



December 2021



Tree Lighting Ceremony

Town Park
Friday, December 10th
5:30PM

caroling to follow.



FREE WELL WATER TESTING for PFAS

REGISTER
Well owners, please apply online for your free private well drinking water sampling kit.

SAMPLE
Receive your free and easy-to-use sampling kit. Collect water samples and return free of charge.

GET RESULTS
Find out if your private well drinking water contains per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). PFAS have been linked to adverse health effects.

Apply for FREE water testing TODAY

[**dwp-pfas.massdep.org**](http://dwp-pfas.massdep.org)

Apply promptly, this is a limited time offer, in select towns.

Applications must be made online. If using cell phone, orient in landscape mode.

Special Town Election:

Date: Saturday, December 4, 2021

Polling hours: 12:00 PM - 4:00 PM

Polling location: Washington Town Hall, 8 Summit Hill Road

Candidates on the ballot

Board of Selectmen

- David Ellis
- John Fish
- Keith Sharp

Municipal Light Board member (3 year term)

- Pauline Combe-Clark

Municipal Light Board member (2 year unexpired term)

- Richard Spencer

Municipal Light Board member (1 year unexpired term)

- No candidates on the ballot

2022 Dog Licenses are Available

We have received the 2022 dog tags. The 2021 licenses and tags do not expire until March 31, 2022, but you are welcome to get the 2022 license/tag anytime you would like. You can see the Town Clerk on Monday evenings with the following:

- Current rabies certificate
- Proof of spay or neuter, if applicable
- Fee: \$4.00 if spayed/neutered or \$10 if not

You can also mail the above (checks payable to Town of Washington) to the Town Clerk, 8 Summit Hill Rd, Washington, MA 01223 and a license and tag will be mailed back to you.

Please note that if you received a 2021 late fee invoice, you will have to pay that first before receiving your 2022 license/tag.



COA News

Classes are continuing with masks being required for all

Yoga Tuesdays at 9:00 am Osteoporosis Thursdays at 9:00 am Tai-Chi/QiGong Fridays at 10:00 am

Pot Luck Dinner Friday December 17th at 5:30 pm all seniors welcome with or without a dish to share - we look forward to seeing you! (masks are required for socializing before and after eating)

