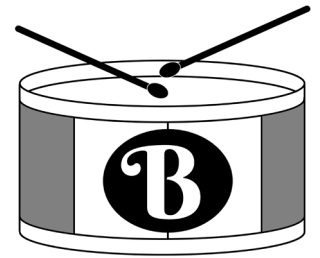


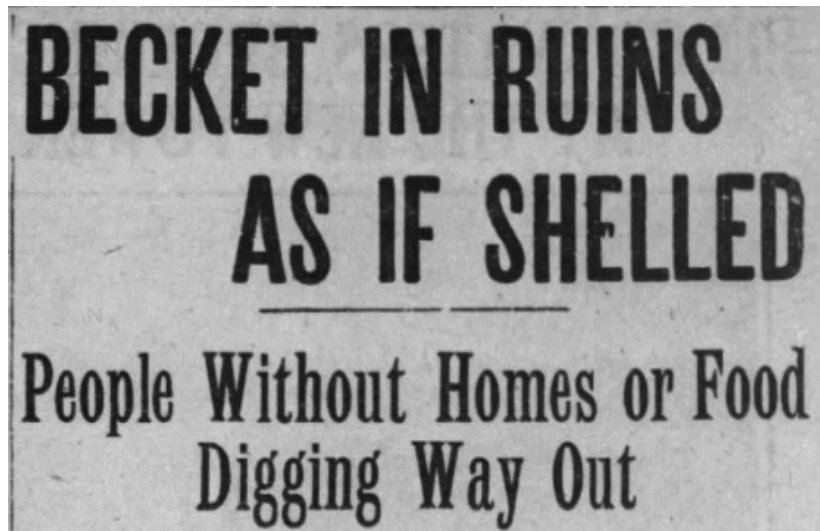
# Becket Beat



Keeping neighbors connected Vol. 4, No. 1 - February 2025

## Becket Was in Ruins

by Marilyn Fish



*The Boston Globe, November 5, 1927, p. 7.*

On November 4, 1927, Becket experienced a natural disaster that changed the lives and challenged the fortitude of its entire population. Most present-day residents have heard of the flood of '27 but not all are aware that Becket was one of many cities and towns in New England that were nearly destroyed by a rare tropical storm that tracked landward, dropping torrential rains over much of the region. In addition, the ground had been saturated by heavy rains in late October leaving lakes, rivers, reservoirs and swamps at medium to high levels. Throughout New England, many trusty old timber and stone bridges and dams that had served for more than 50 years could not withstand the torrents of water. Becket's Wheeler Dam, which held back the waters of the Claflin-Wheeler Reservoir, was one such structure. The reservoir was a fifty-acre body of water located southeast of the junction of Fred Snow Road and Route 8, and was owned by Joseph C. Ballou. On November 4, Mr. Ballou worried and watched as the dam foundered and broke, releasing a rushing wall of water toward the center of the village. Many residents heard the warning horn sounded by Ballou's car as he sped through the streets and others received telephone warnings from Patrick B. McCormick. Some managed to flee to higher ground. The full force of the flood soon washed away most of Becket's mills and commercial enterprises, many houses, and the main road all the way south to Bonny Rigg Four Corners, which was completely blocked by boulders.

The next day The Boston Globe reported, "The townsfolk of this flood-wrecked area saw the sun rise this morning on the ruins that once were the pretty little Berkshire town of Becket," adding "tornado, earthquake, or war could have done no more harm to Becket than did the flood." Main Street had become a ravine between 30 and 40 feet deep, littered with wrecked houses, battered automobiles, and drowned farm animals. Many villagers were left homeless and helpless as the town became a sea of mud accessible only from Washington. The only death attributed directly to the flood was that of Mrs. Augustine Carroll, 77. She had refused to leave her home when warned and tragically died of a broken neck as the deluge carried her downstream along with timbers, trees, and boulders.



Damage from the 1927 flood. Becket Athenaeum archives.

