



November 2023

A special Veterans Day event in honor of America's First Female Veteran

Deborah Sampson disguised herself as a man and served for a year and a half in the Revolutionary War. She was wounded in combat and promoted as an aide to General John Paterson (from Lenox, Mass.). After her true gender was revealed she received an honorable discharge, the first woman ever to do so.

"The Memoir of a Female Soldier", by the late Jan Lewis Nelson of Washington, is a novel based on extensive research about Deborah. It tells of her life and military service, and of her struggle to gain the respect she was due for what she did and to be awarded the veteran's pension she was long denied.

Jan's husband Steve will talk about the book and how it came to be nearly 50 years after it was written.

Saturday, November 11, 11 am, Washington Town Hall
Books will be available for sale and signing
Enjoy warm spiced cider and Shire donuts

TRANSFER STATION Reminders

Hello neighbors! Some things have changed at the Transfer Station - you can get the full set of details on the Town's website or inquire at the TS on your next visit. A few important changes are:

- We can no longer accept tires of any size - check at a tire company in Pittsfield for disposal.
- Mattresses can be brought down to Casella in Lenox Dale for \$ 55. - they will cost \$125 at our TS.
- We are trying to most non-household items into the compacter at 10 cents a pound - if it needs to go into the construction bin, it will be 25 cents a pound - please come prepared.

VERY IMPORTANT NOTE:

- PLEASE !!!! Make SURE that your used motor oil is not contaminated. Our tank has been 'compromised' and it is going to cost \$ 500 to get it tested. If the the level is low enough, they will take it - if not - we have to get it pumped, cleaned and pay for a 'hazardous' dump. Do NOT put anything in the tank except used motor oil. While composing this note, I got the call - it was contaminated with chlorine at a level of 8,000 ppm - acceptable level is less than 1,000 ppm. Brake cleaner could have caused this.

**COA
Classes**

COA
Classes
Chair Yoga Mondays at 11:00 AM
Yoga Tuesdays at 9:00 AM
Osteoporosis Thursdays at 9 AM

SAVE THE DATE:
Tree Lighting in the
Town Park
Saturday December 2nd
5:00pm



Pot luck dinner on Friday November 17th at 5:30 PM
Steve will be cooking turkey with stuffing and mashed potatoes. All seniors are welcome with or without a dish to share.

COA needs you help!! If you can have ideas for additional classes, or would like to be on the board, let me know!!

Questions, comments or concerns contact Rose at
413-394-0003 Washingtoncoa@gmail.com

Washington neighbors,

I wanted to give you a brief update on DCR'S proposed "Ant Lot" logging project in October Mountain Forest in Washington. As you may know, it is currently on hold under the logging moratorium that Governor Healey enacted to review DCR's policies until December. At that time, depending on the DCR review, the "Ant Lot" contract may be signed and there will be little recourse. I am asking people to contact Rep. Smitty and Senator Paul Mark to voice their feelings about this proposed project. Also, anyone who opposes the project and would like to sign the petition can find it at <https://www.savemassforests.com> then click on Action – Preserve October Mountain State Forest and see the petition link at bottom of the page.

The DCR Ant Lot project proposes to log approximately 300 acres to the north of West Branch Road and east of Lenox-Whitney Place Rd. The area will be logged as eight 5-acre openings with connecting paths between the road and each opening for the logging equipment causing fragmentation of the forest. Herbicides may be used in the clearings. A reservoir for Pittsfield's drinking water is located nearby. The project also proposes to log the ash trees along West Branch Rd. and Lenox-Whitney Place Rd. which would include two of the Four Corners.

Susan Purser
Preserve October Mountain Forest
Becket
saveforests8@gmail.com

Dear Washington Friends & Neighbors:

November 2023

The Select Board welcomes Mike Case, who received 17 write-in votes (out of 34 votes cast) in the Oct. 21 Special Election. Thanks to all who took the time to vote in this unusual election.

