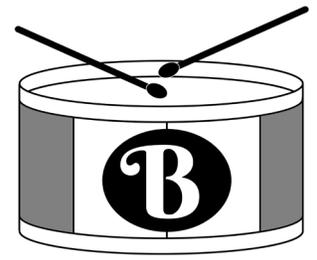


# Becket Beat



Keeping neighbors connected Vol. 4, No. 5, June 2025

## Operating and Ambulance Budgets Pass; Several Tabled Articles and Broader Road Financing Plan Expected to be Addressed at Special Town Meeting Later this Year

by Marcia Parnell

In a four-hour meeting attended by nearly 200 Becket residents, voters approved a \$7,757,877 FY 2026 operating budget, representing a 2.07% increase from 2025, and a \$712,489 Ambulance budget representing a 22.5% increase from 2025. A total of 26 articles appeared on the warrant; 21 were passed and five were tabled.

### Discussion around Expenditure Items

Article 2 – FY 2026 Operating Budget. With a total Highway Department budget of \$1,069,110, \$496,689 or 46% represented by Salaries and Wages, the question was raised about broader road repairs and funding sources. Town Administrator Kathe Warden explained that with voter approval of Article 7 to transfer \$400,000 into the Highway Stabilization Fund it will total \$875,000 for road repair. In addition, she plans to reapply for state grants and she and Town officials expect to have a bond issue proposal for voter approval at a Special Town Meeting to be held in the coming months.

Article 4 – Capital Expenditures totaling \$302,700. Voters opted to review line items individually rather than as a lump sum. At \$100,000, the Town Hall Wind Turbine Project drew questions about its high cost. After Energy Committee representatives explained a projected payback of 10 years and a 50-year useful life, the item was passed. A \$30,000 item for tree removal in the Town's cemeteries was questioned after Select Board member Chris Swindlehurst pointed out that many of the trees marked for takedown had leafed out and appear healthy. A motion to amend the \$30,000 item to include the cost of a certified arborist's report subject to review and approval by the Select Board was ultimately passed.

Article 8 – Funding the Other Post Employee Benefits (OPEB) Liability Account. "What is this?" was the question raised by one resident about the \$150,000 proposal to fund the OPEB Liability Account. Select Board member Jeff Piemont explained that the Town's retiree benefit obligation is significant and funding this item would bring the account total to \$195,000, a small balance relative to the growing obligation, but a start.

Article 9 – Ambulance Budget. A question was raised about the hefty increase in Ambulance Salaries from \$515,183 in FY 2025 to \$646,045, or 25.4%, for FY 2026. Town Administrator Kathe Warden explained that the increase addressed raises, more costly paramedic salaries and overtime.

**Correction:** In our May 2025 story "Annual Town Meeting and Election: Know Before You Go" we incorrectly referred to the Becket Country Store as the Becket General Store.

Continued on page 2



Becket Town Meeting Attendees, photo by Art Alpert

## Article Passed after Lengthy Discussion



Becket Town Moderator and Select Board, photo by Art Alpert

Article 22 – Citizens Petition – Outdoor Lighting Bylaw. Known more familiarly as the “Dark Skies” bylaw, this proposed bylaw generated the most audience input of the afternoon. Proponents expressed the health and safety benefits for humans and animals, the need to nurture and protect the increasingly unique beauty and aesthetic of dark skies in the face of climate change and sprawl, and a mechanism for neighbors to get their lighting complaints addressed if neighbors are unable to settle outdoor lighting encroachment complaints. Opponents described it as overreach, of questionable cost and safety value for camps and farmers to implement, and unnecessary given success expressed by some residents in solving complaints neighbor-to-neighbor. An amendment was approved to address camp and farmer concerns. The Article passed by a vote of 77 to 69.

## Articles Tabled after Discussion and Likely to be Addressed at Special Town Meeting

Article 15 – Acceptance of Mass. General Law Chapter 23B, Section 32(b) Seasonal Community Designation. This article was included in response to the Affordable Homes Act (AHA), which was signed into law by Governor Maura Healey in August 2024, and included Becket as one of 25 Massachusetts seasonal communities owing to the fact that at least 40% of its housing units are second or seasonal homes. Under the law, towns defined as seasonal communities must vote to accept the designation. While it was acknowledged that the law implies benefits afforded by the designation, the uncertainty around the potential requirements imposed by the law on the Town led voters to accept a motion to table. Town counsel explained that there was no deadline on the vote to accept or reject the designation. (See <https://becketbeat.org/2025/05/01/were-a-seasonal-community-and-the-adus-are-coming/> for more details on seasonal communities.)

