

**Town of Becket  
Board of Selectmen's Meeting  
January 17, 2018  
7:00 p.m.  
Town Hall  
557 Main Street, Becket**

Attendees:

Board of Selectmen: William ("Bill") Elovirta, *Chair*; Nicole Ledoux, *Vice-Chair*  
Michael Lavery, *Clerk*

Staff: Robert Markel, *Interim Town Administrator*; Beverly Gilbert, *Admin. Assistant*

Others: Bob Gross (Member of the Broadband Ad Hoc Group),  
Alison Dixon (Chairperson of the Conservation Commission),  
Anne Wellington from the Town of Chester

**1. Call to order**

Bill called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. and he noted that the BOS was recording tonight's meeting.

**2. Pledge of Allegiance**

Bill led the pledge of allegiance.

**3. Moment of Remembrance for Mercedes Gallagher, Special Community Volunteer for our Center Pond Lake, and long-time member of the Westfield River Wild & Scenic Advisory Committee. We also remember Mercedes for her contributions while serving as a member of the Conservation Commission.**

Bill announced a moment of silence and reflection for Mercedes Gallagher who died on January 16, 2018. Afterwards Michael read "Center Pond is Where I Belong." authored by Paul A. London, one of Mercedes' many friends from Center Pond. This writing was published in the Berkshire Eagle.

**4. Board to review minutes for the 01/03/2018 meeting.**

Nicole moved to approve the minutes for the 1/3/2018 meeting. Michael seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

**5. Discussion and possible vote to appoint members on the Town Administrator Search Committee**

The BOS received eight applications to serve on the Town Administrator Search Committee. The BOS agreed that this committee will be comprised of seven members. Bill stated that he was in favor of appointing all those who applied, except for William Rodgers. Michael stated that Mr. Rodgers' application contained no mention of his qualifications. Bill moved to appoint Nina Weiler, Katherine Warden, Bob Gross, Al Blake, Jeff Wilkinson, Dan Parnell and Beverly Gilbert to the Town Administrator Search Committee. Michael seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

The BOS will develop a charge for the committee (summary of the characteristics and strengths of the ideal Town Administrator candidate, and operational guidelines that include a methodology for which the Town Administrator Search Committee will use to measure applicants), and the BOS will schedule an orientation meeting in February with the Town Administrator Search Committee. The town has advertised in *The Beacon's* January and February publications. During March, the Town Administrator Search Committee may begin meeting to review applications.

**6. Broadband Update**

Bob Gross reported that the Broadband Ad Hoc Group continues meeting on a bi-weekly basis with Westfield Gas & Electric. The Group has been reviewing and providing feedback that includes its local knowledge to Precision Valley Communication (PVC) so that PVC may refine its mapping information. The mapping will be used to set up the town's Fiber Serving Area (FSA) neighborhoods.

The town will need to decide on its approach for the pole application process. Pole applications must be in groupings of 200. The dilemma is whether we will submit them sequentially as they are available or wait to submit them all at the same time. Once applications are submitted, there is no way of knowing whether Verizon or Eversource will respond to us first. Upon receipt from Verizon, we must decide within 45 days as to whether we will advance to the make ready stage and we must commit funds at that point. The Broadband Ad Hoc Group will implore Westfield Gas & Electric to provide us with a very good estimate for the total project's cost so that we will have a decent level of comfort that we will stay within our budget. So far pole counts appears similar to MBI's initial pole counts. The Broadband Ad Hoc Group assumes and is hopeful that Westfield Gas & Electric will provide us with a fair count of poles with an indication of the work that must be conducted on them, as well as a count of poles that must be replaced. Bob stated that Westfield Gas & Electric is known for providing very good project cost estimates to several other towns.

The BOS had asked Bob Gross to respond to a letter the town had received from a resident on Dimmock Road. Bob Gross reported that unfortunately due to the remote location of the home and lack of utilities, there is no way Becket can provide service to them. Bob Gross will contact Otis to ask if they are able to provide service to them. Dimmock Road falls mostly within Otis. The resident will most likely incur costs to run wire (underground) for approximately ½ mile in order to hook up to the service.

