



## April 2024

### **A reminder for high school seniors:**

May 1 is the deadline for submitting your application for the Washington Scholarship. Applications may be found on the town website <https://www.washington-ma.gov>. Should you have questions, please contact Linda Levernoch 413-623-8309.

### **Attention High School Seniors Class of 2024**

Any high school senior who is a resident of the Town of Washington and is planning to continue his/her education is eligible to apply for an Emma Bailey Scholarship. Application submission deadline is May 1, 2024. Applications can be found online at [Washington-ma.gov](https://www.washington-ma.gov). Choose the "Community" tab then select "Schools" for the history of the Emma Bailey Scholarship Fund and an application.

### **The Washington Community Builders Group and the Washington Historic Commission**

are holding a hike in Washington, on April 13th, at 10AM. We will be visiting the Stumpf sawmill and millpond, as well as the nearby Stumpf Falls.

The hike is about 2 miles in total, on a rocky trail, with some off trail hiking. Sturdy boots are recommended, as well as insect repellent.

We will meet at the parking area at the intersection of Washington Mountain Road and West Branch Road, then drive from there to the trailhead. Rain date will be the following Saturday, April 20th.

Any questions, call 413-212-6039

### **WHAT: Spring Writing Workshop Series**

(online) with Lara Tupper:

a friendly and supportive group for writers of fiction/nonfiction.

WHEN: Five Thursdays in May from 6:00 - 8:00 pm ET (Zoom) - (May 2 - May 30)

DETAILS: <https://www.laratupper.com/events.htm>

Contact: <https://www.laratupper.com/contact>

Please mark your calendars for our April 20th town wide road cleanup! The focus is Washington Mt. Road but every main road in town could use some help. We'll be out from 9-12 focused on the section between the Dalton line and the AT. Join us there or pick your own road!! Don't forget to wear your safety green or orange and dress for the weather. We'll have trash bags available. The more volunteers we have the quicker we can get it done! Hope to see you helping to keep our town beautiful.

The tennis court next to the playground by the Becket Washington School has been resurfaced with new posts, nets and lines for tennis and pickleball. Anyone interested in learning the game of pickleball there will be a free clinic on Thursday, April 11<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 p.m. with a rain date of Friday, the 12<sup>th</sup>. There will be some extra paddles if someone needs one. So come on down and join the fun. Also starting Thursday, April 18<sup>th</sup> anyone who just wants to play some pickleball with different players mix and match teams come on down. We will try to do it on Thursdays through the summer. If you need anymore info. please contact David at 413-242-4181.

### Community Meeting to Talk About Emergency Services, Saturday, April 13

The Select Board will be holding a Community Meeting on **April 13th, 1:30-3:00 p.m.** at Town Hall to talk about Emergency Services in town and some upcoming changes.

We will be signing a new contract for primary EMS services with Becket Ambulance, because County Ambulance has declined to renew our current agreement in the coming fiscal year. Kathe Warden, Becket Town Administrator, will be on hand along with Max Koivisto, Becket Ambulance co-director, to answer questions and talk about emergency response protocols.

We will also be introducing a new initiative this year to get as many residences in town as possible outfitted with adequate emergency 911 house signage, to aid first responders and improve outcomes in our rural community.

Please join us!



# A P R I L



## Becket Arts Center Events

[becketartscenter.org/events](http://becketartscenter.org/events)

Yoga

**Thursdays, April 4, 11, 18, 25, 9:30am-** Rima Sala leads yoga for all abilities. \$10 (\$5 for BAC members) Class cancelled if CBRSD is closed.

Move

**Fridays, April 5, 12, 19, 26, 12pm-** Diane Firtell leads Nia Somatic Movement for all abilities. \$15 (\$10 for BAC members) Class is cancelled if CBRSD is closed.

Learn

**Saturday, April 6, 4pm** - Join Johnny Irion for a songwriting workshop. \$25 per person. Free for students 14-18.

Music

**Saturday, April 6, 7pm** - Music is My Story with Johnny Irion. Enjoy an evening of music in the upstairs gallery. (\$10 suggested donation to BAC).

Listen

**Thursday, April 11, 5pm** - Speaker Series with Kathe Warden & Robin Mathiesen. The Art of Hilltown Leadership. (Free for Members, \$5 suggested donation).