TOWN OF WASHINGTON DECEMBER 2021 CALENDAR

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
 <p>Becket Arts Center Wreath Making Workshop at the Washington Town Hall 10AM to 5PM Pre-register for one of the two sessions at becketartscenter.org</p>	<p>Call to verify the Town Office you are looking to visit is open before you come to the Town Hall</p>		<p>Historical Commission 10AM Building Inspector 1PM-2PM Transfer Station 5PM-8PM Girl Scout Troop 40367 6PM-8 PM</p>	<p>OSTEOPOROSIS CLASS 9AM</p>	<p>TAI-CHU/QU-GONG CLASS 10AM</p>	<p>Special Town Election 12-4PM Transfer Station 8AM-4PM</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>6</p>	<p>7</p>	<p>8</p>	<p>9</p>	<p>10</p>	<p>11</p>
<p>Becket Arts Center Wreath Making Workshop at the Washington Town Hall 10AM to 5PM Pre-register for one of the two sessions at becketartscenter.org</p>	<p>Administrative Assistants 10AM-2PM Select Board Meeting 7:00 - 9:00PM Assessors Office 6:00 - 8:00PM Tax Collector 6:00 - 8:00PM Town Clerk 7:00 - 9:00PM Police Department 7:00 - 9:00PM</p>	<p>Yoga with Rima 9AM</p>	<p>Administrative Assistant 10AM-2PM Building Inspector 1PM-2PM Transfer Station 5PM-8PM Girl Scout Troop 40367 6PM-8 PM</p>	<p>OSTEOPOROSIS CLASS 9AM</p>	<p>TAI-CHU/QU-GONG CLASS 10AM Tree Lighting Ceremony 5:30PM</p>	<p>Transfer Station 8AM-4PM Town Planning Steering Committee Meeting 9AM</p>
<p>12</p>	<p>13</p>	<p>14</p>	<p>15</p>	<p>16</p>	<p>17</p>	<p>18</p>
<p>Administrative Assistants 10AM-2PM Select Board Meeting 7:00 - 9:00PM Assessors Office 6:00 - 8:00PM Tax Collector 6:00 - 8:00PM Town Clerk 7:00 - 9:00PM Police Department 7:00 - 9:00PM</p>	<p>Administrative Assistants 10AM-2PM Select Board Meeting 7:00 - 9:00PM Assessors Office 6:00 - 8:00PM Tax Collector 6:00 - 8:00PM Town Clerk 7:00 - 9:00PM Police Department 7:00 - 9:00PM</p>	<p>Yoga with Rima 9AM Planning Board Meeting 7PM</p>	<p>Administrative Assistant 10AM-2PM Building Inspector 1PM-2PM Transfer Station 5PM-8PM Girl Scout Troop 40367 6PM-8 PM</p>	<p>OSTEOPOROSIS CLASS 9AM</p>	<p>TAI-CHU/QU-GONG CLASS 10AM Council On Aging Polluck Dinner 5:30PM-7PM</p>	<p>Transfer Station 8AM-4PM</p>
<p>19</p>	<p>20</p>	<p>21</p>	<p>22</p>	<p>23</p>	<p>24</p>	<p>25</p>
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<p>26</p>	<p>27</p>	<p>28</p>	<p>29</p>	<p>30</p>	<p>31</p>	
		<p>Yoga with Rima 9AM</p>	<p>Administrative Assistant 10AM-2PM Building Inspector 1PM-2PM Transfer Station 5PM-8PM</p>	<p>OSTEOPOROSIS CLASS 9AM</p>	<p>TAI-CHU/QU-GONG CLASS 10AM</p>	

Entity	Contact	Number
Assessors	Karen Avale	717-7216
Board of Health	Jim Huebner	655-8668
Building Inspector	Paul Greene	446-0964
Chapel Commission	Rose Borgnis	394-0003
Clerk	Allison Mikaniewicz	623-2185

Entity	Contact	Number
Conservation	Michelle Lampro	464-2388
Council on Aging	Rose Borgnis	394-0003
Finance Committee	Sean Connors	212-1182
Parks Commission	Dominic Sinopoli	623-2086
Planning Board	Don Gagnon	822-8385

Entity	Contact	Number
Police Chief	Nicole Miller	446-4294
Selectmen	Kent Lew	623-0202
Tax Collector	Gina Campbell	623-0146
Transfer Station	Michelle Lampro	464-2388
Veterans Agent	John Herrera	499-9433

Washington Insights

This is the first in a series of articles from members of the Steering Committee for Washington's Town Plan. We are hoping to share what we learn as we explore different paths forward for our town.

How We Pay the Bills

By Carol Lew

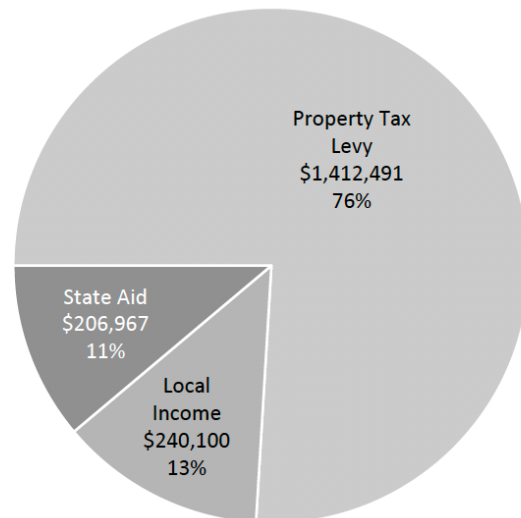
Why go to the trouble of trying to bring businesses to town, when so many Washingtonians like the character of the town just the way it is? It's a question I asked my husband, Kent Lew, after the first Steering Committee meeting. He served on the town's Finance Committee for seven years and is now on the Select Board.

