



## Community Events

The Community Builders Group has planned several events this summer:

**Saturday, June 1 - Town Bird Walk** led by Ed Neumuth. Meet at the town Park at 7:00 am • Bring binoculars (if you don't have any, we'll have a few extra pairs) • Some spots we might visit: Muddy Pond, Upper Valley Marsh, Cross Place Rd, October Mountain State Forest, and Washington Mountain Marsh • Some of the birds we're likely to see: various Warblers (Yellow, Yellow-rumped, Chestnut-sided, Black-throated Green, Black-throated Blue, Nashville, Magnolia), Bluebird, Red-eyed Vireo, Broad-winged Hawk, maybe a Northern Harrier, Bittern, Virginia Rail, and who knows what else. • RSVP preferred, but not required. Text or call (413) 884-4961

**Saturday, June 29 - 10am-2:30pm Family Fun Day** at our town park. Various activities are planned throughout the day including: children's bike helmet giveaway, Touch-a-Truck, children's performer Terry A La Berry, the Eagles Community Stage Band, children's games (under the direction of our local Girl Scout troop), fairy garden and Balloon Ben (balloon artist).

In addition, various organizations will have information booths set up. Confirmed participants include: Washington Historical Commission, Berkshire Humane Society, Department of Conservation & Recreation and Westfield Wild & Scenic. Ozzie's Steak & Eggs' food truck will be on site.

The Community Builders Group has been working on this event for several months. As you can imagine, it will take many volunteers working together to produce a successful event. We are seeking volunteers to help set up booths, direct traffic, assist with parking, greet participants and visitors and clean up afterwards. A list detailing specific volunteer opportunities will be included in the June TRACKS. In the meantime, if you are interested in helping, please contact Linda Levernoch 413-623-8309.

We are grateful to the Washington, Becket and Hinsdale-Peru Cultural Councils for providing funding for the Family Fun Day entertainment.

**July 13 - Second Annual Town Picnic** at the Town Common with optional tour of the Old Town Hall Cemetery. More details will be included in future editions of the TRACKS.

## **Free Medicare Counseling by a Certified Elder Services' SHINE Counselor for Washington Residents**

The SHINE (Serving the Health Insurance Needs of Everyone) program, administered by Elder Services of Berkshire County, provides free, confidential, unbiased, personalized counseling to assist Medicare Beneficiaries with reviewing their Medicare health care coverages.

Bonny DiTomasso, SHINE Volunteer Counselor located in Peru, is available by appointment to review Medicare health care coverages and public benefits. All information will be kept secure and confidential. To schedule a SHINE Counseling appointment, please contact Elder Services' SHINE Volunteer Counselor Bonny DiTomasso at 413-441-2390.

## **Open Burn Season Has Ended for 2024**

May 1, 2024 was the last day of open burn season for the year. Please contact the Fire Chief at [washington.mafirechief@gmail.com](mailto:washington.mafirechief@gmail.com) if you have any questions.

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## **Annual Town Meeting**

**Date:** Wednesday, May 8, 2024

**Time:** 7:00 PM

**Location:** Washington Town Hall, 8 Summit Hill Rd

Deadline to register to vote at the Annual Town Meeting has already passed.

## **Annual Town Election**

**Date:** Saturday, May 18, 2024

**Time:** 12:00 PM - 4:00 PM

**Polling location:** Washington Town Hall, 8 Summit Hill Rd

Deadline to register to vote at the Annual Town Election is **Wednesday, May 8, 2024**

## **Specimen Ballot**

{Lisa, please include the specimen ballot in Tracks - I will send to you by tomorrow}

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## **Vote by Mail for the Annual Town Election**

- If you returned the Vote by Mail postcard you received earlier this year and requested a ballot for all elections this year, a ballot and instructions have already been sent to you.
- If you still need to apply to Vote by Mail you can find the application here: <https://www.sec.state.ma.us/divisions/elections/voting-information/vote-by-mail.htm> Mail the completed form to the Washington Town Clerk, 8 Summit Hill Rd, Washington, MA 01223. You can also drop the completed application in the drop box at the front of the town hall. The application must be received by the Town Clerk on or before Monday, May 13, 2024.

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## **Expired Dog License Grace Period Ends on May 31, 2024**

Reminder: March 31, 2024 was the deadline to renew your dog license(s) and then the two-month grace period began. If you have not yet registered your dog(s) for 2023, please do so before May 31, 2024 to avoid the \$25 late fee.

