

**Town of Becket
Board of Selectmen's Meeting
February 20, 2019
7:00 p.m.
Town Hall
557 Main Street, Becket**

Attendees:

Board of Selectmen: William Elovirta, *Chairperson*; Michael Lavery, *Vice Chairperson*

Staff: William Caldwell, *Town Administrator*; Bev Gilbert, *Administrative Assistant*

Others: Bob Gross, Jan Paxton, Bonny Ditomasso, Tom Callahan, Bill Mulholland, Alison Dixon (Chairperson – Conservation Commission), Dan Parnell

Call to order

Bill called the meeting to order at 7 p.m. He announced that the BOS was recording the meeting.

Pledge of Allegiance

Bill led the pledge of allegiance.

Approval of Minutes

Michael moved to approve the February 6, 2019 minutes. Bill seconded. Motion carried.

Broadband Update

Bob Gross, MLP Manager and Broadband Ad Hoc Group member provided an update on the Broadband project:

- The design is almost finished. The Broadband Ad Hoc Group submitted the latest adjustments to Westfield Gas & Electric and they will review it once again before providing it to the State.
- At the suggestion of the Broadband Ad Hoc Group, Westfield Gas & Electric arranged that property owners with underground utilities may initiate a consultation from PVC (subcontractor of Westfield Gas & Electric) to evaluate their conduits, at cost to the owners. Westfield Gas & Electric will deal directly with the owners of the premises with underground utilities for this service. This service may help owners to determine if they wish acquire broadband service through underground or above ground drops.
- The Broadband Ad Hoc Group will mail letters to all perspective Becket Comcast customers, as well as to all owners of premises that are off the grid, to advise what they will need to do if they wish to achieve Broadband service, since they are not on the town's plan, and require special arrangements
- The BOS signed a letter (Town Counsel reviewed) authorizing Comcast to provide Broadband service to seven premises. This authorizes Comcast to conduct a survey and provide the cost (estimated less than \$15,000) to the town for adding the premises into their system.
- Westfield Gas & Electric has changed its position and no longer wants to offer seasonal rates. After the initial period (few years) with WiredWest's contract is satisfied, seasonal rates will not be available. The Broadband Ad Hoc Group will ask Bill Ennen to negotiate this item with Westfield Gas & Electric since the state wants towns to work with Whip City Fiber. If Westfield Gas & Electric does not yield on this matter, the Broadband Ad Hoc Group will research other ISPs to see what they have to offer.
- Dan Parnell discussed short term borrowing which will likely be necessary once the town depletes its state funding for make-ready. Ordinarily towns may borrow from the stabilization fund but must

re-pay the funding by the end of the fiscal year. Dan reported that Jim Podolak of the Division of Local Services had advised that he believes there is a mechanism that would permit voters to allow the town to borrow from the stabilization fund with no deadline for repayment. Bob Gross will ask Town Counsel to provide a written opinion about borrowing from the stabilization fund and an ATM Warrant Article for that purpose, as well as instructions relating to other requirements which relate to borrowing from the stabilization fund. The objective is to save on interest costs.

- Eversource has contacted Becket Woods to discuss aerial poles. Eversource wanted to have a four-way conversation with Becket Woods, Westfield Gas & Electric, the Broadband Ad Hoc Group and themselves. Bill Ennen and the Broadband Ad Hoc Group think it is best for the town to refrain from involvement in Becket Wood's utilities and the town should not pay for Becket Wood's utility infrastructure. Bob Gross reported that he communicated that to Becket Woods through an e-mail. If Eversource changes how it provides utilities, then there is no reason the town should incur any of that cost, and the town wishes for Westfield Gas & Electric to be involved to ensure that any changes Eversource makes to its utilities will be make-ready.
- The Broadband Ad Hoc Group is considering scheduling informational sessions during the summer to keep residents updated and to reach-out to second homeowners.

Conservation Commission's recommendation for the Town of Becket to apply for the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Program Planning Grant

Alison Dixon, Chairperson of the Conservation Commission, discussed the Conservation Commission's recommendation for the Town of Becket to apply for funding for the planning process of the MVP Program. The funding allow towns to hire a contractor to assist with the process. She advised that once the town is in the planning process (the plan does not have to be completed), it would be eligible for all kinds of grants (the state has 10 million dollars earmarked for various grants affiliated with this program to make us climate resilient). Alison indicated that the Conservation Agent would be available to write the grant. Becket would need to commit with going forward with the process which includes bringing people from all aspects of the community together to identify issues of vulnerable locations, and to develop a plan. The grant requires that the town would assign a staff person or perhaps a volunteer to serve as the grant coordinator. The contractor would act as a consultant and provide expertise and administrative support would be needed.