"Keeping our small rural town just the way it is gets more and more expensive every year. There are costs that we can't choose not to pay and can't negotiate—like School District and 911 Emergency assessments, or insurance premiums. Those keep going up, while our revenue other than taxes (like State Aid) stays flat or goes down. So the difference has to be made up mostly through property taxes. If we want to keep this town affordable for our residents we have to be proactive. But this is not about pursuing revenue at any cost, rather it is about finding opportunities we can all accept, opportunities that allow us to rein in our taxes while still maintaining the essence of our town's character."

Are there Business Opportunities for Washington?

I joined Washington's Steering Committee to consider Business Development for the Town Plan. I thought new businesses could contribute needed revenue to our town. But it turns out to be a complicated issue: Our entire town is zoned residential and most any business interested in locating here would require a special permit. As I began to research different possibilities for business to bring revenue to the town, I kept running into dead ends. To get a baseline, I asked Kent about our current sources of town revenue. He showed me some charts, including this one, estimating revenue for Washington's 2022 fiscal year.

Town of Washington, FY22 Estimated Revenue



Property Tax Levy	\$1,412,491	75.96%
Local Income	\$240,100	12.91%
State Aid	\$206,967	11.13%
		<hr/>
		\$1,859,558 100.00%

Here are some things I learned through my research for the Steering Committee:

- Over 70% of the town's footprint is tax-exempt conservation land. While our town's natural beauty is something we cherish, the conservation land is not subject to property tax. Instead, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and Pittsfield Watershed make a payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT). That payment has decreased over time on state land. And there is no PILOT from the Nature Conservancy, which owns a sizable amount of property in Washington.
- Most businesses would not actually bring in any more revenue to the town than a homeowner does. Residential and commercial properties are assessed in the same way and taxed at the same rate.
- Increasing the tax rate for businesses is not an option for our town under Dept. of Revenue regulations. On the other hand, a business paying the same rate of taxes would not incur the kinds of costs associated with a family living in town and sending kids to school. The net tax benefit of bringing businesses to Washington is similar to some residential situations, like second-homers or residents without school-age kids.
- As required for all towns in Massachusetts, Washington has a bylaw that allows cannabis-related businesses, and there's a 3% town tax rate on cannabis sales. Cannabis Impact fees could also be levied on operations selling or growing cannabis, but towns that are charging this fee are now being challenged if they are not spending the collected fees on the issues they say were impacting them (like additional traffic control or police monitoring).
- Washington's room tax is 6%. Washington homeowners are permitted to rent out rooms or their home as a short term rental (like Airbnb). The state collects room tax and sends that portion to Washington. This is money coming to the town from people who don't live here. (Now we're on to something!) This room-tax revenue would also apply to other types of short-term lodgings with four or more rooms, but establishing such a lodging business would require a special permit under our current bylaws.

In an upcoming article, we plan to explore the topic of short term rentals, and discuss how a homeowner might go about becoming an Airbnb host.

Finding ways to a more sustainable future for Washington won't be easy, but if we work together, I believe we can do it.

Note: Soon, the Town of Washington will have a brand new website. It'll be easy to negotiate, and we'll be able to access so much more information. Tracks will be available there, as it has been on our current website. These articles will be published separately. That's because we plan to expand some of our stories and add photos and links. You'll find them in the Community menu under the heading "Washington Insights".

Winter has definitely arrived. Our plow trucks are all in good working order now and ready. Even as our Highway crew works diligently to keep our roads safe and passable, please use extra caution especially at dawn and dusk as temperatures hover around freezing and road conditions are particularly unpredictable.

Thanks to everyone who turned out for the Special Town Meeting last month. Special thanks to Matt Watson for stepping in as temporary moderator for the occasion and doing a valiant job. Now that we've amended our Solar Photovoltaic bylaw, we can apply again for Green Community status. This will entitle us to grant funding for energy upgrades and projects.

Please remember to come out and vote in the **Special Town Election on Saturday, Dec 4**, from noon until 4:00, and take part in choosing someone to join us on the Select Board.

