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Becket Beat

Keeping neighbors connected Vol. 3, No. 4 - May 2024

Important May Dates for Civic Engagement in Becket

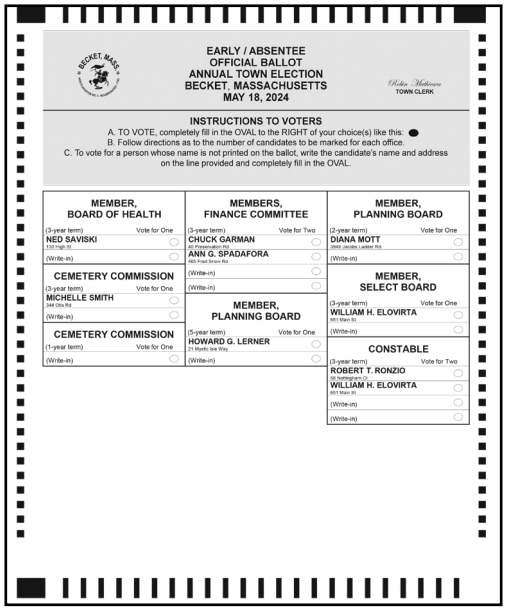
by Tommie Hutto-Blake

Town Clerk, Robin Mathiesen

During an April civic engagement discussion at the Becket Arts Center, Kathe Warden, Town Administrator, and Robin Mathiesen, Town Clerk, had a full audience of residents discussing town leadership and the importance of citizens being fully engaged in the workings of our town. No better time to have this discussion than right before the two most important dates on the Becket town calendar.

Annual Town Meeting: On Saturday, May 11th in the Becket Washington School gymnasium at 2pm (note the new time slot), the Becket Annual Town Meeting (ATM) takes place. Residents will gather with town leadership (Becket Select Board, Becket Finance Committee, Town Administrator and Town Clerk) to plan Becket's future. The most important document of the evening is the working agenda, referred to as the Town Meeting Warrant. Leadership will make brief presentations or answer questions regarding any warrant decision-making related to their area of responsibility. Becket residents may also have requested items to be considered during the ATM. The ATM Moderator will open the meeting by establishing the rules of the Commonwealth for running a town legislative body. Under these guidelines, Becket voters effectively become town legislators for a day, voting up or down all the items to be considered for the next fiscal year (FY 25). All residents are welcome to attend and may fully participate in the discussions during this meeting, but only Becket registered voters who hold a voting card (provided at check-in) may cast votes.

If you've never experienced a Becket ATM, come and participate in this important opportunity to direct town governance. Voters will be making decisions that directly impact Becket in the year ahead. The Becket FY 25 town budget will be carefully reviewed with questions taken and answered prior to a vote taken for each item, referred to as a warrant article. The proposed budget was prepared by the Town Administrator and reviewed by the Select Board and Finance Committee. Each warrant article is listed in numerical order, and following any discussion period, voted on or possibly postponed until a later date. A postcard will be mailed to all Becket taxpayers from Town Hall in advance of the meeting. The postcard provides links to the 2023 Annual Town Report and the 2024 Town Warrant to ensure voters have a chance to review warrant details before the meeting. Hard copies will also be available at the ATM. The deadline for a Becket resident to register to vote in order to cast votes this May is Friday, May 3rd. If you are not a registered Becket voter and have questions regarding your voting status, please call Town Clerk Robin Mathiesen at (413) 623-8934 Ext. 111.



EARLY / ABSENTEE
OFFICIAL BALLOT
ANNUAL TOWN ELECTION
BECKET, MASSACHUSETTS
MAY 18, 2024

Robin Mathiesen
TOWN CLERK

INSTRUCTIONS TO VOTERS
A. TO VOTE, completely fill in the OVAL to the RIGHT of your choice(s) like this. ●
B. Follow directions as to the number of candidates to be marked for each office.
C. To vote for a person whose name is not printed on the ballot, write the candidate's name and address on the line provided and completely fill in the OVAL.

