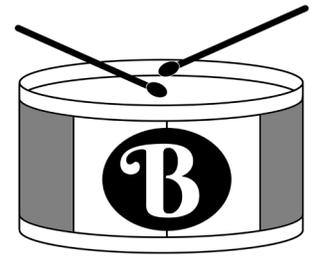


Becket Beat

Keeping neighbors connected Vol. 4, No. 9, October 2025



Becket Emergency Program Faces Funding Shortfall as Winter Nears

by Adele Levine

Last year, a Becket man with serious medical issues was in his home without food or water and he had no way to get his wheelchair in and out of his house. He called the Community Emergency Outreach Program (CEOP) to ask for help. Immediately volunteers responded with food and water and helped him regain access to his own home.

It is for moments like this that the Becket Yoked Parish created CEOP.

“Becket is a town where neighbors reach out to other neighbors in need,” said Pastor Bill Mulholland. “But sometimes emergencies are bigger than what one neighbor can handle. That’s when CEOP steps in.”

This year, however, CEOP faces an emergency of its own. Grants from the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC), which sustained the program in previous years, are no longer available. With winter approaching – the season when requests typically surge – the funding gap is urgent.

“As we approach winter, we are very concerned that we won’t be able to meet all the emergency needs in our community,” Mulholland said. “Though I know the people of Becket will respond if they understand the needs.”

Over the years, CEOP has stepped in when residents faced sudden, critical hardships:

- Fuel deliveries during freezing weather
- Emergency car repairs so people could get to their jobs
- Meal deliveries for housebound residents
- Rides to urgent medical appointments
- Coverage for life-saving prescriptions
- Budget counseling for struggling families

According to Patti Boynton, who often coordinates responses to the requests that come from many different sources, emergencies are rarely straightforward. “The needs are often complex and interconnected,” she said. “One person may need food, heating fuel, and home modifications all at once.”

This year, members of the Yoked Parish have held fundraisers in support of CEOP, raising \$5,000. Since this amount can’t replace the lost grants from BRPC, the program is seeking additional help from the community.

Beyond financial support, CEOP is working to build a roster of skilled volunteers – electricians, plumbers, carpenters, nurses, drivers, and accountants – who can be quickly called on when emergencies arise.

As the cold season approaches, CEOP is asking Becket residents to help ensure that no neighbor faces a crisis alone. How to help? To donate, send a check to Food Pantry, PO Box 306, Becket, MA 01223. Write “CEOP Fund” in the memo line. To volunteer, call (413) 770-1897 to add your name and skills to the emergency response list.

TO DONATE:

Send a check to

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Special Town Meeting Results

by Marcia Parnell

The Special Town Meeting, held on September 20 at 2 p.m. at the Becket Washington School, drew lighter attendance than the Annual Meeting. With just six articles on the warrant, the meeting lasted about an hour. The results were as follows:

Article 1. Conservation Commission Membership Change: Passed unanimously

Article 2. Financial Transfers: Passed unanimously

Article 3. Transfer FY2026 Appropriations from the Building Inspector Salary Account to a Professional Services Account: Passed unanimously

Article 4. Borrow \$5 Million for Paved Road Repairs: Passed by 2/3 majority

Article 5. Proposition 2 ½ Debt Exclusion Referendum for \$5 Million Borrowing as Specified in Article 4: Passed unanimously

Article 6: Regulation – Accessory Dwelling Units: Did not pass

For more details on the Warrant and Articles go to: www.townofbecket.org/administration



(Left to right) Robin Mathiesen, Town Clerk; Ethan Klepetar, Moderator; Select Board members Chris Swindlehurst, Bill Eloverta, and Jeff Piemont; Kathe Warden, Town Administrator

State-Sponsored Medicare Enrollment Guidance for Seniors

by Marcia Parnell

Known as the SHINE program (Serving the Health Information Needs of Everyone) and administered by local Elder Services organizations throughout the state, the SHINE program provides free health insurance information, counseling and assistance to people who are Medicare-eligible. Becket resident and local SHINE representative Steve Rosenthal will be conducting



an **information session at the Becket Athenaeum on Wednesday, November 5th at 3pm for Becket seniors and their caregivers** who are interested in learning more about the enrollment process, and often-confusing array of coverage and prescription drug options. Following his presentation, Steve will address individual questions and also schedule phone calls to help guide individuals through the actual enrollment. Refreshments will be served.