*Continued on page 2*

# Letter from the Editors

As we have for three years now, the Becket Beat staff met in January to review the year prior and brainstorm about changes we want to see in 2025. While we had a long list of accomplishments from 2024, the overall gist is that we feel we are accomplishing our mission of building community and being your source of news for all things Becket. Likewise, our list of goals was extensive but we focused on our top three priorities: Succession planning for staff so we can be sustainable for the long term, finding more writers – both on staff and outside contributors and developing a Kid’s Corner, which you will find in this issue. As usual, much of our conversation focused on representing as many voices as possible, hence the Kids’ Corner. In addition, we will be reaching out to a cross section of readers to give us feedback on the current issue of the month and topics for the future. We hope these changes will help bring the Becket Beat to the next level as we strive to keep improving while remaining true to our mission.

One of our goals established in 2023 was to bring on High School interns to write for the paper. In this issue you will hear from Addy Reddington, a freshman at Wahconah Regional High School. Addy is interested in all aspects of journalism, including writing and photography. For this issue, her reporting focused on a recent change regarding standardized testing (MCAS) in Massachusetts schools. Thank you so much Addy for your valuable contribution!

In our overarching goal of building community, we will once again sponsor Community Day, along with Canterbury Farms, on Saturday, March 8th from 10 am to 3 pm. Look for more details in the announcement on page 8.

Thank you all for your support and encouragement. We look forward to continuing to co-create this publication with you in 2025, and as always welcome and rely on your feedback.

*Becket Was in Ruins, continued from page 1*

A committee was swiftly formed to plan methods of rehabilitation. Several private citizens, civic groups, and businesses donated money to supplement state funds which were expected to cover only the cost of rebuilding the roads. By November 11, the local relief fund had amassed \$17,330 (more than \$300,000 in 2024 dollars). Members of the Red Cross and the Boy Scouts gathered to help feed and clothe citizens in need. Martial law was declared when looters began ravaging destroyed properties. Fifty state troopers kept strangers out of town by turning them back in Hinsdale.

More than 500 men worked at rebuilding Becket, with another 50 from the state highway department busy repairing the roads. Steam shovels, tractors and trucks created a temporary route through Bonny Rigg Four Corners to allow access to Springfield. The Walsh Construction Company employed 200 men to repair and reconstruct the tracks of the Boston & Albany Railroad.

Mill owners made attempts to rebuild their facilities but it seems that their plans fell through. The mills and businesses of surrounding towns employed some of Becket’s displaced workers and these workers eventually began to move closer to their new jobs. In one ruinous day, Becket’s half-century of industrial prosperity and self-sufficiency had come to an abrupt end. It would be many years before the town emerged as the quiet farming village and local hub for natives, telecommuters, summer campers, artists, craftsmen, and vacationers that it is today.

*Sources: Historic Flood November 1927, National Weather Service Bulletin of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association; H. B. Kinnison, The New England Flood of November, 1927, Water Supply Paper 636-C, U.S. Government Publications Warehouse; Contemporary newspapers including The Boston Globe, The Berkshire Eagle, and The North Adams Transcript. All online.*

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## Ad Hoc Building Committee Work Underway

by Marcia Parnell

The Ad Hoc Building Committee, whose formation was initiated by the Town Administrator and approved by the Select Board, has begun its work to review four Town facilities to assess potential maintenance and improvement options. The Committee kicked off in October and tours have since been conducted at all of the sites: Town Hall (557 Main Street), Station 2/Ambulance Garage (629 Jacob’s Ladder Road/Route 20), Station 1/Fire Department (108 Washington Street/Route 8) and the Highway Garage (47 Lyman Street). One of the top priorities, according to Administrator Warden and voiced previously by Select Board Chair Bill Elovirta, is addressing the accelerated wear and tear that expensive Highway Department equipment undergo because there is no covered or enclosed structure to house the vehicles and other gear.

