

Town of Becket
Joint Finance Committee and Board of Selectmen's Meeting
April 10, 2019
6:00 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: Bill Cavanaugh, North Becket Cemetery Commissioner

Finance Committee: Dan Parnell (remote participation due to geographic location), Mark Karlberg, Ann Spadafora, Chuck Garman, and Ron Defoe

These meeting minutes document solely the Board of Selectmen's votes.

The Board of Selectmen Chairperson will call the Board of Selectmen meeting to order.
The Finance Committee Chairperson will call the Finance Committee Meeting to order.
Bill called the meeting to order at 6 PM. He specified that the BOS was recording this meeting.

Correspondence & Transfers.

None

Administrator's Input.

The Finance Committee and BOS agreed to change the FY20 amount budgeted for Highway Department Summer (Memorial Day to Labor Day) help from \$20,400 to \$16,800. This will pay for two individuals to perform outdoor clean-up tasks in the North Becket area of the town.

The Finance Committee and BOS agreed to change the FY20 amount budgeted for Tax Title to \$25,000. Dan Parnell indicated that the Finance Committee would like to focus on assisting the Tax Collector and the Assistant Tax Collector with generating strategies/policies to reduce the town's receivables. Bill C. indicated that he is researching firms that specialize with Tax Title (He explained that this is different from Tax Auctions of which the Town is currently preparing.)

Bill C. suggested that the Finance Committee and Board of Selectmen formulate a suggested plan to pay the town's share of the new Wahconah Regional High School. This will not impact the FY20 budget.

Bill C. asked if the Finance Committee and BOS wanted to approve and recommend the Town Clerk's and Building Inspector's requests to increase their rates of pay beyond the COLA.

Bill C. indicated that Interim Town Administrator Bob Markel did not increase their rates of pay. Bill E. indicated that after Building Inspector Bill Girard retires, he would like the Town to consider shared Building Inspector services as he believes the amount of construction has decreased over the years. Bill C. had conducted a salary survey for Building Inspectors within the Berkshire County Managers Group and found that the towns responding did not offer sound comparisons to the Becket community. The BOS did not vote to increase the pay rate beyond COLA for Town Clerk and Building Inspector.

Bill C. will ask the Town Treasure and Town Accountant to re-check the Clerk of Committees COLA increase.

Discussion ensued about the Fire Chief's salary. Fire Chief Mark Hanford has provided notice that he will not seek to be reappointed after his term expires on 6-30-19. The Finance Committee and BOS agreed to restructure the Fire Chief's compensation. It is anticipated that the Fire Chief will spend more time attending to increased OSHA and other operating related mandates. The Finance Committee and BOS agreed to increase the Fire Chief's stipend to \$7,300 (increase in the amount of \$2,967) and the town will retain the inspection fees which is estimated less than \$3,000 annually).

FY20 Budget discussion and possible votes.

Bill C. fielded questions regarding on the proposed operating and capital budgets.

Bill Cavanaugh, Chairperson of the Cemetery Commissioners, presented his request for Cemetery Capital Budget items which he had provided to the Interim Town Administrator. However, this capital budget request for topsoil and a John Deere mower with backhoe was not amongst the budget requests provided to Bill Caldwell during the transition period. It was Mr. Cavanaugh's understanding that the Highway Superintendent was going to provide the cost for the equipment through a group purchasing group. The Finance Committee and BOS agreed that Mr. Cavanaugh's request for equipment has merit and should be considered. Due to that the Town Meeting Warrant must be finalized, the Finance Committee and BOS decided to increase the Reserve fund from \$35,000 to \$50,000. This will allow for a more thorough analysis to confirm that the town does need the equipment to accomplish the work at the Cemeteries, and will give Mr. Cavanaugh/Highway Dept. an opportunity to provide precise costs to present to the Finance Committee and Board of Selectmen. Mr. Cavanaugh stated that he will be able to operate without additional funding for the topsoil.

Bill C. discussed the FY 2020 Capital Requests. He advised that the Parks & Recreation Capital Request in the amount of \$4,381.82 belongs amongst the FY 2020 Capital Requests bringing the new total to \$186,995.29.

Bill moved for the Board of Selectmen to recommend an operating budget for fiscal year 2020 that totals \$6,717,003. Michael seconded. Motion carried.

The Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee will vote on their recommendations for the Town Meeting Warrant Articles.

Bill C. discussed the 2019 Annual Town Meeting Warrant Articles as listed below:

Article 1 – Compensation, Article 2 - FY 2020 Operating Budget, Article 3 – Debt Service, Article 4 – Transfer to the Stabilization Fund, Article 5 – Acceptance of Chapter 90 Funds, Article 6 – Ambulance Budget, Article 7 – Ambulance Capital Budget, Article 8 – Repairs to Becket Arts Center, Article 9 - Purchase of the New Police Cruiser, Article 10 – Fire Department Fees, Article 11 – Ambulance Department Drainage, Article 12 – Town Hall Parking Lot – Article 13 – Town Hall Kitchen, Article 14 – Becket Athenaeum Free Cash, Article 15 – Becket Athenaeum Well and Septic, Article 16 – Local Option Meal Excise Tax, Article 17 – Payment Option for Properties in Tax Title, Article 18 – Sale of Surplus Property, Article 19 – Town Clerk Appointment, Article 20 – Extended Contract – Recycling, Article 21 – Rooms Tax, Article 22 – Community Act, Article 23 – Use of Stabilization to reduce Tax Rate, Article 24 – Citizen Petition: Single Use Plastic Bag Ban, Article 25 – Indian Lakes Association Dues, Article 26 – Easement for Athenaeum, Article 27 – Revolving funds, Article 28 – Free Cash for FYH2019 Deb payment, Article 30 – Solar Installations Article 29 – Solar Installations, Article 31 – Marijuana Establishments & Medical Marijuana Treatment Centers, Article 32 – Marijuana Establishments & Medical Marijuana Treatment Centers.

Article 1 – Compensation: Bill C. advised that the correct annual salary should be \$2,121.60 for the Board of Selectmen.

Article 7 – Bill C. will check the language with Town Counsel. Bill C. will list the exact figure (\$17,000) for the remaining retained earnings.

Articles 16 & 21 – Bill C. will check if taxes collected for local option meal excise tax and Room Occupancy Excise may be earmarked for road improvements. If so, Bill C. will add the language.

Article 19 – Bill C. will obtain language from Town Counsel.

Article 23 – Bill C. will Change from “Use of Stabilization to Reduce Tax Rate” to “Use of Stabilization to offset Capital Debt Payment.”

Article 25 – Bill C. will correct to say Free cash (should not say stabilization), “To see if the Town will vote to appropriate from Free Cash...”

Article 26 – Bill C. will obtain language from Town Counsel.

Articles 29 through 32: The Board of Selectmen will not provide a recommendation for these articles submitted by the Planning Board which relate to amendments to Zoning Bylaw Table of Contents.

Article 24 – It was noted that no date for which this ban would take effect was listed and perhaps the article may be amended on the floor of the ATM if so allowed by the Moderator and Town Counsel.

Bill E. moved to approve Annual Town Meeting Warrant Articles (with changes described above) #1 through 28 with the exception of Article 24 which is being held during this vote. Michael seconded. Motion carried.

Bill E. indicated that he did not agree with Article 24 to institute a ban on plastic bags. He would prefer that education be employed to address use of plastics, and he does not want this ban to expand to a ban on plastic water bottles which are provide to the Becket Firefighters during calls. Michael indicated that he is lead petitioner and believes banning plastic bags in the community, although a small measure, is a worthwhile action to take to help the environment.

Any other business

Bill E. will attend the Berkshire County Dinner meeting on April 25, 2019.

The BOS discussed their availability to accept Pat Carnavale of the Governor’s Western Massachusetts Office’s invitation to meet during May to discuss any matters of importance to the Town of Becket. Bill. E. and Bill C. will plan to meet with Mr. Carnavale.

The Selectmen will adjourn their meeting. The Finance Committee members will adjourn their meeting.

Bill moved to adjourn. Michael seconded. Motion carried. At 8:03 pm., Bill adjourned the meeting.

Date Approved 5-1-19

Respectfully submitted,
Beverly Gilbert, *Administrative Assistant*



William Elovirta, *Chairperson*

Documents discussed at this meeting:

- Draft Annual Town Meeting Warrant
- FY 2020 Operating Budget
- FY 2020 Capital Requests