

Annual Town Meeting Minutes 5/14/05

Pursuant to the foregoing warrant, the Annual Town Meeting was called on May 14, 2005, 7:15 p.m. at Becket Washington School, 12 Maple Street, Becket. There being a quorum present, the meeting was called to order at 7:17 p.m. by the Moderator. There were 123 voters present with a total of 147 people attended the meeting.

Present: Bruce Garlow, Moderator; William Cavanaugh, John Murray, and Doug Walter, Selectmen; Michael Falk, Jeremy Dunn, Richard Pryor and Ann Spadafora, Finance Committee Members; Jeanne Pryor, Town Clerk; Richard Furlong, Town Administrator; and Sally Bell, Town Attorney.

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 participate but not vote. The Moderator introduced the Chair of the Finance Committee, Michael Falk, who addressed the group concerning the Finance Committee's work and recommendations. Mr. Falk referred to the letter from the Finance Committee that was included with the mailing of the Annual Town Meeting warrant and was available at the meeting and spoke to the following issues:

1. that the Town has an added burden this coming year to pay for the Becket Washington School since construction is completed and we will be required to begin paying both principal and interest on a 20 year bond
2. that the requested FY2006 CBRSD operating budget for Becket is for an increase of \$189,627 (or 12.22%) over last year, and
3. that the Town has minimal reserves and therefore increases in our expenditures must be paid for primarily with increases in property taxes and other local revenues

He expressed the Committee's concern that large increases may continue in future years unless State revenue sharing for Becket and CBRSD substantially increases, and the rate of growth in the SBRSD operating budget is significantly reduced and the Town votes to reduce discretionary spending and/or to selectively reduce services. He asked for support for the Finance Committee's recommendations. A brief discussion followed concerning the Stabilization Fund.

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 \$12.00 per hour for the performance of their duties as Board of Health members.
- 2.) Cemetery Commission at the rate of \$12.00 per hour for the performance of their duties as Cemetery Commission members in maintaining the cemeteries.
- 3.) Conservation Commission at the rate of \$12.00 per hour for the performance of their duties as Conservation Commission members.
- 4.) Planning Board Chairman at the rate of \$12.00 per hour for time spent doing research that is in excess of meeting time.

Selectmen: Recommend

Majority Vote Required

Finance Committee: Recommends

Article 1 was moved by Doug Walter and seconded by William Cavanaugh. 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		BUDGET	BUDGET	BUDGET	%	Selectmen		
APPROVED		REQUESTED	RECOMMENDED	Change	Recommended			
FY. 2005		FY. 2006	FY. 2006	FY. 2006				
<u>GENERAL GOVERNMENT</u>								
1-	TOWN COUNSEL	\$3,000.00		\$4,000.00		\$4,000.00	33.3%	
2-	LEGAL EXPENSE	\$5,000.00		\$3,000.00		\$3,000.00	-40.0%	
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	\$3,900.00	-13.3%	\$4,500.00
6-	SELECTMENS' EXPENSES		\$1,100.00		\$1,100.00	\$1,000.00	-9.1%	
7-	ADVERTISING	\$2,000.00		\$2,000.00		\$2,000.00	0.0%	
8-	TOWN SECRETARY	\$29,640.00		\$33,696.00		\$32,677.00	10.2%	\$33,696.00
9-	TOWN ADMIN. SALARY		\$41,144.00		\$42,500.00	\$42,500.00	3.3%	
10-	TOWN ADMIN. EXPENSE		\$900.00		\$1,100.00	\$900.00	0.0%	
11-	FINANCE COMMITTEE		\$150.00		\$800.00	\$800.00	433.3%	\$500.00
12-	ASSESSORS' SALARIES		\$83,521.00		\$90,555.00	\$90,555.00	8.4%	
13-	ASSESSORS' EXPENSE		\$12,600.00		\$13,400.00	\$12,800.00	1.6%	