Warden expects the Committee’s assessment to take approximately one year from kick off. The six-member team is made up of residents with a cross section of interest and expertise: Al Blake, retiree; Bruce Davey, owner Davey Associates, Inc., structural engineer; Jan Elovirta, Becket volunteer firefighter; Tim Gooding, Principal, Gooding Architecture LLC; Mark Hanford, former Becket fire chief; and Jeff Wilkinson, real estate agent for Stone House Properties. Meetings are held monthly on various Thursdays and residents are welcome to attend. Check the Town Meeting section of Becket’s website for details. Given the expense and long-term nature of the total initiative, public input throughout the process is important.

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# Community Calendar February 2025

Full listing & details: [www.BecketBeat.org/Community-Calendar](http://www.BecketBeat.org/Community-Calendar)

see page 5  
for more >>



## BECKET ARTS CENTER

**Tuesdays (through 2/18):** Intro to Improv with Ken Cheesman and Paula Langton / 7-9pm / \$45 per class (discount for BAC members)

**Saturday, February 15:** Songwriting Workshops w/ Chris Merenda / 10am-1pm & 1:30-4:30pm / \$50 per session (discount for BAC members)

**Saturday, February 22:** Songwriting Workshop w/ Chris Merenda / 1-4pm / \$50 (discount for BAC members)

**Saturday, February 22:** Chris Merenda Performance / 7-9pm / \$20 (\$10 for BAC members)

**Monday, February 24:** Writing Group with Jim Petosa / 7-9pm / \$5 (free for BAC members)

**Wednesday, February 26:** Drum with Rick Shrum! / 4-5pm / \$15 (\$10 for BAC members)

**Coffee Bag Art Contest is Back!**

[www.becketartscenter.org/coffee-bag-art](http://www.becketartscenter.org/coffee-bag-art) for details.

## BECKET ATHENAEUM

**Saturdays:** Storytime with Stay & Play / 10:30am-12:30pm / Free / Stay after Storytime for snacks and a chance for kids to play and caregivers to connect with each other.

**Saturday, February 1:** Movie Night for Adults / 6:30-9:30pm, movie starts at 7pm / Free

**Tuesdays:** Baby & Toddler Playgroup / 10-11am / Free

**Tuesday, February 4:** Book Club: The Celebrants by Steven Rowley / 1:30pm / Free

**Monday, February 10:** Cookbook Club: Roast Figs, Sugar Snow by Diana Henry / 6-7:30pm / Free

**Thursday, February 13:** Flower & Cookie Bar with Blooming Table Events / 6-7:30pm / Free / Registration required: [bit.ly/BA-flower-bar](http://bit.ly/BA-flower-bar)

**Thursday, February 20:** Game Night / 6-8pm / Free

**Thursday, February 27:** Mindful Making for Teens / 6:30-8pm / Free

## Kids' Corner

### Word Search (Ages 5-8)

S	N	O	L	H	A	T	G	J	R
C	O	A	P	L	E	D	Q	P	S
B	O	D	T	S	N	E	L	D	I
H	S	L	E	D	O	W	T	M	C
C	O	L	H	R	T	S	P	H	E
I	O	R	F	R	O	S	T	Y	N
N	W	A	N	S	E	R	K	O	G
A	T	Q	T	N	X	C	O	L	D
M	R	B	O	O	T	S	O	P	R
E	N	W	F	W	R	O	X	S	E

Find the following words in the grid:  
Snow, Ice, Hat, Sled, Cold, Coat, Frost, Boots

Answers in next month's issue

### Word Search (Ages 9-12)

B	L	I	Z	Z	A	R	D	G	Q	W
S	N	O	W	S	T	O	R	M	F	N
F	R	O	S	G	R	I	L	E	I	M
I	C	K	C	S	E	O	R	C	R	L
P	A	V	A	L	A	N	C	H	E	T
M	I	T	T	E	N	S	E	D	P	I
F	I	C	S	D	L	A	C	E	L	N
S	L	E	I	D	I	N	G	H	A	O
S	T	O	R	C	C	O	L	Z	C	R
S	N	O	W	F	L	A	K	E	E	S
P	X	Y	I	T	U	E	A	N	K	C
N	F	R	O	S	T	B	I	T	E	O