MEMBER, BOARD OF HEALTH
(3-year term) Vote for One
NED SAVISKI
(Write-in)

CEMETERY COMMISSION
(3-year term) Vote for One
MICHELLE SMITH
(Write-in)

CEMETERY COMMISSION
(1-year term) Vote for One
(Write-in)

MEMBERS, FINANCE COMMITTEE
(3-year term) Vote for Two
CHUCK GARMAN
ANN G. SPADAFORA
(Write-in)
(Write-in)

MEMBER, PLANNING BOARD
(5-year term) Vote for One
HOWARD G. LERNER
(Write-in)

MEMBER, PLANNING BOARD
(2-year term) Vote for One
DIANA MOTT
(Write-in)

MEMBER, SELECT BOARD
(3-year term) Vote for One
WILLIAM H. ELOVIRTA
(Write-in)

CONSTABLE
(3-year term) Vote for Two
ROBERT T. RONZIO
WILLIAM H. ELOVIRTA
(Write-in)
(Write-in)

Sample Ballot

Town Election: Becket voters have an opportunity to help select town leadership during the Annual Town Election on Saturday, May 18th at Town Hall. Polls will be open from 10am to 7pm. This year there are ten open positions on the ballot. Becket voters will be electing one Select Board member, two Finance Committee members, one Board of Health member, two Planning Board members, two Cemetery Commissioners, and two Town Constables. In all of these open positions the ballot will also include a line for "write-in" votes. Please consider participating in both the Annual Town Meeting and the Town Election. Your vote is your voice!

TOC: Important May Dates, P1 / Letter from the Editor & Secret Ballot Voting, P2 / Winter: A View from WRHS, P3 / May Community Calendar, P4-5 / Becket Families Go West (Part 1), P6 / Becket Beat Celebrates 2 Years, P7 / BWCP News, P8

Letter from the Editors

Welcome to the May issue of the Becket Beat. We want to thank our student interns from Wahconah High School for contributing their unique and much-needed perspectives to the Becket Beat this year. Paetyn Tatro, a 10th grader, wrote two articles for us this year – "Students Hit the Winter Trails," which was published in December's issue, and "The Importance of High School Sports for All Students," published in April. Lola Mancari and Jack Walton, both 9th graders, wrote an article for this month's issue entitled "Winter: A View from Wahconah Regional High School." They all did a wonderful job and made the paper that much richer and representative of our community. Their internships were paid for by a grant from the Becket Cultural Center.

We also want to make a correction to our Town Happenings column in our April issue, where we mistakenly referred to our Town Administrator, Kathe Warden, as our Town Manager.

Finally, please remember to get out and vote – we can't complain if we abstain. Happy spring everybody!

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Secret Ballot Voting Not Adopted until 1892

by Marilyn Fish

Voting in the annual town election is a time-honored Massachusetts practice but over time the method of casting ballots has changed. In 1892, Becket adopted the Australian ballot system, the system in which voters mark their choices in the privacy of a voting booth on uniform ballots that list all candidates and are printed and distributed by the government. The system was first introduced in Victoria and South Australia in 1856 and was extensively adopted in the United States after the presidential election of 1884. Earlier elections were conducted by voice vote or with "party tickets," slips of paper listing only the members of one party. These were easily identified by party officials as voters inserted them into unsecured ballot boxes.

Dissatisfaction by some to the new approach was anticipated, as noted in the accompanying Berkshire County Eagle article. Also, based on the article it appears that at that time the town meeting and town election were held on the same day.