The Dodge 5500 truck that was damaged in an accident back in February has finally been replaced. Back in spring, we spent a few months contesting our insurance company's valuation. Thanks to former Board member John Fish for helping eventually get a higher payout. But State procurement laws make it very cumbersome to replace a vehicle: we couldn't just go out and purchase a replacement chassis; we had to go through a sealed bid process. Thanks to Sean Curran, our Town Administrator, for helping us navigate that.

Scarcity in the vehicle market prevented us from finding an exact replacement, but Tom was able to get a 2023 Ford that was similar enough that we have been able to refit the salvaged bed, sander, and hydraulics from the Dodge at minimal cost. Together the Board and Finance Committee were able to cover the replacement costs with the insurance money and federal ARPA grant funds.

The Board of Health has acquired a new shipment of Covid tests. Residents can get free test kits, N-95 masks, and sanitizer at the Town Hall during open hours, while supplies last.

For the past six years, County Ambulance has been our primary ambulance service, based on a 2017 agreement. Becket and Hinsdale provide mutual aid assistance as needed. Based on a recent incident, the Select Board has decided that it is time to review this arrangement and explore additional options, as circumstances have evolved since that previous decision. We will be inviting the Becket Town Administrator and Ambulance Department director to join us at our November 20 meeting. The challenges of providing adequate emergency services in rural areas is a topic of broader conversation as well and has come up in recent forums with various local leaders.

Dave Drugmand and the Green Communities team are finalizing a grant project to outfit the Town Hall with heat pumps to save energy costs. This will also be an important step towards being able to use our Town Hall as a heating/cooling shelter during severe weather events. The Municipal Vulnerability Planning team will be further developing a proposal in the months ahead to enable the Town Hall to function as a climate resilience hub and emergency shelter. The Select Board will need to develop activation protocols and volunteer coordination for emergency events. We hope residents will get involved when the time comes.

The frost is on the pumpkin, as they say; so, it's time to savor the waning fall and prepare to meet the winter season ahead. Happy Thanksgiving, everyone.

Kent Lew
Select Board chair

David Ellis
Select Board clerk

Mike Case
Select Board

Gravel Roads

The Beauty and Challenges of Dirt!

By Susan Colgan

Dirt roads are a part of our history. They connect us to our past. A dirt road is often beautiful, meandering, even romantic. But they also can be bumpy, full of potholes, rutted like an old-fashioned washboard, and muddy. Oh, so muddy. Tom Johnson, Superintendent of Washington's Department of Public Works, is quick to point out that old dirt roads weren't built to be roads; they were tracks farmers used to get from one place to another.

Technically, a dirt road is a bit of a misnomer. Most roads we call dirt are gravel roads made up of a mixture of dirt and crushed stone or gravel. Twenty-two-and-a-half miles of roads in our town are gravel. The remaining 19.7 miles are paved.

It was autumn when my husband first drove up Lovers Lane, years ago, to see the property he would end up buying...The road crossed a bridge and immediately turned to gravel then gradually climbed up a mile to the property. It was a golden afternoon. The light shown through masses of yellow leaves on the maple trees that lined the road. The yellow light, the maple trees and the dirt road sold the place.

We love our road. Our neighbors love our road. But not everyone loves a gravel road, especially in mud season. Gravel roads need a lot of maintenance. At least twice a year, they need to be graded, smoothing out the bumps and ruts. Importantly, grading in the spring also creates the slight crown down the middle of the road which allows water during spring and summer storms to drain off into the gutters running alongside the road.

In fall, the grading is also essential to smooth out the road and flatten it, removing the crown, making the road uniform and more stable for winter driving and plowing. But probably the worst thing about maintaining gravel roads is mud. And last year's mud season was one of the worst, according to Johnson. In his office he elaborated.