Music

**Saturday, April 13, 7pm** - Music is My Story with Louise Mosrie. Enjoy an evening of music in the upstairs gallery. (\$10 suggested donation to BAC).

Stories

**Friday, April 19, 7pm & Saturday, April 20, 2pm** - Must Be Nice or Today I am a No (Working Title) is an early-stage, budding collection of journal entries, essays and original songs.

Art

**Friday, April 26, 5-7pm** - Sean McCusker gallery display opening reception. Free and open to the public.

Learn

**Saturday, April 27, 4pm** - Join Louise Mosrie for a songwriting workshop. \$25 per person. Free for students 14-18.



sign up for our email newsletters on our website

## 2023 Dog Licenses Have Expired

The **2023 dog licenses expired on March 31, 2024**. The Town of Washington offers a very generous grace period of two months before imposing late fees. If you have not applied for a 2024 license for your dog(s) please do so before May 31, 2024. After that date you will be assessed a \$25 late fee for each dog, plus the cost of the dog license.

To receive your 2024 license(s) please see the Town Clerk on Monday evenings with the following information or send it in the mail (Attn: Town Clerk, 8 Summit Hill Road, Washington):

- Current rabies certificate
- Proof that your dog is spayed or neutered, if applicable
- Appropriate fee. \$4 if dog is spayed or neutered, \$10 if not
- Mail the above to the Town Clerk, 8 Summit Hill Road, Washington, MA 01223 and a license and tag will be mailed to you.
- If you received a late fee invoice for 2022, you will have to pay that first before you can renew your dog license for 2023.

Any questions please contact the Town Clerk 413-207-7526 or [washington.ma.townclerk@gmail.com](mailto:washington.ma.townclerk@gmail.com).

## TOWN OF WASHINGTON PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY -DEMOCRATIC TUESDAY, MARCH 5, 2024

### TOWN COMMITTEE

Write-ins:	
Carol Lew	1
Edward Bond	1
David Drugmand	1
Ernest Lampron	1
Craig Willis	1
Peter Matson	1
Kimberly Allardyce	1
Other	1
Blanks	264

**Total 272**

### STATE COMMITTEE MAN

Sherwood Guernsey, II	79
Blanks	12

**Total 91**

### PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE

Dean Phillips	5
Joseph R. Biden	78
Marianne Williamson	4
No Preference	3
Write-ins:	
Robert Kennedy	1
Blanks	0

**Total 91**

### STATE COMMITTEE WOMAN

Marietta Rose Rapetti Cawse	44
Megan Elise Arvin	23
Write-ins:	
Blanks	24

**Total 91**

**Total Registered Voters: 409**

**Total Votes Cast: 153**

**Total Republican Ballots Cast: 59**

**Total Democratic Ballots Cast: 91**

**Total Libertarian Ballots Cast: 3**

**Voter Turn-Out: 47.3%**

**TOWN OF WASHINGTON  
PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY -REPUBLICAN  
TUESDAY, MARCH 5, 2024**

**STATE COMMITTEE WOMAN**

Jessica L. Boldyga	32
Write-ins:	
Blanks	27

**Total 59**

**STATE COMMITTEE MAN**

Nicholas A. Boldyga	30
Blanks	29

**Total 59**

**PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE**

Chris Christie	0
Ryan Binkley	0
Vivek Ramaswamy	0
Asa Hutchinson	0
Donald J. Trump	30
Ron DeSantis	0
Nikki Haley	29
No Preference	
Write-ins:	0
Blanks	0

**Total 59**

**TOWN COMMITTEE**

Write-ins:	
Blanks	177

**Total 177**

**Total Registered Voters: 409**  
**Total Votes Cast: 153**  
**Total Republican Ballots Cast: 59**  
**Total Democratic Ballots Cast: 91**  
**Total Libertarian Ballots Cast: 3**  
**Voter Turn-Out: 37.4%**

**TOWN OF WASHINGTON  
PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY -LIBERTARIAN  
TUESDAY, MARCH 5, 2024**

**STATE COMMITTEE WOMAN**

Write-ins:	
Blanks	3

**Total 3**

**STATE COMMITTEE MAN**

Blanks	3

**Total 3**

**PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE**

Jacob George Hornberger	1
Michael D. Rectenwald	0
Chase Russell Oliver	0
Michael Ter Maat	1
Lars Damian Mapstead	0
No Preference	
Write-ins:	0
Blanks	1

