



May 2011

To our fellow Washington residents:

Between the Patriots' Day holiday and the lack of a quorum on 4/11 and 4/25 the Select Board met only once in April. We apologize to any residents who were inconvenienced.

The Board plans to appoint a Building Maintenance Coordinator. A job description for the position, which carries an annual salary of \$500, can be found on the Town's website. This appointment, like other appointments to the Town's various boards, committees and councils will be made in June, so anyone who is interested please let Jan Nelson (our Administrative Assistant while Jodie Hostetter is on maternity leave) know. Jodie and Jan have made this a seamless transition – thanks to both!

Due to increased concern that non-residents have been using our Transfer Station, stickers to identify residents are being printed. Once they are available they will be handed out at the Transfer Station by Michelle Lampro. The stickers are free and will also be available at the Town Hall.

In all likelihood Head Start will be moving to the Becket-Washington School. Among other implications, this will free up considerable space in the Town Hall. The Select Board, Finance Committee and the Planning Board will be considering the overall use of space in the coming months. If anyone has any ideas or concerns, please let us know.

Some updates:

- After the re-bid of the new boiler for the Town Hall we have received a quote that was slightly lower than the first. The boiler itself and a maintenance contract will be paid for by a Federal energy grant while a new on-demand hot water heater will be paid from the building maintenance budget. Energy usage at the Town Hall should be significantly reduced.
- Specifications for the insulation and re-siding of the Town Hall are being prepared by Berkshire Regional Planning. This work is also being funded by a Federal energy grant, and should also have a positive effect on energy usage.

We hope to see as many of you as possible at our Annual Town Meeting (7 pm Saturday May 14 at the Town Hall). Even more importantly, we hope each and every one of our voters exercises his or her most important civic duty during Town Elections on Saturday May 21. See you there.

Jim Huebner,
Select Board Chair

Shaun Lennon,
Select Board Clerk

Free sharps containers for the safe disposal of hypodermic needles are available at the Transfer Station.
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MAY tidbits from the Conservation Commission
taken from: http://www.massaudubon.org/Nature_Connection/almanac.php

May 3
New moon.

May 6
Watch for trout lilies, columbine, trillium, and other woodland wildflowers before the trees leaf out.

May 7
Watch for spring azure butterflies at forest edges and in gardens.

May 15
The height of spring warbler migration; listen for the dawn chorus and watch the treetops and shrubbery at dawn and dusk.

May 17
Full moon. The Flower Moon.

May 20
Painted turtles and snapping turtles move onto land to lay their eggs.

May 25
Scarlet tanagers and rose-breasted grosbeaks return.

May 28
Dogwood blooms.

MAY HOLIDAYS

May 01 Labor Day / May Day • May 05 Cinco de Mayo (Mexico)
May 08 [Mother's Day](#) • May 30 [Memorial Day](#) (USA)

Update on the Neighbor to Neighbor Challenge - Submitted by Rose Borgnis

as of April 22, 2011 donations have been received from 9 Washington residents totaling \$295.00
We are well on our way to meeting the challenge (at least 20 residents donating a total of \$750.00)
and receiving the 5 to 1 matching funds of \$3,750.00 to help out our neighbors in need.
The deadline to meet the challenge is June 1, 2011.

The slate for this year's Annual Town Election is set. The following people will be printed on the ballot:

Richard Spencer: Finance Committee; 3 year term
Sean Connors: Finance Committee; 3 year term
Marilyn Wiley: Planning Board; 5 year term
Kenneth Walls: Planning Board; 2 year unexpired term
Michael Case: Selectman; 3 year term

There is also the Auditor's position (2 year unexpired term) and a third position on Finance Committee (1 year unexpired term) on the ballot, but no nomination papers were submitted for either of these positions.

The election will be held on Saturday, May 21, 2011 from 12:00 PM to 4:00 PM at the Town Hall. Hope to see all our registered voters come out to vote! And if you aren't able to vote on this day, contact me soon for an absentee ballot application.

Allison Mikaniewicz, Town Clerk
623-2185

TOWN OF WASHINGTON
Preliminary Highlights of the Fiscal Year 2012 (FY12) Annual Town Warrant
Submitted by Richard Spencer

Article 3: Elected officials have seen no salary increase in three years. After careful consideration of increases in required duties, mostly due to state requirements, and a survey of salaries in towns similar to ours, the town has budgeted large increases for the Town Clerk and the Assessors.