All SHINE representatives receive 55 hours of training to become certified and must take an annual re-certification exam. According to Steve, SHINE's aim is to help more than just seniors new to Medicare. "Many existing enrollees don't realize that it's important to review their Medicare health insurance and prescription drug needs annually because plans and costs change from year to year and what makes sense one year may not the next. The goal is to find the right coverage at the lowest possible cost." Steve will also explain some of the major changes that will take place in 2026.

The annual Medicare enrollment period runs from October 15th to December 7th.

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School Updates

by Barbara Craft-Reiss

On a beautiful fall morning, with the Becket-Washington School alive with the sounds and sights of children learning, I had the pleasure of meeting with Dr. Michael Henault and Mr. Aaron Robb, the new Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent respectively. They have both been in their new positions since July 1, 2025. Prior to assuming these new roles, Dr. Henault was Assistant Superintendent for Central Berkshire Regional School District and Mr. Robb was the Principal of Wahconah Regional High School. Interestingly, they both shared that they have had experience in multiple roles within school settings, and as needed have served as substitute teacher, paraprofessional, custodian, and even bus driver! The only job they have not done, is cafeteria worker. Maybe a reflection on their culinary skills?

When asked about their collective vision for the district, Dr. Henault stated that his hope is for us to be the best rural school district in Massachusetts by providing our learners with the same resources available to more affluent districts. While leading our district forward, Mr. Robb is intent on getting feedback from all stakeholders. He hopes to build trust and develop positive relationships by being available to all who wish to speak with him. Dr. Henault added that they are a good team in that they share the same mindset.

An important goal they share is improving student outcomes and supporting teachers. "That's our work; systems are in place to that end", stated Mr. Robb. Dr. Henault added that CBRSD is doing well with their limited resources compared to those available in larger districts. Teachers strive to meet the current needs of children, which are constantly changing.

They both value the importance of community engagement. The Superintendent has been meeting with town administrators as well as Select Boards. He intends to create community forums to listen to the people and learn of their specific needs. The elected officials associated with our district (Leigh Davis, Paul Marks, John Barrett, and Lindsay Sabadosa) will be meeting with Dr. Henault to tour the schools and discuss funding sources. Mr. Robb stated that using social media is a priority to engage and demystify.

Our 7 towns that make up Central Berkshire (Dalton, Hinsdale, Becket, Peru, Washington, Windsor, and Cummington), are fiscally responsible for our district's budget. Both Henault and Robb are trying to involve more people in their bottom-up approach to the budget. Community meetings will allow for this, as well as meetings with the school's leaders to determine what resources they might need.

Children remain at the center of their work. Having their educational roots in the classroom as teachers, they both find joy and validation in observing teachers and children learning and growing.

With their over 49 years of collective experience, it is clear that this district is in most capable hands. Their ability to work together, with similar visions, leadership styles and work ethics allows me, as a School Committee member representing Becket and as a retired school administrator, to feel confident that CBRSD is moving forward and doing all that is possible to create the very best outcomes for our children while balancing that with fiscal responsibility and supporting our educators and staff. Their new energy is palpable, and we are grateful for the leadership of Superintendent Henault and Assistant Superintendent Robb.

Solar Development Applications in Becket

by Kathy Dickinson

With energy costs continuing to rise, and with the growing realization that we need to move away from our dependence on fossil fuels, many communities are evaluating alternative clean energy sources such as wind and solar. In fact, Becket already had a sizable solar array installed a few years ago and tied directly into the power grid near Jacobs Ladder Road.

Three applications to develop new Solar Farms with Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) here in Becket were submitted to the Becket Conservation Commission (BCC) in June of this year. Initial information was shared with residents on July 8th, when the BCC scheduled an open forum and voted to approve hiring a certified wetland consultant to assess environmental impacts for each of the three designated sites at the expense of the respective applicants. It was also determined that the applications would be reviewed by the BCC separately and sequentially.