The town will need to confer with a legal specialist to develop an agreement for homeowners, or property owners who must underwrite some of their expense. The town must have a mechanism to ensure that the town will receive payment. Westfield Gas & Electric will not issue separate contracts and invoices to the property owners. The entire cost will be charged to the town and the town will need to arrange to re-coup costs or possibly require advance payment of the cost from property owners who exceed the town's start-up allowance. This may prove challenging because it will not be possible to define all costs in advance. Bob stated that the Selectmen had decided that the town will provide camps such as Greylock, Watitoh, & the YMCA, along with Jacob's Pillow, with a single drop and if they wish to have additional drops, it will be at their expense. The Broadband Ad Hoc Group will contact them to find out whether they want more than one drop. Westfield will not commit to fixed price trenching because it is not possible for them to know in advance what they will find under the ground and what it will end up costing them. Becket Woods is also a big unknown. Becket Woods' bylaws require that all their utilities must be buried. Some homeowners will need to underwrite some of the expense due to trenching on a very long driveway if the cost exceeds the allowance the town has agreed to provide. Generally it is more predictable to charge for above ground wiring.

**7. Discussion and possible vote to appoint Municipal Light Plant Manager**

Michael moved to appoint Robert Gross as the Municipal Light Plant Manager effective upon receiving the current MLP Manager's (Edward Gibson's) resignation. Nicole seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

**8. BOS review and possible vote on its recommendations for changes to the Bylaw Review Committee Proposed Amendments to Article 17 Section 21.**

Bob Markel will forward the proposed language amendments to Article 17 Section 21 and questions to Town Counsel that the BOS & Bylaw Review Committee discussed at their January 11, 2018 meeting. It is anticipated that after town counsel replies, the BOS will vote to include an Article regarding Proposed Amendments to Article 17 Section 21 to the Special Town Meeting Warrant.

**9. Special Town Meeting – Scheduling a Date & Possible Articles**

Bob will write the Special Town Meeting Warrant for review and possible vote at the Selectmen's Feb. 7<sup>th</sup> meeting. Pending availability of Town Counsel, the Town Clerk, and the Town Moderator,

the BOS agreed to schedule the Special Town Meeting at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, March 6<sup>th</sup>. The BOS will consider holding the STM at the Becket Washington School due to the possibility that the marijuana moratoria articles draw a large group of attendees.

**10. Town Hall HVAC Upgrade**

Discussion ensued to see whether the BOS would entertain rescinding its December 20, 2017 rejection of the HVAC bids. The low bid came in at \$253,000, which exceeded the \$178,000 funding approved for this project. The Finance Committee had voted in favor of asking the town to approve the \$75,000 shortfall. To comply with state procurement law, February 2, 2018 would be the 30-business day deadline for the town to enter into a contract with the low bidder of the HVAC project.

A DOER Green Energy grant balance in the amount of \$28,429 had been included in the town's \$178,000 funding approved and there had been question about whether the town could apply for additional DOER Green Energy Grant money toward this project. Bob Markel had researched and advised that the town would not be eligible for additional DOER Green Energy grant toward this project.

The Selectmen agreed to take no action and to revisit the Town Hall HVAC Upgrade project.

**11. Highway Garage Heater**

Because one of the ceiling heaters in the Highway Department Garage was inoperative, the town ordered a 93% efficient propane furnace from Levernoch Plumbing & Heating. Unlike oil heaters, propane heaters do not require maintenance and cleaning which will be a cost-savings to the town. AmeriGas will not charge for their tank lease. Eventually the town will purchase its own tank. Bill advised that the Highway Department Garage has two heaters. The second heater uses heating oil. At a future town meeting, the town may consider replacing this second heater for a more fuel efficient and cost savings propane system.