Article 5: Most General Government budgets are set at the FY11 level or have slight increases. Notable increases, however, are for Tax Collector and Town Clerk Expenses. Also, after several years at the same rate, the town has budgeted a significant increase for the consulting assessor who has shouldered the brunt of the department's duties since his appointment and has not seen an increase in many years. A significant decrease is requested for Selectmen's expenses. FY11 included several expensive legal ads. Also, a significant decrease in short term interest is anticipated, due to the acceptance last year of the ability to issue preliminary real estate tax bills. This greatly reduced the town's cash flow problems. Several costly projects are scheduled for the town park; but at press time that budget had not been finalized.

Articles 7 & 8: The capital budget for the Central Berkshire Regional School District is down 7.5%; and the much larger operating budget is up 4.5%. The increase in the assessment for operating expenses is solely due to the minimum contribution, which is set by a state formula not the school committee.

Articles 9 & 10: We expect three vocational education students in FY12, two at Taconic High School and one at McCann Technical School. Due to the efforts last year of our primary bus driver, Victor Breen, negotiations with the town of Becket have led to significant decreases in the cost of vocational student transportation starting in FY 11.

Article 12: (Health & Safety) The Becket Fire Department has asked for a \$2000 increase this year. We have budgeted \$6000 for at least ten years. A small increase in Washington Police expenses is also anticipated.

Articles 13: (Community Services) The Becket Athenaeum has asked that we increase our support in FY 12. Over the past year, attendance at the library has increased 50% and circulation has increased nearly 40%. Washington accounts for about 15% of Athenaeum patrons.

Article 16: (Buildings, Grounds, Equipment) An increase is requested for some overdue repairs to the town hall, the school house on Washington Mountain, and the old town hall. The request for regular maintenance of town buildings is unchanged from FY11 at \$30,000. But, for FY12 the account has been split to include separate line items for the custodian (\$3100), a maintenance coordinator (\$500), and all other related expenses (\$26,400).

Article 17: Conservation Commission expenses are down after an expensive environmental notice of intent in FY11.

Articles 19 & 20: The first of these enables the town to join in the Western Massachusetts broadband initiative. Technically it establishes a municipal lighting plant under Massachusetts law. This article requires a paper ballot and approval by at least 2/3 of those present and must be passed twice. It was originally passed at the special town meeting of January 24, 2011. Article 22 seeks to appropriate \$1000 for the town to join WiredWest, the consortium that is working to bring high speed internet service to the area.

Article 22: This article seeks to transfer \$35,000 from the Stabilization Fund to reduce the FY 12 tax rate. As yet the state has not certified Washington's free cash. When that happens we hope to replenish the Stabilization Fund.

Overall the town's budget has decreased 1.2% from FY11; but we optimistically expect a 3.4% decrease in state aid (Governor's and House Ways & Means Committee budgets). If the Senate doesn't significantly reduce those aid figures, Washington's tax rate is expected to increase slightly.

After May 2nd, the full warrant will be posted on the bulletin board, will be on the Washington web site, <http://www.washington-ma.com/>, and will be available in hard copy at the town hall on Monday, 5/9, from 9:00 - 12:00 AM or from 7:00 – 9:00 PM.

The meeting is at 7:00 PM on May 14th.

Should Head Start stay or go? Submitted by Rose Borgnis

If you read last month's letter from the Selectmen you are already aware that Head Start was asked to explore the possibility of moving to Becket Washington School.

Comments that I have heard in regards to this range from; well we do need the space, to why would we want to lose the income along with a host of others in between. To determine the space needs at the Town Hall each committee, board, and office was given a short survey to fill out. Much to my surprise the majority of them came back stating that they do have adequate space for their needs. It was mentioned that cleaning out unneeded items and reorganizing the current space would go a long way in resolving any space needs of the foreseeable future. It was also mentioned that in order to expand the space currently offered to the Historical Commission the office used by the Head Start family advocate could be relocated to the stage area of the room currently being used by Head Start.