Articles 19, 20 and 21 – Citizens Petition to transfer from Undesignated Funds \$31,000 for a “fast charging” electric vehicle charging station, \$7,500 to support the Farmers Market and \$1 to support the development of a gas station at the Becket Country Store. Although it was noted that the Articles would need to be amended to request funding from Free Cash, Town counsel advised that it was his legal opinion that towns and municipalities are prohibited from funding commercial enterprises. Voters opted to table the Articles giving Becket Country Store owner Ryan Eley an opportunity to revisit his citizens’ petition in some other fashion.

Article 23 – Zoning Bylaw – Addition of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU). Also addressed in the AHA is a provision allowing homeowners to create ADUs by right in single-family zoning districts. ADUs may be half the square footage of a primary residence or 900 square feet, whichever is smaller. (See <https://becketbeat.org/2025/05/01/were-a-seasonal-community-and-the-adus-are-coming/> for more details on ADUs.) Article 23 was sponsored by the Becket Planning Board in an effort to incorporate and detail requirements for ADUs in Becket’s bylaws in accordance with state law. Some disagreement and uncertainty about definitions and requirements led to the vote to table the Article.

## Additional Takeaways

Drawing less attention but important to note, nonetheless, were the warnings from Town officials about two big pending expense items for the Town. Finance Chair Ron Defoe reminded voters that with fewer state grants and bond funding looming, residents will face a growing tax burden to fund expensive but much-needed repairs for asphalt surfaces like County and Yokum Pond Roads. And cited earlier, Select Board member Jeff Piemont’s advice about the large, growing and ongoing retiree benefit expense voters will be required to fulfill.

Look for updates in the *Becket Beat* as they become available for more information on a Special Town Meeting about road repair bond financing and tabled Articles.

# Meet the Candidates and Town Election Results

by Al Blake and Kathy Dickinson



Candidates forum attendees and participants, photo by Art Alpert

The first-annual candidate forum was held at Town Hall on Monday, May 12th, in order for candidates for elected Town positions to introduce themselves to members of the community and to entertain questions of interest to the electorate. Candidates who participated included Dan Parnell and Ron Defoe, both of whom were running for re-election to the Finance Committee; Chris Swindlehurst, in a contest for re-election to the Select Board; Sarah Francis, who was running for a position on the Cemetery Commission; and both candidates for one position on the Planning Board, John Verity and incumbent Rob Ronzio. Dave Johnson, who was running for Select Board was unable to attend, but provided his profile in advance of the forum. Dr. Howard Lerner was also unable to attend and ran for a seat on the Board of Health.

Each candidate was given two minutes to introduce themselves to roughly 40 members of the community who attended in person, and another eight who joined via Zoom. Attendees were also provided a list of the roles and responsibilities of the various boards. Following introductory statements, each candidate present was asked to answer a short list of questions, including why they were interested in the position they were seeking; what they thought that Board had done for the Town and what more that Board could or should do; and if they had plans to encourage more members of the community to participate on local boards. The forum was then opened to questions from the audience.

Several questions revolved around how Becket might improve housing options for residents who wish to remain in Becket while requiring more assistance as they age. A suggestion was made to consider establishing a Housing Committee to explore potential ideas, in addition to encouraging citizens to attend monthly Select Board meetings. Selectboard Chair Eloverta pointed out this had been explored in the past, but interest was expressed in revisiting.

A final question to the candidates came from Ryan Eley, owner of the Becket Country Store: "What is your favorite spot in Becket?" Enthusiastic responses included the lakes, forests, hiking the Quarry, and all the good places to dine!

The event was hosted by Town Clerk Robin Mathiesen, and moderated by Al Blake, a member of multiple Town Boards and a contributor to the *Becket Beat*.

The Town election was held on Saturday, May 17th from 10-7pm and drew a record number of 233 voters out of 1,708 registered.

Following are the results and huge thanks to Robin Mathiesen, Town Clerk, Sue Crossley, Assistant Town Clerk and all of the volunteers who made our election process a tremendous success we all should be proud of.