At that initial meeting, there was a good deal of concern regarding safety and environmental impact expressed on the part of attendees about the proposed developments. While duly noted, the BCC Chair, Dave Johnson, stated that any further action on these applications would have to wait until the final wetland assessment reports were received. Only then would the BCC move forward and within the defined process they are mandated to follow.

Community Calendar October 2025

Full listing & details: 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)

Sundays: Sean McCusker Live Painting Demo / 1-2pm / Free

Tuesdays: The Art of Voice - a weekly community sing-along led by Paula Langton / 6:30-8:30pm / Free

Sunday, October 5: Music Brings Communities Together: JoAnne Redding Trifecta / 5-7pm / Free

Thursday, October 9: 'Moving Through Color' An Exhibit of Paintings & Drawings by CATA Artists with Disabilities Opening Reception / 4-6pm / Free

Saturday, October 11: Botanical Monoprinting Workshop with Suzanne Gammon / 10am-3pm / \$80 (Tiered Pricing for members, free for grades 9-12)

Saturday, October 18: Music Brings Communities Together: Natalia Bernal & Jason Ennis / 5-7pm / Free

Thursday, October 23: Gather & Plant interactive after-school event for kids in collaboration with the Becket Athenaeum & BWS PTO / 3pm / Free

Saturday, October 25: Kimberly Geisler Fire Cider Workshop / 1-3pm / \$50 (Tiered Pricing for members)

Monday, October 27: Maker Mondays / 6:30-8pm / Free (will meet on future 2nd and 4th Mondays)

Thursday, October 30: Ghost Storytelling Evening / 7-9pm / Free

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

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

Tuesday, October 7: Book Club: *Tom Lake* by Ann Patchett / 1:30pm / Free

Monday, October 13: Cookbook Club: *Maangchi's Big Book of Korean Cooking* by Maangchi and Martha Rose Shulman / 6-7:30pm / Free

Thursday, October 16: Game Night / 6-8pm / Free

Thursday, October 16: The Poetic and Musical Genius of Taylor Swift / 7pm / Virtual / Free / Registration required

Monday, October 20: Taylor Swift Style - Fashion Through The Eras / 7pm / Virtual / Free / Registration required

Saturday, October 25: D&D One Shot Adventure / 1-4pm / Free / Ages 9+, registration required

Saturday, October 25: Movie Night for Adults / 6:30-9:30pm, movie starts at 7pm / Free

Monday, October 30: Taylor Swift By The Book - The Literature Behind The Lyrics / 7pm / Virtual / Free / Registration required

Tuesday, November 4: Book Club: *Memorial Days* by Geraldine Brooks / 1:30pm / Free



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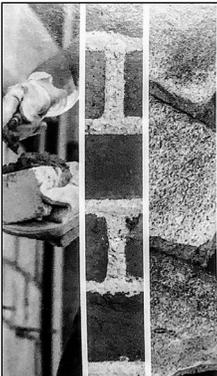
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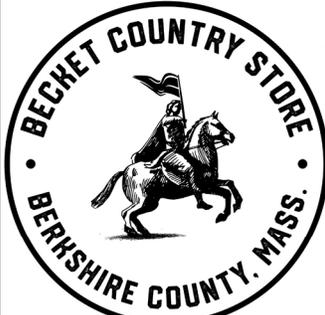
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Community Calendar October 2025

see page 5
 << for more



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

TOWN GOVERNMENT

- Wednesday, October 1:** Board of Health / 5pm
- Wednesday October 8, 22:** Select Board / 6pm
- Wednesday, October 8:** Planning Board / 6pm
- Tuesday, October 14:** Municipal Buildings Advisory Committee / 9am
- Tuesday, October 14:** Historical Commission / 3pm
- Tuesday, October 14:** Finance Committee / 3pm
- Wednesday, October 15:** Bylaw Review Comm. / 10am
- Tuesday, October 21:** Energy Comm. / 5pm
- Tuesday, October 28:** Conservation Comm. / 6pm

For more on live and local music events, visit:
www.route8pub.com
www.thedreamawaylodge.com/events
www.facebook.com/PapaBobsentertainmenthall

Becket Council on Aging Hosts Information Session
Monday, October 27th at 10:30 to 11:30 am,
Community Room, Becket Town Hall

Brief overview of selected services for residents 60+: Berkshire Regional Transit Authority Rural Senior Van Service for transportation to medical appointments, shopping and more; SHINE Program for Medicare enrollees; Nonotuck Adult Family Care Services personalized day services for people with disabilities.

