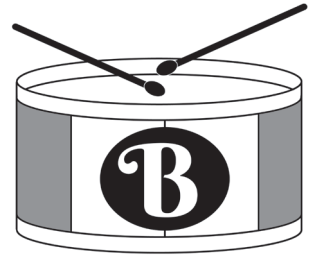


Becket Beat

Keeping neighbors connected Vol. 5, No. 10, November 2026



Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony for Becket's First Wind Turbine

By Kathy Dickinson

October 19th was an historic day at Becket Town Hall, where Becket Energy Committee Chair Garth Klimchuk welcomed the public and special guests at the ribbon-cutting to celebrate the Becket Wind Project. After introducing and thanking his Committee, Town Manager Kathe Warden, and members of the Select Board, Klimchuk announced that this occasion marked the culmination of over three years of work on the part of the Becket Energy Committee (BEC) specifically to bring renewable energy in the form of a single community-scale 15kW wind turbine to power Town Hall.

Attending the event, State Senator Paul Mark pointed out that “volatility in the cost and supply of energy is a part of life now for everyone, and won’t be going away anytime soon.” According to State Representative Leigh Davis, “Becket is providing a model for the rest of the Commonwealth.” Both agreed with Mark Rabinsky from the MA Department of Energy Resources (DOER), who shared that “the Becket Wind Turbine serves as a great example of what small towns can do when we work together at the State and local levels.” Becket Select Board Chair William Elovirta reminisced about what energy resources looked like when he moved to Becket in 1946 before installation of electrical service: just a simple gas-powered generator. He joined the other speakers in congratulating Becket on this remarkable achievement.

The BEC has been working to improve energy efficiencies since 2013, but beginning in 2023 the committee began the work of identifying the best way to reduce municipal energy costs while progressing towards the MA State target of decreased

L to R: Venessa Cline and Leslie Gulluni (from EverSource), Susan Purser, Ron DeFoe, Cathy DeFoe, Garth Klimchuk, Leigh Davis, Paul Mark, Al Blake, Julie Craumer, Mark Rabinsky, and William Elovirta. [Out of the frame: Anne Morrison of EverSource, and Kathe Warden conducting the Countdown.] Photo by Art Alpert



Wind Turbine installation, photo by Art Alpert

continued on page 2

Letter From the Editors

We would like to share some spring-like news for this fall issue. The Becket Beat is partnering with the Becket Washington Elementary school to publish a column written directly from the students. Under the guidance of 5th-grade teacher Lauren Dolan, students Emma Matthews, Vivian Pratt, Siscel Bruce-Cole, Weston Dietlin, Amelia Karpinski, Jamison Zalepeski and Alanna Lavoie will be submitting a monthly article on a topic that matters to them. In this issue, Dolan introduces us to the students and to the curriculum they are studying, focused on the Westfield River Watershed and its role in our environment. We are off to a great start and can't wait to hear more from these enterprising young minds.

We also want to introduce two new volunteer staff to the Becket Beat: Joe Bazydlo and Austin Bazydlo. Both are new to Becket, coming from the Washington DC area. Joe has a background in engineering and technology and looks to use that to inform the community on topics like energy resources, housing, archeology and culture. Austin has expertise in AI, medical physics and human services and will use that knowledge to help us better understand AI and its impact on our everyday lives. He is also passionate about cooking and promises to share some of his favorite recipes with us.

As we head into the holidays and approach 2027, we feel incredibly grateful for the renewed energy that Joe, Austin, and the students will bring to our community.

Have an amazing Thanksgiving!

Wind Turbine, continued from page 1

dependence on fossil fuels by switching to renewables. Early in the process, it was determined that the Town Hall site had a unique advantage – its 1,506-foot elevation was ideal for harnessing energy from wind year-round. Throughout this period, the BEC provided multiple information sessions and shared a wealth of supplemental resources on the Town website to keep residents apprised of the process, the benefits, and the timeline to fruition. The anticipated lifespan of the equipment is 50 years. Additionally, not only will this 100-foot turbine provide enough service to power Town Hall, it will also supplement power to the Highway Garage.