Head Start has been a very gracious tenant in the Town Hall for 18 years now. Knowing that they occupy the only room in our town hall large enough to hold all the residents who attend our annual town meeting, as well as on other occasions when we have asked to use the room, the Head Start teachers have willingly stayed late to tear down the classroom and come in early the next morning to get it all put back together. During the state and federal elections they cancel school so that they don't inconvenience anyone. Efforts have been made by the teachers to involve residents by inviting them to read stories to the children or help with an art or craft project. Having Head Start in the building has been beneficial as they have let us know when the heat was not working in the winter, when there was no water, when the fans for the heaters overheated and started to smoke, they sign for and receive packages and important documents for the town, and when the copier repair person or other service people need access to the building they don't mind letting them in. When told by the Building Inspector that code requires the playground to be fenced in they did not ask the Town to pay for any of the cost.

While the Select Board meets weekly and other boards or committees meet once a month, Head Start is there daily during the school year so they are more likely to notice and alert us to problems in the building which allows us to correct the problem before further damaged is caused. While the current amount paid (\$500.00 a month for 10 months) may not seem like much this is income to the Town that does not have to be raised by taxes. Whenever school is not in session families can bring our youngest residents to use the age appropriate playground equipment that Head Start has provided. Rather than asking them to leave I feel we should ask them for a 5-10 year lease with annual increases in the lease payment tied to the cost of living because what do we really gain by having head Start relocate?

A Bird Walk with Ed Neumuth

We'll meet at the town park on Sat., May 14th with a rain date for Sunday the 15th. The walk will start at 7 AM and last about 3 hours. For more information you can call 413-884-4961 or email eneumuth@gmail.com

**You Are Cordially Invited
To Washington Head Start
Art Exhibit**

*Come join us to view the priceless art work on display
Family and friends are welcome to this extraordinary event*

Date: Tuesday May 17, 2011

Rain date Wednesday May 18

Exhibit Tim: 5:30 PM to 6:30 PM

Place: Washington Town Hall



**11th Annual "Arlo Guthrie's Historic
Garbage Trail" Walk to Massacree HD**

- Sunday, May 22, 2011
- Registration begins at 8:30AM at The Guthrie Center
- Walk begins at 10AM.
- HD tees available the day of the walk with a donation of at least \$25.

For more info/sponsor forms, please visit our website

www.freewebs.com/hdwalk

If anyone can't make the walk, but would still like to donate to the cause, you can send a check made out to HD WALK, c/o 218 Beach Rd. Washington, MA 01223

A few words from our Park & Recreation Committee...

- May 14th Park Clean Up from 9-1:00. Bring your rakes, shovels, wheel barrows & pruners! We'll be cleaning up the flower beds, putting more wood safety chips under the swings and more.
- We are looking for volunteers to help out at the annual park events: Family Fun Day, Hilltown Hoot & the Pumpkin Walk.
- We are looking for 1 more person to join the Park & Recreation Committee, who will be appointed by the select board.

For more information, please call RJ Peltier at 623.5911

TUPPERWARE PARTY - MADE FOR SMART LIVING - Mary Peltier, Becket Federated Church 623.8844
Sunday, May 15, 2011 1 P.M. • Becket Federated Church Parish Hall • Becket, MA
Come one, come all for the good time and great products.

Just a Reminder...

The Family Fun Day at the Washington Town Park is on Saturday, June 25th

The Emma Bailey Scholarship Committee received a total of five applications this year. All were from Washington residents who are students at Wahconah Regional High School. After careful review of the applications the committee decided to award each of the five students with a \$250.00 scholarship. The recipients are as follows: Brendon Lennon who plans to attend the College of Saint Rose to study music and math; MacKenzie Fisher who plans on attending Berkshire Community College; Michael Moro who plans a major in computer information systems at Berkshire Community College; Casey Keator who plans to attend the University of South Carolina to study business and Kyle Kelson who plans to attend New England School of Communication to study audio engineering and communications. We wish them all a bright future. Submitted by Jan Nelson, Admin. Asst. to the Selectmen



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8 Summit Hill Road
Washington, Ma. 01223

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Send your Tracks info by 25th of the month to:
mrsabeski@mac.com or if you do not have email, call Lisa at 623.5088