

**Town of Becket
Board of Selectmen's Meeting
February 22, 2017
7:00 p.m.
Town Hall
557 Main Street, Becket**

Attendees:

Board of Selectmen: William Elovirta, *Chairperson*; Jeanne Pryor, *Vice Chairperson* (remote participation); and Nicole Ledoux, *Clerk*

Staff: Ed Gibson, *Town Administrator*; Beverly Gilbert, *Recording Secretary*
George Roberts, *Town Clerk*

Others: Pat Mullens and Bill Compton of the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, Michael Lavery, Jeremy Dunn, Bob Gross, and Al Blake

Call to Order

Bill called the meeting to order at 7 p.m. He stated that the meeting is being held in accordance with the Open Meeting Law and Guidelines for the Becket Board of Selectmen Meetings.

Bill asked if anyone was recording the meeting. Beverly for the Board of Selectmen indicated that she was recording the meeting.

Bill announced that Jeanne Pryor will participate remotely due to geographic location, and all votes will require a roll-call.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Chairperson led those attending in the Pledge of Allegiance.

BOS to consider Highway Superintendent's recommendation to increase the Town Mechanic's Rate of Pay due to successfully completing his fifth 90-day evaluation period

At the recommendation of the Highway Superintendent who submitted notification that the Town Mechanic successfully completed his fifth 90-day probationary period, Nicole moved to increase the Town Mechanic's rate of pay to \$21.28 (effective 2/5/2017). Bill seconded. Roll call: Bill Elovirta – aye, Jeanne Pryor – aye and Nicole Ledoux – aye. Motion carried 3-0.

Public Hearing (Continuation from 02/15/2017): Public Comments and discussion the submittal of a FY17 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application, including a proposed Housing rehabilitation Program on behalf of the Town of Becket.

At 7:05 p.m., Bill read the below notice and called the public hearing to order:

The Town of Becket Board of Selectmen will hold a Public Hearing on Wednesday, February 15, 2017 at 7:05pm in the Berkshire Room in Town Hall, 557 Main Street, Becket, to receive public comments and discuss the submittal

of a FY17 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application, including a proposed Housing Rehabilitation Program, on behalf of the Town of Becket. Residents and interested individuals from Becket are encouraged to attend and participate. For additional information, please call Patricia Mullins, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, 413 442-1521 X 17. Signed by the Town of Becket Board of Selectmen.

Bill indicated that on February 15th, he called above mentioned public hearing to order and then continued it.

Patricia Mullens, from the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC), stated that she is here to receive input from the public on the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application (due March 10th) that BRPC is submitting on behalf of the Town of Becket. Pat described the grant, fielded questions, and discussed several grant application documents with the BOS. Pat stated:

The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development Program (HUD) funds the CDBG program and sends funds to each state for disbursement. In Massachusetts, the Department of Housing & Community Development (DHCD) provides the CDBG grant to the communities. The CDBG is a competitive grant. Communities in Massachusetts must compete with each other for the funds. There are limitations to the amounts of the funds as well as the allowable projects. Becket is limited to \$800,000, which includes the requirements re: administration and program delivery of the grant activity. Pat anticipates that the town will have a budget of approximately \$600,000 towards housing rehabilitation. She will approach the Town Administrator (and, if necessary, the BOS) with the final budget. Up to \$40,000 may be used per project. BRPC has set a goal of 15 projects at \$40,000. The reason for using 15 units (projects) instead of more than 15 projects with a lower amount is that it is always okay to add more units within that budget, but we may be penalized if the minimum number of units indicated is not satisfied. The program manager/rehabilitation specialist selects the projects based on the waiting list. Under this program, we will provide zero percent interest deferred loans to homeowners to pay for the projects. A list of pre-qualified contractors will bid, the selected contractors will perform the work, and the program pays the contractor (with the homeowners' approval for the work). After the project is completed, we file a lien against the property for a fifteen year period. During this 15 year period, the homeowner only has to repay the loan if ownership of the property is transferred (sale, inheritance, foreclosure are some examples of transfers). If the property is transferred, a portion of the loan must be re-paid. Otherwise the owner does not need to repay the loan. During the 15 year period, the amount of the loan is decreased incrementally based on the time that has passed. This information will be provided to the homeowners before they decide if they would like to proceed with the project. Pat specified that this program is not designed for investors who acquire a property to fix up and profit from a quick sale.