Bob Gross advised that the town is expected to pay 25% of the cost of the grant expenses, including staffing.

Bill C. reported that he had discussed the MVP Program with an Emergency Management Director from another community, and so far, this director has devoted approximately 300 hours toward this grant. Bill C. expressed concern about the significant workload commitment this grant would mean to Becket.

Alison will report on what she learns at the MVP Seminar scheduled at the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commission Conference she will attend on March 2nd. She will inquire if the town's wetlands fund may be used to pay expenses affiliated with this grant.

Alison stated that it is not a matter of if the town should engage in this process (which will help us to be more prepared for what is to come) but when the town should start this process. She suggested talking to other groups including the Board of Health, Police Department, and Fire Department to see how this grant may assist the town.

Bill C. will request input regarding this matter from department heads (including the Highway Superintendent).

The BOS will continue this discussion at its March 6th agenda.

Wahconah School Building Committee Presentation

Members of the School Committee Building Project Committee Jan Paxton, Bonny Ditomasso, Tom Callahan and Bill Mulholland provided a handout (Evaluation of Alternatives, Estimated tax impact to the towns, Wahconah Building Project Update (February 2019, and September 2018), and presented and asked for the town's support on the Wahconah High School Building Project. They advised that they have been working in compliance with the Massachusetts School Building Authority and they provided information on the total cost, footprint of the school, tax impact, and other options available. Discussion ensued on school enrollments, programs, and population. The BOS agreed to list the Wahconah H.S. Forum scheduled on March 7th at the Becket Washington School in the Becket Bulletin. Voting to fund the new high school building will occur in district towns on April 6th.

Fiscal Year 2020 Budget Discussion

Operating Budget (discussion areas)

- Due to declining Health and dental insurance rates, Bill will reduce that portion of the budget by 3% (approx. \$12,000).
- Awaiting school operating assessments, 3% COLA figures from town Accountant
- Bill C. recommends increasing town counsel, and Tax Title
- Considering adding an AED account (for all town AEDs) into the operating budget

Capital Budget (discussion areas)

- Received request from the Becket Arts Center, and the Ambulance, Police, Highway, and Buildings & Grounds Departments.
- There is about \$250,000 in free cash that will be available for capital expenditures.
- Police Department Cruiser – The Police Chief is obtaining information on cruiser brands, and considering whether to purchase a K-9 cruiser
- Highway Dept. Vehicles/equipment – Bill C. and Dan Parnell are exploring lease to own. Dan Parnell suggested that stainless steel truck beds purchased in the past should be reused as intended when purchased.
- Drainage at Ambulance Dept.
- Town Park Committee will submit a budget request for the 21 Maple Street Area

Discussion ensued about selling off Tax Titles, and properties that the Town of Becket may wish to consider acquiring. Bill C. will meet with the Town Accountant and Town Treasurer to discuss Tax Titles.

Bill C. will look into water filtration system for the Town Hall.

BOS to vote to accept MIIA's Health Benefits Trust Renewal Proposal for FY2020

Michael moved to approve the MIIA Health Benefits Trust Renewal Proposal for FY2020. Bill seconded. Motion carried.

Police Chief's notification dated 2-13-19:

Resignation of Part-time Reserve Police Officer Cameron Forest effective 2-28-19

The Police Department will recruit to hire a Part-time Reserve Police Officer

The BOS acknowledged receipt of Chief McDonough's communication with attached copy of Part-time Reserve Police Officer Cameron Forest's notification that he tenders his resignation effective 02-28-19 to accept a full-time position with the Town of Sheffield Police Department K-

9 Unit. Bill C. indicated that the town will recruit for a replacement of this Police Department position.

Departmental Reports:

Ambulance Department (January 2019)

Volunteer Fire Department (December 2018 & January 2019)

The BOS reviewed the above captioned departmental reports. Bill moved to accept the Ambulance Director's recommendation to write-off \$2,175.26 (patient is deceased with no estate). Michael seconded. Motion carried. Bill moved to accept the Ambulance Director's recommendation to send \$7,027.50 receivables to collections. Michael seconded. Motion carried.

Board of Selectmen's Comments and Announcements

Michael discussed and brought up that the Sherwood Greens Road District's next meeting agenda will include discussion of an incident that occurred several weeks ago; The wintery road conditions on Trail Circle prevented the Becket Ambulance from reaching a call. Sherwood Greens Road District is responsible for maintaining its roads (Trail Circle is one of their roads). The Becket Ambulance Director had provided a report to the town about this matter.