**Total 3**

**TOWN COMMITTEE**

Write-ins:	
Blanks	9

**Total 9**

**Total Registered Voters: 409**  
**Total Votes Cast: 153**  
**Total Republican Ballots Cast: 59**  
**Total Democratic Ballots Cast: 91**  
**Total Libertarian Ballots Cast: 3**  
**Voter Turn-Out: 37.4%**

Dear Washington Friends & Neighbors:

April 2024

Despite the winter being generally mild, it hasn't wanted to move on, still hitting us with cold snaps and ice storms. Let's hope April showers bring only May flowers and nothing more.

As previously reported, County Ambulance in Pittsfield, which has provided primary response service for the past seven years, has declined to renew our agreement. We have been in talks with Becket Ambulance to take over in July. The Finance Committee is working to absorb the new assessment into next year's budget. We will be hosting a **Community Meeting on Saturday afternoon, April 13, 1:30–3:00 p.m.**, to discuss these upcoming EMS changes. This will provide an opportunity to meet some of the Becket Ambulance staff and to answer any questions or concerns that residents may have. We'll also talk about actions we can take individually to improve EMS response times in our rural community.

In the morning on that same **Saturday, April 13, 10:00 a.m.**, this year's Community Walks will be kicking off with a **History Hike** led by Tom Hoffmann of the Historical Commission. The entire western half of town that is now October Mountain State Forest was once a thriving part of the community, populated by homes, schools, and businesses. This hike will explore one such activity down the Navin trail at the site of the former Stumpf Mill.

On **Saturday, April 20**, the weekend before Earth Day, we'll hold this year's **Annual Roadside Cleanup**. Residents are encouraged to pick up trash along town roads, either a section in your own neighborhood or join the group focusing on the wooded stretch of Washington Mountain Rd along the watershed property. See elsewhere in Tracks or on the website for more information on how to pitch in. Thanks to Ann-Marie Desautelle and Linda Levernoch for helping to organize this year.

During a visit to western Massachusetts last month, the State Inspector General stopped in Washington to meet with Sean Curran (Town Admin), Ben Gelb (Treasurer), and Kent Lew to learn about the challenges of tiny towns like ours, especially regarding the dis-economies of scale in staffing essential roles and filling volunteer positions. He went away with a new appreciation.

This month, Sean and Kent will be attending two municipal forums with officials from Beacon Hill, one in Lenox, the other in Northampton. These events provide key opportunities to lobby State House leaders on issues that are critical to us, like funding for vocational education transportation (see the *Insights* article), roads & bridges, and emergency services. We're seeing all the past efforts begin to make a difference as Boston is starting to pay more attention now to Western Mass. We hope to keep the momentum going and translate that into increased State Aid.

Kent Lew  
Select Board chair

David Ellis  
Select Board clerk

Mike Case  
Select Board

# Our Mysterious School Budget

## by Josh Greene

Growing up in the 'burbs, my school district served three towns, but most students were less than a mile from any particular school, so we could walk. I remember the often-vocal disputes over the school budget, with my parents and their friends battling the senior voting block that would work to send the budget down in flames. Now, as I am about to graduate into senior citizenship myself, I can well relate to the tax burden people on fixed incomes feel. Still, I am happy to pay the price of living in a community with growing families. Washington would not be the same without a thriving community of young kids. Education represents one of the most significant line-items in the town budget—45 percent of the budget, in fact. I hoped to figure out how it is determined, so I set out to research why the education budget is what it is, and why it seems to fluctuate so much.

After reading some reporting in the Berkshire Eagle and then meeting with Kent Lew, the complexities of Massachusetts' approach to financing education began to come into focus.

We are part of the Central Berkshire Regional School District (CBRSD), made up of seven towns: Becket, Cummington, Dalton, Hinsdale, Peru, Washington and Windsor. We combine forces to provide education for all of our students.

The School District funds its budget with some state aid (called Chapter 70 funds), and the rest has to come from the towns. How it all gets divvied up is quite complicated.

Each year, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) follows a complex formula to determine a "foundation" budget for every community. This represents a basic level of education for every student in Massachusetts. DESE then determines how much of that is to be funded by state aid and how much each town is required to contribute.