In July or August, the town will receive notification if it has been selected to receive the grant award. CDBG is a reimbursement program. The town will sign a contract with the DHCD and will engage the BRPC to administer the project. BRPC will bring the services to the town to facilitate the activities. When BRPC submits claims against the grant, the town will need to

transfer the funds to BRPC. All fiscal control will be transparent. BRPC will work with the Town Administrator, Town Treasurer and Town Accountant.

Bill asked if the town could restructure the loan forgiveness. Pat stated that there is discretion as to how the grant is structured. Pat indicated that most of the communities set-up the loans in the same manner as specified. Bill stated that although he can appreciate it is a low-income grant, he thinks homeowners should assume some financial responsibility. Pat stated that if the BOS wishes to discuss changing the structure of the program, she will research and return to another BOS meeting. Bill indicated that due to time constraints for submitting the discussed application, the structure of the loan agreement may be considered in the next CDBG grant.

Jeremy Dunn asked if the town would ever be out the money or not receive the money in the same fiscal year. Pat explained that this will not happen because BRPC advances the money, and submits a reimbursement request from the town. She indicated that the projects may span over a year (18 months plus any approved extensions) and she explained the process for paying bills related to the grant. When there is a claim against the grant, she will submit an invoice to the town, and Ed will review and return approved drawdowns to BRPC who will forward the request for reimbursement to DCHD for processing.

Jeremy Dunn asked for examples of homeowner projects, the criteria by which homeowners are selected, and who selects homeowners. Pat indicated that homeowners must fall into the HUD threshold of low to moderate income, and must occupy the home slated for the project. It is okay if the owner rents a portion of the property as long as the owner lives there. The grant must be used for improvements/repairs related to bringing the home up to building code (some examples include roofs, electrical, lead paint removal). Examples of projects not permitted include adding a sunroom, or solar panels. If a home is beyond repair and should be demolished, it will not qualify as a project. The Town of Becket has long list of interested parties on a waiting list. BRPC will view as many of those homes as possible. The Town will establish an advisory committee to assist with the review and selection process based on priorities. Jeremy inquired if second home residences may qualify for this grant. Pat indicated that although BRPC has not run into this category, this is something that may be considered and brought to the advisory committee. Bill Compton stated that in his experience, the home would need to be the primary residence.

Ed discussed the idea of allocating a portion of the grant for septic repair. It was agreed to follow Pat's recommendation that although the town may assess a higher priority to homeowners who seek funding for septic repair, the town will not allocate a portion of the grant for this activity.

Currently there is an eighteen month performance period deadline that may be extended. It is anticipated that future grants will have a two year performance period.

Nicole asked if multiple parties may apply together for a project (such as a region needing septic system upgrades). Pat specified that each homeowner must apply separately.

Pat discussed several documents relating to the grant:

CEO Certification – This form was signed by the Chairman of the Board of Selectmen.

Anti-Displacement & Relocation Assistance Certification: If someone must be relocated outside their home while the project occurs, there are certain guidelines as to how that will be managed. BRPC has an item in the budget for relocation. Pat advised that should relocation cause a project to exceed \$40,000, towns may apply for a single case waiver from DHCD.

Timely Expenditure Threshold: The town must expend all money from previous grants or a certain portion of it. This circumstance does not apply because Becket spent all funding awarded in its 2011 CBDG grant.

Displacement of Non-CDBG Funds Certification: The Chief Elected Officer of the city/town must certify that CDGB funds are not used to displace non-CDGB funds under the control of the municipality.