14-	TOWN TREASURER SALARY	\$28,235.00	\$29,083.00	\$29,083.00	3.0%
15-	TOWN TREASURER EXP.	\$4,475.00	\$4,400.00	\$4,400.00	-1.7%
16-	TAX TITLE	\$3,000.00	\$10,000.00	\$5,000.00	66.7%
17-	TAX COLLECTOR SALARY	\$24,985.00	\$40,560.00	\$40,560.00	62.3%
18-	TAX COLLECTOR EXPENSE	\$6,800.00	\$7,500.00	\$7,000.00	2.9%
19-	ASSIT. TAX COLLECTOR	\$22,440.00	\$21,632.00	\$21,632.00	-3.6%
20-	TOWN CLERK SALARY	\$15,652.00	\$15,810.00	\$15,810.00	1.0%
21-	TOWN CLERK EXPENSE	\$1,345.00	\$1,160.00	\$1,160.00	-13.8%
22-	ELECTION-REGISTRATION	\$5,639.00	\$5,618.00	\$5,618.00	-0.4%
23-	CONSERVATION COMM.	\$4,177.00	\$6,765.00	\$5,000.00	19.7%
24-	PLANNING BOARD EXPENSE	\$2,500.00	\$5,000.00	\$3,500.00	40.0%
25-	REGIONAL PLAN COM.	\$1,011.00	\$1,037.00	\$1,037.00	2.6%
26-	BOARD of APPEALS	\$1,100.00	\$1,200.00	\$1,200.00	9.1%
SUBTOTAL GEN. GOVT.		\$305,064.00	\$346,566.00	\$335,282.00	9.9%

HIGHWAY

27-	GENERAL MAINTENANCE	\$214,000.00	\$224,000.00	\$224,000.00	4.7%	
28-	VACATION & HOLIDAYS	\$30,372.00	\$32,826.00	\$32,826.00	8.1%	
29-	MACHINERY ACCOUNT	\$37,000.00	\$38,000.00	\$38,000.00	2.7%	
30-	RECONST. of GRAVEL ROADS		\$34,000.00	\$35,000.00	\$35,000.00	2.9%
31-	FUEL ACCOUNT	\$30,000.00	\$40,000.00	\$40,000.00	33.3%	
32-	WINTER ROADS	\$131,000.00	\$158,700.00	\$158,700.00	21.1%	
33-	STREET LIGHTS	\$6,800.00	\$6,800.00	\$6,800.00	0.0%	
SUBTOTAL HIGHWAYS		\$483,172.00	\$535,326.00	\$535,326.00	10.8%	

SCHOOLS and LIBRARIES

34-	SCHOOL OPERATING	\$1,551,764.00	See	article 3,4 & 5	-100.0%
35-	SCHOOL CAPITAL	\$20,787.00	\$53,405.00	\$53,405.00	156.9%
36-	VOCATIONAL TUITION	\$47,500.00	\$90,000.00	\$90,000.00	89.5%
37-	VOCATIONAL TRANSPORT.	\$55,000.00	\$63,000.00	\$63,000.00	14.5%
38-	LIBRARY	\$21,000.00	\$25,000.00	\$20,000.00	-4.8%
SUBTOTAL SCHOOL & LIB.		\$1,696,051.00	\$231,405.00	\$226,405.00	-86.7%

VETERANS

39-	VETERANS AGENT SALARY	\$1,562.00	\$1,600.00	\$1,600.00	2.4%
40-	VETERANS AGENT EXPENSE	\$400.00	\$400.00	\$300.00	-25.0%
41-	VETERANS BENEFITS	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	0.0%
42-	MEMORIAL DAY	\$450.00	\$500.00	\$400.00	-11.1%
TOTAL VETERANS		\$3,412.00	\$3,500.00	\$3,300.00	-3.3%

CEMETERIES

43-	BECKET CENTER	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	0.0%
44-	NORTH BECKET CEMETERY	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	0.0%
45-	WEST BECKET	\$1,500.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	-33.3%
SUBTOTAL CEMETERIES		\$9,500.00	\$9,000.00	\$9,000.00	-5.3%

