

Town of Washington Select Board Meeting  
2/12/2024 7:00 – 9:00 PM Washington Town Hall

1. K. Lew called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Attending for the Select Board were K. Lew, D. Ellis, and Mike Case. After leading the attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance, K. Lew made a motion to accept the meeting minutes from 1/29/24. D. Ellis seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

**2. Attendants:** Sean Curran, Dick Spencer, Paul Mikaniewicz, Tom Johnson, Debra Megas, Chief Miller, Sherri Thomas, and Linda Levernoch. Dave Drugmand and Jane Kaufman from the Berkshire Eagle attended remotely and recorded the meeting for reference purposes. Tykesha Nothe was present to take the meeting minutes.

**3. Public Comment period:** P. Mikaniewicz requested to increase the rate of Fire Department inspections from \$30 to \$40 effective at the beginning of the next fiscal year. P. Mikaniewicz also requested oversight on shared driveways to make sure emergency vehicles can navigate access. There was discussion about which Town bodies have any jurisdiction over new driveways. K. Lew explained that the Planning Board is responsible for zoning approval of shared driveways, so he suggested P. Mikaniewicz request that the Planning Board notify him when there is an application. D. Ellis suggested creating formal guidance for planning driveways. K. Lew will put the matter of inspection fees increase on the next agenda for approval. D. Spencer reported that his term on the Light Board needs to be updated on the website.

**4. Approval of warrants:** A bill for Town Hall maintenance was billed against Town Hall Operations instead of Town Hall Repair and Maintenance. Expense for printer cartridges is being charged against the shared services grant for \$292. K. Lew asked S. Curran to look into what has been charged against the grant already. K. Lew Made a motion to amend the warrants. The cartridges were put Town Supplies account and the repair on the Repair account. M. Case seconded. Motion passed unanimously. B. Gelb revised the Payroll warrant to add a \$400 police detail check from Chief Miller.

The Board noted the Parks Commission's approval of a request to use the Town Park for Family Fun Day without objection.

**5. Town Administrator report:** S. Curran reported that he testified in favor of DLS investment in cyber security. Kathe in Becket has yet to confirm times to meet with Washington due to illness. She is working on the contract. The Select Board requested to get a draft of the contract before the 3/15. There was discussion on signing the contract before or after the Town Meeting. The Board agreed that the contract must be signed before because Becket EMS is the only reasonable option. The presentation is meant to give a community an opportunity to understand the costs associated with Becket EMS. S. Curran will follow up with Gina Campbell in regards to second signatory on checks. D. Ellis asked S. Curran to remove and return the flag in the park.

- **Highway garage heater update:** T. Johnson reported that heaters need replacement fans. The repair is in the works and will be less expensive than originally anticipated. The break room boiler has been repaired.

**6. VA Lakes Unit 2 bids review and award:** S. Curran reported that he received 2 bids for the VA Lakes Unit 2. His recommendation was to accept the highest bid which was from the Nature Conservancy for \$25,100. K. Lew explained that the bid was less than the appraisal of \$35,000 which triggers a disclosure in the Central Register. The Board agreed that getting more is unlikely because the land is not developable. K. Lew made a motion to accept the bid from the Nature Conservancy for \$25,100. D. Ellis seconded. Motion passed unanimously. S. Curran will follow up with Nature Conservancy and Town counsel. K. Lew will put VA Lakes Unit 1 on a future agenda.

**7. Bucksteep Receivership update:** The attorney suggested asking the court to enter in the previous correction order and organize an inspection after which the BOH will vote.

**8. Select Board schedule:** Next Meeting dates: 2/26, 3/11, 3/25, 4/8. There was discussion on having the Select Board having the meeting earlier. It was decided to keep the time the same but change the agenda as needed. K. Lew explained that his term is ending and he is not yet sure if he will run again. There was discussion on delegating more responsibilities if he chooses to run again. He also asked the other members of the Board to take over the Select Board letter as well as consider a rotating Chair.

**9. Update on Westfield Wild & Scenic grant opportunities:** D. Ellis reported that he forwarded the grant proposal for the culvert on Johnson Hill to S. Curran. D. Ellis agreed to be the official signer and continue to manage the application. S. Curran will manage operations. D. Ellis will pass the Nature Conservancy grant info to S. Curran. There was discussion on restoring or removing the Eden Glen Dam. K. Lew explained the need to address the downstream issues first and that the Town had previously voted to restore it for recreation, but without any plan to fund a restoration or provide for management and maintenance. The first step is to get a professional inspection. Next, come up with comparable plans and estimated costs both to restore and to remove, so that voters can make a fully informed decision about which direction to pursue. D. Ellis will follow up with Cindy at Westfield Wild & Scenic to determine if there is any funding available to take the first steps.

**10. Joint meeting with Finance Committee:** K. Lew explained that his goal is to see the tax levy held to no more than a 3 percent increase. Meaning only \$50,000 more revenue coming from taxes. The cherry sheets show \$17,000 in State aid which is fairly reliable. Local revenue is best served to keep everything flat except for payment in lieu of taxes and the non-recurring. The non-recurring will go up \$17,000 because that's the share that Middlefield will pick up. K. Lew explained that the watershed is very reliable at \$148,000. Abatement will go up to \$29,000. Bottom line: if the tax levy is held to 3% there should be \$93,000 additional revenue to fund FY25 budget increases. D. Ellis asked about money from Bucksteep. K. Lew explained that the money from Bucksteep will not be certified as free cash until next year.

**11. Financial Policies & Procedures, update and possible adoption:** In the capital planning section Accountant was changed to the Town Administrator regarding responsibility for Town Assets. The Accountant was changed to the Treasurer in regards to managing Town debt. In the forecasting section estimates for local receipts should reflect 5-year average of actual collections and should never exceed 100 percent of the prior years actual collections. Annual audit was changed to periodic audit. There was discussion on a credit card preapproval form. K. Lew explained the importance of getting notice to Lynne before she gets the statement, in case she doesn't get receipts in a timely fashion. There was also discussion on repercussions if the credit card policy is not followed. D. Ellis questioned whether it was a

preapproval form if some cardholders don't actually need preapproval but just need to file the notice. D. Megas will follow up with D. Ellis to work out revised language to clarify that procedure.

**12. Other business:** Chief Miller reported that she and Frank pulled over 16 people on Saturday. 8 of them were Washington residents. Up to this point they have only issued verbal warnings. Chief Miller requested the Boards support in ticketing repeat offenders. The Board agreed that repeat offenders should be ticketed. The current Road Safety Grant has a hiatus on funding extra enforcement now until April. Chief Miller reported that K. Pettibone has resigned as backup in Washington due to changing jobs to Stockbridge and so F. Murphy is now her only backup which is fine for now.

Adjournment: K. Lew motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:03PM. D. Ellis seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Accepted: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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Respectfully submitted,

Tykesha Nothe

#### **Correspondence:**

Notice of bankruptcy of Endo International. Requires clarification. K. Lew will follow up with S. Curran.

Berkshire Natural Resources Council fundraising pamphlet.

2 notices from the Lee Planning Board regarding Lee zoning bylaws special permit hearings on 2/12 and on 2/26.

Beacon Hill in the Berkshires Hills conference with Senator Paul Mark at Lenox Town Hall on 4/6 9am–1pm. K. Lew suggested that a representative from Washington attend.