- Board of Health – Dr. Howard Lerner (185 votes, 7 write-ins and 41 blank)
- Finance Committee – 2 positions, Ronald Defoe, Daniel Parnell (206 and 199 votes respectively, 1 write-in and 60 blank)
- Select Board – Christopher Swindlehurst (136 to 95 votes, 2 blank)
- Cemetery Commissioner – Sarah Francis (219 votes, 14 blank)
- Planning Board – John Verity (183 to 47, 3 blank)

Total voters: 233; Total registered voters: 1,708; Voter turnout percentage: 13.6%

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# Mrs. Adeline Smith Accepts the Boston Post Cane

by Marilyn Fish

Mrs. Adeline Smith, who will celebrate her 100th birthday later this year, will be formally recognized as the oldest citizen of Becket, Massachusetts,\* when the Town's Select Board presents her with the Boston Post Cane at 3pm, on Friday, June 6, in the Town Hall Community Room.

The Boston Post Cane tradition began in August 1909, when Edwin A. Grozier, publisher of the Boston Post, launched a public relations campaign aimed at increasing readership. He sent 700 gold-headed ebony walking canes to the Boards of Selectmen of 700 New England towns, with the request that each be presented with the compliments of the Post to the oldest male citizen of the town. It was to be used by that person until his passing and then handed on to the next oldest citizen of the town. In 1930, after considerable controversy, eligibility for the cane was opened to women.

The canes were made by J.F. Fradley and Co., a New York manufacturer, from ebony shipped in seven-foot lengths from the Congo. The head was engraved with an inscription reading, "Presented by the Boston Post to the oldest citizen of (name of town). To Be Transmitted". The Select Boards were the trustees of the canes and were expected to keep them always in the hands of the oldest citizen. More than 500 towns in New England still carry on The Boston Post Cane tradition with the original canes they were awarded in 1909.

While the tradition is great, it has not always been foolproof. Quite some time ago, Becket needed to secure two duplicate Boston Post canes as the original was lost. One duplicate belongs to the Historical Commission and stays in a display case in Town Hall. The second belongs to the Select Board, as originally established by the Boston Post cane regulations. The Select Board then establishes the procedure for awarding the cane to Becket's oldest citizen. Becket provides the cane to the recipient to enjoy during their lifetime, after which it is returned to the Select Board for the next recipient.

\*Mr. William (Bill) Robinson of Becket, who marked his 100th birthday on April 24, 2025, is a few months older than Mrs. Smith, but declined to accept the Boston Post Cane. See more on Mr. Robinson in the April 2025, issue of the *Becket Beat*.

Source: <https://bostonpostcane.org/origins-of-the-tradition>

**Edwin Atkins Grozier**



Grozier c. 1896

Image from Wikipedia



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Randy Cormier



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# Community Calendar June 2025

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

see page 6  
for more >>



## BECKET ARTS CENTER

**Thursdays:** Yoga with Rima Sala / 9:30-10:30am / \$15 per class (discount for members)

**Tuesday, June 10:** The Art of Whiskey Tasting Series 4: Barrel Strength Bourbon with Colin Goundrey / 7-8pm / \$70/person

**Thursday, June 12:** Local LGBTQ+ Artists Panel Discussion / 5-7:30pm / Free

**Friday, June 13:** Berkshire LGBTQ+ Pride Exhibit Opening / 5-7pm / Free

**Friday, June 20:** Leigh Davis - Join the Constituent Conversation / 4-6pm / Free

**Saturday, June 21:** Arts & Crafts Marketplace / 10am-3pm

**Wednesday, June 25:** Plein Air / 10am-1pm / \$10 (free for members)

**Saturday, June 28:** Music Brings Communities Together: The Lucky 5 / 5-7pm / Free

**Sunday, June 29:** Historic Canterbury Farm Garden Party / 3-6pm / \$25 (\$20 for members)

## BECKET ATHENAEUM

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

**Tuesday, June 3:** Book Club: The Comfort of Crows by Margaret Renkl / 1:30pm / Free

**Wednesday, June 4:** Swing with Ralph Rosen / 6-7:30pm / Free

**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!

**Monday, June 9:** Cookbook Club: Start Here by Sohla El-Waylly / 6-7:30pm / Free

**Thursday, June 12 & 26 :** Mindful Making for Teens / 5:30-7pm / Free

**Thursday, June 12:** Game Night / 6-8pm / Free

**Tuesday, June 17:** School's Out, Summer's On: Summer Reading Kickoff Party / 3-5:30pm / Free

**Wednesday, June 18:** Urban Blues with Ralph Rosen / 6-7:30pm / Free

**Tuesday, June 24:** Movie Night for Adults / 6:30-9:30pm, movie starts at 7pm / Free

**Saturday, June 28:** Visit the library table at Washington Family Fun Day! / 10-4pm / Washington Town Park / Free

**Tuesday, July 1:** Book Club: Normal People by Sally Rooney / 1:30pm / Free

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# Community Calendar June 2025