Bill E. discussed an item listed under Correspondence:

Amy Perlmutter e-mail (with attachment) dated 02-13-19 request to add adoption of a Dark Skies by-law to the Annual Town Meeting Warrant. Attachment: Bylaw Review Committee's document (rev. 10-4-17 Proposed Addition to Article 17—Town Betterment By-Laws: Section 23-Outdoor Lighting)

In response to this communication, Bill E. reported that he inquired with Jeanne Pryor, former member of the By-Law Review Committee, who sent him an e-mail advising that the Bylaw Review Committee's last meeting occurred on April 18, 2018 and that the Bylaw Review Committee had not submitted a proposed Dark Skies Bylaw for town meeting. The BOS agreed that the Bylaw Review Committee should be re-activated, and the language of the proposed Dark Skies Bylaw warrants additional analysis.

Borgnis Landfill Affidavit Vote

Michael moved to authorize the Chairperson of the BOS to sign and submit to the Registry of Deeds an affidavit specifying that at town meeting the town declined to accept a gift of the Borgnis Landfill Property. Bill seconded. Motion carried. It was noted that Washington also sent a similar affidavit. The affidavits will enable the Registry of Deeds to correct their records which erroneously reflect that Washington and Becket owned the Borgnis Landfill property.

Administrator's Report

Bill C. discussed several items that he is currently working on:

- HVAC system for Town Hall – Bowman Engineering
- Work with RFP for Solar adjacent to Town Hall – No bids received
- Green Communities Grant - close-out walk-through and debrief
- Green Communities Competitive Grant open (awaits report from Bowman Engineering)
- Route 20 Spring (in process)
- Exploring options for digital records – He will meet with staff tomorrow to get a better understanding of scope
- Collins Center at UMASS Boston working on Budget presentation – GFOA Certification
- Town buildings light upgrades

- BRPC Health and CDBG update
- Election workers minimum wage increase
- Culvert Grant Award
- Annual Town Meeting Warrant

Public Input

There was none.

Any other business to come before the Board

Bill made a motion to sign a vocational transportation agreement between the Lee Public Schools and the Town of Becket (this will allow one of Lee’s students to ride the bus to Smith Vocational School). Michael seconded. Motion carried.

A business that sells solar panels sent Beverly an e-mail inquiring whether the town has door to door solicitation permits. The BOS indicated that the town does not have a solicitation permit and those wishing to conduct door to door solicitation should contact the Police Department. Before responding to the e-mail, Bill C. will discuss this with the Chief of Police.

Correspondence

**MelansonHeath letter dated 02-06-19 re: FY2017 Audit (Report dated 01-16-19)
 Planning Board Notice dated 02-05-19: Public Hearing scheduled on 04-10-19 to
 review a Special Permit application submitted for 19 Switter Lane**

**Amy Perlmutter e-mail (with attachment) dated 02-13-19 request to add adoption of a
 Dark Skies by-law to the Annual Town Meeting Warrant. Attachment: Bylaw
 Review Committee’s document (rev. 10-4-17 Proposed Addition to Article 17—Town
 Betterment By-Laws: Section 23-Outdoor Lighting)**

The BOS reviewed the above communications. Bill C. will discuss MelansonHeath’s letter with the Town Accountant, and Town Treasurer.

BOS to review and sign payable warrants


The BOS reviewed and signed payable warrants.

BOS to adjourn the Meeting

Michael moved to adjourn. Bill seconded. At 9:17 p.m., Bill adjourned the meeting.

Date Approved: 3-6-2019

Respectfully submitted,
 Beverly Gilbert, Secretary


 William Elovirta, Chairperson

Documents discussed at this meeting:

- BOS Meeting Minutes for February 6, 2019
- Town Administrator’s Report
- Departmental Reports as listed above
- Correspondence as listed above

- School Building Committee Handout as described above
- Letter from Conservation Commission dated 02-08-19 re: Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program Planning Grant Opportunities
- BOS Letter to Comcast dated 02-19-19 re: authorization to provide service to Becket Properties
- MIIA Health Benefits Trust Renewal Proposal
- Police Chief McDonough's memo dated 02/13/2019 with copy of Cameron Forest's letter of resignation dated 02/06/2019
- Amy Perlmutter's e-mail dated 02-20-19 re: dark skies bylaw with letter dated 02-20-19 signed by 9 Becket Residents asking the BOS to submit a town meeting article re: adopting a dark skies bylaw on a town warrant.