

November 22, 2021 Regular Selectboard Meeting via Zoom

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Bannon opened the meeting at 6:00pm; those present via zoom: Ed Abrahams, Leigh Davis, Eric Gabriel, Garfield Reed. Town Manager Mark Pruhenski, Assistant Town Manager Chris Rembold, Principal Tax Assessor Ross Vivori, Finance Director Accountant Sue Carmel.

Panelists: Water Commissioners: Walter Atwood, Kenneth Schumacher, William Foster, William Brinker.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

- a. February 24, 2021
- b. March 2, 2021
- c. March 30, 2021
- d. April 29, 2021
- e. August 23, 2021
- g. September 13, 2021
- h. September 27, 2021
- i. October 4, 2021

L. Davis made a motion to approve the minutes of February 24, 2021; March 2, 2021; March 30, 2021 and April 29, 2021; E. Abrahams seconded. Roll call vote: E. Abrahams, “aye,” S. Bannon, “aye,” L. Davis, “aye,” E. Gabriel, “abstain,” G. Reed, “abstain.” All in favor, 3-0.

L. Davis made a motion to approve the minutes of August 23, 2021; September 13, 2021; September 27, 2021; October 4, 2021; E. Abrahams seconded. Roll call vote: E. Abrahams, “aye,” S. Bannon, “aye,” L. Davis, “aye,” E. Gabriel, “aye,” G. Reed, “aye.” All in favor, 5-0.

Chairman Bannon noted the August 27, 2021 meeting was an executive session and the November 4, 2021 and November 15, 2021 minutes were not provided.

3. SELECTBOARD’S ANNOUNCEMENTS/STATEMENTS

- a. E. Gabriel thanked Berkshire Grown and Parks and Recs for the weekend market at the Housatonic Community Center - it drew 900+ attendees and invigorated the town center.
- b. L. Davis recognized Simon’s Rock cross-lake swimmers for donating a bench at Lake Mansfield in honor of Ruth Meyer.

4. TOWN MANAGER’S REPORT

- c. HWW – M. Pruhenski provided an update stating the Selectboard had met in executive session where options for HWW were discussed. A vote was taken and another meeting will be scheduled to continue progress. He also stated the survey for HWW customers is live on the Town’s website and encouraged HWW customers to participate to help pinpoint where water issues are most concentrated and pervasive. 135 responses to-date.
- d. M. Pruhenski also noted that holiday lights will start going up on Monday, November 29.

5. LICENSES AND PERMITS

- a. Steve Birnhak/Heather Campell for a driveway at 258 Monument Valley Road, Great Barrington MA.

L. Davis made a motion to approve the permit for Steve Birnhak/Heather Campell for a driveway at 258 Monument Valley Road; E. Abrahams seconded. Roll call vote: E. Abrahams, “aye,” S. Bannon, “aye,” L. Davis, “aye,” E. Gabriel, “aye,” G. Reed, “aye.” All in favor, 5-0.

6. PUBLIC HEARINGS

a. Tax Classification Hearing – Ross Vivori, Principal Tax Assessor, presented recommendations for distributing the tax levy among taxpayers for the Fire District and Town of Great Barrington. Currently there is a single tax rate with no exemptions or discounts for specific classes/groups of property. R. Vivori reported on revenue, growth and year over year variances in overall taxable value across four property classes – residential, commercial, industrial and personal property.

i. Fire District – R. Vivori recommended a tax rate of \$1.04 – he noted this is a \$.31 increase over last year.

Water Commissioners joined and Chairman Atwood made a motion that the Fire District rate be \$1.04 in the coming year; W. Brinker seconded. Roll call vote: W. Atwood, “aye,” W. Brinker, “aye,” W. Foster, “aye,” K. Schumacher, “aye.” All in favor 4-0.

ii. Town of Great Barrington - R. Vivori recommended a tax rate of \$14.86 – he noted this is a decrease of \$1.13 from last year.

L. Davis made a motion to adopt a single tax rate of \$14.86/thousand dollars of valuation for all classes of property for FY22. E. Abrahams seconded.

Charman Bannon asked for questions/discussion

- E. Abrahams stated he was not challenging the recommendations, but in the future would like to better understand options for the distribution of the tax levy. He requested additional background on how the Board of Assessors reached its recommendations and how single vs split tax rate would impact each property class.
- R. Vivori stated that he has option tables that show estimated shift ranges.
- Chairman Bannon stated that more information would be provided and this matter would be discussed in the next 60-90 days

Roll call vote: E. Abrahams, “aye,” S. Bannon, “aye,” L. Davis, “aye,” E. Gabriel, “aye,” G. Reed, “aye.” All in favor, 5-0.

7. NEW BUSINESS

a. Request to subordinate a Real Property lien from the FY14 CDBG Housing Rehabilitation Program – C. Rembold provided background on the Community Housing Rehabilitation Block Grant Program and related 15-year lien on this property. Permission to subordinate has been granted previously in similar situations.

L. Davis made a motion to subordinate the lien and authorize the Town Manager to sign; E. Abrahams seconded. Roll call vote: E. Abrahams, “aye,” S. Bannon, “aye,” L. Davis, “aye,” E. Gabriel, “aye,” G. Reed, “aye.” All in favor, 5-0.

b. Partnership Agreement with Be Well Berkshires for the Mass in Motion Municipal Wellness & Leadership Initiative – C. Rembold stated this is the Be Well Berkshires/Mass in Motion initiative involving towns across the county in better understanding/addressing the social determinants of health and promoting active living. Great Barrington has been active since 2009. He requested Selectboard’s support to enter into the partnership agreement. Morgan Ovitsky of Be Well Berkshires presented on past work in food assessment/access and future plans funded by a Mass in Motion.

L. Davis made a motion to support the work of Mass in Motion and to authorize the Chair of the Selectboard to sign the partnership agreement; S. Bannon seconded. Roll call vote: E. Abrahams, “aye,” S. Bannon, “aye,” L. Davis, “aye,” E. Gabriel, “aye,” G. Reed, “aye.” All in favor, 5-0.

Chairman Bannon noted there were 8 panelists and 18 attendees at the high point of the meeting.

8. CITIZEN SPEAK TIME

9. SELECTBOARD'S TIME

10. MEDIA TIME

11. ADJOURNMENT – Chairman Bannon adjourned the meeting by unanimous consent at 6:36pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Stacy Ostrow
Recording Clerk