When the state determines how much each town has to pay, it considers the property values in the town, the potential growth in the tax base and the residents' financial prosperity to come up with how much it thinks a given community can afford and should be spending on education.

Given those factors, a town's required minimum can be volatile: There can be dramatic changes in income level in town, or property values might change, or we might show growth in our ability to raise revenue.

But the actual cost of providing an education for our students in Central Berkshires is higher than the State's foundational budget. So the District has to assess an additional amount to make up that difference, which is called the Budget Balance. This balance is apportioned among the towns based on a five-year rolling average of the number of students each town has in the district—for Washington, that's 53[KL1] students.

Transportation costs round out the district's operating budget and aren't part of the State's foundational budget. These costs are assessed based on the same rolling five-year average of students. So each year our budgeted CBRSD Operating Costs are made up of these three components: our state-determined Required Contribution, our portion of the Basic Budget Balance, and our portion of the Transportation budget.

For next year, in Washington these costs will average to around \$14,328 per student. Because the state's required contribution is based on local property values and incomes, that average cost per student varies widely across the seven towns. Becket, for instance, averages to roughly \$20,000 per student, while Peru pays more like \$11,000.

There is also a capital budget (the debt on school buildings), which is determined on a project basis. The annual debt payment on each project is apportioned based on the town's number of students in that specific school, not district-wide. So, as Kent points out, "Becket-Washington School debt is covered basically by Becket and Washington. Dalton and Hinsdale have a few students attending, so they contribute a little."

The fluctuation of student population across the district can impact operating assessments. Washington's school-age population has been fairly constant, but many other towns have gone down in recent years. So our costs have gone up, even though we don't have more students because we ended up with a higher proportion.

You might think this sounds an awful lot like an unfunded mandate from the state, but the state barred unfunded mandates years ago; so it is just a mysterious and convoluted formula. What is, in fact, an unfunded mandate is the transportation requirement for our vocational education students. When the state barred unfunded mandates, Voc. Ed. transportation was already in place, so it was not subject to that law.

Since our school district does not have any of its own vocational education programs, students attend Voc. Ed. outside the district, and it is our town's responsibility to transport them there. They might attend Taconic High School in Pittsfield, about 30 minutes away; McCann Technical School in North Adams, about 45 minutes away, or Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School in Northampton, about 60 minutes away.

Where kids go is based on a number of factors, including which schools have programs they want to attend. Kent reports that Washington currently has six Voc. Ed. students attending three different schools, spread across the region.

The tuition for Voc. Ed. averages just under \$20,000. But we get state aid from "Chapter 70 funds" of \$5,100 per student. What is more challenging are the logistics and costs of transportation. We are required by state law to provide that transportation, and currently have to budget roughly \$10,000 per student.

The Town is entitled to full reimbursement by the state for these transportation costs — "subject to appropriation" by the Ways and Means Committee at the Statehouse. Unfortunately, for at least the past seven years, the State appropriation for this has only been enough to cover about six percent of the cost, with taxpayers picking up the rest. This year, the reimbursement will be about 17 percent.

Further complicating the town's budgeting process is the timing of students' acceptance into Voc. Ed programs. "We don't find out definitively which new students got accepted and to which schools until July or August, after our budget has already been passed in May," Kent says, "which makes it all a moving target, especially transportation."

If this all sounds a little untenable, that's because it is. Rural school districts are facing a financial crisis, as we simply don't have the economies of scale of an urban or suburban district. We'll all likely be hearing more about Statehouse debates over rural schools in the coming year.

### Washington's Education Costs

	FY 20	FY 21	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24	FY 25
CBRSD operating	\$663,112	\$708,223	\$729,950	\$761,454	\$746,093	\$745,077
CBRSD capital	\$32,785	\$97,118	\$109,011	\$124,597	\$103,937	\$103,443
Voc ed tuition	\$18,000	\$18,500	\$0	\$76,000	\$118,989	TBD
Voc ed transportation	\$12,757	\$14,355	\$5,276	\$31,376	\$59,280	TBD