"Last year we had two mud seasons—one in January and one again in March!" Usually, spring brings only one. There are places in town, he says, that have real drainage problems when mud season hits: up at the beginning of Watson, another up on the Middlefield Road, at the bottom of Schultz Road and then a long, troublesome stretch on Lovers Lane that begins where the paved portion meets the gravel. The first 2000 feet of the Lane is the worst.

It is here that Johnson and his crew are conducting a well-researched plan this fall. They hope it will prevent the mud season disaster from recurring next year. Whenever mud season hits, the short-term solution, Johnson explains, is to dump stones on the mud to help solidify the surface and to help drainage. But this stopgap solution does not last, nor does it address the underlying drainage problem.

Franklin County has more dirt roads than any other county in the state, and their manual of gravel roads details some of the structural issues: Mud season is the result of excessive water content in the road structure that freezes during the winter months. As temperatures warm in spring, the water in the roadway melts from the top. Since lower levels are still frozen there's nowhere for the water to drain and the top layer of the road, which is usually the finer particles of dirt and gravel, forms a "slurry." The action of passing vehicles pumps this fine slurry to the surface. The stones sink and the mud rises.

Simply put, a well-built road has a firm subgrade roadbed with a layer of aggregate base (18 to 24 inches of gravel or large crushed stone) and an eight-inch surface layer of a finer mix of crushed stone. The course material provides strength and has voids between the particles to help drainage. The finer stones fill the gaps to help hold the course materials together, ideally decreasing the infiltration of water into the road.

Johnson's plan is to close the first 805 foot section of Lovers Lane from the end of the paved roadway south to the first mailbox. He will dig down four feet to the subgrade level. Six inches of big stone aggregate will fill the approximately 22-foot-wide trench. On top of this, three inches of slightly smaller rock will be applied with another 3/4-inch layer of finer gravel. Johnson then plans to cover this strong base with geogrid or plastic mesh and another layer of crushed stone. The mesh is designed to prevent the mud slurry formed during mudseason from rising through the gravel base while, at the same time, letting water flow through the mesh, thus draining the road. Johnson hopes this operation will take no more than several weeks, weather permitting. Lovers Lane will be closed for as long as it takes.

The Chapter 90 Program, authorized through Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 90, Section 34, provides funding to municipalities for maintenance of paved roads. Gravel roads are not included unless major reconstruction is needed and approved; nor are there state regulations for the upkeep of gravel roads.

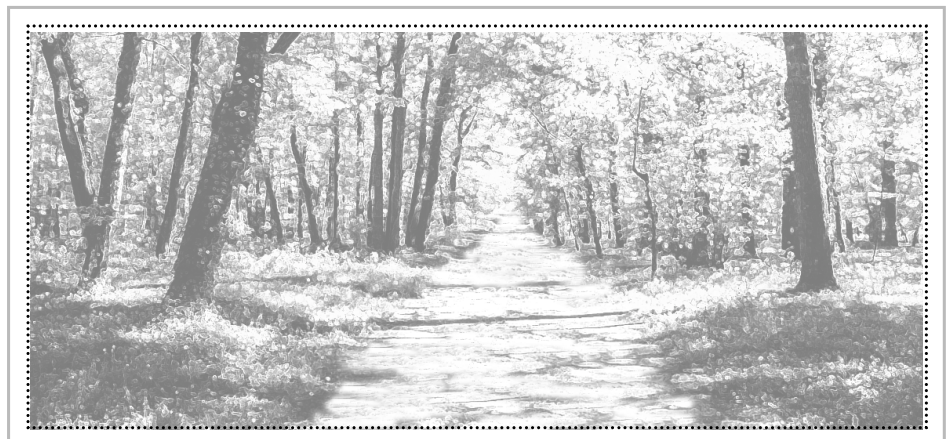
The amount allotted to Washington annually for paved roads comes to about \$168,000 a year, which, on the one hand sounds, like a lot — until Johnson points out that the 0.9-mile stretch of Upper Valley Road from Summit Road to Route 8 repaired this summer cost \$252,000. The biggest cost, according to Johnson, is covering the prevailing wage for operators of heavy equipment. "It adds up!"