Anti-Speculation and Recapture Plan: If the property is transferred, this outlines that the amount owed on the Deferred Payment Loan will decrease annually for a period of fifteen years (specifies re-payment schedule).

Program Income Certification Form: Requires the Town Treasurer's and Chief Elected Official's signature. This form is to list program income from CBDG (If someone pays back loans). The town must see if anything over \$25,000 is repaid as a result of the grant. Ed will ask the Treasurer to complete the form.

There is a new portion of the application for matching funds. The town may receive bonus points if it matches 10 percent of the application. Ed reported that the town had received \$31,000 repayment of CDBG funding (Elton Ogden of Berkshire Regional Housing sent the town 4 checks from someone who transferred their home). The BOS directed use of this \$31,000 plus the BOS will apply to the Community Preservation Commission for \$29,000 for matching funds of this grant. Pat will have Ed fill out a statement indicating that the town will provide \$60,000 matching funds for the grant.

Certification form.

Bill Compton from BRPC discussed:

Environmental Review Statutory Checklist (Ed Gibson signed this form.) The form is a guide listing actions required in order to comply with statutes and regulations for each project site.

Citizen Participation Plan – The plan describes elements of public participation such as advertising public hearings, public hearings, amendments to the grant, public outreach, website information, how to sign up, confidentiality, access to information, publishing the plan, reports, access to records, technical assistance, and resolution of complaints and procedures for lodging and resolving grievances.

Jeremy asked who pays for the legal fees. Pat indicated that a portion of the grant budget is for legal costs, and there is also a line item for the town's audit.

Jeanne asked if the town incurred additional costs for the 2011 CDBG. Pat indicated that the town did not incur any costs.

Bill asked if anyone had additional questions or comments. Hearing none, he asked if there was a motion to close the hearing. Jeanne moved to close the hearing on the CBDG Grant. Nicole seconded. Roll call: Bill Elovirta – aye, Jeanne Pryor – aye and Nicole Ledoux – aye. Motion carried 3-0. Bill closed the public hearing at 8:02 p.m.

Town Clerk Presentation to BOS re: suggested scheduling of Caucus and Special School Election

Town Clerk George Roberts indicated that typically the caucus occurs in April and this year the caucus had originally been planned for Monday, April 10th. Last week Ed advised that there would be a special town election to approve the funding for the Wahconah School building feasibility project that will be held Saturday, April 8, 2017, 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. Typically, we run the caucus for seven hours (noon to 7 p.m.), not six hours. George suggested combining the caucus and special election on the same day. Town Administrator cleared this idea with Town Counsel who advised that there must be two separate: warrants, separate check in and check out stations. George indicated that the ballot programming vendor, LHS, advised that the voting machine may handle two separate ballots with two separate reports. George stated that he is seeking feedback from the BOS to see if there is any reason not to hold the caucus along with the special election on April 8th. George indicated that there is no choice on the date for the special election or hours but nothing to prohibit us from having the caucus two days earlier which would be 40 days before the election. He specified that there may be issues with securing staffing if the events were two days apart. The school board will pay for cost of ballots for the special election, posting of the warrant (\$25), programming automark, and will split the cost of the accu-vote machine and election workers. George indicated that there is no requirement specifying that the caucus has to be seven hours (he thinks six hours will be ample). The BOS indicated they are fine with combining the caucus and special election.

Discussion and possible vote on Broadband Ad Hoc Group request for BOS approval of two proposed Broadband Resolutions

Jeremy Dunn addressed the BOS. The purpose of the two resolutions is to generate further evidence that the towns working together (known as WiredWest) may present to the state officials to try to persuade them to release broadband funds. The resolution states that towns want to build broadband networks, and that towns want to operate them regionally and towns are interested in working with the Westfield Gas & Electric MLP (WG&E) independently or through WiredWest. In four weeks, key decision makers such as Carolyn Kirk, Deputy Secretary of the Office of the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development, will be in attendance at a broadband meeting and it is hoped that they will consider the resolutions presented by the towns.