The project was incentivized by State mandates to reduce dependence on fossil fuels and was funded by a series of grants, including \$139,500 from the MA DOER Green Communities Competitive Grant, along with federal clean energy tax credits, with the goal of ultimately providing power at no cost to the Town. In fact, Becket stands to save about \$9,000 per year by switching to this municipal power source. Final Permission to Operate (PTO) has been issued and the turbine should be operational by November 1st. More detailed information can be found on the Town website by visiting the Energy Committee section and clicking on Becket Wind Project.

[https://www.townofbecket.org/sites/g/files/vyhlf4146/f/uploads/becket_wind_project_media_package_2026.09.25_0.pdf]

The relative cost of energy has been top-of-mind for everyone lately. Good to know that our Becket Energy Committee was ahead of the curve, and can serve as a model for other small towns in our region.

Who Needs Home Watch?

- Going South for the Winter?
- Taking a Vacation?
- Business Travel Keeping you Away?
- Can't get to your Second Home as often as you'd like?
- Do you own a Vacant Rental Home?
- Is your Home Vacant Waiting to Sell?

What CRM Home Watch Does

- Regular House Checks
- Check Security, Doors, Windows
- Check Plumbing, HVAC & Appliances
- Look for Leaks, Pests, Damage
- Real Time Reports Emailed immediately after Check
- Concierge Services

Call for a Free Estimate
Serving Southern Berkshire County

617-816-6152

crmhomewatch.com



Residential & Commercial
Licensed by Mass State Police
Bonded & Insured

Transfer Station Swap Shop Event!

SPECIAL EVENT

**Saturday, November 7
Sports Equipment Swap**

Bring your **USABLE** and **CLEAN** skates, skis, sports bags, hockey sticks, pucks, basketballs, pickleball items, tennis equipment, and more.

We cannot accept helmets of any kind, but for this event we will accept clothing specific to a sport.



**Becket Transfer Station – NEW HOURS Effective Nov. 3:
Tuesdays & Saturdays, 7 AM–3 PM**

Thank You to Our Advertisers!

KNOX TRAIL INN

SOUPS & SALADS
BURGERS
PIZZAS & CALZONES
GREAT APPETIZERS
SPECIAL ENTRÉES
CHEF SPECIALS
TASTY COCKTAILS

Gluten-Free & Vegetarian Choices

DINE IN OR TAKE OUT

Book a private party with us!



KTI
Knox Trail Inn

Serving American comfort food in our Historical Inn with a lively pub and quaint dining room

KNOX FAVORITE PRIME RIB
16oz. slow-roasted served with potato and veggies (served Thurs-Sat)

OPEN MON, WED, THUR 12-9PM
FRI & SAT 12-10PM | 413.269.4400

LIVE MUSIC EVERY WEEKEND
TRIVIA NIGHT EVERY THURSDAY
SPINDLE MUSIC BINGO
KELLIOKE KARAOKE & DJ

Like Us on Facebook
Follow Us on Instagram
knoxtrailinn.com

1898 EAST OTIS ROAD (RT. 23) EAST OTIS, MA

The Becket Connection

Red Horse Real Estate

Ginger Conner

Your Becket Realtor for 25 Years
Specializes in Waterfront & Second Homes

413.447.5846
Ginger@RedHorseRealEstate.com



The Pease Store

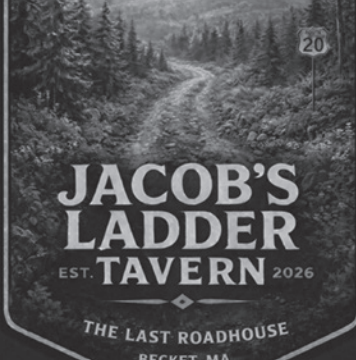
11 Main Street, Chester, MA

Saturday, 9-2
Sunday, 10:30-2
and by appointment

(929) 310-9648 • loisrecycle@yahoo.com

specialized town-named clothing & more

- low-sugar jams, syrup, topping from farm next door
- microgreens by order 2 weeks in advance



formerly Papa Bob's

OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK

Mon-Fri: 3pm-midnight
Sat-Sun: noon-midnight

71 Chester Rd., Becket
(413) 623-8777



HOME MODIFICATION

LOAN PROGRAM

0% interest,
deferred payment loan program

The HMLP program provides modifications for home accessibility improvements including bathrooms, kitchens, & more