## Upcoming Events at the Becket Athenaeum

3367 Main St, Becket [BecketAthenaeum.org](http://BecketAthenaeum.org)



- **Book Club: The In-Between: Unforgettable Encounters During Life's Final Moments** by Hadley Vlahos  
Tuesday, April 2  
1:30pm
- **Solar Eclipse Prep Party**  
Thursday, April 4  
Drop in between 3 & 6pm for snacks, crafts, and eclipse glasses!
- **Library Storytime**  
Saturdays, April 6, 20, 27, May 4, 18, 25  
10:30-11:30am
- **Movie Night for Adults** Saturday, April 6 & May 11  
6:30-9:30pm, movie starts at 7pm
- **Cookbook Club: Tu Casa Mi Casa** by Enrique Olvera  
Monday, April 8  
6pm
- **Creative Movement & Storytime with Laurel Lenski**  
Saturday, April 13 & May 11  
10:30-11:30am
- **Game Night**  
Thursday, April 18 & May 16  
6-8pm
- **Baby & Toddler Playgroup**  
Tuesdays starting April 30  
10-11am
- **Book Club: Klara and the Sun** by Kazuo Ishiguro  
Tuesday, May 7  
1:30pm

## Events for the Yoked Parish of Becket for 2024

April
<b>Friday, Apr 5:</b> Free Pasta Dinner / Becket Federated Church / 5-7pm
<b>Saturday, Apr 6:</b> Food Pantry / Becket Federated Church / 9-11am
<b>Saturday, Apr 20:</b> Food Pantry / Becket Federated Church / 9-11am
<b>Saturday, Apr 27:</b> Breakfast / Becket Federated Church / 8-10:30am / \$8
May
<b>Friday, May 3:</b> Free Pasta Dinner / Becket Federated Church / 5-7pm
<b>Saturday, May 4:</b> Food Pantry / Becket Federated Church / 9-11am
<b>Saturday, May 18:</b> Food Pantry / Becket Federated Church / 9-11am
<b>Saturday, May 25:</b> Breakfast / Becket Federated Church / 8-10:30am / \$8



**Washington Tracks**  
**Town Hall**  
**8 Summit Hill Rd.**  
**Washington, MA 01223**

**Presorted Standard**  
**US Postage**  
**PAID**  
**Permit 121**  
**Pittsfield MA**

[www.washington-ma.gov](http://www.washington-ma.gov)

## **Support Our Local Businesses**

**John Fish Piano Service**  
413-281-6130  
[johnfishpiano.com](http://johnfishpiano.com)  
Piano tuning, repair & restoration; 20  
years experience

**Hilltowns Veterinary Clinic**  
Dr. Sharon Lynch, MVB  
133 South Washington State Rd  
Washington, MA 01223  
413.623.5329  
[www.hilltownsvetclinic.com](http://www.hilltownsvetclinic.com)

**Lisa M. Peltier, Realtor**  
Cell: 413-822-1257  
Licensed in MA  
Roberts & Associates Realty, Inc  
48 Housatonic St., Box 25  
Lenox, MA 01240  
(413) 637-4200  
e-fax: (413) 410-2205  
[www.berkshirehouses.com](http://www.berkshirehouses.com)

**Horace Mann Insurance Agency**  
PO Box 772 Becket Ma. 01223  
Phone 413.623.2112  
Fax 413.623.5551  
Provide all Personal Lines of Insurance  
Provide Financial and retirement products too

**Pinnacle Painting Company**  
578 South Washington State Rd  
Washington, MA 01223  
413.623.8737  
Over 35 years experience Painting, wall  
covering & light carpentry

**Mark F. Roos, Broker Associate ABR**  
**The Kinderhook Group**  
413.822.6143  
[markfr909@gmail.com](mailto:markfr909@gmail.com)  
Helping buyers and sellers achieve their  
dreams

**Summit Hill Campground**  
34 Old Middlefield Rd.  
Washington, Ma. 01223  
413.623.5761  
Great Family Camping  
Tents, R.V.s Motor Homes  
Full Hook Ups  
Pet Friendly  
Seasonals Welcomed  
Events scheduled May through Sept

**Tom's Digitizing Service**  
753 Upper Valley Rd.  
Washington, MA 01223  
413-441-0784  
[thomassadin@gmail.com](mailto:thomassadin@gmail.com)  
I will convert your old 8mm movies, VHS  
tapes and video cassette tapes to DVDs.  
Call or email for pricing.

Email your TRACKS info by the **25th of the month** to get in to next month's  
issue to Lisa at: **[mrsabeski@mac.com](mailto:mrsabeski@mac.com)**  
**Please put TRACKS in the subject line.**