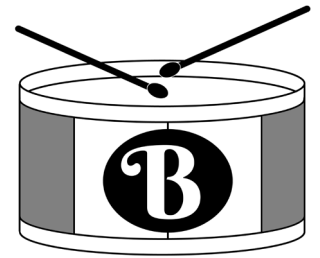


# Becket Beat

Keeping neighbors connected Vol. 5, No. 2, March 2026



## Roads: Current Conditions and Upcoming Projects

By Marcia Parnell

Knowing the interest our readers have in “all things road,” March seemed like the ideal time to check in with Town officials for the latest conditions and upcoming improvement plans.

Last year, short freeze and thaw spells see-sawed throughout the colder months and the variability resulted in potholes and erosion on paved surfaces and deep bowling-alley-like ruts on many dirt and gravel roads. This year? Extreme cold, high winds, and plenty of snow sum up the winter weather in Becket as of this writing. No mud season yet – but it’s sure to come.

Highway Superintendent Ed Pickert reports that sustained periods of well-below-freezing temperatures have had a particularly damaging impact on paved surfaces. Salt is used to melt snow and ice, and the water produced gets into cracks and breaks up the hard surface. As a result, Pickert acknowledged that County and Yokum Pond Roads – already in rough shape – are now in “terrible condition.” Slated for design/engineering work, bridge repair and full-depth reclamation in 2026-27, the Highway Department plans to patch rough areas as a stopgap measure until permanent resurfacing can be done.

The 31 miles of unpaved roads that Becket maintains have fared far better than paved roads up to now. There’s been no significant thaw and crushed gravel is routinely spread to improve traction and driving safety. But Pickert warns as spring arrives, unpaved roads will become especially challenging. The frost this winter has gone very deep, and as the roads fully thaw, they will become wet, soft and easily rutted by local traffic.

Looking beyond winter to upcoming paved-road projects – which as reported in our February ’25 and November ’24 issues will be financed through an often-changing combination of bond financing, various state grants, Chapter 90 State allocations and designated Town Highway Department funds – Town Administrator Kathe Warden and Superintendent Pickert maintain a running spreadsheet. A simplified version detailing work completed from 2024 and planned through 2027 and beyond is included above. There is a dynamic document because grant applications may be denied, costs are likely to rise, project funding is usually broken down by phase (such as design and engineering) and bond financing is a complex and potentially lengthy process.

What’s not captured today on any spreadsheet are Highway Department plans for ongoing improvements to Becket’s unpaved roads. Warden says they are addressed on an as-needed basis, and acknowledges that they need to take the same approach with gravel, particularly in light of the State’s Unpaved Roads Grant Program, which became effective in June 2025. Pickert says any awarded grants would likely go to drainage projects, which are more complex and costly than many towns can pay for and construct without outside assistance.

For now, Warden’s submitted a grant to purchase a new heavier roller and trailer. She notes that the grants may not be used to pave existing unpaved roads.

Road	Year	# of Feet	New Surface
Quarry	2024	5,280	Pavement resurfacing
Upper Bonny Rigg	2024	1,525	Pavement resurfacing
Bancroft	2024	8,221	Pavement resurfacing
Werden	2024	n/a	Town culvert repair
YMCA	2025	5,407	Pavement resurfacing
Hamilton	2025	1,370	Pavement resurfacing
Wells	2025	4,530	Pavement resurfacing
Werden	2026	3,239	Pavement resurfacing
Werden	2026	n/a	Town culvert repair
George Carter	2026	6,512	Pavement resurfacing
Leonhardt	2026-27	3,000	New pavement from top of west-end hill
County / Yokum Pond / Tyne	2026-27	21,120	Engineering, drains, full-depth reclamation and bridge design/engineering
High Street	Unknown	4,500	Application for design/engineering grant awarded
Benton Hill	2026-27	n/a	Culvert to small bridge
Yokum Pond	Unknown	n/a	Small bridge replacement

# Special Town Meeting Saturday, March 7th at 2 pm at the Becket Washington School

Two articles will be on the warrant for registered voters:

**Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) By-Law** – Initially proposed and tabled by voters at the May 10, 2025 Annual Town Meeting due to uncertainty about definitions and requirements, the new version aims to address those, including the elimination of a provision allowing two ADUs on a single property.

**Temporary Moratorium on the Construction of Industrial-Ground Mounted Solar Photovoltaic Installations and Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) By-Law** – Proposed by Town Planning Board due to concern over Becket’s limited resources and ability to review and write new by-laws in compliance with State regulations and guidelines within specified deadlines. Becket is required to be in compliance with State guidelines by December 1, 2026; however, State Model By-laws will not be published until March 2026.