BECKET

The annual town meeting will be held Monday, and the Australian ballot system will be tried for the first time. It is quite probable that there will be many surprises in the result, and no doubt there will be the usual amount of "kicking" from the disappointed candidates, as it is generally known that some are "kicking" on the voting at the citizens' caucus, held in Seminary hall on the 7th, some of the defeated candidates for nomination claiming that there were "illegal votes cast," while others say that several voters cast two or three ballots apiece. This is all talk and nothing more. The caucus was conducted in as legal a manner as possible, and the majority of the people are satisfied with the result. A defeated candidate longing for office can very easily find something to find fault over. The fight between the candidates for selectmen is hot and will be waged to the bitter end. It would be rash for any one to attempt to name the successful ones. W. J. Cross should be elected

The Berkshire County Eagle, 17 Mar 17, 1892, page 7.

Winter: A View From Wahconah Regional High School

by Lola Mancari and Jack Walton, 9th Grade

Even hearty residents of the Berkshires can agree that recent winters have been roller coasters: wind and ice storms, extreme precipitation, blizzards, unseasonably warm days, and yes, icy cold days, as well. Trends in recent decades document that winter temperatures have been rising with less snow falling in Berkshire County. (Some folks don't really see a problem with that.) However, some regional activities and businesses are greatly affected, including ski areas and sites popular for ice fishing, so livelihoods dependent on traditionally colder winters are hurting. Warmer water in the Great Lakes means wetter weather in the Berkshires, and warmer temperatures have more than doubled the incidences of ice storms in the past 50 years over the previous 60 years (MA Climate Action Tool). Ice storms have negative impacts such as power outages, damaged trees and damage to crops due to frozen buds.

According to WRHS History teacher Mr. Rocky Dailey, "We're not just seeing less snow, but when we do it melts more quickly, causing local flooding. Ultimately, at the coast this results in a rise in ocean levels." Biology and Human Body teacher, Miss Nicole Swegal, noted that longer-term effects on nature and the environment are particularly concerning. "For example, most birds in North America migrate for nesting as well as for food; however, warmer temperatures cause insects to emerge earlier in the spring, an adjustment which potentially deprives birds of nutrients from larvae they need to survive."

Becket residents Linda and Dave Bacon have a tree nursery on their Canterbury Farm property and manage a cross-country ski and snow shoeing business in the winter, so they depend on snow and cold weather. Climate change has impacted their busy season. Winter starts later, and since it is later, trees are budding during cold snaps. As Dave summed it up, "It affects everything." Fortunately, they have many scenic trails on their property, so they were able to convert a recent "ski and snowshoe" event into a wonderful day of hiking.

Weather changes day to day, but global trends tell a longer story.

Photos 1 & 2: two photos taken hours apart on the same day. Photo 3: Tree buds iced-in after an ice storm

Check out the *Becket Beat's* New Website www.BecketBeat.org Same Address, New Look!

Home | Community Calendar | Past Issues | Submissions | Advertising | Donations | About | Contact Us | Facebook Group

Community Calendar May 2024

see page 5 for more >>

Full listing & details: **www.BecketBeat.org/Community-Calendar**

BECKET ARTS CENTER

Thursdays, May 2, 9, 16, 23, 30: Yoga w/ Rima Sala / 9:30-10:30am / $10 ($5 for BAC members)
Saturday, May 4: Reading of "Heroes of the 4th Turning"/ 2-4pm / $15 ($10 for BAC members)
Thursday, May 9: Speaker Series, Chris Ferrero - The Art of Deer Defense / 5-6pm / $5 (Free for BAC members)
Saturday, May 11: Music is My Story with Cliff Eberhardt / 7pm / Donations appreciated
Friday, May 17: 'The Child Within' Exhibit Opening Reception / 5-7pm / Free
Saturday, May 25: Songwriting Workshop with Cliff Eberhardt / 4pm / $25 (free for students 14-18)
Friday, May 31: "Wood Working" Exhibit Opening Reception / 5-7pm / Free
Saturday, June 1: Douglas Williams presents "Another Show" / 7-9pm / $20 suggested donation

