk transmit a copy of this resolution with the vote of the Town Meeting thereon to the elected officials named above.

Selectmen: RecommendMajority Vote Required

Finance Committee: No Position

The Moderator noted that the subject matter of Articles 20, 21 and 22 are all related and he will entertain discussion on the three articles at this time. **Article 20** was moved and seconded on the floor. Doug Walter spoke in support of these three articles, discussed genetically modified organisms and the need for labeling. He noted that voting in support of these articles takes the first step as we would be joining many other towns such as Huntington, Williamstown, Savoy and Buckland who have already passed this at their town meetings. He also discussed the other articles that have to do with the protection of farmers and with the limitation or complete moratorium of crops being planted that are known to be genetically modified. The articles request our legislators to sponsor and support legislation as described in the articles. Discussion followed both in support of and opposition to the articles. A motion was

made and seconded to cut off debate and move the article. The Moderator noted that this required a 2/3 vote. A vote was taken and the motion passed by a 2/3 vote. A vote was then taken on Article 20 and **Article 20 passed.**

Article 21: To see if the Town will vote to make the following request for legislation:

This article was petitioned by a group of interested citizens.

Whereas, certain genetically engineered (GE) crops have been shown to cross-pollinate with non-GE crops on adjacent farmland; and

Whereas, such cross-pollination has been deemed by the corporate manufacturers of GE crops to be infringement on their patented genetic materials by owners of said adjacent farmland; and

Whereas, such corporate manufacturers have used their considerable financial resources to attempt to claim both patent infringement against the owners of adjacent farmland and ownership of any farm product resulting from the unsolicited migration to adjacent farmland of the genetic materials from farm products grown from their GE seeds:

Now, therefore, be it resolved that the Becket Town Meeting:

- 1) requests that our United States Senators, Edward Kennedy and John Kerry, our Congressional Representative, John Olver, our Governor, Deval Patrick, our State Senator, Benjamin Downing, and our State Representative Denis Guyer, **sponsor and support legislation defining any unwanted or unsolicited migration to adjacent farmland of the genetic materials from GE farm products as a trespass and tort by the corporate manufacturers of GE products and making said corporate manufacturers strictly liable for providing means of recovery for the owners of said adjacent farmland; and**
- 2) additionally requests that the Becket Town Clerk shall transmits a copy of this resolution with the vote of the Town Meeting thereon to the elected officials named above.

Selectmen: Recommend **Majority Vote Required**
Finance Committee: No Position

It was moved and seconded to waive the reading of Article 21 and it passed. **Article 21** was moved and seconded on the floor. There was no discussion. **Article 21 passed.**

Article 22: To see if the Town will vote to make the following request for legislation:

This article was petitioned by a group of interested citizens.

Whereas, genetically engineered (GE) foods and crops have been shown to cause long-term damage to the environment, threaten rural economies, and may impair human health;

Whereas, GE crops have been found to contaminate other farmers’ crops through cross-pollination, and are stringently regulated in more than 30 countries; and

Whereas, Congress and federal regulatory agencies have failed to adequately address this problem;

Now therefore, be it resolved that the Becket Town Meeting:

- 1) requests that our United States Senators, Edward Kennedy and John Kerry, our Congressional Representative, John Olver, our Governor, Deval Patrick, our State Senator, Benjamin Downing, and our State Representative Denis Guyer, **sponsor and support legislation that would enact a moratorium on the further growing of GE crops until there is credible and independent scientific evidence that these products are not harmful to our health, the environment, and the survival of family farms; and**
- 2) additionally requests that the Becket Town Clerk transmit a copy of this resolution with the vote of the Town Meeting thereon to the elected officials named above.

Selectmen: Recommend **Majority Vote Required**
Finance Committee: No Position

It was moved and seconded to waive the reading of Article 22 and the motion passed. **Article 22** was moved and seconded on the floor. There was no discussion. **Article 22 passed.**

It was moved and seconded that the meeting adjourn to the Annual Town Election which will be held one week from today on May 19, 2007, starting at 10:00 a.m. A vote was taken and the motion passed. The checkers were Election Workers Dorothy Bellavance and Blanche Lennington.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanne W. Pryor
Town Clerk