see page 5  
 << for more



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

## TOWN GOVERNMENT

- Tuesday, June 3:** Parks & Rec / 9am
- Wednesday, June 4:** Board of Health / 5pm
- Wednesday, June 4:** Select Board / 7pm
- Finance Committee - TBD, check town website
- Tuesday, June 10:** Historical Commission / 3pm
- Wednesday, June 11:** Planning Board / 6pm
- Wednesday, June 18:** Bylaw Review Committee / 10am
- Wednesday, June 18:** Select Board / 6:30pm
- Tuesday, June 24:** Conservation Comm. / 6pm

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

**Route 8 Pub Sunday Music Series**  
**5-8pm**

- 6/1: Dos Matteos
- 6/8: The Mikes
- 6/15: Adams Brothers
- 6/22: Payola Brothers
- 6/29: Trevor Davis

## COMMUNITY EVENTS

- Mondays in June:** Osteo Class w/ Rima Sala / Washington Town Hall / 11am / Free
- Tuesdays in June:** Yoga for Seniors w/ Rima Sala / Washington Town Hall / 9am / Free
- Tuesdays & Thursdays in June:** Becket Senior Group Lunch & Bingo / Becket Town Hall / 10am-2pm / \$3 for lunch
- Wednesdays in June:** Yoga / Becket Town Hall / 9am / \$3
- Fridays in June:** Pickleball / 5-7pm / North Becket Tennis Court
- Friday, June 6:** Free Pasta Dinner / Becket Federated Church / 5-7
- Saturdays, June 7, 21:** Food Pantry / Becket Federated Church / 9-11am
- Saturday, June 28:** All You Can Eat Breakfast / Becket Federated Church / 8-10am / \$10

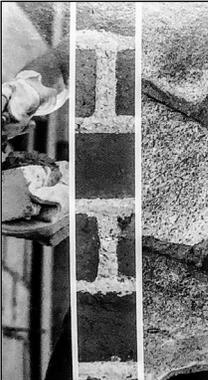


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# Becket's Own Paul Revere Bell Focal Point of Berkshire County's First Massachusetts 250 (MA250) Celebration

