

Selectboard Regular Meeting via Zoom
Monday, July 25, 2022

1. CALL TO ORDER SELECTBOARD REGULAR MEETING - Chairman Bannon opened the meeting at 6:00pm. Roll call: Ed Abrahams, “aye,” Steve Bannon, “aye,” Leigh Davis, “aye,” Eric Gabriel, “aye,” Garfield Reed, “aye.” All members in attendance.
Additional attendees: Town Manager Mark Pruhenski

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. June 27, 2022

- b. July 11, 2022

L. Davis made a motion to approve the minutes of June 27 and July 11, 2022; E. Abrahams seconded. S. Bannon asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: E. Abrahams, “aye,” S. Bannon, “aye,” L. Davis, “aye,” E. Gabriel, “aye,” G. Reed, “aye.” All in favor 5-0.

3. SELECTBOARD’S ANNOUNCEMENTS/STATEMENTS

- a. G. Reed stated Great Barrington Day is getting some publicity and arrangements are going well with 23 stores participating. He encouraged residents to participate.

4. TOWN MANAGER’S REPORT

- a. Housatonic Water Works – M. Pruhenski stated he had nothing new to report.

S. Bannon stated this is to endorse the Selectboard letter dated July 25, 2022 and he proceeded to read the letter:

Dear Governor Baker,

By letter to you dated June 1, 2022, Great Barrington residents, Sharon Gregory and Denise Forbes, writing on behalf of the Residents for Clean Water, requested your assistance in resolving ongoing issues with water supply to the Village of Housatonic in Great Barrington by the Housatonic Water Works Company. That letter proposes and requests that you take action to encourage an audit of the company by the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities. Being aware of the issues identified in the letter and having the utmost concern for the quality of water supplied to the residents of our town, and as voted in our meeting of July 25, 2022, the Great Barrington Selectboard endorses the proposed audit and seconds that request. For reference, a copy of the June 1st letter is included with this letter. To confirm our concerns regarding this matter, we are copying to all the public officials and agencies to whom the petition of Residents for Clean Water was also sent.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. If your office requires any further information, please have your staff contact our Town Manager, Mark Pruhenski at the number listed below.

L. Davis made a motion to send the letter to Governor Baker; E. Abrahams seconded. S. Bannon asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: E. Abrahams, “aye,” S. Bannon, “aye,” L. Davis, “aye,” E. Gabriel, “aye,” G. Reed, “aye.” All in favor 5-0.

5. LICENSES AND PERMITS

- a. Janis Martinson of the Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center for a Temporary Sunday Entertainment License for a film screening at Grover Park on Sunday September 4 from 4:00 PM to 11:00 PM.
 - i. S. Bannon noted the location is Grover's Corner - and no one from the Mahaiwe is in attendance. The Selectboard had no questions about the event.
- L. Davis made a motion to approve a Temporary Sunday Entertainment License to the Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center for a film screening at Grover's Corner on Sunday September 4 from 4:00 PM to 11:00 PM; E. Abrahams seconded. S. Bannon asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: E. Abrahams, “aye,” S. Bannon, “aye,” L. Davis, “aye,” E. Gabriel, “aye,” G. Reed, “aye.” All in favor 5-0.
- b. Kent Lemme of the Berkshire Running Center for Guido's Great 8 Road Race and permission to use Town Roads on Sunday August 7th beginning at 8:00 AM. The race will be run in the breakdown lanes, begin just north of Big Y and head north on Route 7, turning left onto Pope Street, then turn left (west) onto Route 23, left onto West Sheffield Road, then left on Lime Kiln Road, right onto Route 7, left onto Kellogg Road, left on Boardman Street, left on Brookside Road, right on South Main (Route 7), then to Guido's.
 - i. G. Reed stated he would like applicants to attend the meeting.
 - ii. E. Abrahams stated he had no questions and is prepared to vote.
 - iii. L. Davis asked if this event had been held previously – E. Gabriel stated he had participated in the past and it was well run and organized.
- L. Davis made a motion to grant permission to use Town Roads on Sunday August 7th beginning at 8:00 AM to Kent Lemme of the Berkshire Running Center for Guido's Great 8 Road Race; E. Abrahams seconded. S. Bannon asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: E. Abrahams, “aye,” S. Bannon, “aye,” L. Davis, “aye,” E. Gabriel, “aye,” G. Reed, “aye.” All in favor 5-0.
- c. Linda Hoddy for the Stockbridge Sinfonia Community Orchestra for a One Day Beer and Wine License for a concert and resection celebrating their 50th Anniversary at St. James Place, 352 Main Street Great Barrington from 7:30 PM to 8:30 PM.
 - i. S. Bannon stated he received an email that this application has been withdrawn.

6. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Vote Members of the Regional Transportation Advisory Committee as Special Municipal Employees
 - i. M. Pruhenski stated it is common practice for the Selectboard to appoint board and committees members as special municipal employees – and he clarified it does not exempt anyone from the Conflict of Interest law, it just makes it less restrictive. He stated over the years the Selectboard has approved nearly all boards/committees in the Town with this designation – the Regional Transportation Advisory Committee did not exist the last time the Selectboard updated the list.
- L. Davis made a motion to approve members of the Regional Transportation Advisory Committee as Special Municipal Employees; E. Abrahams seconded. S. Bannon asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: E. Abrahams, “aye,” S. Bannon, “aye,” L. Davis, “aye,” E. Gabriel, “aye,” G. Reed, “aye.” All in favor 5-0.

- b. Lucy Prashker to update the Board on the 8 Town Regional School District Planning Board.
 - i. Lucy Prashker, Chair, 8 Town Regional School District Planning Board, provided a status

update on research, discussions and preliminary recommendations regarding educational and financial aspects of regionalizing/combining the Southern Berkshire and Berkshire Hills School Districts. She reviewed challenges such as decreasing enrollment, increased operational costs, flat state funding and increased student needs - and noted the current model is not sustainable without reducing educational programs and/or increasing town assessments. She stated seven alternative models were considered with the most promising being merging the two school districts into a single PreK-12 district, keeping all existing elementary and middle schools in place, and creating a new 9-12 high school built on the Great Barrington campus. She covered the educational advantages and fiscal efficiencies of the model for students, teachers and taxpayers - and stated the board voted 16-6 to select/prioritize this model for further research and outreach/feedback. She also highlighted an emphasis on integrated traditional academic and new Career/Vocational Technical Education (CVTE) programs.

L. Prashker stated the Board plans to draft a new 8 Town School District Agreement that could be reviewed by the Selectboard and put to voters next spring. It will include addressing school committee composition/voting and assessment methodologies for operating and capital costs overall and for the new high school. She stated an advisory group with representation from each town is being formed to work on the draft - and noted the agreement must work for the eight towns in the short and long -term.

L. Prashker shared community feedback received via surveys, focus groups, public meetings and website comments – which was largely positive noting support for expanded technical education, fiscal efficiencies and larger student connections. She also addressed concerns raised about public misinformation, cost sharing for the new high school, school identity, transportation considerations, and plans for the Mt Everett facility. She shared an update on funding from the state, the 8 towns, the school districts and other local funders – and noted there will be no additional state regionalization funds available next year – so the towns may be asked for funds to continue the work through next May.

Jake Eberwein, Educational Consultant, shared the approach being used around educational visioning to frame discussion and build core shared values. Stakeholders will be divided into four groups: preK-4 and middle school 5-8 – noting these groups will not face substantial change, but discussion will help build a more aligned community. The other groups for the high school are: CVTE program offerings and 9-12 academic enrichment/co-curriculum programming focused on setting a vision for the new high school and aspirations for the merged school district.

Peter Dillon, Berkshire Hills Regional School District Superintendent, provided an update on the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) process stating borrowing was approved at Town Meeting and the kickoff is August 1st; providing 270 days to move forward. He also stated there is an MSBA informational meeting next week.

ii. The Selectboard was asked for any questions/comments

- E. Abrahams raised the idea of moving district offices to the high school in Sheffield to save on rent – and asked about the decision not to close schools - as Southern Berkshire had

previously considered doing so. L. Prashker replied this could be considered by Southern Berkshire and/or the new school district though it is not recommended in the preferred model and has not been factored into savings. S. Bannon stated costs for moving school district offices would not be reimbursable and the towns would have to pay the costs. It was agreed the idea to move the office would be considered.

- L. Davis asked what would happen if a town did not vote to approve. L. Prashker stated theoretically that could happen, which would result in a 7 town agreement. J. Eberwein added that if a town declines, it would need its own educational plan and arrangement/agreement with another town or district. It was also noted the State Commissioner of Education will determine if an agreement is acceptable.
- L. Davis asked about MSBA funding and timing/coordination with the renovation of Monument Mountain High School. P. Dillon replied he would defer response pending clarification with MSBA. S. Bannon stated the School Committee views the merger as important, but so is work on Monument Mountain – it is on parallel tracks.
- G. Reed raised concerns about cost and an oversized new school. P. Dillon replied the MSBA process includes analysis to get an accurate number for the enrollment projection and building an appropriately sized facility. G. Reed continued to ask about the breakdown of the six no votes – it was clarified that all six were from southern Berkshire towns, but the majority of those representatives voted affirmatively. It was also noted the reasons for the no votes was the need for more discussion and community outreach before voting.
- The Selectboard thanked the presenters for a comprehensive and informative presentation.