For more information, please contact
Berkshire Regional Planning Commission at:
HMLP@berkshireplanning.org

Bark Mulch

Topsoil

Compost

HAY STRAW

413-243-4111

Meadow Farm
1125 Meadow Street, Lee

Compost Facility Accepting Yard & Wood Waste



Sherwood Shoppe

413-623-2338

"From Scratch"
Baking & Cooking
NOW OPEN
Tues. - Sun.
8am -7pm



CORMIER LANDSCAPING

Lawn Service	Driveways	Clean Ups
Excavation	Patios	Tree Work
Retaining Walls	Mulching	Plowing
Decks	Custom Property Design	Stone Work

Proprietors:
Gerry Cormier
Randy Cormier

PO Box 148
Becket, MA 01223
413 822-0739
gerrycormier@yahoo.com

Support Local Businesses!

What She Found in a Thousand Towns – We Have Here in Becket

By Kathy Baugh

Magic filled the air at the Becket Arts Center on Saturday October 24th, as world-renowned folk singer and songwriter Dar Williams captivated a packed house with her performance and insights from her book, *What I Found in a Thousand Towns*.

In her book, Williams explores her fascination with towns that thrive against the odds. She began with Beacon, NY, a town neighboring her home in Cold Spring. Once struggling in the late 90s, despite its picturesque location along the Hudson River, Beacon transformed into a vibrant destination with a flourishing art scene in the early 2000s. While that was largely a result of the opening of the Dia Center in 2003, the town made a concerted effort to embrace the modern art museum while preserving its community integrity, which played a crucial role in this renaissance.

Through her firsthand experience, Williams connected this series of developments to other towns she had visited like Phoenixville, Pennsylvania and Moab, Utah. The thread she uncovered are towns lifting themselves up by rediscovering their identities, through resources they have (nature, culture, history, food etc.) and working collaboratively to enhance them. She identified a key element of these transitions (which differentiates them from towns that have simply been gentrified, only to benefit the wealthy) as “positive proximity.” By this Williams means developing spaces or platforms that allow all residents to come together in a way that instills pride and a sense of agency over the place they call home, such as restaurants, parks, trails, dog runs, theatres, waterfronts, etc.

Following Williams’s presentation, a group of community leaders took the stage to highlight Becket’s strengths and opportunities. Dave Johnson, Chair of the Conservation Commission, emphasized the transformative effects of town boards that collaborate with residents rather than merely communicate top-down. Mo Vandesteene, long-time resident and owner of the Route 8 Pub, discussed his journey of leaving Becket only to return 20 years later to realize what a truly special place Becket is to live. Local folk legend Bobby Sweet relayed a similar story, reflecting on the many towns he visits as a travelling musician and always appreciates coming home. Kathy Baugh, Co-Editor of the *Becket Beat* and this article’s author, spoke about creating the *Beat* during the pandemic

with the express purpose of building community during a period of extreme isolation. Lastly, Town Administrator Kathe Warden expressed her commitment to maintaining Becket as a cherished Berkshire gem while exploring paths for its continued growth.

Audience members shared other opportunities for enhancing community connection, including celebrating the 100th anniversary of the 1927 flood, exploring what can be done with the Becket Quarry, embracing the wide range of Athenaeum programming and highlighting natural resources like the Wild and Scenic Westfield River.

Throughout the evening, many acknowledged that our historic and vibrant Becket Arts Center, whose team conceived of and hosted this amazing night, is a significant generator of “positive proximity” in our community. Attendees left inspired, filled with pride, and ready to cultivate new ideas for strengthening the foundation of our beloved town.