To view the proposed by-laws, go to: [townofbecket.org](http://townofbecket.org)

# FILL THE SHELVES THIS MARCH!

Community Food Drive  
for the Becket Food Pantry

Dates: March 2<sup>nd</sup> to March 27<sup>th</sup>

Times: Weekdays from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm

Drop-Off Location: Becket Town Hall

Pantry supplies are running low after the holidays — let’s come together and restock them! Bring non-perishable foods from the Pantry’s Most Wanted List and help support local neighbors. **Every item counts. Every donation helps.**

### Most Wanted Items:

Canned Goods: Tomato products (\*all); Canned chicken; Tuna fish; Stews (meats & veggies); Soups (regular & low sodium); Sloppy Joes, Manwich, etc.; Hamburger Helper

Drinks: Shelf stable milk (whole & 2%); V8 juice; Tomato juice; Cranberry juice; Crabapple juice (+combos)

Packaged Goods: Cream of Wheat; Breakfast cereals; Crackers; Rice; Pasta; Salad dressings

Baking Supplies: Sugar (white & brown); Flour; Mixes (brownie, etc.); Cooking oil; Cooking spray

Non-food Items: Hand soap; Dish soap; Detergent (laundry); Shampoo; Toothpaste; Feminine products; Toilet paper; Paper towels

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# Community Appreciation Day Planned for Becket Highway Department Workers

by Adele Levine

After a long winter of snowstorms and relentless plowing, Becket Country Store will host a community appreciation day to honor the people who help keep the Town moving.



On March 20th, the first day of spring, the store will welcome members of the Becket Highway Department to stop by for complimentary food and drinks, provided through donations from grateful local residents.

This is intended as a simple gesture of gratitude for the long hours highway workers spend clearing and maintaining Becket's roads each winter, often working through the night and in difficult conditions to keep the community safe.

## Summer 2026 Employment Opportunities Town of Becket Parks and Recreation Committee

- Summer Park Counselor (2 positions)
- Town Beach Lifeguard (2 positions)
- Town Beach Gate Attendant (2 to 3 positions)

Send letters of interest to: Town of Becket, Parks & Rec. Committee, 557 Main Street, Becket, MA 01223

For complete job descriptions and requirements visit [townofbecket.org](http://townofbecket.org) and click on "Job/Volunteer Opportunities, Procurement" on the left sidebar.

**Photo Gallery**

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## Support Local Businesses!

# Stories by Firelight

By Kathy Baugh

On the 15th of February, friends gathered at the home of Rich and Laura Fredricks for an evening of good food, comradery and Stories by Firelight. The concept of Stories by Firelight was created by Normi Noel, a founding member of Shakespeare & Company, and director of over forty productions in the Berkshires. This performance, an adaptation of a short story by Edith Wharton, and performed by local actors, Paula Langton, Ken Cheeseman and Doug Williams, was Normi's first living room performance.

The desire to perform in living rooms (or gardens, depending on the season), comes from a long tradition of Normi being read to by her parents under a pine tree in their home by the sea on Cape Breton Island. As time went on, roles reversed, and she read to her parents by the fire as the light faded on a winter afternoon, falling into the deep magic of a fine story being woven while waiting for the tea to steep.

The nostalgia for those times, she says, has been the impetus to create Stories by Firelight, bringing actors, strong writing and friends together into the intimate setting of the living room or verandah, and with any luck, around a fire. In the spring of 2025, Normi posed the concept to Langton and Cheeseman. They loved the idea and invited her to do a reading of her own play for Veterans' Day this past fall at Becket Arts Center (BAC). They also suggested auctioning a Stories by Firelight performance as part of a fundraiser for BAC – and the Fredricks were the highest bidders.

After winning Stories by Firelight, the Fredricks decided to use the reading as a fundraising event for their daughter's foundation, (<https://www.emilyfredricksfoundation.org/>.) Emily was killed in Philadelphia when she was struck by a sanitation truck driver while riding her bicycle on November 28th 2017. Rich and Laura created the foundation in her honor. They also co-founded Families for Safe Streets in Philadelphia in 2018 (<https://www.safestreetsphilly.org/>), and Families for Safe Streets Massachusetts in the fall of 2025 (<http://safestreetsmass.org/>), both devoted to supporting individuals and families impacted by preventable crashes in their respective states and nationally.