Ed indicated that Todd Corcoran of MBI visited him today. It is anticipated that the town is about to receive the letter approving the bond for broadband, and that the good news is that the

town will still be doing our Design and Engineering through MBI via mini bids for four, five or six towns. Therefore, the town will receive that portion of the money and will not have to worry about bidding it on our own. The Design and Engineering firm may also be the OPM through the construction phase so that will also be taken care of. Finally, the town will not be giving our money up front to MBI as everything will be invoiced and paid through the town. It is anticipated that the pole survey will take approximately four months.

Jeanne moved to sign the broadband resolution. Nicole seconded. Roll call: Bill Elovirta – aye, Jeanne Pryor – aye and Nicole Ledoux – aye. Motion carried 3-0. The BOS thanked Jeremy and Bob for attending tonight’s meeting.

Zoning Board of Appeals’ notification and request for comments concerning:

- **Application for Site Plan Approval - Jacob’s Pillow Dance Festival, Inc. for property located at 358 George Carter Road for dormitory buildings**
- **Application for Site Plan Approval and Special Dimensional Permit - Jacob’s Pillow Dance Festival, Inc. for property located at 358 George Carter Road for a new restaurant**
- **Application for Site Plan approval - Borrego Solar Systems, Inc. for property located off Tanglewood Circle for a Solar Array generating facility**

The BOS tabled commenting on the above listed applications until its 3/1/2017 meeting. Jeanne inquired about the solar array and was told that it is a commercial facility (approximately 30 acres). Ed advised that the Becket Energy Committee viewed the application at last week’s meeting. Ed indicated that the Conservation Commission is reviewing this application. Ed, Bill, and Al Blake plan to visit the proposed site before the next BOS meeting. Ed is also interested in how much clear cutting of trees will be necessary.

Monthly or Quarterly Reports: Volunteer Fire Dept., and others tba

The BOS reviewed the report of the Volunteer Fire Department

Board of Selectmen’s Comments and Announcements

Jeanne inquired if there was additional information about Kushi Institute. Ed stated that it is closed. Bill, through Kushi’s grounds keeper, heard that Kushi’s property is on the market. Ed indicated that the Assessors received an inquiry from a realtor agent. The BOS agreed with Bill’s suggestion to explore the idea of acquiring Kushi’s property located at the corner of Fred Snow and Route 20 (approx. 5.9 acres) for the town’s possible use (replacement of Fire Station, or other town buildings) and to protect the monument. Ed believes that the assessed value of this land is less than \$30,000.

Bill indicated that he attends Berkshire Regional Transit Authority meeting and his 1.2 or 1.3 weighted vote has at times has made it possible to meet the quorum. Bill reported on how the town has benefitted from having the service in fiscal year 2016. Bob Malnati, Director of the BRTA, had provided Bill with a breakdown of FY16 trips. We had 451 para-transit trips from Becket with a gross cost of \$12,959 of which \$4,826 was received from fares, leaving a net cost

of \$8,133 of which federal funds were provided in the amount of \$2,545, state funds of \$4,053 applied. The town's share \$1,435 will come off the cherry sheet.

Fiscal Year 2018 Budget

The Town Administrator presented highlights of the 1st draft of the Fiscal Year 2018 budget: School budget, vocational school tuition, Police Department, Transfer Station, Highway Dept., Tree Account, Board of Health Salaries and Expenses, Parks & Recreation, Health Insurance, debt schedule, Ambulance Department Salaries, Snow and Ice, Conservation Commission Proposition 2 ½ increase plus projected growth is \$190,000. This does not include the increase in local revenues.

Ed discussed the capital plan. The BOS agreed with his priorities and that he will recommend FY18 purchases/spending including: a new ambulance, buildings and grounds truck, and replacement of Fire Station Number 1's Heating Systems.