S. Bannon stated there are 6 panelists and 23 attendees at the meeting.

7. CITIZEN SPEAK TIME

- a. Erica Mielke, 360 Park Street, thanked the Selectboard for taking action on the Housatonic water situation and emphasized it is a real and pressing issue.
- b. Shiobbean Lemme of the Berkshire Running Center confirmed approval for the event.
- c. Michelle Loubert, 70 Division Street, stated she sent a letter to MassDOT regarding the Division Street replacement bridge expressing concerns about no weight limits and traffic speed – and copied the Selectboard and Town Manager - she asked for a response. S. Bannon replied we are awaiting response from MassDOT as they are the experts. M. Loubert also stated she made a public records request for information on vehicle accidents/traffic stops on Division Street and the Route 41 intersection. She noted brush is obstructing the view at the intersection.
- d. Sharon Gregory, 32 Hollenbeck Ave., requested the Selectboard ask MassDOT if there are cameras to identify overloaded trucks are on the bridge – S. Bannon replied it would be discussed.

8. SELECTBOARD'S TIME

- a. G. Reed asked for driver education about traffic laws and driver responsibility. He also asked for repainting of crosswalks that are faded.
- b. E. Gabriel reinforced support for the letter to the Governor and recognized E. Mielke's comments. He showed a discolored water sample from his home and encouraged continued community efforts to address the issue.
- c. E. Abrahams acknowledged E. Mielke's comments - and noted it is a slow process in which the Town has little power – and there is a shared frustration that more cannot be done faster.

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- d. L. Davis read a letter sent to the Selectboard and M. Pruhenski last week:
The following is a letter sent to the Town Manager Mark Pruhenski hoping it would be included the Selectboard's discussion of proposed changes for the crosswalk on Main Street:
Dear Mark, Unfortunately, I still have a primitive computer system at home, with a monitor

that doesn't have either a camera or microphone. So I'd appreciate it if you could share this short message during tonight's Selectboard Meeting. I have lived and worked in downtown Great Barrington for about 40 years. And had the opportunity to watch Main Street change from both sides of the street. One of the most dangerous changes occurred with Downtown Revitalization when Main Street began to resemble a short stretch of a superhighway rather than the heart of a small New England town. Because I'm so often sitting and working facing toward Main Street, I've had a unique view of the efforts of locals and visitors alike, the young and old, the healthy and aging, and especially parents with children trying to cross the street. Yes, a small percentage of people stupidly and recklessly enter without warning but many more cautious and careful folk find themselves in a kind of combat. Caused in large part by those cars and trucks in the outer lanes with no clue as to why the cars in the inner lanes have stopped. I certainly approve of the elevated flashing light system on the outer lanes. I would have thought it made sense to supplement them with in-roadway warning lights on both sides of the crosswalk. You can see such a system at Lightguardsystems.com. Their lights are snowplow resistant. Sadly, though, the current four lanes are a continuing encouragement for drivers to speed, to pass a slower driver who is actually trying to obey the current 25 mph speed limit. A limit few drivers ever attain. Try joining me at 6:45 in the morning when I try to cross Main Street to FUEL — there's a convoy of speeding pickup trucks ... and I consider myself lucky to get yet another iced latte. **Postscript:** I almost didn't make it the last few feet from Fuel to the other side this Saturday morning a little before 9 a.m.. A driver from Connecticut didn't seem to notice or care that the three other lanes had all come to a stop. He obviously needed to make the right turn onto Railroad Street more than I deserved to live another day. Thanks for your consideration. Mickey Friedman, 4 Castle St., Great Barrington

9. MEDIA TIME

10. EXECUTIVE SESSION:

- a. Executive Session, under MGL c.30A, §21(a)(3) to discuss litigation strategy concerning the pending appeal of Price Chopper Operating Co. of Massachusetts, Inc. to the Alcoholic Beverages Control Commission relating to denial of an application for a wine and malt beverage package store license to be exercised at 300 Stockbridge Road, if the Chair declares that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the Town's litigating and/or negotiating position with respect to the appeal. A vote regarding whether to go into executive session is expected; and votes may occur during the executive session. The Board will not return to public session.

L. Davis made a motion for the Selectboard to enter into executive session under MGL c.30A, §21(a)(3) to discuss litigation strategy concerning the pending appeal of Price Chopper Operating Co. of Massachusetts, Inc. to the Alcoholic Beverages Control Commission relating to denial of an application for a wine and malt beverage package store license to be exercised at 300 Stockbridge 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.

- i. G. Reed stated he would recuse from the executive session – Town Counsel, David Doneski, confirmed G. Reed cannot participate in the executive session.

ADJOURNMENT - Chairman Bannon adjourned the meeting by unanimous consent at 7:21pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Stacy Ostrow, Recording Clerk