Refreshments will be served. Please contact COA, Paula Bergeron, (413)634-8934, ext. 127 to register.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

- Mondays:** Chair Yoga for Seniors / Washington Town Hall / 11am / Free
- Tuesdays:** Yoga for Seniors w/ Rima Sala / Washington Town Hall / 9am / Free
- Tuesdays & Thursdays:** Becket Senior Group / Becket Town Hall / 10am-2pm / free Chair Yoga 10:30-11:00am followed by Lunch and Bingo / Becket Town Hall / Lunch \$3
- Wednesdays:** Yoga / Becket Town Hall / 9am / \$3
- Saturdays, October 4, 18:** Food Pantry / Becket Federated Church / 9-11am
- Saturday, October 4:** Harvest Turkey Dinner Fundraiser / 4:30-6:30pm / Congregational Church Guild Hall / \$18 (free for children under 12)
- Tuesday, October 21:** Vaccine Clinic / 4-6pm / Becket Town Hall
- Saturday, October 25:** All You Can Eat Breakfast / Becket Federated Church / 8-10am / \$10
- Monday, October 27:** Becket Council on Aging Information Session / 10:30-11:30am / Becket Town Hall / Free

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Real Estate Taxes Explained

by Susan Neul

Of all the costs of owning a home, the one most confusing is often real estate taxes. Not only does the tax rate change every year but so can the imputed value of the house. The tax rate calculation in Becket is determined in the months after the Town budget is approved at the end of May. The Board of Assessors, in conjunction with their valuation subcontractor, starts with the budget, which shows how much money it needs to raise. The next step is to update property values. Once they have the new total value of the properties, it is simple math to figure out what tax rate is required to get to the total income needed to pay all the town's expenses. Of course, there are other sources of income beside residential real estate tax which are worked into the equation.

What is especially confusing is that the tax invoicing is based on a July 1 to June 30 year, corresponding to the fiscal year of the town, but the actual rate for the year is only arrived at halfway through the fiscal year, in December. This means that the amounts for August and November payments must be guesstimates or placeholders. And if the placeholder turns out to be higher or lower than what the new rate says it should be, the overage or underage is compensated for in the invoices for February and May payments.

This is why the invoices sent out in July 2025 for payments to be made on August 1 and November 1 are called a Preliminary Real Estate Tax Bill. The rate used for these invoices is the previous year's tax rate plus 2.5%. And then in December, residents will receive the Actual Real Estate Tax Bill that applies the new tax rate but also adds back or takes out over and under payments from what the placeholder was. Keep in mind that the tax rate can change in both directions; it doesn't always increase. The rate was \$9.77 per \$1,000 of assessed value in fiscal year 2024 but decreased to \$8.76 in Fiscal Year 2025.

The second part of the equation, and the part most mysterious to homeowners, is how a property value is determined and why it can change over time.

There are 1702 residential properties in Becket and 1917 empty lots that must have their valuations kept up to date. It's a big job which is why many Massachusetts towns contract out the work to specialized companies rather than maintaining staff and leasing the computer programs required. Regional Resource Group, Inc., based in Leominster, MA handles the valuation work for Becket, assisted by town employee, Jessica Perotti, who staffs the Town of Becket Assessors office. Staff from RRG are also on hand on various days during the week. The CEO of RRG, Harald Scheid, spends a considerable amount of time in Becket overseeing the work.

Those wanting to dig deeper should consider watching the 6-part webinar on the Regional Resource Group website ([https://rrgsystems.com/Assessing 101](https://rrgsystems.com/Assessing%20101)). And by using the online interactive map AxisGIS (<https://next.axisgis.com/becketma> and available on the Town of Becket website), a curious resident can click on their own and any neighbors' properties and immediately see the valuation rates for the land and the houses.

