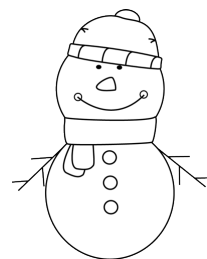
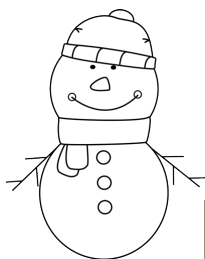




December 2023



*Join Friends and Neighbors
in the Town Park for the
Annual Tree Lighting celebration*

*Enjoy cookies, cocoa and
caroling in the gazebo
Saturday, December 2nd at 5:00 PM*

A vertical poster for a winter writing workshop. The background is dark blue with white snowflakes of various sizes scattered throughout. At the top, there's a border of larger, more detailed snowflakes. In the center, the title "Winter Writing Workshop Series" is written in a large, elegant, white cursive font. Below the title, the dates "January 15-February 12, 2024" and "Five Mondays, 6-8 pm ET" are written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font, followed by "ONLINE" in all caps. At the bottom, there's a white silhouette of a snowy landscape with evergreen trees. On the right side of this landscape, there's a small icon of a quill pen in an inkwell, next to the text "SWIFT INK STORIES". To the left of the quill, there's a line of text: "Join a friendly, supportive writing community and jumpstart your prose in 2024." To the right of the quill, it says "with Lara Tupper" and "laratupper.com". At the very bottom, centered, is the text "For details: laratupper.com/events".

*Winter
Writing
Workshop
Series*

❄ January 15-February 12, 2024
Five Mondays, 6-8 pm ET
ONLINE

Join a friendly, supportive
writing community and
jumpstart your prose in
2024.

 SWIFT INK
STORIES

with Lara Tupper
laratupper.com

For details: laratupper.com/events

**COA
Classes**

COA

Classes

Chair Yoga Mondays at 11:00 AM

Yoga Tuesdays at 9:00 AM

Osteoporosis Thursdays at 9 AM

Celebrate the season with the Becket Praise Team at the Pot luck dinner on Friday
December 15 th at 5:30 PM

Steve will be cooking roast pork. 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

Dear Washington Friends & Neighbors:

December 2023

Winter is fast-approaching, another holiday season is upon us, and the end of the year is just around the corner. The few snowfalls so far have not stuck for long. But residents are reminded not to plow snow from driveways onto the roadways. If you have to push snow across the road, please be sure to clean up any trailings. Your cooperation with this is appreciated.

The Lovers Lane Rd project to rebuild the road base at the bottom of Schulze Rd has been postponed until next spring, unfortunately. Tom was not able to coordinate the additional resources needed within the weather constraints, and now time has basically run out this season.

We continue to actively engage with CSX to address the ongoing problems at the Upper Valley Rd swamp. The flooding recurred within weeks after their last efforts, and worse than ever. Sean worked with DFW to address beaver issues further downstream, which CSX claimed were blocking the drainage from Muddy Pond. Now CSX has been back to pump out water once again and has brought a crew from down south to attempt to completely clear the compromised culverts.

But we know the problems will just recur without a long-term fix. What we really need CSX to do is replace and upsize the old culverts. The CSX regional foreman has put in for replacement next year, but the decision rests higher up. Sean has engaged with the MassDOT Rail & Transit Administrator and the Governor's Western MA Director for help convincing CSX of this priority.

Residents have undoubtedly noticed all the pole replacements that Eversource has been doing along Route 8 through town. Washington has historically been served by two separate electrical circuits: half the town is fed from the Hinsdale substation, while the other half gets its power from the Blandford substation. The current upgrade project will finally connect these two circuits. This means when a storm takes down the feed to one part of town, Eversource will now be able to temporarily switch to the other circuit (once the damage area has been isolated, of course). This upgrade will improve resiliency in Washington and potentially reduce outage downtimes. The project will also make three-phase power available in town for the first time, which could now enable large-scale solar generation or Level 3 EV charging stations, for example.

