

**Town of Becket
Board of Selectmen's Meeting
November 4, 2015
7:00 p.m.
Town Hall
557 Main Street, Becket**

Attendees:

Board of Selectmen: Jeanne Pryor *Chairperson*; William Elovirta, *Vice Chairperson*;
Angela Hilton, *Clerk*

Staff: Ed Gibson, *Town Administrator*; Beverly Gilbert, *Recording Secretary*;
Christopher Bouchard, *Highway Superintendent*

Others: Colleen O'Connor, Mike Hamling, Glenda Hamling

Call to Order

Jeanne called the meeting to order at 7 PM. She stated that the meeting is being held in accordance with the Open Meeting Law and Guidelines for the Becket Board of Selectmen Meetings.

Jeanne asked if anyone was recording the meeting. The Board of Selectmen was recording the meeting.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Chair led those attending in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes

Angie moved to approve the 10/21/15 minutes. Jeanne seconded. Motion carried.

Sherwood Shoppe Permit Application to replace Stolen Sign located on Town-owned Land

Mike and Glenda Hamling discussed their permit application for the replacement (same dimensions, same location) of Sherwood Shoppe's stolen sign. Because the proposed sign is located on the town right of way, the Building Inspector had forwarded this application to the BOS. Mr. Hamling asked if the sign vanishes again, could he replace it without obtaining a building permit. Ed advised that when a sign is removed or changed, the town bylaws require obtaining a new sign permit with no exceptions allowed even if replacement is necessary due to vandalism or theft. At the request of Mr. and Mrs. Hamling, the BOS agreed to send a letter to the Building Inspector relaying that if due to vandalism or theft, the Sherwood Shoppe needs to replace their sign (same dimension, same location, with no significant changes to the wording or design), BOS review may be eliminated. The Selectmen stated that they have no issues with the Building Inspector approving the permit for Sherwood Shoppe's proposed sign.

Selectmen to sign Letter of Request to State Representative and State Senator to file amendment to Town Charter / Bylaws (relating to Parks & Recreation Committee) for approval by State Legislature

Ed indicated that at the Special Town Meeting held on 4/5/14, the town voted to combine the Parks Commission and Recreation Committee to form the Parks & Recreation Committee. To complete the process, the town must obtain State Legislature approval. The BOS signed a letter of

request to the State Representative and State Senator to file an amendment to the Town Charter / Bylaws (relating to Parks & Recreation Committee) for the approval by State Legislature.

2016 Town Meeting Budget Calendar

Jeanne indicated the only change to the 2016 Town Meeting Budget Calendar is that the last day for the Selectmen to receive Petitioned Articles is April 1st whereas last year it was **proposed** for April 1st before being approved at the May 2015 ATM.

Chairman of Planning Board to Present Update to Selectmen on Medical Marijuana

Because Mr. Bob Ronzio, Chairman of the Planning Board, did not attend tonight's meeting, this agenda idea was not discussed.

Highway Superintendent's recommendation to hire Equipment Operator, and Town Mechanic

Chris and Ed updated the BOS regarding the recruitment for the Equipment Operator and Town Mechanic openings in the Highway Department. Because Chris and Ed have not been through a cycle of hiring Highway Department employees, they wanted to discuss their ideas regarding starting pay structures before extending offers of employment. Ed wanted to confirm that he is authorized to hire those reporting to the Highway Superintendent. Bill stated that this is his understanding as well, and because the Highway Department workers do not report to the BOS, and there is nothing specifically stating the BOS should do so in the bylaws, he does not think it would be necessary for the BOS to vote on these appointments. The BOS suggested that Ed may elect to check BOS minutes to see if the BOS voted to approve the hiring of Highway Department employees (not the Highway Superintendent).

Chris suggested that the equipment operator's starting pay would be \$20.95 per hour and upon the successful completion of the 90 day probationary period, the pay would increase to \$21.95 per hour, currently the top pay for the equipment operator. Bill Elovirta advised that historically new highway department hires take a year to reach their top rate of pay. Because much of the work changes each season, new employees were eligible to receive pay raises on a quarterly basis during the first year. Chris agreed that the town's past approach is sensible.