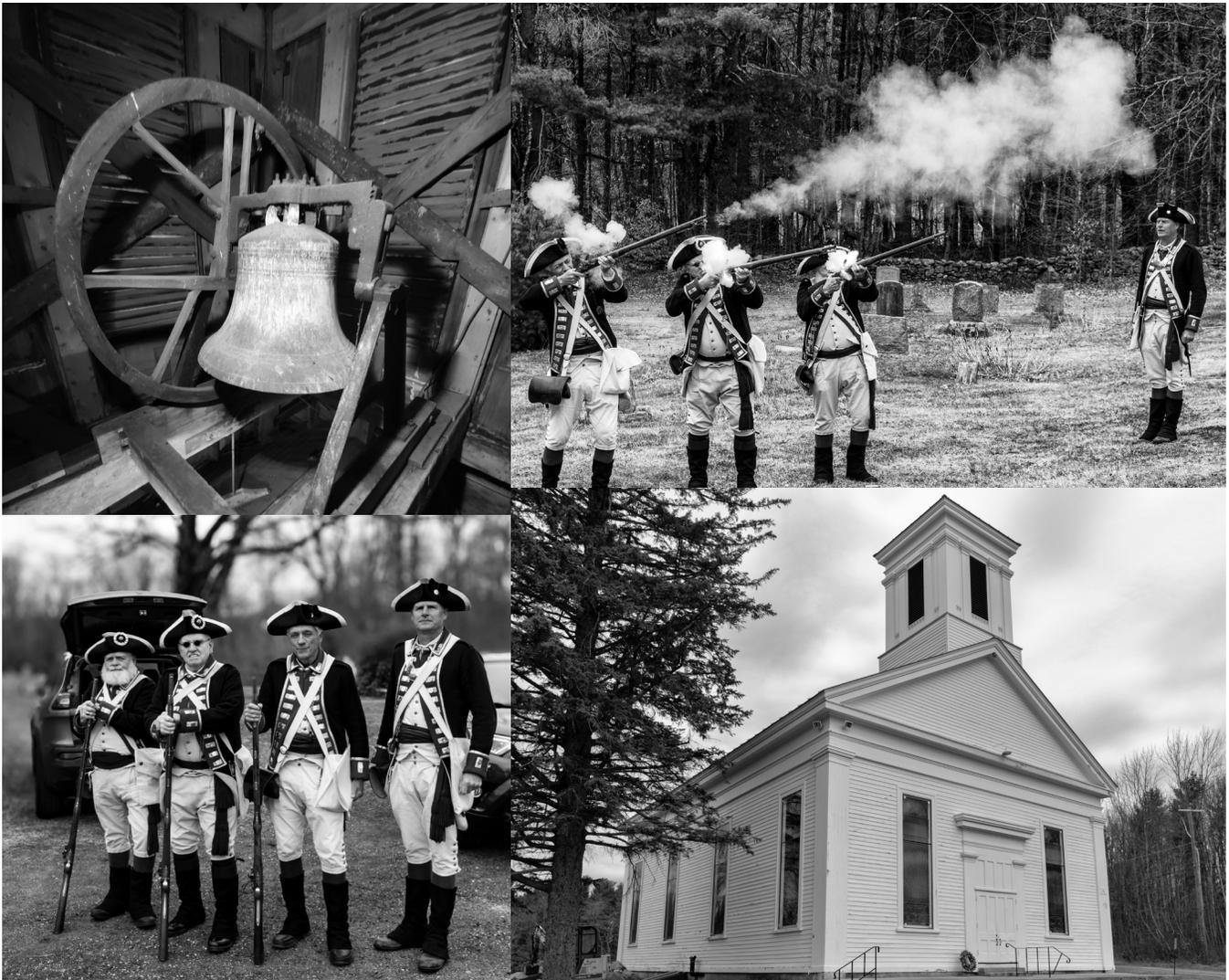
by Art Alpert

Volunteers from Becket's Yoked Parish staged a dramatic remembrance of the start of the American Revolution at the Congregational Church here in Becket on Patriot's Day, April 21st. MA250 is a statewide initiative to celebrate 250 years of America's independence and Massachusetts revolutionary legacy and Becket's remembrance is the first such event to be held in Berkshire County.

The ceremony began with the ringing of the Paul Revere church bell at noon by local student Jonah Rawson, calling those attending inside the church. Once gathered, the names of the 25 Revolutionary War veterans buried in the Becket Center Cemetery (as designated by the Daughters of the American Revolution) were recited followed by readings of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's 1863 "Paul Revere's Ride" by Rita Furlong and John J. Daly's 1918 "A Toast to the Flag" by Christopher Tourtellot. Moving outdoors, the group honored the veterans who served in the country's fight for freedom with a wreath and a musket salute by uniformed representatives of the Colonel Henry Knox Regimental Color Guard of the Sons of the American Revolution. Pastor Bill Mulholland ended the ceremony with taps.

In an announcement on September 17, 2024, Governor Maura Healey explained that "Massachusetts 250 is a statewide, ongoing celebration of our history and everything that makes our state special. Massachusetts is where the Revolution began and where the Revolution continues. We are first in freedom, first in education, first in health care and first in innovation." For those interested in other statewide celebrations, go to <https://massachusetts250.org>.

For more information on Becket's Paul Revere Bell see *Becket Beat's* October 2022 story at <https://becketbeat.org/october/> and scroll to page 3. Photos below courtesy of Art Alpert.





Pastor Bill Mulholland Playing "Taps", Photo by Art Alpert

## Revolutionary War Veterans Buried in Becket Center Cemetery

Ebenezer Adams  
 Lt. James Birchard  
 Dr. Oliver Brewster  
 Andrew Broga  
 Lt. David Brown  
 Jacob Carter  
 Joshua Chapman  
 Capt. Jonas Childs  
 Anthony Church  
 George Conant  
 Jonah Cushman  
 James Harris  
 Joseph Higley  
 Micah Higley  
 Milton Johnson  
 Capt. Solomon King  
 Amos Kingsley  
 Nathaniel Kingsley  
 John Messenger  
 Lt. Joseph Moore  
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 Levi Snow  
 Jabez Wadsworth  
 Jonathan Wadsworth  
 Deacon Ebenezer Walden

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Town of Becket information:  
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# Becket Select Board and Becket Planning Board Seek Applicants to Fill Vacancies on the Planning Board

- **Planning Board Member.** The term of this Select Board/Planning Board appointment is until the May 2026 Annual Town Election. The May 2026 Annual Town Election ballot will include a Planning Board position to fill the remainder of Howard G. Lerner's term through May 2029.
- **Planning Board Associate Member** (serves in a **non-voting** capacity, unless participation is required to establish a quorum). The term of this Select Board appointment is July 1, 2025 through June 20, 2026.