Last month, the Select Board met with the Becket Town Administrator and their new EMS Director to discuss the possibility of having Becket Ambulance provide our primary service. We plan to meet again with County Ambulance to discuss their current and future capabilities. In the new year we will want to review options with residents for input before finalizing any decisions.

As you gather with family and friends to celebrate this season, please stay safe and healthy. We wish everyone Happy Holidays and a prosperous New Year.

Kent Lew
Select Board chair

David Ellis
Select Board clerk

Mike Case
Select Board

Meet Sean Curran

Washington's New Town Administrator

By Josh Greene

In a first for Washington, we now have a Town Administrator to help us run Washington. The search committee, made up of residents of Washington and Middlefield, hired Sean Curran, who started this summer working half time for each town.

The Select Board, led by Kent Lew, sees this as a critical step to establish stable and sustainable governance. By separating the practical administration of the town from the duties of elected officials, projects, records and other essential operations will be handled by someone with the skills and training to do it. "That allows the elected officials on the Select Board to play the very important role of representing the community, to make sure the activities are in the betterment of the community goals. Anyone with a commitment and interest in the town can run for the Select Board, to participate in those decisions and not be burdened with the work that comes out of them." I spoke with Curran about the background he brings to his new job and the goals he hopes to help Washington achieve.



Sean Curran describes his upbringing as working class. "My folks came here from Ireland," he says. "They never graduated from high school and they instilled in all of us that education was the way to get ahead in the US." He left Springfield to study political science at Saint Anselm College in Manchester, New Hampshire, then went on to study law at Suffolk University Law School in Boston. He would study in the law library and look out the window at the Massachusetts State House. "The golden dome on Beacon Hill was right across from the library," he recalls. "That seemed to be where all the action was."

When he returned home to Springfield, there was an opening for the state legislature so he threw his hat in the ring. "I represented the residents of Springfield there for ten years, and it set me up for a career in the public sector. After I left the legislature, I started my own practice—real estate law was my bread and butter for many years." When Tony Gulluni was elected district attorney of Hampden County, Curran joined his staff full time, working there for three years starting in 2016. Now he serves on the Springfield City Council.

While Washington is an hour from home, he was interested in the Town Administrator role as an opportunity to gain executive experience in government—having served in the legislative branch for most of his career. "I take Route 20 every morning. It may not be the smartest way—there are some 35 mph areas—but it's a beautiful drive into Berkshire County."

Curran juggles his administrative duties at Washington and Middlefield, working half-time for each town. "I find the positions are complementary," he says. "There are the same challenges in Washington and Middlefield. Both have old school houses for the town hall, and both deal with limited funding from the state. Smaller towns are dependent on state aid, and they don't get a lot. You need a strong voice on the executive level to fund through grants."

“Springfield would have three or four people writing grants,” he says, while in Washington, it had been up to members of the Select Board and some part timers working for the town. As Kent Lew points out, even if we can write the grant, that’s only half the battle; we need someone to manage the programs if the money comes through.

Curran has been impressed by the people he’s met during his first few months here in Washington. “I’ve worked at City Hall [in Springfield], at the State House [in Boston], in the courthouse...and I don’t think I’ve come across a bunch of more civic minded individuals. Everyone I meet in town is really pro-Washington, with the concern of how to move this town toward progress. It energizes you; it recharges your batteries to see such civic-minded individuals.”

He is also optimistic about Governor Maura Healey’s commitment to Western Massachusetts. “The administration has really elevated the focus on rural communities, and appointed Anne Gobi, as director for rural communities. Hopefully, my role as town administrator will give Washington a stronger voice.”

In addition to writing grants, looking for funding outside of the state’s allocations—and implementing what funding he can bring into Washington—his role also involves work on the annual budget. He will be working with the town’s Finance Committee, setting parameters for the budget, bringing it to the committee for their recommendations, then presenting it to the Select Board.