PROTECT. PERSON & PROP

46-	POLICE DEPT. SALARIES	\$130,945.00	\$140,217.00	\$136,039.00	3.9%	
47-	POLICE DEPT. EXPENSE	\$15,000.00	\$16,500.00	\$15,500.00	3.3%	
48-	HARBOR MASTER	\$940.00	\$940.00	\$940.00	0.0%	
49-	OUT REACH PROGRAM	\$1,250.00	\$1,500.00	\$1,500.00	20.0%	
50-	CONSTABLE EXPENSE	\$300.00	\$300.00	\$300.00	0.0%	
51-	FIRE CHIEF SALARY	\$3,382.00	\$3,425.00	\$3,425.00	1.3%	
52-	FIRE DEPT. EXPENSES	\$16,000.00	\$16,500.00	\$16,500.00	3.1%	
53-	BUILDING INSP. SALARY	\$49,000.00	\$50,731.00	\$49,375.00	0.8%	
54-	BUILDING INSP. EXPENSE	\$3,710.00	\$6,720.00	\$6,000.00	61.7%	
55-	DEMOLITION FUND	\$4,000.00	\$20,000.00	\$6,000.00	50.0%	
56-	PUBLIC SAFETY INSPECTIONS		\$7,000.00	\$9,000.00	\$9,000.00	28.6%
57-	CIVIL DEFENSE	\$50.00	\$50.00	\$50.00	0.0%	
58-	DOG OFFICER SALARIES	\$10,400.00	\$10,400.00	\$10,400.00	0.0%	
59-	DOG OFFICER EXPENSES	\$1,230.00	\$1,230.00	\$1,230.00	0.0%	
60-	FORESTRY	\$300.00	\$300.00	\$300.00	0.0%	
61-	MOTh ACCOUNT	\$100.00	\$100.00	\$100.00	0.0%	
62-	TREE ACCOUNT	\$8,000.00	\$8,000.00	\$8,000.00	0.0%	
TOTAL PROT. PER.& PROP.		\$251,607.00	\$285,913.00	\$264,659.00	5.2%	

HEALTH & SANITATION

63-	BECKET AMB. SALARIES	\$120,000.00	\$130,000.00	\$130,000.00	8.3%
64-	BECKET AMBULANCE DEPT.	\$15,200.00	\$15,700.00	\$15,700.00	3.3%
65-	E911 COMMUNICATION	\$4,581.00	\$4,856.00	\$4,856.00	6.0%
66-	INSPECTOR of ANIMALS	\$200.00	\$200.00	\$200.00	0.0%
67-	TRANSFER STATION	\$84,000.00	\$87,000.00	\$87,000.00	3.6%
68-	SOUTH BERK. SOLID WASTE	\$5,500.00	\$5,800.00	\$5,800.00	5.5%
69-	BOARD of HEALTH SALARIES	\$13,500.00	\$18,000.00	\$18,000.00	33.3%
70-	BOARD of HEALTH EXPENSES	\$6,700.00	\$7,500.00	\$7,000.00	4.5%

71-	LEE VISITING NURSE	\$4,500.00	\$4,500.00	\$4,500.00	0.0%
72-	MENTAL HEALTH CENTER	\$500.00	\$515.00	\$515.00	3.0%
TOTAL HEALTH & SANIT.		\$254,681.00	\$274,071.00	\$273,571.00	7.4%
UNCLASSIFIED EXPENSES					
73-	STABILIZATION FUND	\$0.00	\$40,000.00	\$40,000.00	100.0%
74-	ACCOUNTING SERVICES	\$16,000.00	\$17,500.00	\$17,500.00	9.4%
75-	GENERAL INSURANCE	\$88,000.00	\$95,000.00	\$95,000.00	8.0%
76-	MUNICIPAL BUILDING	\$30,500.00	\$30,500.00	\$30,500.00	0.0%
77-	MUNICIPAL UTILITIES	\$46,500.00	\$49,000.00	\$49,000.00	5.4%
78-	TOWN REPORTS	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	0.0%
79-	POSTAGE \$9,700.00	\$10,500.00	\$10,200.00		5.2%
80-	COUNCIL on AGING	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$4,750.00	-5.0%
81-	RECREATION COMM.	\$9,000.00	\$10,000.00	\$8,500.00	-5.6%
82-	PARKS COMM.	\$8,000.00	\$9,000.00	\$7,000.00	-12.5%
83-	HISTORIC COMMISSION	\$700.00	\$700.00	\$650.00	-7.1%
84-	INT. SHORT-TERM DEBT	\$5,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	-40.0%
85-	COUNTY RETIREMENT	\$113,824.00	\$121,198.00	\$121,198.00	6.5%
86-	HEALTH INSURANCE	\$180,000.00	\$202,000.00	\$202,000.00	12.2%
87-	PAYROLL TAX ACCOUNT	\$12,000.00	\$13,000.00	\$13,000.00	8.3%
88-	RESERVE FUND	\$8,000.00	\$10,000.00	\$10,000.00	25.0%
TOTAL UNCLASS. EXP.		\$535,224.00	\$619,398.00	\$615,298.00	15.0%
GRAND TOTAL		\$3,538,711.00	\$2,305,179.00	\$2,262,841.00	-36.1%