## SPECIMEN BALLOT

### TOWN OF WASHINGTON ANNUAL TOWN ELECTION

SATURDAY, MAY 18, 2024  
12:00 PM to 4:00 PM

#### ELECTED OFFICES PUT AN "X" IN THE BOX

##### FINANCE COMMITTEE (3-year term)

Vote for one

☐ **DAVID DRUGMAND**  
Candidate for re-election  
572 Washington Mountain Rd

☐ \_\_\_\_\_

##### FINANCE COMMITTEE (2-year unexpired term)

Vote for one

☐ \_\_\_\_\_

##### MUNICIPAL LIGHT BOARD (3-year term)

Vote for one

☐ **PAULINE COMBE-CLARK**  
Candidate for re-election  
658 Summit Hill Rd

☐ \_\_\_\_\_

#### ELECTED OFFICES PUT AN "X" IN THE BOX

##### PLANNING BOARD (5-year term)

5-year term

Vote for one

☐ **CRAIG WILLIS**  
Candidate for re-election  
600 Upper Valley Rd

☐ \_\_\_\_\_

##### SELECT BOARD

(3-year term)

Vote for one

☐ **STEPHEN B. DELOYE**  
70 Ryan Rd

☐ **KEITH J. SHARP**  
443 North Washington State Rd

☐ \_\_\_\_\_

##### TOWN CLERK

(3-year term)

Vote for one

☐ **ALLISON MIKANIEWICZ**  
Candidate for re-election  
1214 Lovers Ln

☐ \_\_\_\_\_

## Town Of Washington Park Updates

Spring is here and the Town of Washington Parks Committee is prepping for Summer fun. There are several community events on the calendar and we are excited to see our beautiful park become a focal point of our community.

We need your help at the Park Cleanup Day on Saturday May 25th from 10 am - 1 pm. Please RSVP with the Park Committee. Refreshments will be provided. We need your help to keep the park beautiful!

Becket Beach passes will be available to purchase this month for \$30 per pass. You can contact the Jodi Hostetter or stop by the Town Hall for more details.

Music in the Park will return every Sunday in August. More details to come!!

## COA

### Classes

Chair Yoga Mondays at 11:00 AM

Yoga Tuesdays at 9:00 AM

Osteoporosis Thursdays at 9 AM

Pot luck dinner on Friday May 17 th at 5:30 PM at the town hall. Steve & Deb have BBQ chicken on the menu. All seniors are welcome with or without a dish to share. We look forward to seeing you there!

An astounding 30 large contractor bags of trash were removed from Washington Mt. Rd. on the annual Earth Day road cleanup on Saturday April 20! Thank you to volunteers Ruth and Liz Sangree, Michele Beemer, Linda Levernoch, Kent and Carol Lew and Ann-Marie Desautelle for blitzing their way down the road and Meredyth Babcock from the Westfield Wild and Scenic River organization for loaning us grabbers and vests. This project could not take place without the support of the Selectboard and Tom Johnson and his DPW crew! Thank You!

Lots of roads in town still need some TLC, so the next time you're out for a walk, bring a bag and help keep our town beautiful.

See you next year!

Dear Washington Friends & Neighbors:

May 2024

With the relatively mild temperatures this winter, there is a good chance that this will be another bad year for ticks. So as you venture out to enjoy Spring in Washington, be sure to take appropriate precautions against tick bites for yourself and your dogs.

May means town meeting season across the Berkshires. Our **Annual Town Meeting** will be held on **Wednesday, May 8, at 7:00pm** at Town Hall. By the time you receive this, the full warrant and budget details should be posted on the town website. The Central Berkshire Regional School District is asking our voters to approve some updates to the regional agreement that a dedicated subcommittee spent the past two or more years hammering out. A copy will be available online for review, and printed copies will be available before the meeting, of course.

Then, as always, ten days later we will hold our **Annual Town Election** on **Saturday, May 18, noon to 4:00pm**. Among the positions on the ballot, there will be an open seat on the Select Board with two new candidates vying for the position. So be sure to come out and vote.

With the plows put away, and as things dry out, the Highway crew will be turning their attention to annual task of getting gravel roads back in shape and cleaning roadside deadfall. In July, they'll revive the postponed project to rebuild the worst portions of Lovers Lane Rd and improve drainage. Depending on how that progresses, Tom hopes to extend the project up Schulze Rd. Over the winter, he was able to confer with colleagues in Charlemont and Ashfield who have used the same new techniques with great success. Their tips & tricks should help with our work. Stay tuned for some periods of road closing later this summer when that gets underway.