The BOS were amenable to Chris' recommendation for the pay package for the mechanic. Chris suggested that the starting rate would be \$18.50 per hour, and increase to \$19.50 per hour upon the receipt of all of licenses (which are in process). Beyond the cost of living increase the mechanic may be eligible to receive on July 1st, the Highway Superintendent would develop goals on a six month basis for the mechanic and if that individual reached the goals as set out in the six month period then the mechanic would be eligible for a 3.25% increase at the end of that six month period. If the individual reached all goals in each six month period, at the end of two years, he would receive the same pay rate as the equipment operators.

Ed and Chris will take the BOS's suggestions under advisement.

Board to consider Appointments: Berkshire Regional Planning Commission Alternate Member, Representative to the Community Preservation Committee.

The Planning Board submitted a copy of their 10/14/15 minutes:

- The Planning Board voted to name Robert Ronzio as the Planning Board's Representative to the Community Preservation Committee.

- Gale LaBelle accepted the Planning Board's nomination to serve as the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission's Alternate Representative.

Bill moved to re-appoint Gale LaBelle Alternate Member to the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission for a term ending 6/30/16. Angie seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

The BOS noted the Planning Board's appointment of Bob Ronzio as the Planning Board's Representative to the Community Preservation Committee. BOS action is not necessary for such.

Jeanne asked Bev to check the status on vacancies and advertise if there are openings on the Community Preservation Committee.

Monthly Report(s):

The BOS reviewed the monthly reports of the Highway Department (September and October) and the Ambulance Department (October).

Board of Selectmen's Comments and Announcements

Jeanne indicated that discussion on forming the Broadband Ad Hoc Committee is on hold pending receipt of the WiredWest Becket Delegates' recommendation as to whether or not to proceed.

Bill reported that last Friday, the Fire Department participated in the Pumpkin Walk in the Washington Park. It was a successful event attended by approximately 300 people.

Town Administrator's report

MBI Broadband: the current status of the Broadband signups for Becket as of 11/4/15 is we are 86% of the way to our signup goal: 97 more locations to go to reach our goals of a required 40% take rate.

Tax Classification Hearing FY2016 – The Real Estate Tax Classification Public Hearing has been scheduled and advertised to be held during the Board of Selectmen's meeting of 11/18/15. The Board of Assessors (Liz Will and Geri Walters) along with Jeff Reynolds and Harald Scheid from Regional Resource Group will be here to present the Tax Classification Public Hearing and answer any questions from the public or the Board of Selectmen. Per Jeanne's inquiry, Ed will ask the Assessors if the districts have conducted their Tax Classification Hearings. Ed indicated that he has heard that this year the DOR will enforce the requirement for public hearing notices.

MassDot Community Capital Conversations: The Massachusetts Department of Transportation held their community conversations concerning their future Capital Expenditure plans on, 10/29/15 in Pittsfield. Chris Bouchard, Bill Elovirta and Ed Gibson attended. The new format of waiting in line to speak with the specific representative from a particular department or to enter comments or concerns "online" via the computer that was there, rather than being able to speak out and have questions answered, was not particularly well received.

Free Cash: It appears that our Free Cash certification will be in the neighborhood of \$200,000 this year. Ed provided a historical account of Certified Free Cash for Becket back to 2003. Last year was a very unusual year due to some accounting adjustments. Ed reminded the BOS that based on the town's financial policy, half of the Free Cash is automatically placed into the Stabilization account.

Reserve Transfer Request: Ed will present a Reserve Transfer request to the Finance Committee tomorrow evening to transfer \$2,200 into the North Becket Cemetery account.

At least one of the cemetery commissioners had thought that the yearly appropriation for the commissioner's cemetery could be divided into twelve equal monthly payments like a stipend even though Town Meeting had voted to approve the commissioners pay rates on an hourly basis. When Ed brought it to the Commissioners' attention after the auditor found the discrepancy, it turned out the appropriation was not adequate for the amount of hours the work actually took. During discussion, Ed suggested the BOS may want to consider meeting with the Cemetery Commissioners to discuss next year's appropriation and the possibility that the Commissioners share with each other the knowledge and care of the three cemeteries. Jeanne had stated that she is concerned that right now each of the Commissioners is knowledgeable about only his/her own cemetery (Bill Cavanaugh for North Becket, Michelle Smith for West Becket and Dean Williams for Center). If a Commissioner were to become unexpectedly unavailable, it would be ideal for all of the Commissioners to be prepared to operate all of the cemeteries. Ed had mentioned that some retired individuals prefer monthly stipend payments in lieu of hourly pay so that they have income during the wintertime when there is no maintenance work at the cemetery. Ed stated that regardless of the method of payment (monthly stipends or hourly wages), the town is not being overcharged by the commissioners.