Article 2 was moved and seconded on the floor. The Moderator stated that he would read all the line items aloud, noting that the dollar amount to be voted on is in the column "Budget Recommended FY06". If there were to be any questions or discussion on any item, a "Hold" would be asked to be placed on that item. At the end of the reading of the line items, 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. "Holds" were placed on the following line items:

- 2- Legal Expense
- 17- Tax Collector Salary
- 38- Library
- 73- Stabilization Fund
- 80- Council on Aging
- 81- Recreation Comm.

The Moderator noted that the law has changed and it now requires a 2/3 vote to appropriate /transfer funds in the Stabilization account. In future years this will be a separate article and not a line item on the warrant. Also next year, the budget line items will be announced in a group by the Moderator, instead of reading each separate line item as a time saving measure.

After reading all line items, a motion was moved and seconded on the floor to vote to approve all line items that did not have a Hold on them. **All line items not held passed unanimously.**

Line item 2 (Legal Expense, \$3,000)

Mr. Falk noted that the amount requested is needed due to pending litigation and that the requested amount may not be enough; more may need to be appropriated at a special meeting. A vote was taken and **Line item 2 passed.**

Line item 17 (Tax Collector Salary, \$40,560)

Ms. Swindlehurst spoke to the additional work put on the tax collector due to quarterly billing and indicated her support for the increase in the tax collector salary. Discussion followed on tax collector fees. Mr. Falk noted that the increase in the tax collector salary would bring her close to the midpoint of her salary rate and her entire salary would now go towards her pension. Mr. Furlong explained that the fees will become a local receipt to the General Fund of the Town. A vote was taken and **Line item 17 passed unanimously.**

Line item 38 (Library, \$20,000)

Mr. Podolski, Library Trustee, spoke in support of the Library's budget request. Ms. Swindle-hurst made a motion to amend the line item amount to \$21,000; the motion was seconded on the floor. Mr. Falk said that the Finance Committee supports the amended amount. A vote was taken and the motion passed. Doug Walter made a motion to further amend the line item amount to \$25,000; the motion was seconded. Discussion followed. A vote was taken and the amendment to \$25,000 failed. A vote was taken on the amended amount and **Line item 38 (\$21,000) passed.**

Line item 73 (Stabilization Fund, \$40,000)

Ms. Swindlehurst noted that the Stabilization Fund line item 73 in the Budget Approved FY 2005 column of today's warrant was listed as \$0.00 but in the Annual Town Meeting minutes dated May 8, 2004, as printed in the Town's 2004 Annual Report, it listed Stabilization Fund as being approved at \$40,000.00. Mr. Furlong noted that \$20,000 was requested at the Annual Town Meeting but that the \$20,000 was rescinded at the Nov. 30 Special Town Meeting and so the \$0 amount is correct. Since there appeared to be a typographical error, it was agreed that the Town Clerk's record would be checked to see if the \$40,000 listed in the Annual Report was in error. The Moderator noted that this item requires a 2/3 vote. A hand count vote was taken and the vote was as follows: Yes 104, No 2. **Line item 73 passed.**

Line item 80 (Council on Aging, \$4,750)

Mr. Nelson spoke in support of the Council on Aging request noting that the Council on Aging was not consulted by the Finance Committee. Mr. Falk apologized for not meeting with his group noting that the Finance Committee will support their request.