Curran is working to tap into the state’s Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Grant Program—developing a plan, which then may qualify the town to apply for a grant. Part of that plan is to make capital improvements at the Town Hall for an emergency heating and cooling center at the Town Hall. The goal is to help protect residents during a disaster.

He’s also been focused on resolving the recurrent flooding on Upper Valley Road. In fact, when we spoke, Curran was on his way for a site visit with CSX. As he explained the problem that has been dogging residents in the neighborhood, “CSX has two culvert pipes running under the railroad tracks. They are more than 100 years old, and we rely on them to drain the swamp along Upper Valley Road into Muddy Pond, which empties into the Housatonic.” He was on his way to meet with CSX to see if their crew could open the blocked culverts with waterjets, rather than pumping out millions of gallons of water from the swamp into Muddy Pond. He has been calling state officials and administrators for rail and transit, working to put Washington’s flooding at the top of their agenda. “We are advocating for full culvert replacement,” Curran explains, “making our voice known, that Washington deserves a corporate partner that takes care of its property. Culvert maintenance is part of that.”

Curran sees a central part of his new job as serving as the point person between department heads. He has set his personal goal to bring as much money to the town through grants, focusing on capital improvements—to the roads, the town park, Town Hall... He is at Town Hall about four hours a day, and hopes to make the place a resource for residents with any questions on taxes, road issues or services related to town government. You can find him there on Mondays from 5 pm to 9 pm, as well as on Wednesdays and Fridays from noon to 4 pm.

Washington has provided a town issued cellphone for Sean; text or call him at 1-413-440-9747. You can also contact Sean by email, at washingtontownadm@gmail.com. Reach out to share your concerns, opportunities you see for the town, or just to share your love of Washington.

**Science of Movement Workshop:
Benefits of Movement for
Our Many Muscles**

**Friday, December 15, 2023
10:00-11:00 a.m.**

Washington Town Hall

Free workshop open to all community members that are interested in supporting their overall wellbeing through movement!

Share in the conversation about the impact of physical activity on our physical, cognitive and emotional wellbeing.

Following the presentation and discussion the facilitator, Laurel Lenski, will offer an opportunity to engage in experiences & exercises that benefit our many muscles!



This program is sponsored by the
Washington Cultural Council.



Open Burning for 2024

Open burning will run from **January 15 - May 1, 2024**. 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 obtaining a permit:

1. Call the Fire Chief's residence (413) 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.
2. 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 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 Useavailable
- No hazardous materials
- Use common sense and be safe
- Call 911 immediately if fire gets out of control

Paul Mikaniewicz

Fire Chief

Becket / Washington

Upcoming Events at the Becket Athenaeum

3367 Main St, Becket

BecketAthenaeum.org

The Becket Athenaeum needs your support in this season of giving!

Help us continue to provide the robust services & materials that you and your neighbors value so highly! A healthy library consistently responds to, and even anticipates, the evolving needs of the community. In order to grow with our patrons – we need your support! The funds we receive from Becket and Washington cover about half of our annual operating budget. We invite you to join our loyal group of donors - those community members who we rely on to bridge our funding gap.

Expect our mailing this month or donate online anytime:

bit.ly/BA-donate

- Saturday, December 2, 6:30-9:30pm, movie starts at 7pm
Movie Night for Adults
- Saturdays, December 2, 16, 23, 30, 10:30-11:30am
Library Storytime
- Tuesday, December 5, 1:30pm
Book Club: Behold the Dreamers by Imbolo Mbue
- Saturday, December 9, 10:30-11:30am
Creative Movement & Storytime with Laurel Lenski
- Monday, December 11, 6pm
Cookbook Club: Bring Your Own Recipe & Cookie Swap
- Wednesday, December 13, 5-7pm
Game Night

"Becket Federated Church store will be open from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm on Saturday December 2nd, 9th, and 16th. Christmas items."



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