Dar Williams and Audience, photo by Art Alpert



Community Panel, photo by Art Alpert

Becket Residents Can Now Monitor Air Quality Data

24/7/365

By Marcia Parnell

Initiated by Berkshire Regional Planning Commission Senior Planner, Britney Danials, working closely with Town officials, two sites in Becket are now monitoring air quality 24/7/365 as part of the Berkshire County Clean Air Project, a county-wide effort to improve knowledge about neighborhood-level air quality in support of public health, environmental planning and community awareness.

Real time data is available at <https://www.berkshirecleanair.org>, which defines Air Quality Index (AQI) levels. Once there, click on the Visit Berkshire Clean Air link, to see a snapshot of Becket's AQI.

There are 26 outdoor and 36 indoor monitoring sites throughout Berkshire County and the data will be compiled and analyzed at the end of three years. Becket was chosen because its higher elevation areas mean air can become trapped under certain conditions and the impact of that is considered important to monitor and understand.

Danials noted that another selection consideration was the Town's older population, and the number of children at Becket Washington School and the summer camps, who by virtue of their age are vulnerable to poor air quality. But ultimately, she explained, "Everybody should care about air quality. I don't think people are aware of how much it can impact how we feel, how we think, and how it affects our respiratory systems."

The initiative is particularly timely given the health concerns raised locally by the wildfire smoke disasters that occurred over the past two summers. But as Danials explained, "Smoke is obvious. Air pollution is usually invisible and can go undetected without monitoring."

The outdoor monitor is located at the Becket Town Park. An indoor monitor resides at the Becket Athenaeum. Why measure indoor air quality? According to Danials, the data will help compare outdoor to indoor levels during air-quality incidents when residents are told to remain indoors. Both indoor and outdoor data may also help with planning for cooling and clean air centers in the future.

The good news is that at the time of this writing, Becket's outdoor AQI is 8 and anything under 50 is considered "satisfactory." But with climate change and uncertainty about environmental impacts outside of our control in the future, knowing there's a place to check local air quality takes one less unknown off the table.



*Air Quality Monitor on Shed at Town Park,
photo by Art Alpert*

Becket Roads: Progress on Multiple Fronts

By Marcia Parnell



Embankment, photo by Marcia Parnell

Unexpected State Funding Fast Tracks Repair of Route 8 Embankment: The Route 8 embankment repair project is the fortunate recipient of \$4.27 million in federal funds recently received by Mass DOT, which is responsible for the road's maintenance and repair. The State secured \$153 million in additional federal transportation funding for 16 Mass DOT and MBTA projects across the Commonwealth. The funds came through a redistribution process from other states and programs that were unable to use them. States that have eligible, shovel-ready projects can request and may be granted some of the unused funds.

The embankment on Route 8 near the intersection of McNerney Road last experienced significant erosion in summer 2023 when heavy rains took a toll on several roads around town. Shortly after the rain storms, the DOT erected a temporary cliff-hugging fence and cement barriers to keep any additional erosion from falling onto the road and potentially injuring motorists and other passersby.

Planning has been underway for a permanent fix which will remove the ledge along Route 8, but the funding was not yet in hand. Town Administrator Kathe Warden said she has been keeping an eye on the temporary repair and recently called her Mass DOT contact because

Community Calendar November 2026

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

see page 7
for more >>



BECKET ARTS CENTER

Up-to-date info at: becketartscenter.org/calendar

Monday, November 2: Maker Monday / 5-6:30pm / Free

Wednesdays: Tai-Chi Chih with Sara Rotenberg / 9:30am / \$15 per class (disc. for members)

Wednesdays: Beginner Yoga with Maggie Murphy / 5:30pm / \$15 per class (disc. for members)

Thursdays (except 11/26): Yoga with Rima Sala / 9:30-10:30am / \$15 per class (disc. for members)

Saturday, November 7: A Celebration of Words with Stories by Firelight / 2-3pm / Free

Sunday, November 8, 15, 22: Zentangle Workshop with Delsie Dunn / 1:30-3:30pm / \$45 (disc. for members and grades 9-12)

Tuesdays, November 10, 17, 24: Community Music Circle / 6-8pm / Free

Saturday, November 14: Holiday Marketplace / 10am-3pm / Shop Local Artists!