The Fredricks expressed delight with the performance as it stimulated a rich post-play conversation in which everyone reflected on the meaning of the play, shared personal stories and gained insights into themselves, their friends and to the healing power of storytelling in such an intimate setting.

Stories by Firelight offers tales of the great writers through time, performed by accomplished Berkshire actors in your own home. A website is in the works. In the meantime, for more information, contact [norminoel3@gmail.com](mailto:norminoel3@gmail.com)

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## Bridging the Gap: Prioritizing Youth Mental Health

By Unari Karkabe Ryan, Wahconah Regional High School intern

Mental health challenges affect people of all ages, but children's needs are often overlooked. In Berkshire County, limited access to specialized services and a shortage of pediatric mental health beds underscore the importance of early identification and intervention. While stress is often associated with adulthood, children face increasing emotional pressures related to school demands, social media, and the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, including heightened anxiety and cyberbullying.

Early warning signs—such as social withdrawal, disengagement from activities, and disrupted sleep—are frequently misunderstood or missed altogether. Counselors at Wahconah Regional High School note that children are sensitive to stress arising from both internal challenges and external factors, including family financial instability. In response, schools have taken on an expanded role as a first point of support. Adjustment counselors and guidance staff with clinical training work collaboratively with private therapists and community providers to coordinate care and advocate for students.

Caregivers also play a critical role, though stigma surrounding mental health can make conversations difficult. Mental health professionals emphasize the value of open, nonjudgmental dialogue and encourage families to view therapy as a routine form of support. School-based programs such as Second Step, which focuses on emotional awareness and problem-solving skills, are designed to help students develop coping strategies and resilience.

Educators contribute by balancing academic expectations with students' emotional well-being. Adjustments to workload and consistent communication between teachers and families can help ensure that students do not struggle in isolation. Mental health professionals stress that counseling is a preventive and supportive resource rather than a last resort. Early intervention, they say, can improve long-term outcomes and strengthen emotional resilience in children.

See <https://www.cbrsd.org/family-community/bullying-reporting-resources> for more info.

# Community Calendar March 2026

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

see page 6  
for more >>



## BECKET ARTS CENTER

**Tuesdays (except March 10):** Learn to Meditate: Tame the Wild Horses of Your Mind with Rosie Bleyer / 6-7 p.m. / donations appreciated

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

**Saturdays:** Becket Freestyle Dance / 10:30am-12pm / \$15 per class (\$10 for members)

**Monday, March 9, 23:** Maker Mondays / 6:30-8pm / Free

**Sunday, March 15:** Travels with Missie: The Photographs with Kevin O'Hara / 2pm-3pm / \$10 (\$5 for members)

**Saturday, March 21:** "The Year of Magical Thinking" by Joan Didion – A reading of a play based on her memoir / 4-6pm

**Friday, March 27:** Novel Creations Ball / 6-10pm / Price TBD

**Saturday, March 28:** Sashiko Hand-Stitching Basics with Rachel Barclay / 12-4pm / \$80 (discount for members & youth)

Up-to-date info at: [becketartscenter.org/events](http://becketartscenter.org/events)

## BECKET ATHENAEUM

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

**Wednesdays:** One-on-One Tech Support / 2:30-4:30pm / By appointment / 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!

**Tuesday, March 3:** Book Club: *The Left Hand of Darkness* by Ursula K. Le Guin / 1:30pm / Free

**Monday, March 9:** Cookbook Club: *The Complete Vegetarian Cookbook* by America's Test Kitchen / 6-7:30pm / Free

**Wednesday, March 11:** Shadow Boxes + Puppets with Meredyth Babcock / 5-7pm / Free

**Thursday, March 19:** Game Night / 6-8pm / Free

**Monday, March 23:** Revolution in America: Past, Present, Future with Senator Paul Mark / 6-8pm / Free

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

**Thursday, March 26:** Close at 6pm

**Tuesday, April 7:** Book Club: *By Any Other Name* by Jodi Picoult / 1:30pm / Free

Up-to-date info at: [becketathenaeum.org/events](http://becketathenaeum.org/events)