Meetings: Ed will attend the Finance Committee Meeting on 11/5/15, the WiredWest Meeting on 11/6/15 in Northampton, the MMA Small Town Administrators Meeting on 11/12/15 in Lincoln, The Berkshire Administrators/Managers Meeting on 11/17/15 in Lenox, the LEPC Emergency Management Meeting on 11/18/15 in Lenox, and the Central Berkshire Regional School District Seven Town Advisory meeting on 11/19/15.

Records Room: As the town's Risk Manager, Ed addressed and described the potential liability relating to the Central Records Room. To protect the records, Ed advised that he will develop a policy for the BOS to consider, which will include security enhancements and greater accountability when accessing files. Rather than wait until the policy is adopted, the BOS directed Ed to begin the process by changing the locks to the Records Room as soon as possible. The Town Secretary and Town Administrator will have keys to the Records Room.

Public Input

Colleen O'Connor stated that she recently had problems with her boiler, and that the contractor who paid her a visit for that advised her not to use her well water for anything as there are illegal underground dry wells close by adding to the contamination of her water. Ms O'Connor described some of the hardships she encounters due to the lack of potable water at her home in North Becket Village. She indicated that she plans to talk to the Board of Health, and anything the BOS could do to help would be greatly appreciated.

Any other business to come before the Board

Jeanne received a letter from Mr. Stephen Santoro of Parsons Way inquiring about the procedures for the town acceptance of a private road as a town way. Jeanne had conveyed to Mr. Santoro that she will be in contact with him to put his request on the agenda for an upcoming Selectmen's meeting. A discussion ensued. Jeanne researched other towns' policies for accepting private road as town ways and will forward her findings to the other BOS members. Before scheduling Mr. Santoro on the agenda, she would like the BOS to continue their discussion and possibly adopt a policy for town acceptance of a private road as a town way.

Jeanne would like to recommend that the BOS send the town's street sign replacement policy to the road districts and home owner associations so that the districts and homeowner associations will be aware that the town has color requirements for street signs. Before doing so, the Town Administrator will review the laws relating to this.

Jeanne brought a copy of the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission FY2015 Annual Report for the file.

Jeanne brought up the Water Feasibility Study the BOS approved, and she would like the BOS to follow-up on the next steps that had been discussed on 6/4/15. She would like the town to begin to search for grants (maybe Berkshire Regional Planning Commission), and discuss zoning acreage requirements with the Planning Board. Even if it's not possible to secure funds for everything recommended in the study, she would like the town to begin the process of developing a municipal water supply. Perhaps the construction of a municipal water supply may be divided into various stages with the North Becket Village being first on the list as the need is there.

Review Correspondence

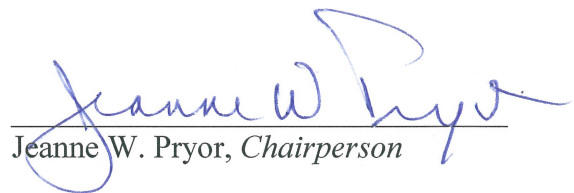
- Central Berkshire Regional School District re: Seven Town Advisory Committee Meeting 19th November

Selectmen to adjourn meeting:

Angie made a motion to adjourn. Bill seconded. Motion carried unanimously. At 8:40 p.m. Jeanne adjourned the meeting.

Reviewed Payroll/Expense Warrants.

Respectfully submitted,
Beverly Gilbert, Secretary


Jeanne W. Pryor, Chairperson

Documents discussed at this meeting:

Town Administrator's Report
September Reports of the Highway Superintendent
October Report of the Ambulance Department
Appointment Application from Gale LaBelle
Planning Board's minutes dated 10/14/15
Parks & Recreation submission to State Senator and State Representative