**12. Planning Board's recommendation for a Special Town Meeting Article to Transfer Approving authority from ZBA to PB for Large-Scale Ground Mounted Solar Photovoltaic Installations**

In accordance with the Planning Board's request, Bill moved that the Special Town Meeting Warrant contain an article to transfer approving authority from the Zoning Board of Appeals to the Planning Board for Large-Scale Ground Mounted Solar Photovoltaic Installations. Michael seconded. Motion carried unanimously

**13. Monthly Reports (Dec. 2017): Animal Control Officer, Ambulance Dept., and Fire Dept.**

The BOS reviewed the Animal Control Officer, Ambulance Department and Fire Department December 2017 reports.

**14. Board of Selectmen's Comments and Announcements**

Bill advised that the Country Journal asked him for responses toward their upcoming article about the closing of the Route 20 Spring. Nicole and Michael acknowledged that they had received an email Bill had sent to them regarding this matter.

Anne Wellington of Chester, indicated that she is here to represent some of the individuals who are distressed about the imminent closing of the Route 20 Spring because they rely on it for their source of drinking water. She reported that she and other members of her group had reached out to several agencies to see if there are alternatives that may be employed to keep the spring in operation. Anne asked if the BOS would consider other options rather than closing the spring. Anne spoke of the importance of the Route 20 Spring and asked the BOS if other options may be explored to keep this very special community resource open. The BOS explained that because the town was not able to determine and had tried but was not able to eliminate the source of contamination (7 out of 12 tests indicated that coliform was present), the Massachusetts Dept. of Environmental Protection ordered that the Town of Becket either install a filtration system or close the spring. The BOS indicated that

in addition to the lack of funding for building, maintaining and operating a filtration system, it is not known where the spring originates and although the Town of Becket paid for the required water testing (due to the fact that the spring is a public water supply), the spring itself is not located on town own-land. Bill indicated that the previous Town Administrator had contacted the Town of Chester's Town Administrator to see if Chester may be willing to get involved with fixing and taking over the spring. The BOS indicated that the spring will not be closed until the springtime. Bill suggested that this group may consider approaching the Chester Board of Selectmen. Anne indicated that perhaps the community may raise money to save the spring.

The BOS will place the BOS Policies and Procedures on the town's website.

Bill asked Bob if the town needed to have a public hearing regarding the proposed Revolving Account Bylaw (which comes from the Municipal Reform Act). Bob indicated that unlike zoning bylaws, no public hearing is required for filing a town bylaw.

Michael had a conversation with one of the owners of the Barrington Brewery who dispelled rumors that his business had been extracting water from the Route 20 Spring. The BOS indicated that due to the slow flow of the spring pipe, the amount of time required to draw the water into a 10,000 gallon truck would not be practical. Michael has heard members of the community speculate that such activity would explain the source of the spring's contamination.

#### **15. Town Administrator's Report**

Today is Bob Markel's fourth day under the Town of Becket's employ.

The town received an invitation to serve as a member of the Working Group for the I-90 Interchange Study which the MassDOT initiated to examine the feasibility of a new interchange on Interstate 90 between the Town of Lee and City of Westfield. It was agreed that Bill Elovirta will attend the kick-off meeting for the study's Working Group on February 8<sup>th</sup> at the Blandford Town Hall. Bill stated that the BOS had sent a letter asking that the state conduct a feasibility study for car-only access between Westfield and Lee. Bill stated that William Stone Co. has a tremendous number of trucks (approx. 50-70 trucks a day) travelling on Bonny Rigg Hill Road and William Stone Co. would love to have closer access to the turnpike. Bill said that would be great for Becket to keep William Stone Co. off the local roads. Bill is wondering if the state could make an exception to William Stone Co. due to the circumstance and proximity. Bob Gross stated that he had met with Rep. Smitty Pignatelli who had tried to pass special legislation for granite trucks to use the emergency exit located in Becket between 4 a.m. and 7 a.m. but this did not fly. Bill indicated that the turnpike which is an interstate road would require federal approvals.