Jeremy Dunn made a motion to amend the line item amount to \$5,000 and it was seconded. There was no discussion. A vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously. There was no further discussion on the line item. A vote was taken on the amended amount and **Line item 80 (\$5,000) passed unanimously.**

Line item 81 (Recreation Comm., \$8,500)

Tina LeVasseur spoke in support of the Recreation Committee's request. She made a motion to amend the line item amount to \$10,000 and it was seconded. Mr. Falk spoke in favor of the Finance Committee's recommendation of \$8,500. Mr. Cavanaugh spoke in favor of the amended \$10,000 amount. A vote was taken on the motion and it passed. There was no further discussion on this line item. A vote was taken on the amended amount and **Line item 81 (\$10,000) passed.**

The Moderator explained the intent of the 3 articles on the school budget.

Article 3: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$1,551,764.00 to fund the school district operating budget at last year's level.

Selectmen: Recommend

Majority Vote Required

Finance Committee: Recommends

Article 3 was moved by Jeremy Dunn and seconded by William Cavanaugh. Mr. Soluri, School Committee Member, welcomed everyone to the new Becket Washington School noting that we are now the 4th highest in exam scores in Western Massachusetts.

He introduced Superintendent Paul Swem and Business Manager Robert Tensel who were also present. Mr. Soluri referred to the "FY06 Budget: Town Meeting Presentations" report that was distributed at the meeting and gave a presentation on the CBRSD's operating budget request, addressed frequently raised questions, lower transportation reimbursements, declining enrollments and discussed the current status of the school budget since three towns have turned it down. The cost per pupil is about \$8,000, among the lowest in the Berkshires and below the state average. Mr. Falk presented the Finance Committee's recommendations for the school budget. He noted that during the past 3 years, there has been a 30.3% increase in the Becket budget for CBRSD's operating budget and asked if there is a plan to reverse the decade long declining enrollment. He noted that the Finance Committee believes that it is up to the school district to have a strategy to bring costs down. Questions were asked and discussion followed on the increase in ELE students and ELE teacher salary, possible conservation measures to decrease utility costs, employee health insurance costs, retirement eligibility requirements and costs, the 7.5% increase for the schools vs. last year, unfunded mandates, and the cost per household of the school budget. Mr. Slem reported that they had an opportunity to meet with Senator Nuciforo and learned that there is a potential that more revenue may be received from the state and that Chapter 70 will be held harmless next year. A vote was taken and **Article 3 passed.**

Article 4: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate an additional amount of \$124,142.00 to fund the Finance Committee's recommended amount. This additional funding to be contingent on a Proposition 2 ½ override question appearing on the Town Election ballot of May 21, 2005.

Selectmen: Recommend

Majority Vote Required

Finance Committee: Recommends

Article 4 was moved and seconded on the floor. Jeremy Dunn pointed out that the Selectmen and Finance Committee both recommended that you vote on this article and not article 5. As the superintendent stated, the state is likely to increase funds and with such an increase this article without article 5 would be adequate for the school district. Mr. Furlong noted that if you pass this article you will also need to vote for the override at the May 21 Town Election. A vote was taken and **Article 4 passed.**

Article 5: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate an additional amount of \$189,627.00 to fund the CBRSD requested amount. This additional funding to be contingent on a Proposition 2 ½ override question appearing on the Town Election ballot of May 21, 2005.

Selectmen: Do Not Recommend

Majority Vote Required

Finance Committee: Does Not Recommend

Article 5 was moved and seconded on the floor. A motion was made and seconded to amend the amount of the article to \$65,485.00. There was no discussion. A vote was taken and the amendment passed. Following discussion, a vote was taken on the amended article. **Article 5 did not pass.**

Article 6: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$224,801.00 to fund the bond payment for the following previously debt excluded items:

Becket Washington School	\$169,792.00
Nessacus Regional Middle School	\$ 55,009.00

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

Selectmen: Recommend
Finance Committee: Recommends

Majority Vote Required

Article 6 was moved and seconded on the floor. Mr. Falk stated that the amount of the Becket Washing School bond payment is an estimate as this point provided by the school district. A vote was taken and **Article 6 passed**.

Article 7: To see if the Town will vote to appropriate the sum of \$148,658.00 to be used for maintenance and reconstruction of Town roads and to fund the appropriation by transferring said amount from available funds with any unspent funds to carry over from year to year until spent by the Town. This sum 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 7 was moved by Doug Walter and seconded by John Murray. Following a brief discussion and explanation by Mr. Furlong a vote was taken. **Article 7 passed unanimously**.