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# Community Calendar March 2026

see page 5  
 << for more



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

## TOWN GOVERNMENT

- Wednesday, March 4:** Board of Health / 5pm
- Wednesday, March 4, 18:** Select Board / 6pm
- Wednesday, March 4:** Community Preservation Committee / 6:30pm
- Saturday, March 7:** Special Town Meeting / BWES / 2pm
- Tuesday, March 10:** Historical Commission / 3pm
- Tuesday, March 10:** Finance Committee / 3pm
- Tuesday, March 17:** Energy Committee / 5pm
- Wednesday, March 18:** Bylaw Review Comm / 3pm
- Tuesday, March 17 & 24:** Municipal Buildings Advisory Committee / 9am
- Tuesday, March 24:** Conservation Commission / 6pm
- Wednesday, March 25:** Planning Board / 6pm

Up-to-date info: [www.townofbecket.org/calendar](http://www.townofbecket.org/calendar)

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## COMMUNITY EVENTS

- Mondays:** Osteo Yoga for Seniors / Washington Town Hall / 11am / Free
- Tuesdays:** Yoga for Seniors w/ Rima Sala / Washington Town Hall / 9am / Free
- Tuesdays:** Chair Yoga / Becket Town Hall / 10:30am / Free
- Wednesdays:** Yoga / Becket Town Hall / 9am / \$3
- Thursdays:** Chair Yoga / Becket Town Hall / 10:45am / Free
- Tuesdays & Thursdays:** Becket Senior Group / Becket Town Hall / 11am-2pm / Lunch and Bingo / Becket Town Hall / Lunch \$3
- Saturdays, March 7, 21:** Food Pantry / Becket Federated Church / 9-11am
- Tuesday, March 17:** AI + Disinformation / Becket Town Hall / 2-3pm / Free
- Thursday, March 19:** AI + Disinformation / Washington Town Hall / 1-2pm / Free

### Live and local music events:

- [www.route8pub.com](http://www.route8pub.com)
- [www.thedreamawaylodge.com/events](http://www.thedreamawaylodge.com/events)
- [www.facebook.com/PapaBobsentertainmenthall](https://www.facebook.com/PapaBobsentertainmenthall)

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**Winter in Becket**  
Photos by Art Alpert



## Conservation Commission Seeking One New Member

Anyone interested in learning more about serving on the Conservation Commission is asked to contact Chair Dave Johnson at (976)424-5752 or Agent Nic Pietroniro at (413)623-8934, ext. 129, or send an email to [conservation@townofbecket.org](mailto:conservation@townofbecket.org).

The Commission holds a scheduled open meeting on the fourth Tuesday of each month from 6 pm to approximately 8 pm at Town Hall. In addition, the Commission conducts site visits once a month for pending applications.

For details, visit: <https://www.townofbecket.org/home/news/town-invites-interest-ed-residents-learn-more-about-serving-conservation-commission>

### BECKET WASHINGTON COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP (BWCP) NEWS

The Yoked Parish of Becket would like to thank our community for their generous support of our Valentine's Day Cookie Extravaganza to benefit our Community Emergency Outreach Fund. The extravaganza raised \$1,600 to help our neighbors in need. Thank you!!!!

### March at the Becket Arts Center: Creativity, Wellness, Community, and Performance

In March, the Becket Arts Center presents a rich array of creative, wellness, community, and performance events that appeal to artists and arts-lovers alike. The month features ongoing meditation sessions, all-levels yoga classes, Becket Freestyle Dance gatherings, and Maker Mondays for people to get hands-on and connect with fellow creatives.

Other highlights include a special travel photography talk with Kevin O'Hara "Travels With Missie: The Photographs," on March 15, and "The Year of Magical Thinking," a reading of a powerful theatrical adaptation of Joan Didion's memoir examining grief and its emotional logic on March 21. We are also looking forward to our Novel Creations Ball on Friday, March 27 to celebrate community-made upcycled book-based artwork – come dressed as your favorite literary character or author! View our complete calendar of events at [becketartscenter.org/events](http://becketartscenter.org/events).

### Revolution in America: Past, Present, Future with Senator Paul Mark at the Athenaeum

In recognition of 2026 being the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, this month the Becket Athenaeum will kick off a series of events connected to the history of the United States with Revolution in America: Past, Present, Future with Senator Paul Mark on Monday March 23 at 6pm.

The evening will begin with a screening of an excerpt reel from the recent PBS documentary, The American Revolution, followed by a discussion about what it means to be revolutionary moderated by Senator Paul Mark. We invite participants to consider the questions: "What does revolution mean to you?" and "Is there an historical figure, a musician, an author, an artist, a leader, etc who epitomizes a spirit of revolution in your opinion?" Attendees are welcome to bring their thoughts or any examples of work, art, writing around these questions that they might want to share. We look forward to a rich and respectful discussion!



## Becket Beat

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