With summer on its way, Becket Beach passes will become available this month. Last year, Becket increased the cost to us without warning, too late to adjust the fee. This year, on the recommendation of the Finance Committee and Parks Commission, we have approved adding that increase into our Beach Pass fee, bringing the cost to \$30. We recognize that this will not be popular. But it is still a bargain compared to other memberships or private options.

There are plenty of community activities shaping up for the season ahead, including the annual **Town Park spruce up** at the end of this month, the **Town Bird Walk** on June 1, a **Family Fun Day** in late June, and a **Town Picnic** in July (see elsewhere in Tracks for details). And then, the ever-popular **Music in the Park** will return for a month of Sundays in August. Hard-working Jodi Hostetter could use more help with organizing and setup for the Music in the Park. So if can pitch in to keep this tradition vibrant, please get in touch with her at [washington.aas@gmail.com](mailto:washington.aas@gmail.com).

Kent Lew  
Select Board chair

David Ellis  
Select Board clerk

Mike Case  
Select Board



# Washington's Fiscal 2025 Budget

By Carol Lew

The Finance Committee is hard at work nailing down the details of the budget that will be voted upon at the Annual Town Meeting on May 8th. I sat down with Dave Drugmand, Committee Chairperson, and Meg Megas, Committee member, to talk about what kinds of changes we can expect to see in the upcoming budget.

As usual, the education line items make up the highest expense; 36% of the budget for Central Berkshire Regional School District, and an additional 9% for vocational education.

“We expected to see an \$8,000 increase in the school budget,” said Dave. “But the school district received rural aid money, and the result for Washington is a \$1,000 decrease for our Central Berkshire Regional School District obligation over last year.”

Vocational education is a different story. We will have one additional voc. ed. student this coming year, a total of seven, so the budget has increased for both tuition and transportation. Tuition will increase from \$119,000 to approximately \$137,000, and transportation will increase from \$59,300 to approximately \$80,000. If you read last month's Insights article, you will understand some of the complex story behind these astonishing figures. Because our school district does not have voc. ed. programs, students that choose a vocational education must travel to other districts. The tuition costs of the three different schools that students can attend vary; in general, it's about \$20,000 per student, though the town does receive around \$6,000 in state aid to offset this. But it is also the town's responsibility to transport them all.

This transportation cost is entitled to full reimbursement by the state, but only if the state puts it in their budget. For a number of years, the state has funded only 6% of the costs. We may see 17% reimbursement this year. Town Administrator Sean Curran and Select Board chair Kent Lew have attended numerous legislative meetings to lobby for full state financial reimbursement for this hefty cost to the taxpayers. Sean is also meeting with other neighboring towns to see how it might be possible to, together, find a way to bring out-of-district voc. ed. transportation costs down. These efforts may see results in the future, but won't impact the upcoming budget.

In the coming year, we need to secure a new contract for Emergency Medical Services. Our previous service provider, County Ambulance, will no longer contract with Washington. Fortunately, Becket has an excellent EMS service, and they are willing to provide primary ambulance service for Washington. There's a cost, but the proposed financial compensation is fair. The EMS line item is \$12,000, a figure based on the

average number of EMS calls in Washington in previous years. But the real cost will be based on the actual number of times the service is used in our town during the year. “The effect on our tax rate will be 11¢,” Dave points out, “about \$35 for the average single family home.” There is a small cost-of-living increase for staff in the budget. “We have a dedicated, hard-working staff here in Washington”, Meg said. “They’re not seeing the kind of wage increase that they might have wanted, but they understand why the town needs to keep costs down.”

In the budget this year is a line item for Permit Eyes, a platform for on-line building permitting that most other towns in the Berkshires use. The initial setup costs will be funded by money carried over from a previous year for this purpose. The annual subscription will cost \$1,900 per year. Why do we need this? We are now one of few towns that continue using paper permit processing, and it’s causing problems. Several of our inspectors, who also service other towns, are prepared to stop working for Washington because that process is too cumbersome for them. In addition, the information about new building projects isn’t always getting to our assessors, and home valuations are not getting updated. This means that we are missing potential tax revenue, and that affects all of us.

This year, the town will bear the full cost of our half-time Town Administrator. Last year, 50% of the cost was paid for with a Regionalization and Efficiency Grant from the State. Meg Megas points out how important this role is to the town. “As a Finance Committee member, and just as a resident, I am dismayed that we pay so much in property tax and yet we hardly see the benefit; our roads are still in rough shape, our culverts need repairs, dead trees fall on the road. We have no money to solve these issues. But our Town Administrator is actively seeking grants to help us solve these problems and will have the responsibility to see the projects through when they are funded. It’s the only way we will see improvements to our town.”