Article 8: To see if the Town will vote to appropriate the sum of \$25,000.00 for the Ambulance Department Salary Account and to fund the appropriation by transferring \$25,000.00 from the Ambulance Department Receipt Reserved Account.

Selectmen: Recommend
Finance Committee: Recommends

Majority Vote Required

Article 8 was moved and seconded on the floor. Following a brief discussion a vote was taken. **Article 8 passed unanimously**.

Article 9: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$12,000.00 to perform an audit of the Town's accounts for fiscal year 2005 ending June 30, 2005. Last audit performed in 1998.

Selectmen: Recommend
Finance Committee: Recommends

Majority Vote Required

Article 9 was moved by Doug Walter and seconded by William Cavanaugh. Mr. Dunn pointed out that not only will this bring us in alignment with good fiscal practices and in alignment with other towns in the area, performing the audit will potentially help the town's credit rating and therefore keep the payments on the bond that we will need to fund the school as low as possible. In response to a question, Mr. Falk noted that the audit will be for one year. A vote was taken and **Article 9 passed unanimously**.

Article 10: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$28,000.00 to purchase a new wood chipper for the Highway Department.

Selectmen: Recommend
Finance Committee: Recommends

Majority Vote Required

Article 10 was moved and seconded on the floor. In response to a question, Mr. Elovirta explained the cost of the chipper. Mr. Dunn pointed out that this was the Highway Department's highest priority and the Finance Committee supports it. A vote was taken and **Article 10 passed**.

Article 11: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$6,500.00 for ongoing Arts Center building repairs.

Selectmen: Recommend
Finance Committee: Recommends \$1,000.00

Majority Vote Required

Article 11 was moved and seconded on the floor. In response to a question, Mr. Falk noted that the Finance Committee only recommended \$1,000 as it saw this request as a lower priority considering the financial situation of the town. Mr. Gorden spoke to the need for the requested amount to fund a handicapped accessible bathroom that will be an improvement to the building. Mr. Cavanaugh expressed his support for the article and the need to provide access to people with disabilities. Mr. Dunn suggested that we are spending money that we don't have. Mrs. Schlanger spoke in support of the article. Mr. Falk noted that when we have to balance the budget, there may not be money to fund this article. Discussion followed. Mr. Falk made a motion to amend the amount of the article to \$1,000 and it was seconded. A vote was taken on the motion and it failed. Mr. Young made a motion to amend the amount of the article to \$3,000 and it was seconded. Discussion followed. A vote was taken on the motion and it failed. In response to a question, Mr. Schlanger noted that the Becket Arts Center contracted for the work, not the Town. Following further discussion, a vote was taken on the article and **Article 11 passed**.

Article 12: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$1,000.00 for the binding and preserving of Town Clerk records.

Selectmen: Recommend
Finance Committee: Recommends

Majority Vote Required

Article 12 was moved and seconded on the floor. There was no discussion. A vote was taken and **Article 12 passed unanimously.**

Article 13: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$5,000.00 for the weed treatment of Center Pond.

Selectmen: Recommend \$2,500.00
Finance Committee: Does Not Recommend

Majority Vote Required

Article 13 was moved by William Cavanaugh and seconded on the floor. Mr. Furlong made a motion to amend the amount to \$1,000 and it was seconded. Mr. Furlong said that a survey was recently done by Aquatic Control. It showed that there was no need for chemical treatment this year. However, there is a cost for surveys. He noted that milfoil was found but that Aquatic Control's recommendation was that aggressive hand pulling be done this summer to keep it under control. Discussion followed on the town's share of funding for Center Pond weed control, private/public use of the lake and causes for invasion of weeds in the lake. A vote was taken on the motion to amend the amount to \$1,000 and it passed. A vote was then taken on the amended article and **Article 10 (\$1,000) passed.**

Article 14: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$1,200.00 for the Center Pond Weed Project (hand pulling).

Selectmen: Recommend
Finance Committee: Recommends

Majority Vote Required

Article 14 was moved and seconded on the floor. There was no discussion. A vote was taken and **Article 14 passed.**

Article 15: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$5,000.00 for the purchase of a snowplow for the Highway Department.

