



# Town of Great Barrington

## Town Manager's Office



[www.townofgbma.gov](http://www.townofgbma.gov)



(413) 528-1619



334 Main Street,  
Great Barrington, MA 01230



[lhartsgrove@townofgbma.gov](mailto:lhartsgrove@townofgbma.gov)

*Liz Hartsgrove*  
Town Manager

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*Chris Rembold*  
Assistant Town Manager

## Report to the Selectboard

To: *Great Barrington Selectboard*  
From: *Liz Hartsgrove, Town Manager*  
Date: *January 26, 2026*

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Below is the Town Manager's report for January 26, 2026.

### **1. INFRASTRUCTURE AND ASSETS**

- a) Berkshire Gas has filed a petition with the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities seeking approval for a general increase in base gas distribution rates, along with a proposed five-year performance-based ratemaking plan. If approved as filed, the Company is seeking to generate nearly \$28 million in additional revenue, which represents an overall 18 percent increase in base distribution revenue.

The Department of Public Utilities has suspended the effective date of this request until October 1, 2026 while it conducts a full review, including public participation as an important part of this process. The Department will be holding public hearings in Greenfield on January 29, Pittsfield on February 5, and virtually on February 4. Written public comments will also be accepted through February 27, 2026.

Anyone who would like more information about the hearings, how to participate, or how to submit written comments can visit the Department of Public Utilities online file room by searching docket number 25-170.

### **2. PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY**

- a) The Town continues to work closely with the Town of Sheffield while Brookside Bridge remains closed. A Memorandum of Understanding is currently being reviewed between the towns formalizing this collaboration for the remainder of the calendar year until the temporary bridge is installed this fall. This MOU will ensure essential operations remain seamless and residents in both towns receive the services they need during this period.
- b) On January 14<sup>th</sup>, Interim Police Chief Carlotto, Selectboard Chair Bannon, and I met with BRIDGE CEO Gwen VanSant to review the collaborative efforts required with considering any adjustments with the Great Barrington Trust Policy. This initial conversation focused on ensuring that the Trust Policy review is inclusive, reflective of community perspectives, and aligned with our shared goals for public safety, transparency, and equitable treatment for all residents. The aim is to have an update provided to the Board at a near future meeting.

- c) On January 13 at approximately 5:15 p.m., Great Barrington Police responded to multiple 911 calls reporting a motor vehicle versus pedestrian accident on Main Street near Bilmar Veterinary Services (776 Main Street). Southern Berkshire Ambulance also responded. While on scene, officers tested the crosswalk flashing warning system and found that it was not activating as intended.

The Town's Department of Public Works immediately reviewed maintenance records and conducted follow-up inspections. Although the system had been tested and verified as operational on December 31, it was determined on January 14 that the batteries were failing and not holding a charge. Two new batteries were installed on January 15, and the system was fully tested, reprogrammed, and the solar panels realigned.

I extend my sincere condolences to the family, friends, and loved ones of the pedestrian involved in this tragic accident. I also want to thank the many community members who have reached out with their concerns and suggestions. Public safety is my top priority, and your voices are essential as we work to make your streets safer.

This section of Main Street is owned and maintained by the Town, and this incident certainly has underscored the importance and opportunity of being proactive by taking action both in short and long-range planning through a phased infrastructure improvement approach.

Consistent with the Town's mission to serve the community with integrity, accountability, and a commitment to public safety, staff across departments have been working together to carefully plan and coordinate three targeted capital improvement initiatives that I will be recommending as part of my FY27 budget submission to the Select Board and Finance Committee.

First, I will be recommending immediate crosswalk improvements, including mechanical system enhancements, refreshed pavement markings, and visibility upgrades to improve driver awareness and pedestrian safety.

Second, I will be supporting revising 2024 Mass Works Grant application to focus on sidewalk extension and lighting improvements from the crosswalk to Brookside Manor, to strengthen pedestrian connections and safety. By narrowing the scope to a clearly defined design and construction project, the Town will be better positioned to move this work forward.

And lastly, I will be recommending funding to begin the long overdue Master Plan initiative, starting with a community visioning process. This first phase will create space for residents, businesses, and stakeholders to share what they want for the future of the community as a whole, and for areas like this corridor, where mixed-use development and activity continue to grow.

This phased approach will allow the Town to accomplish community's priorities of advancing safety enhancements in a responsible manner while also keeping within

our budgetary means resulting in safer, more accessible streets for all who live, work, and visit Great Barrington.

**3. HOUSING**

No Update this week.

**4. SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT**

No Update this week.

**5. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

No Update this week.

**6. MUNICIPAL SERVICE DELIVERY**

- a) We continue with the preparation and development of the FY27 Operating and Capital budget, proceeding in accordance with the Town’s Budget Action Calendar. Beginning tomorrow, Department Heads will begin a structured and full team review of all FY27 Capital Budget proposals. Each project will be evaluated individually and rated based on defined criteria, including alignment with Select Board priorities, community needs, operational impact, and long-term sustainability.

This cross-departmental review is a critical step in building a coordinated municipal budget, as many capital projects and service investments intersect across departments. The ratings and feedback from this process will directly inform my recommendations to the Select Board and Finance Committee and will be incorporated into the FY27 Budget submission scheduled for February 13th.

This approach ensures that our capital planning is thoughtful, transparent, and aligned with the Town’s strategic goals and fiscal capacity.

- b) Lastly, I want to take a moment to thank our essential service teams, particularly the Department of Public Works, Police, and Fire for their tireless work during winter storm “Fern”. Their coordination, long hours, and dedication ensured that your roads were cleared, emergencies were responded to, and residents were supported throughout challenging conditions. I also want to thank the public for their patience and understanding while non-essential Town services were paused. These closures were necessary to help keep both residents and staff off the roads and safe during the storm.

Crews continue to clear roads, sidewalks, and public buildings in preparation for offices reopening and services resuming tomorrow and as temperatures remain extremely cold for the rest of the week, I want to remind the community that Town buildings will be open during normal business hours and are available as warming locations for anyone who may need them.

*Thank you.*