Bob joined yesterday's Becket Energy Committee Meeting. An Energia official who attended remotely offered to conduct a free insulation audit for town buildings. The BOS declined this proposition on the basis that this had been done within the past two years in town buildings

Due to rising costs, Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Agency, our insurance carrier, will no longer offer the Medex 3 plan and has asked if the town is willing to migrate employees to Medex 2. Bob will request that MIIA send a representative to explain the changes and health insurance options to employees. Medex 2 is less expensive and will have higher co-pays and modest changes that will increase the cost to the employees.

Bob will attend the BOS's Feb. 7<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> meetings. He has called for a department head's meeting tomorrow at 10 a.m. in the Becket Room. The BOS members are invited to attend. The MMA Annual Conference and Meeting is scheduled to occur this weekend.

#### **16. Public Input**

Alison Dixon, Chairperson of the Conservation Commission, discussed the status of the Conservation Commission Agent's recruitment. There is one candidate that the Conservation

Commission wishes to select. The BOS clarified that the Conservation Commission is required to submit a recommendation for hiring of the Conservation Commission Agent to the Town Administrator who officially hires the Conservation Commission Agent, and BOS approval is not required. Bob will contact former Town Administrator Edward Gibson who was conducting reference checks on one of the candidates.

**17. Any other business to come before the Board**

Bob advised that the Board of Health has arranged for an inspector to conduct a sanitary code inspection on a home located on Main Street.

Patricia Mullins, Community & Economic Development Program Manager from the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, had sent an e-mail reporting that the town's Community Development Block Housing Rehabilitation Grant now has 4 projects under contract and bids coming in for a 5<sup>th</sup> project.

The Board reviewed and did not comment on the Zoning Board of Appeals' Notice of Public Hearing with attached application submitted by Todd Owen for a dimensional special permit in conjunction with a garage addition on his property located at 100 Prince Paul Path.

**18. BOS to review and sign Warrants**

The BOS reviewed and signed the payable warrants.

**19. Review Correspondence:**

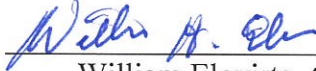
❖ **Town of Otis Notice of Public Hearing scheduled on 1/23/18 re: Discontinuance of Road Maintenance**

The BOS advised that Otis' discontinuance of road maintenance as described in its 1/23/2018 notice will not impact Town of Becket operations.

**20. Board of Selectmen to adjourn the meeting**

Michael moved to adjourn. Nicole seconded. Motion carried unanimously. At 8:55 p.m., Bill adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,  
Beverly Gilbert, *Administrative Assistant*

  
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William Elovirta, *Chairperson*

**Documents discussed at this meeting:**

- "Center Pond is Where I Belong" by Paul A. London, Becket, MA
- Appointment Applications for Town Administrator Search Committee (Nina Weiler, Katherine Warden, Robert Gross, Al Blake, Will Rodgers, Beverly Gilbert, Jeff Wilkinson, & Dan Parnell)
- Letter from Chris & Dennis Regan dated 01-06-2018 re: Broadband fiber Network Access
- Proposed amendments to Article 17 town Betterment Bylaws voted on at the BOS & Bylaw Review Committee meeting held on 01-11-2018
- List of Possible Special Town Meeting Articles
- Planning Board Request dated Dec. 13, 2017 for the BOS to include a Special Town Meeting Warrant Article re: Bylaw Changes to transfer approving authority from ZBA to PB for Large Scale Ground Mounted Solar Photovoltaic Installations (draft Zoning ByLaw attached).
- Invitation from MassDOT dated January 5, 2018 re: I-90 Interchange Study Kickoff Meeting
- Email dated January 8, 2018 from edm engineering re: Town Hall HVAC Upgrade
- December Monthly Reports: Animal Control Officer, Ambulance Dept. & Fire Dept.
- Town of Otis Notice of Public Hearing scheduled on 1/23/18 re: Discontinuance of Road Maintenance
- ZBA Notice of Public Hearing on the application submitted by Todd Owen of 100 Prince Paul Path to request a Dimensional Special permit approvals for an addition of garage.