BECKET ATHENAEUM

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

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Community Calendar May 2024

see page 4
<< for more

Full listing & details: **www.BecketBeat.org/Community-Calendar**

TOWN GOVERNMENT

Wednesday, May 1: Board of Health / 5pm
Wednesday, May 8: Planning Board / 6pm
Saturday, May 11: Annual Town Meeting / 2pm
Tuesday, May 14: Finance Committee / 5pm
Tuesday, May 14: Historical Commission / 7pm
Wednesday, May 15: Bylaw Review Committee / 10am
Wednesday, May 15: Select Board / 7pm
Saturday, May 18: Annual Town Election / 10am-7pm
Tuesday, May 21: Energy Committee / 4pm
Wednesday, May 22: Climate Change Forum / 2:30pm
Tuesday, May 28: Conservation Comm / 6pm

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Mondays, May 6, 13, 20, 27: Chair Yoga for Seniors / Washington Town Hall / 11am / Free
Tuesdays, May 7, 14, 21, 28: Yoga for Seniors w/ Rima Sala / Washington Town Hall / 9am / Free
Tuesdays & Thursdays, May 2, 7, 9, 14, 16, 21, 23, 28, 30: Council on Aging Lunch & Bingo / Becket Town Hall / 11am-2pm / $3 for lunch
Wednesdays, May 1, 8, 15, 22, 29: Yoga / Becket Town Hall / 9am / $3
Saturdays, May 4, 18: Food Pantry / Becket Federated Church / 9-11am
Saturday, May 11: Mother's Day Flower Sale / First Congregational Church / 9am-3pm
Saturday, May 25: All You Can Eat Breakfast / Becket Federated Church / 8-10:30am / $8
Thursday, May 30: CHP Mobile Health Unit / Town Hall / 1-3pm

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www.thedreamawaylodge.com/events

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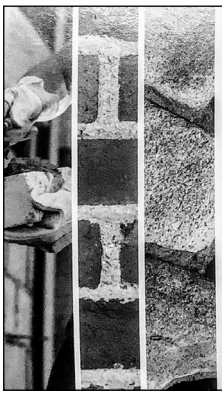
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Becket Families Go West: Part 1

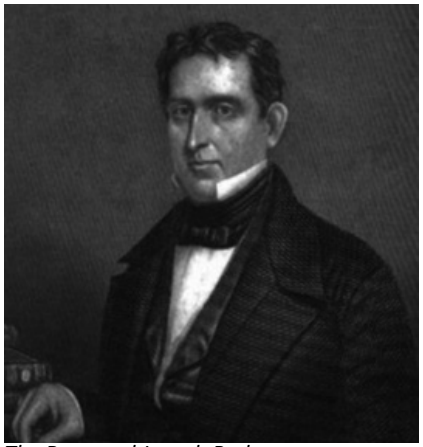
by Marilyn Fish

In September 1810, a group of 16 Becket and Washington men met at Thatcher Conant's Becket house to consider purchasing and moving with their families to "a township of land in the state of Ohio," more specifically Town 4 on Range 6 of Portage County (at that time part of the upper tier of the Western Reserve originally claimed by Connecticut). Their town would later be named Windham, after Windham, Connecticut, the home of many Becket ancestors. The effort was hardly surprising given that westward migration from New England had begun years earlier. In 1793 the federal government began giving free acreage on the Western Reserve to those who had suffered property losses during the Revolutionary War. The government also sold thousands of acres to speculators who subsequently sold "survey townships" to settlers. One such speculator was Massachusetts Governor Caleb Strong who, as part of the Connecticut Land Company, owned 92 % of Town 4.

Caleb Strong (1745-1819), portrait attributed to Gilbert Stuart. Strong was a lawyer, politician, and Founding Father who served as the sixth and tenth governor of MA (1800-1807, 1812-1816).