Find the following words in the grid: Blizzard, Icicle, Avalanche, Snowflake, Mittens, Frostbite, Sled, Fireplace, Snowstorm

# Community Calendar February 2025

see page 4  
 << for more



Full listing & details: [www.BecketBeat.org/Community-Calendar](http://www.BecketBeat.org/Community-Calendar)

## TOWN GOVERNMENT

- Saturday, February 1:** Conservation Comm. / 6pm
- Wednesday, February 5:** Board of Health / 5pm
- Wednesday, February 5, 19:** Select Board / 7pm
- Tuesday, February 11:** Historical Commission / 1pm
- Wednesday, February 12:** Planning Board / 6pm
- Wednesday, February 19:** Bylaw Review Comm. / 10am

For more on live and local music events, visit:  
[www.route8pub.com](http://www.route8pub.com)  
[www.facebook.com/PapaBobsentertainmenthall](http://www.facebook.com/PapaBobsentertainmenthall)  
[www.thedreamawaylodge.com/events](http://www.thedreamawaylodge.com/events)

## COMMUNITY EVENTS

- Saturdays, February 1, 15:** Food Pantry / Becket Federated Church / 9-11am
- Tuesdays & Thursdays in February:** Council on Aging Lunch & Bingo / Becket Town Hall / 11am-2pm / \$3 for lunch
- Mondays in February:** Chair Yoga Class / Washington Town Hall / 11am / Free
- Tuesdays in February:** Yoga for Seniors w/ Rima Sala / Washington Town Hall / 9am / Free
- Wednesdays in February:** Yoga / Becket Town Hall / 9am / \$3
- Saturday, February 15:** Valentine's Weekend Cookie Extravaganza Fundraiser / 10am-2pm / Guild Hall / *Donations to benefit the Yoked Parish of Becket Community Outreach Emergency Fund*
- Saturday March 8:** Becket Community Day at Canterbury Farm / 10am-3pm / Stay tuned for specials and participating businesses

### Route 8 Pub Winter Music Series

#### Sundays, 5-8pm

- 2/2: Rounders Revival
- 2/9: Kilashandra
- 2/16: Bobby Sweet & Lara Tupper
- 2/23: Jack Waldheim
- 3/2: Dave Brown
- 3/9: Awake at the Wheel
- 3/16: St. Patrick's Day Celebration
- 3/23: Kollin Kozlowski
- 3/30: Kilashandra

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# How the Members of Wahconah Regional High School Are Feeling About the New MCAS Ballot Decision

by Addison Reddington

The Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System, or MCAS, has been a qualifying component for High School graduation here for over 20 years. That changed this past November, when voters decided to eliminate that requirement. So, what does this mean for Wahconah Regional High School? While the MCAS will still be administered, will teachers enjoy more freedom planning their lessons? Will relaxing the requirement affect graduation rates?



*Wahconah Regional High School, online photo*

According to Principal Robb, “graduation rates will go up slightly only because the MCAS test will no longer be a barrier. It will be the responsibility of each school district to come up with new measures to ensure the students meet what’s called a Competency Determination.” He felt that the biggest challenge he’ll face as a principal is trying to get kids to care about this test, and stressed that it is critical to avoid uncertainty when it comes to children. Is MCAS a true measure of intelligence? “No, it measures that you learned certain education standards.”

But how will this affect the teachers at WRHS? History teacher, Mr. Patton, and Biology teacher, Mr. Furlong agree that not much will change for them, and that modification to lesson plans will be minor. They both agree that MCAS does not necessarily measure intelligence; Mr. Patton felt it was a “decent measure of a student’s ability to complete discrete skills,” while Mr. Furlong pointed out that it doesn’t take into account “kids who have test anxiety and other distractions in their lives.” Mr. Patton shared that Teacher Development Days typically focus on preparation for MCAS, so the test has become a driving force for what teachers do, “for better or worse.”

While Alena Proper, a ninth grader at WRHS, understands the purpose of a standardized test, now that the MCAS isn’t a barrier to graduation, she hopes teachers might find more opportunity to expand their curricula.