Town Administrator's Report

Bonny Rigg Hill Road Culvert Replacement – Bonny Rigg Hill Road re-opened 3 p.m. on 2/15/2017. The contractor will return in the spring to perform the paving and to install the permanent guardrails.

Health Insurance: We received our quote for Health Insurance through MIIA for the upcoming fiscal year and we will see a four percent increase in the upcoming year which put us at the bottom of the range of increases within municipalities belonging to MIIA. MIIA will provide actual rate estimates next week. Ed stated that the BOS should discuss any possible changes to the health plans which would reduce the costs.

Town of Washington Fire and Ambulance Update: As a follow up to Bill Elovirta and Ed's visit to the Town of Washington's Selectmen's meeting on 2/23/2017 concerning their payment to Becket for Fire, Ambulance and Parks & Recreation services, Ed met with Kent Lew from Washington's Finance Committee. While we are still trying to find some common grounds to base an agreement for moving forward, one of the more common basis may be the number of households. Washington does agree that they are not currently paying anything for our ambulance services and they wish to pay their fair share. It just remains to be seen as to the details as how we get there. A discussion ensued. Kent also asked Ed in the future, if one employee in police dept. may fully retire, and at that time might we talk about sharing police services. Bill pointed out that Becket tends to use the Great Barrington Court (can also use Pittsfield but Great Barrington is more convenient), Becket is assigned the Mass. State Police in Lee (Washington is assigned to use Cheshire State Police), and there is a great deal of territory that must be covered between Becket and Washington.

Town Hall Projects Update: The new front and rear entrance doors have been delivered. The contractor is waiting for the re-ordered door handles to come in (expected to be this Friday and then they will install the doors.) David is coordinating their installation with our locksmith to have the lock cylinders master keyed to a new system. Cornerstone is expecting to be out here next week to schedule the door installations. When the weather is warmer, the contractor will return to pour cement into the holes to secure the posts.

Meetings: Ed will attend the Finance Committee Meeting on March 2nd.

Town Hall HVAC "Draft" Study: EDM Architects and Engineering has provided a "draft" narrative to potential Options for a New Town Hall HVAC system which Ed distributed to the BOS for review, comments, and questions. EDM would like the town to pick one of the Options for them to focus their efforts on. At this point, Ed is focusing his research and questions on Options 3, 4 and 5. The working budget for this project not counting any remaining DOER grant funding is \$140,000 which has been appropriated through Town Meeting. Ed discussed the options with the BOS. He will submit questions and request additional information including photographs from EDM.

Public Input

None

Any other business to come before the Board

Bill stated that the Ambulance Director Jim Kupernik submitted notification that he is retiring and March 17, 2017 will be his last day of work. It was decided to schedule the party for Jim and Joe (who is retiring at 3/31/2017) if they are available 1 p.m., on Monday, 3/13/2017.

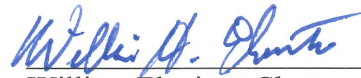
Review Correspondence: None

Selectmen to Adjourn Meeting.

Jeanne moved to adjourn. Nicole seconded. Roll call: Bill Elovirta – aye, Jeanne Pryor – aye and Nicole Ledoux – aye. Motion carried 3-0. At 9:45 p.m., Bill adjourned the meeting.

Reviewed Payroll/Expense Warrants.

Respectfully submitted,
Beverly Gilbert, Secretary



William Elovirta, Chairperson

Documents discussed at this meeting:

All documents described under the Public Hearing above
Town Administrator's Report
Town of Becket Broadband Resolutions
EDM HVAC Replacement Study for Town Hall, 2/16/2017
Notice of Public Hearing
Town of Becket Financial Summary
Becket Volunteer Ambulance Report for January 2017
James Kupernik letter to provide notice of retirement 2/17/2017
Highway Superintendent letter dated 1/31/2017 re: Mechanic Pay Increase
CBRSD Tentative Maintenance & Operating Budget
Election Warrant for Central Berkshire Regional School District