The receivership case for the Bucksteep property is winding down. The buildings and grounds have been made safe and secure. The judge views the task of Health Code compliance as one for a new property owner, not the Receiver. Our Treasurer has filed in Land Court to foreclose on the tax-title lien. The current owner, Family Unity International, has said that they are now having their commercial broker, Cushman & Wakefield, put together an auction of the property.

The Covid-19 case numbers in Berkshire County continue to be higher than the state average. Everyone 18 and over who is fully vaccinated is now eligible and strongly encouraged to get a booster shot. To find a location, visit vaxfinder.mass.gov.

MassDEP is offering to Washington homeowners a free testing of well water for the presence of harmful PFAS chemicals. Apply at dwp-pfas.madwpdep.org.

In the months ahead, the Select Board will be looking to appoint a Cemetery working group to review cemetery policies, make recommendations to the Board, and manage any project to prepare new cemetery space in town. If you're interested in being part of that group, please reach out to Kent or Tricia, or email Jodi at washingtonaas@gmail.com.

The Select Board is now experimenting with remote participation via Zoom for its regular Monday night meetings. The Meeting ID and login information will be posted on the agenda at Town Hall. When the redesigned website is launched (hopefully with the new year) we will be able to regularly provide a direct link.

As you gather with family and friends to celebrate this season, please use common sense and stay safe and healthy. Happy Holidays to one and all.

Kent Lew, Select Board chair

Tricia Drugmand, Select Board clerk

Help Wanted with Climate Change Planning

The Select Board is interested in pursuing a Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Planning Grant to review and update our Hazard Mitigation Plan. The project will further identify climate change vulnerabilities in our community. Receiving MVP status will open up significant grant opportunities to fund important projects. The Board is looking for anyone with some experience in grant writing and project leadership who might want to step up and volunteer to help us and the community.

If this sounds like you or someone you know, please contact Kent or Tricia directly or email washingtonboardofselectmen@gmail.com for more information.

Open Burning for 2022

Open burning will run from **January 15 - May 1, 2022**. Washington residents and property owners must obtain a permit for open burning from the Fire Chief for each day they want to burn. There are two options for Call the Fire Chief's residence (413) obtaining a permit:

623-2185 and speak directly to the Chief or leave a message (listen to the entire message to be sure burning is being permitted for the day). When leaving a message include name, address where you will be burning, and a contact phone number.

1. Log onto www.bcburnpermits.com and follow the directions that are listed.

Weather conditions, current and predicted, are part of the determining factors for permitting. The MassDEP also makes a determination based on air quality. Call the MassDEP Air Quality Hotline at (800) 882-1497 or visit [MassAir Online](https://massaironline.com) to find out if the daily air quality is acceptable for burning.

Open burning must be done:

- Between 10:00 AM and 4:00 PM
- At least 75 feet from all buildings
- As close as possible to the source of the materials being burned
- When air quality is acceptable for burning
- Attended by an adult until completely extinguished
- Extinguishment materials / tools must be onsite and available
- No hazardous materials
- Use common sense and be safe
- Call 911 immediately if the fire gets out of control

WASHINGTON TRACKS
TOWN HALL
8 SUMMIT HILL RD.
WASHINGTON, MA 01223

HAPPY
everything

WWW.WASHINGTON-MA.COM

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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

Hilltowns Veterinary Clinic

Dr. Sharon Lynch, MVB
133 South Washington State Rd
Washington, MA 01223
413.623.5329
www.hilltownsvetclinic.com

John Fish Piano Service

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johnfishpiano.com
Piano tuning, repair & restoration; 20 years experience

Justice of the Peace

Dorothy Filanowska
413.446.6921 justicedora@gmail.com
<http://www.justicedora.com>

Mark F. Roos, Broker Associate ABR

The Kinderhook Group
413.822.6143
markfr909@gmail.com
Helping buyers and sellers achieve their dreams

Pinnacle Painting Company


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

Realtor & Notary

Lisa Peltier
500 S. Washington State Rd.
413.822.1257
Keller Williams Realty
LisaPeltier413@gmail.com

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



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