Looking forward, MCAS will remain a tool, but will no longer be seen as an obstacle.

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## An Update on the Roads

by Marcia Parnell

There’s been some good news on the road maintenance front since we reported in November 2024 that Becket’s application for a \$1 million MassWorks for Infrastructure grant and another \$1 million grant for small-town roads had been denied by the State. Town Administrator Kathe Warden reports that the Town will receive a \$114k Rural Road allocation (identical to the 2024 allocation), and that a second round of review has resulted in approval of a \$65k Division of Ecological Restoration (DER) small-bridge grant to partially fund the engineering and permitting costs for the Benton Hill bridge project. Those upfront costs are expected to total nearly \$140k. Warden hopes to secure a \$20k grant from the Wild and Scenic Westfield River Committee and anticipates funding the \$55k balance from Chapter 90 funds already on hand. An estimate on the actual construction costs cannot be determined until the initial work is completed. Still pending is word on funding from the State’s Fair Share grant program from which Becket received \$152k for FY 2024.

As for County and Leonhardt Roads, Warden and Town officials have had some discussions about the possibility of the Town issuing a bond to fund County Road — most likely as one large project as opposed to the two-part initiative originally envisioned using grant funds — but no definitive plan has been solidified. For Leonhardt Road, Warden plans to reapply for a small-town roads grant next year. All of the engineering work and permitting approvals are now in place. Since feedback she’s received is that the State’s focus is on funding truly “shovel-ready” initiatives, Warden believes the timing may be more favorable. Yet she acknowledges that because road costs have increased so significantly over the last several years, “towns are finding that their dollars don’t go as far as they used to and so everyone is looking for grant help from the State.”

# 29 Grants Awarded by Cultural Council for Becket Programs and Residents

The Becket Cultural Council has awarded 29 grants totaling \$19,000 for 2025. The grants will support a wide range of arts, humanities, and science programming for people of all ages in Becket. Said Council Chair Cathy Terwedow, "Massachusetts is the only state to include cultural-enrichment funds for every town in its annual budget. We're particularly fortunate in Becket, where electors also voted to make the arts part of the Town's annual budget. We have a unique opportunity here to support so many local artists, musicians, storytellers, poets, dancers, and crafts people while at the same time delivering all of the programs right here in Becket, giving residents so many things to see and do throughout the year!"

The Becket Cultural Council is one of 329 Local Cultural Councils (LCC) in the Commonwealth. The state legislature provides an annual appropriation to the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency, which then allocates funds to each community. Decisions about which activities to support are made at the community level by a board of municipally appointed volunteers. Of the grants awarded for 2025, \$5,500 was funded by Becket; \$13,500 came from the State. Noted Leigh Davis, State Representative of the 3rd Berkshire District, "I'm proud to support the Becket Cultural Council and its dedicated volunteers who work tirelessly to enrich our community through the arts, culture, and local initiatives."

The members of the Becket Cultural Council are Cathy Terwedow, chair; Andrea Pecor, treasurer; Lisa Rosier, secretary; Sarah Reedy, publicity; Andi Cawein, Shelley Chanler, Karen Ludington, and Jane Markham. This year's grants include:

- Becket Arts Center for its Music Brings Communities Together
- Becket Athenaeum for its Museum Passes program and community programs
- Becket Beat for local journalism
- Becket Washington School for Interactive Science Exploration, BTG Plays!, and Jacob's Pillow Curriculum in Motion
- Becket Washington School PTO for Picnic in the Park and a STEAM Assembly & Events
- Berkshire Music School, Inc. for Rhythms of Brazil: A Journey Through Traditional Musical Instruments
- Facepaint, Inc for the donation of books and online resources to the Becket Athenaeum
- Jodi Hostetter for Music in the Park
- Kate Hubbell for Introduction to Tools and Carpentry Basics
- Berkshire Art Center for the ARTcentric after-school program at the Becket Washington School
- Mollie Kellogg for Incognito Witch, the Musical
- Laurel Lenski for Kinesthetic Learning with Intrinsic Movement
- Jana Pfeiffer for The Juckets
- Q-MoB Inc for Celebrating Becket/Hilltown Pride Queer History & Culture
- Sevenars Concerts for their 57th Anniversary Season
- The Stockbridge Sinfonia, Inc. for their concert series
- Town of Washington for Family Fun Day
- Lara Tupper for Beginning to See the Light: A Cabaret Evening with Lara Tupper and Benny Kohn
- Becket Arts Center for song-writing series & concert
- Becket Arts Center for teen arts program
- Becket Athenaeum for additional monthly programming
- Becket Beat, for Facebook intern
- Becket Washington School for traveling science program
- Laurel Burgwardt for Becket Free Thanksgiving Dinner
- Sherwood Forest for Memorial Day potluck entertainment

Grants applications for 2025 are now closed. To apply for a 2026 grant, visit [www.townofbecket.org/becket-cultural-council](http://www.townofbecket.org/becket-cultural-council) in early September. For more information about the Becket Cultural Council, send an email to [becketculturalcouncil@townofbecket.org](mailto:becketculturalcouncil@townofbecket.org).

*A note of thanks from Kathe Warden*



**Many thanks to our wonderful community.**

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## BECKET COMMUNITY DAY AT CANTERBURY FARM

Co-Hosted by Canterbury Farm and The Becket Beat

**Date:** Saturday March 8th

**Time:** 10:00am-3:00pm

**Location:** 1986 Fred Snow Rd, Becket, MA 01223

**Phone:** (413) 623-0100



Join your neighbors for a day of cross-country skiing or snow shoeing at the lovely Canterbury Farm. Discounted tickets and equipment rental available to Becket residents. After the winter activities, visit local businesses and enjoy discounts on food and drink. Stay tuned for specials and participating businesses.

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### BECKET WASHINGTON COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP (BWCP) NEWS

#### Valentine's Weekend Cookie Extravaganza Fund Raiser

Donations to benefit the Yoked Parish of Becket Community Outreach Emergency Fund

**Date:** Saturday, February 15

**Time:** 10am-2pm

**Location:** Guild Hall / 21 YMCA Rd, Becket



#### Becket Arts Center - So Much to Love & Coffee Bag Art Returns

There is something for everyone at the BAC in February. Intro to Improv continues on Tuesdays through 2/18. We welcome songwriter, multi-instrumentalist, and lead singer/performer Chris Merenda for a two-weekend songwriting workshop residency (February 15 & 22) that culminates in his performance on February 22 at 7pm.



Drum with Rick Shrum! in a monthly class on February 26 – learn to play traditional west African rhythms on hand drums in a fun group setting. And join Jim Petosa for our monthly writing group on February 24.

PLUS, our Coffee Bag Art Contest returns to raise funds for children's programming. Stop by the BAC to pick up a large burlap coffee sack, get creative, and return it by March 2nd. We can't wait to see what you'll make this year! [www.becketartscenter.org/coffee-bag-art](http://www.becketartscenter.org/coffee-bag-art) for details.

#### New at the Athenaeum: Online Wellness Classes, Flower Arranging, and Crafting for Teens

Check out Ompractice, the newest addition to our digital resources! Join a live, online, camera-on class or explore the video library of recorded classes in yoga, meditation, tai chi, Pilates, and more - all for free with your library card. [BecketAthenaeum.org/ompractice](http://BecketAthenaeum.org/ompractice)

Register now to join us for a Flower & Cookie Bar on February 13 at 6pm: [bit.ly/BA-flower-bar](http://bit.ly/BA-flower-bar). Blooming Table Events will guide participants through creating a flower arrangement to bring home alongside some sweet botanical small bites. Space is limited.

Local teens! Join us at the library for a quiet evening of crafting and connection. (And snacks!) Bring your own project or enjoy a provided craft and hang out with your friends while making new ones. Stop by once or come every other Thursday at 6:30pm, starting February 27.



## Becket Beat

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