The funds used to pay for the work done on Upper Valley and Frost Roads this summer came in part from the Storm Damage Reimbursement Funds available from the State after the July 18, 2021, "Big Rain." In addition to the Storm Damage Reimbursement Funds, the town used the past four years' worth of Chapter 90 Program funds (the \$168,000 per year). "With what's left over in the town budget we are able to do this major reconstruction on Lovers Lane," Johnson adds. If the improvements work as hoped, town residents can anticipate mud season improvements on Watson, Schultz and the Middlefield roads in years to come.

While the costs of maintaining our gravel roads mounts up as they did last spring, you might just ask: "How about paving the gravel roads?" But the initial cost of paving our gravel roads would be steep, explained Select Board Chair Kent Lew. It is not just a matter of putting pavement on top of gravel. The roadbed needs to be prepared, drainage problems need solving, roads need to be made wider to conform to state laws,

trees need to be removed, and landowners need to be consulted. It is a costly and daunting project for a small town like ours.

And then there are all the folks who prize our gravel roads, and the character they lend to our town.



Upcoming Events at the Becket Athenaeum

3367 Main St, Becket

BecketAthenaeum.org

- Saturdays, November 4, 11, 25, 10:30-11:30am
Library Storytime
- Saturday, November 4, 6:30-9:30pm, movie starts at 7pm
Movie Night for Adults
- Saturday, November 4, 7pm, Location: Robert Alaire's home at 74 Andrews Rd
Stargazing Party with Destin Heilman
- Tuesday, November 7, 1:30pm
Book Club: The Dutch House by Ann Patchett
- Monday, November 13, 6pm
Cookbook Club: Barefoot Contessa Foolproof by Ina Garten
- Wednesday, November 15, 5-7pm
Game Night
- Saturday, November 18, 10:30-11:30am
Creative Movement & Storytime with Laurel Lenski
- Sunday, November 19, 12-1:30pm
Reading & Poetry Workshop with José B. González
- Saturday, December 2, 6:30-9:30pm, movie starts at 7pm
Movie Night for Adults



Becket Arts Center

becketartscenter.org/events

THURSDAYS, NOV. 2, 9, 16, 30: Yoga with Rima Sala / 9:30-10:30am / \$10 (\$5 for BAC members)

FRIDAYS, NOV. 3, 10, 17: NIA with Diane Firtell / 12-1pm / \$15 per class

SATURDAY, NOV. 4: The Thanksgiving Play by Larissa Fasthorse Staged Reading / 2pm / \$20 (\$10 for BAC members)

MONDAYS, NOV. 6, 13, 20: Sean McCusker Art Demonstrations / 1-3pm / Free

FRIDAY NOV. 10: Creative Movement and Body Language for children K-5 / 10am / Free

SATURDAY, NOV. 11: Music Is My Story Performance - Bernice Lewis with Amy Attias / 7-9pm / \$10 suggested donation

FRIDAY, NOV. 17 - SUNDAY, NOV. 19: Bakersfield Mist by Stephen Sachs Theater Performance (NOV. 17: 7pm; NOV. 18: 2pm & 7pm; NOV. 19: 2pm) / \$25 (\$10 for BAC members)

SATURDAY, NOV. 18: Music Is My Story Songwriters' Workshop with Bernice Lewis / 4-6pm / \$25



Happy Thanksgiving!

Apple Pie
 Butternut Squash
 Casserole
 Corn
 Cranberry Sauce
 Eat
 Family
 Friends
 Gather
 Gravy
 Green Beans
 Love
 Mashed Potatoes
 Pecan Pie
 Pumpkin Pie
 Rolls
 Stuffing
 Sweet Potatoes
 Thanksgiving
 Turkey



N N N E Q N J V E S V V J G C F R F
 J C M Z W T H A N K S G I V I N G K
 S M W S D N E I R F A O B V C R T I
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Please put TRACKS in the subject line.