Although the Connecticut Land Company frequently published exaggerated reports of their property, the Becket group was most likely familiar with the harsh realities of dangerous travel and primitive conditions from first-hand accounts. In 1800, Becket brothers Thomas Delaun, Asahel, and Isaac Mills had traveled 600 miles in covered wagons from Becket to Portage County, where they became the founders of Nelson Township, only 5 miles north of Windham. They worked as ax-men for the surveyors to earn the price of their 100-acre lots and were the only settlers in Nelson until 1803, when they were joined by seven other families. Isaac returned for a time to New England. However, a stream of New England pioneers trickled in to settle other Portage County towns, including Ravenna, Aurora, Mantua, Deerfield, Palmyra, and Atwater.

In addition, Conant's group was well-acquainted with Reverend Joseph Badger, Blanford's full-time and Becket's part-time Congregational minister and the brother-in-law of Becket's doctor, Oliver Brewster. In 1800, Badger had become a missionary on the Western Reserve. Having set out on horseback on November 15, 1800, crossing the Hudson at Newburgh, the Delaware at Sussex Court House, New Jersey, and the Monongahela into the Reserve, he arrived just in time to preach in Youngstown on the last Sabbath in December. After a strenuous year of itinerant missionary work, he returned to Blanford to fetch his wife and children. He loaded a horse-drawn wagon with household possessions and set off to Buffalo, New York and south on Lake Erie to Ohio. Once settled in Austinburg, he served wherever Ohio emigrants had established communities, hoping to rebuild their Congregationalist principles. Badger returned to Blanford for reassignment in 1808 and was back on the Reserve within two years.



The Reverend Joseph Badger, (1757-1846), was the first missionary sent to the Western Reserve.

All of those who attended the September 1810 meeting were Congregationalists who had lived, worshiped and governed in Becket for many years. Over time the population had become more diverse and traditionalists found themselves increasingly at odds with changing customs, particularly as they pertained to Church matters. In fact, the men had formed the First Congregational Society in the Town of Becket to express their wish to freely practice their form of religion without hindrance or controversy. It seems that by 1810 they thought that they had a better chance of accomplishing their personal, civic and spiritual goals elsewhere. The Mills brothers and Reverend Badger were able to provide information on the best routes and places of settlement. Now the interested parties just had to work out the details.

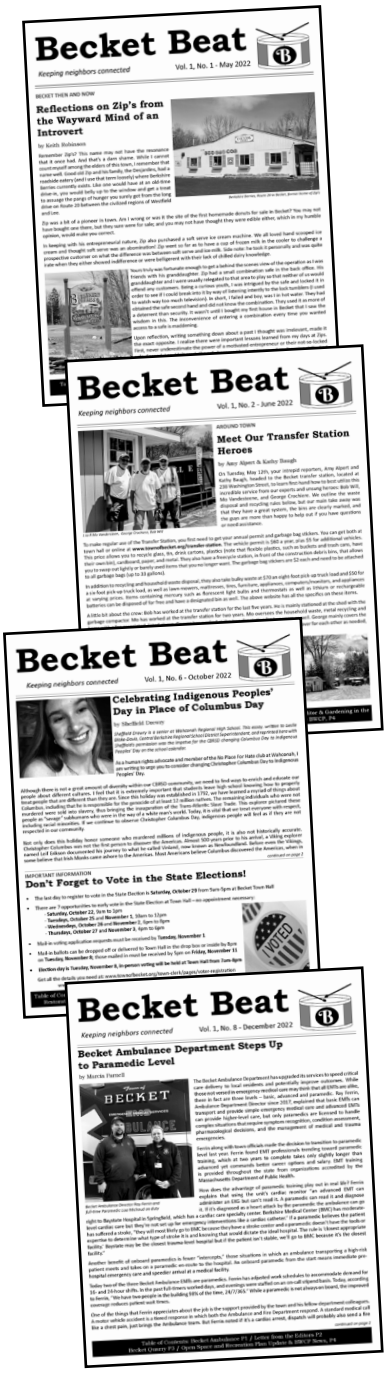
The group formed the Beckett [sic] Land Company and appointed Dillingham Clark, Conant's nephew and the owner of a tavern in Washington, to meet with Governor Strong to discuss the terms of purchase. Soon afterward they dispatched Clark and Jeremiah Lyman to explore their proposed township. After receiving a favorable report, it was agreed that the purchasers would turn over to the sellers some of their Massachusetts property at its appraised value. The sale was then consummated at $1.76 per acre for 14,845 acres. The deed was made to "Dillingham Clark, Esquire, Alpheus Streator, yeoman, and Thatcher Conant, gentleman." Soon thereafter, the families began to say their farewells. *See the June 2024 issue for Part 2.*

Ohio (the Western Reserve) in 1796.