Saturday, November 21: Cabaret Evening with Lara Tupper, Benny Kohn, and Bobby Sweet / 7-9pm / \$15 (disc. for members)

BECKET ATHENAEUM

More info & to register: bwlibrary.org/events

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

Wednesdays (except 11/11 & 11/25): One-on-One Tech Support / 2:30-4:30pm / By appt: bwlibrary.org/techhelp / Free

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

1st & 3rd Saturdays: One-on-One Tech Support / 10-12pm / By appointment: bwlibrary.org/techhelp / Free

Tuesday, November 3: Book Club: *Being Mortal* by Atul Gawande / 1:30pm / Free

Monday, November 9: Cookbook Club: *On the Curry Trail* by Raghavan Iyer / 6-7:30pm / Free / Registration required

Tuesday, November 10: Google Workspace Q&A with Russ Jarowski / 4pm / Free

Wednesday, November 11: Closed

Thursday, November 12: Close at 6:30pm

Thursday, November 19: Game Night + Mah Jongg / 6-8pm / Free / Registration required for Mah Jongg

Saturday, November 21 - Saturday, November 28: Drop-in craft during open hours / Free

Monday, November 23, 9am - Monday, December 7, 6pm: 2026 Becket Athenaeum Online Silent Auction / bwlibrary.org/auction26

Tuesday, November 24: Movie Night for Adults: 9 to 5 / 6:30-9:30pm, movie starts at 7pm / Free

Wednesday, November 25: Close at 4pm

Thursday, November 26: Closed

Tuesday, December 1: Book Club: *Neverwhere* by Neil Gaiman / 1:30pm / Free



Cormier Tree Service

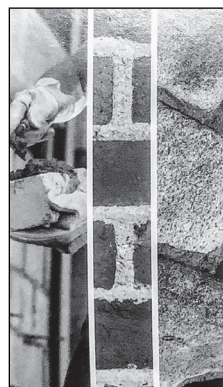
Tree Removal
Tree Topping
Wood Chipping

Excavation
Driveways
Patios
Mulching

Plowing
Stonework
Land Clearing

Proprietors:
Gerry Cormier
Randy Cormier

PO Box 148
Becket, MA 01223
413-822-0739
gerrycormier@yahoo.com



TOM SERMINI
Owner

SERMINI MASONRY
Masonry Repairs and Restorations

1820 Jacobs Ladder Road
Becket, Ma. 01223

413-274-0115
serminimasonry@gmail.com



Community Calendar November 2026

see page 6
<< for more



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

TOWN GOVERNMENT

Monday, November 2: Community Preservation Committee / 5pm
Tuesday, November 3: Election Day / Polls 7am-8pm
Wednesday, November 4: Board of Health / 5pm
Wednesday, November 4, 18: Select Board / 6pm
Monday, November 9: Community Preservation Committee - Public Hearing / 6pm
Tuesday, November 10: Historical Commission / 3pm
Tuesday, November 17: Municipal Buildings Advisory Committee / 9am
Tuesday, November 17: Energy Committee / 5pm
Thursday, November 17: Conservation Comm. / 6pm
Wednesday, November 18: Bylaw Review Comm / 3pm
Wednesday, November 18: Planning Board / 6pm
Up-to-date info: www.townofbecket.org/calendar

OCTOBER MOUNTAIN
REAL ESTATE

HAHAGENAH@GMAIL.COM
413.243.1519 (CELL/TEXT)

HENRY A. HAGENAH
OCTOBERMOUNTAINREALESTATE.COM

CHAMBERY INN



Schoolhouse Suites™
199 Main Street
Lee, Massachusetts 01238
www.chamberyinn.com

*Romantic Getaways
Couples Massages
Rest, Relaxation, and Rejuvenation
in a Historic New England Schoolhouse*