Though not in the operational budget, there were several other points to note about Washington’s 2025 financial picture. Every year, the state must certify “free cash”. Free cash is a combination of money not spent plus unanticipated revenue. The State needs to review the details and then approve the availability of the funds. In previous years, the number was high enough that it provided a buffer in the event of unforeseen expenses. Free cash has been used for bus repairs, roof repairs, or other one-time expenses that couldn’t be covered by the operational budget. The Finance Committee was surprised to learn that this time, we have only \$6,900 in free cash. “It’s going to be a lean year”, Meg said.

By the time you’re reading this, the Finance Committee will have posted to their page on Washington’s website a budget summary and a spreadsheet showing year-to-year budget comparisons. Take a look to prepare for the vote on May 8th. You may want to arrive to the meeting a little early, as there will be handouts you can review, as well.

**The Washington Cultural Council** is pleased to congratulate the recipients of grant funding for fiscal year 2024. Below are the grantees and the titles of their projects:

- The Becket Washington School PTO: School Community Gathering; Laser Show
- MUSIC Dance.edu: Hip Hop Chair Dance for Seniors
- Friends of the Washington Town Park: Music in the Park
- The Becket Police Association: Annual Holiday Party
- The Becket Arts Center of the Hilltowns, Inc.: Music Brings Communities Together
- The Becket Washington School: Interactive Science Exploration
- WAM Theatre, Inc.: Community Engagement Programming
- Berkshire Music School, Inc.: *Willie was Different*: A Musical Enrichment Program
- IS183, Inc.: ARTcentric: Berkshires After-school at Becket-Washington Elementary School
- Town of Washington: Family Fun Day
- Hilltown Families, Inc.: Hilltown Families Suggests
- Laurel Lenski: Moving Meditation Series
- Lara Tupper: *Pick up the Pen*: Start Your Writing Project
- Becket Athenaeum, Inc.: Washington Museum Passes; Washington Community Performances

The Washington Cultural Council is responsible for awarding grants each year to support cultural activities in town and in our greater community, using the funding received by the town from the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

The deadline for applications for 2025 funding is October 17th, 2024.

We are always welcoming new members; please contact us if you are interested in joining our group!

For more information, please see our page on the town website: <https://www.washington-ma.gov/cultural-council>



## BECKET ARTS CENTER

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# ARTS & CRAFTS MARKETPLACE

Saturday 22 JUNE  
10:00 am - 4:00 pm

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## CALL FOR ARTISTS AND VENDORS

Members: \$20 per table  
Non-Members: \$35 per table  
**APPLY BY 1 JUNE**

*Space is limited, apply today!*

 [becketartscenter.org/marketplace](https://becketartscenter.org/marketplace) 

 North Becket Village



## Upcoming Events at the Becket Athenaeum

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



- **Library Storytime**  
Saturdays, May 4, 18, 25 & June 1  
10:30-11:30am
- **Baby & Toddler Playgroup**  
Tuesdays, May 7, 14, 21, 28 & June 4  
10-11am
- **Book Club: Klara and the Sun by Kazuo Ishiguro**  
Tuesday, May 7  
1:30pm
- **Creative Movement & Storytime with Laurel Lenski**  
Saturday, May 11  
10:30-11:30am
- **Cookbook Club: The Woks of Life by Bill, Judy, Kaitlin, and Sarah Leung**  
Monday, May 13  
6pm
- **Game Night**  
Thursday, May 16  
6-8pm
- **Movie Night for Adults** Saturday, May 25  
6:30-9:30pm, movie starts at 7pm
- **Book Club: The Maid by Nita Prose**  
Tuesday, June 4  
1:30pm

We are now accepting applications for our teen internship program for the July to August and July to December sessions! For more information and to apply online by May 15: [BecketAthenaeum.org/employment](http://BecketAthenaeum.org/employment)

### Events for the Yoked Parish of Becket for 2024

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
June
<b>Saturday, Jun 1:</b> Food Pantry / Becket Federated Church / 9-11am
<b>Friday, Jun 7:</b> Free Pasta Dinner / Becket Federated Church / 5-7pm
<b>Saturday, Jun 15:</b> Food Pantry / Becket Federated Church / 9-11am
<b>Saturday, Jun 29:</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**  
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**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.**