Sources: Cathaline Alford Archer, "Eighteenth Century Becket," A Bicentennial History of Becket, Berkshire County, Massachusetts, 1765-1965, Becket Historical Society, 1964; E. G. Holland, Memoir of Rev. Joseph Badger, C.S. Francis and Co., New York, 1854; History of Portage County, Ohio, Chicago, Warner, Beers & Company, 1885; various online genealogy sites and entries on Ohio history.

The Becket Beat Celebrates Two Years!

May 2024 marks the two-year anniversary of the *Becket Beat*. We are so grateful to everyone who supported our 2023 fundraising campaign. Thank you for helping us become your trusted source for community news and information. **We couldn't do it without you!**



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HELP WANTED: JULY 8 - AUGUST 15

The town of Becket needs Summer Camp workers, a life guard, and a beach road attendant this summer. The town will pay the fee for lifeguard training for a two year promise of work.

Lifeguard position: 3 days @ $20.00 per hour.
Gate attendant: 5 days @ $18.00 per hour for 7 hours per day.
The Summer Camp worker: 4 days a week for 6 weeks @ $18.00 per hour.
Dates needed are July 8-August 15.
Perfect for residents of Becket or Washington or nearby towns.
Must be 16 years of age or older.

Please send your resume to Rita Furlong at:
Town of Becket Parks and Recreation,
557 Main Street, Becket, MA01223

or email: blueberryledge@gmail.com or call: 413-623-5146.

BECKET WASHINGTON COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP (BWCP) NEWS

Mother's Day Flower Sale - Saturday, May 11

9am-3pm (or until sold out)
10" Hanging Baskets & 10" Patio Pots ($25/each)
Plus bedding plants

To Benefit the Historical Restoration Efforts of the First Congregational Church of Becket. For questions, please call 413-623-8300

Becket Arts Center - A Reading, Lecture, Music, Exhibits & More

Spring has sprung at the BAC. Join us on Sat., May 4 for a reading of "Heroes of the 4th Turning;" learn the Art of Deer Defense with Chris Ferrero on Thurs., May 9; hear the legendary Cliff Eberhart on Sat., May 11 (return for the songwriting workshop on Sat., May 25); and join us for two exhibit openings ("The Child Within" on Fri., May 17 & "Wood Working" on Fri., May 31. And, don't miss Douglas Williams' "Another Show" on Sat., Jun. 1. Plus, artists and vendors have until June 1 to reserve a spot at this year's Arts & Crafts Marketplace (Sat., Jun. 22, 10am-4pm). $35/table ($20 for BAC members). Register here: becketartscenter.org/marketplace

Families Connect at the Athenaeum & Get Your Garden Growing

We always welcome families to stay after our Saturday 10:30am storytime for kids to play and their adults to connect with each other. Starting on May 18, we'll also be offering free snacks and coffee.

For budding gardeners (pardon the pun), we're here to help you prepare for the growing season with free seeds from our Seed Library and new Gardening Toolkits available for checkout from our Library of Things. Each kit can be checked out for 3 weeks and contains a variety of gardening tools plus gloves in adult and kid sizes.

Becket Beat

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The Becket Beat is published monthly (with a combined Jan/Feb issue)

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Find the Becket Beat at: Becket Arts Center; Becket Athenaeum; Becket Country Store; Becket Post Office; Becket Town Hall; Neon Newt; Papa Bob's; Route 8 Pub; Sherwood Shoppe; Transfer Station