The valuation process has many layers. Can mistakes happen? Of course! What's a homeowner to do? The most important step is to keep track of your valuations, which are found in detail on AxisGIS. An unusual increase or decrease should be examined. Data entry errors do indeed happen but luckily not often. And it can be useful to look at valuations for neighboring properties to see if the valuations are consistent.

If you discover an issue, you need to file paperwork on it prior to the February 1 due date of the first tax payment on the Final Tax Bill so that the bill can be corrected.

Solar Development, continued from page 3

The first of what is anticipated to be a series of public meetings has been scheduled for September 29th at 6pm. The plan for this initial meeting is for Chair Johnson and BCC Agent Mary Summers to share an outline of the application process and to provide basic information including terminology, a summary of the applications, and anticipated timeline. After formal presentations by Emily Stockman (the wetland consultant), the applicants and the BCC, time will be allocated for questions and initial public comments deemed to be within the jurisdiction of the BCC. Attendees who wish to engage are encouraged to be respectful, responsible in their comments, and to stick to the science and substance of discussion without undue repetition. No props (i.e. t-shirts, posters, etc.) will be allowed in the room during these sessions.

Johnson stipulated that no decision will be made at this early-stage meeting, and that the BCC may elect to conduct site visits with Stockman and/or other natural habitat specialists.

The three Notices of Intent are listed on the Town website [Boards and Committees/Conservation Commission], and drawings are on file in the Assessor's Office for viewing during business hours. Meetings will be recorded by a newly installed sound system. Any pertinent updates will be posted chronologically via the BCC section of the Town website as these meetings proceed.

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Vaccine Clinic

Where: Becket Town Hall
When: Tuesday, October 21
Time: 4-6pm

Scan QR code to register



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BECKET WASHINGTON COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP (BWCP) NEWS

Annual Harvest Turkey Dinner Fundraiser

Saturday, October 4th at the Congregational Church Guild Hall, YMCA Road

Menu: Roast turkey, mashed potatoes, stuffing, gravy, butternut squash, coleslaw, cranberry sauce and apple crisp with real whipped cream for dessert.

Price: \$18; free for children under 12

Dinner will be served from 4:30 to 6:30pm and takeout is also available.

Walk-ins are welcome but please call (413) 623-8300 or 623-6455 for takeout reservations and include your preference for white, dark or both meats.

Becket Arts Center - Music, Singing, Exhibits, Workshops & More

October at the Becket Arts Center is full of creativity, music, and community gatherings. Each week brings yoga with Rima Sala, joyful community sing-alongs (back by popular demand), and live painting demos by Sean McCusker. Special highlights include the Music Brings Communities Together concerts—JoAnne Redding's Trifecta on October 5 and Natalia Bernal with Jason Ennis on October 18. On October 9, CATA artists open their vibrant exhibition *Moving Through Color*, followed by a hands-on Botanical Monoprinting Workshop on October 11. Later in the month, kids can join Gather & Plant (October 23), and adults can craft their own immune-boosting tonic at Kimberly Geisler's Fire Cider Workshop (October 25), and connect with fellow creatives during Maker Mondays (October 27). The month closes with a spine-tingling Ghost Storytelling Evening on October 30—perfect for autumn nights. From art to song to seasonal workshops, October offers something for everyone.

**BECKET
ARTS
CENTER**

Something for Swifties, D&D, & More This Month at the Becket Athenaeum

Calling all Taylor Swift fans!! This month we've partnered with other Massachusetts libraries to share 3 virtual programs on 10/16, 10/20, & 10/30 that deep dive into the world of Taylor Swift. Each one led by a different author or historian, the presentations will examine "her poetic and musical genius," her iconic fashion, and the literature behind her lyrics. Register at: bwlibrary.org/events

Saturday, 10/25, 1-4pm Dungeon Master Kim DiLegio returns for another D&D One Shot Wonder—an adventure that begins and ends in one session. A great place to try out D&D if you've never played before, beginners and experienced players are welcome, 9 & up. Registration required.