**TO APPLY**, please submit a cover letter, resume and an Appointment Application to:  
 Select Board and Planning Board c/o adminasst@townofbecket.org. (Or via Select Board and Planning Board c/o Beverly Gilbert, Town Hall, 557 Main Street, Becket, MA 01233).

The application may be obtained from the Town Hall or Town website at the Forms and Documents page of the town website [www.townofbecket.org](http://www.townofbecket.org)

Applications are due June 16, 2025.

## Kids' Corner

### SUMMER IS HERE

#### Word Search

**DIRECTIONS:** Find and circle the vocabulary words in the grid. Look for them vertically and horizontally.



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- |       |        |
|-------|--------|
| BEACH | SUMMER |
| CAMP  | SUN    |
| FUN   | SWIM   |
| HOT   | WATER  |



Answer key on page 10

## Farmers Markets in Becket this Summer!

**Berkshire Mobile Farmers Market Comes Back to Becket**

**Tuesdays beginning June 17th - October 14th  
 3:30 to 5:30pm at Becket Town Hall Pavilion**



Shoppers will find a variety of seasonal produce at the market, as well as other food staples such as eggs, meat, dairy products, bread, maple syrup and honey.

All products are locally sourced, and payment is on a tiered/sliding scale to make shopping at the market affordable for all. Customers can choose to pay either retail price, pay 50% off the retail price, or pay nothing at all (using the market as a food pantry). The market will also accept SNAP/HIP as a payment option and will accept Farmers Market Nutrition Program coupons (WIC and Senior coupons).

**Becket Country Store Farmer's Market**  
**Fridays, beginning June 13th- September 26**  
**4:00 to 7:00pm**



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CENTER**

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**SATURDAY 21 JUNE**

10:00 am - 3:00 pm

[becketartscenter.org/marketplace](http://becketartscenter.org/marketplace)

*June word search answer*



**Pasta Dinners & Breakfasts are BACK  
at the Becket Federated Church!**

Free pasta dinners on the first Friday  
of every month, beginning June 6th.

All you can eat breakfast for \$10  
on the last Saturday of every month,  
beginning June 28th.

**BECKET WASHINGTON COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP (BWCP) NEWS**

**Becket Arts Center - Marketplace, Music, Exhibits &  
More to Start the Summer**

Join us on Saturday, June 21 for our Arts & Crafts Marketplace with more than 20 artisan vendors; there will be so many great items to see and buy. We celebrate pride month with a local LGBTQ+ Pride exhibit, opening Friday, June 13 with an artist panel discussion the evening prior (Thursday, June 12). Our Whiskey Tasting series with Colin Goundrey continues on Tuesday, June 10 and we welcome State Representative Leigh Davis for a constituent conversation on Friday, June 20.

Plus, we kick off our Music Brings Communities Together series on Saturday, June 28 with The Lucky 5 and host a Garden Party fundraiser at Canterbury Farm on Sunday, June 29. You can always find the latest events online at [BecketArtsCenter.org/events](http://BecketArtsCenter.org/events)

**Music Presentations and Summer Reading for All Ages @ the Library**

Join us at the Athenaeum in June for two presentations with musician and music historian Ralph Rosen. June 4th at 6pm Swing Music: Ralph will trace the development of early jazz, onward into the "Swing Era" which was dominated by large ensembles called "Big Bands." June 18th at 6pm Urban Blues: Ralph will take us on a journey into the world of Urban Blues where he'll look at the mass migration of Black Americans from the south to the Midwest and northeast throughout much of the 20th century and how this created a change in the traditional approach to blues.

School's Out, Summer's On: Summer Reading Kickoff Ice Cream Party: This year's summer reading theme is Level Up at Your Library and we are excited for a summer full of great events for all ages including a storyteller, a magician, family movie nights, pop-up storytimes, lawn games, and a new Books and Bevies book club for adults. Kick off the season with lawn games and ice cream on Tuesday, June 17th from 3-5:30 at the library.

**BECKET  
ARTS  
CENTER**



**Becket Beat**

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