Selectmen: Do Not Recommend
Finance Committee: Does Not Recommend

Majority Vote Required

Article 15 was moved and seconded on the floor. Mr. Elovirta spoke in support of the article noting that the plow to be replaced is 20 years old and is unsafe to use. Discussion followed. Ms. Swindlehurst requested that snowplows be added to the Highway Department's inventory list. Ms. Swindlehurst made a motion to pass over article 15 and it was seconded. Discussion followed on the Highway Dept. maintenance account. Mr. Falk asked if the Highway Department could get around not having this article pass so that an additional \$5,000 would not be added to the town's predicted shortfall. A vote was taken on the motion to pass over the article and it failed. A vote was taken and **Article 15 passed.**

Article 16: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$1,000.00 for beaver maintenance throughout the Town.

Selectmen: Recommend
Finance Committee: Recommends

Majority Vote Required

Article 16 was moved by John Murray and seconded by Richard Furlong. There was no discussion. A vote was taken and **Article 16 passed.**

Article 17: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$25,000.00 to be paid over to the district treasurer of the Sherwood Forest Road Maintenance District in the same manner as district taxes under Section 24 of the Special Act Chapter 380 of the 1982 Legislative Acts for the use and benefit of the district on a maintenance and reconstruction project within the scope of this act as designated by the town.

Selectmen: Do Not Recommend
Finance Committee: Does Not Recommend

Majority Vote Required

Article 17 was moved and seconded on the floor. Mr. Falk spoke for the Finance Committee stating that they do not think that this is a reasonable or fiscally responsible article at this time. He noted that the SFRD has twice before received money from the town. He also noted that there are other road districts and/or associations in the town that have private roads and that the SFRD cost to their residents is significantly less than what other communities pay. In addition, the SFRD does have taxing authority for their roads. Discussion followed. Mr. Ronzio noted that originally the SFRD did not realize the current fiscal constraints of the town. He then recommended and moved that, since right now the town has greater needs, we reduce the amount of our request to \$1.00. The motion to reduce the amount of the article to \$1.00 was seconded. In response to a question, Mr. Falk stated that he was speaking for the Finance Committee and apologized if offense was taken at what he said noting that he was not casting dispersions on anyone but only speaking to the article. Discussion followed on the precedent for such a request and issues concerning the

establishment of the Sherwood Forest Road District. A vote was taken on the amended amount of \$1.00 and it passed. A vote was taken on the amended article and **Article 17 did not pass.**

Article 18: To see if the Town will vote to approve a 10 year contract with Recycle America Alliance and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection for the receipt and processing of the town's Recyclable Materials at the Springfield Materials Recycling Facility. The contract, the Springfield Recycling Facility Municipal Agreement, begins on April 1st, 2005 and under its provisions the Town will receive \$15.67 per ton of recyclables plus a share of the revenue generated from the sale of Recyclable Materials.

Selectmen: Recommend
Finance Committee: Recommends

Majority Vote Required

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

Article 19: To see if the Town will vote, pursuant to Section 4A of Chapter 44 of the Massachusetts General Laws, to authorize the Selectmen to enter into mutual aid agreements with other area municipalities for the provision of public health, fire, police and emergency management services.

Selectmen: Recommend

Majority Vote Required

Article 19 was moved and seconded on the floor. There was no discussion. A vote was taken and **Article 19 passed.**

Article 20: To see if the Town will vote to accept Chapter 54, Section 16A of the Massachusetts General Laws as follows:

In any city or town which accepts this section, if the warden, clerk or inspector, or the deputy of any such officer, if any, is not present at the opening of the polls, the city or town clerk may appoint a person to fill such vacancy who shall be an enrolled voter of the same political party as the absent officer, if any competent person enrolled in such party is present and willing to serve.

Selectmen: Recommend

Majority Vote Required

Article 20 was moved and seconded on the floor. There was no discussion. A vote was taken and **Article 20 passed.**

Kathy Hayn Burt thanked the Finance Committee for their hard work and efforts this year and a round of applause was given.

A motion to adjourn was moved and seconded on the floor. The motion passed and the meeting adjourned at 10:24 p.m. The Poll Workers were Dorothy Bellavance, Gale LaBelle and Maryellen Lake.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanne W. Pryor

Town Clerk