A PLACE WHERE
DANCE LIVES

Dance Center, School, Archives

- 220-acre National Historic Landmark
- Recipient of the National Medal of Arts
- Home to America's longest-running international dance festival

Explore our campus year-round in Becket, MA
or see all we have to offer at jacobsipillow.org

JACOB'S
PILLOW

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Tuesdays: Osteo/Chair Yoga for Seniors / Becket Town Hall / 9:30am / Free
Tuesdays & Thursdays (not 11/26): Becket Senior Group /
Becket Town Hall / 11am-2pm / Lunch and Bingo / \$3
Wednesdays: Yoga / Becket Town Hall / 9am / \$3
Thursdays (not 11/26): Osteo/Chair Yoga for Seniors /
Becket Town Hall / 10:45am / Free
Fridays: Fitness Class / Becket Town Hall / 9am / \$3
Thursday, November 5: Wild & Scenic Remarkable River Potluck / Becket Town Hall / 6:30-8:30 / Free
Saturday, November 7: 4th Annual Becket Day / Art, Food, Drinks, Music / All Day
Saturday, November 7: Sports Equipment Swap / Transfer Station / 7am-3pm
Saturday, November 14: Becket Federated Church Christmas Bazaar / 3391 Main St / 9am-3pm
Thursday, November 19: The Gathering - MEN'S GROUP / Becket Town Hall / 7-9pm
Saturdays, November 7, 21: Food Pantry / Becket Federated Church / 9-11am

Live and local music events:

www.route8pub.com

www.thedreamawaylodge.com/events

www.facebook.com/PapaBobsentertainmenthall

 William Pitt | Sotheby's
INTERNATIONAL REALTY

LOCAL REAL ESTATE EXPERT
THOM GARVEY
TGARVEY@WPSIR.COM
508-371-8219
GREAT BARRINGTON BROKERAGE
306 & 308 Main Street | 413.528.4192
WILLIAMPITT.COM


413-447-5846

Ginger Conner, The Becket Connection

RED HORSE REAL ESTATE
www.RedHorseRealEstate.com
PO Box 111 Becket MA 01223
Ginger@RedHorseRealEstate.com

Learning About the Watershed at Becket Washington Elementary School

By Lauren Dolan, 5th Grade Teacher at BWES

Students and teachers in grades 2–5 at BWES worked together with Mrs. Babcock from the Wild and Scenic Westfield River group to engage in an in-depth study of local watersheds during an exciting new watershed unit. Throughout the three-week unit, students participated in six learning stations – twice per week – throughout the afternoon. Students were organized into cross-grade groups and rotated through stations: Maps and Mapmaking, Stream Table, Weather and Erosion, Exploring Yokum Brook, the Water Cycle and Watershed Vocabulary.

In Maps and Mapmaking, students learned how to read maps and how to use a compass. In Weather and Erosion, students participated in hands-on activities, such as sanding down rocks and using sediment to observe erosion in action. In the Water Cycle, students learned that the water they drink today could be up to 1 billion years old, thanks to Earth's efficient water cycle. During the Exploring Yokum Brook station, students went down to the stream to observe the local river ecosystems firsthand.

These activities made the learning educational and fun, allowing students to learn by doing. Many students found this approach more effective than reading from a textbook. Elliot, a 3rd grader, shared that he learned, "Falling trees make shelter and stabilize banks and rivers." This unit connected science standards for grades 2-5 while exploring our own school backyard.

The Watershed unit was a positive experience for the students. Vivian, a 5th grader, said "I liked how the stream table was interactive and each week built on the other. The first week we learned about the basic parts and by the final week we were adding vegetation and animals and seeing what happens to the watershed when vegetation grows and animals arrive." Amelia said that she enjoyed "how the school community came together and had different grades in all of the groups. Interacting with each other and helping the younger students made the learning more effective because I could explain to them if they did not understand". All of the six stations fit together. Aliyah, also a 5th grader said "we learned words in the Vocabulary station that were being used in other stations to give us a deeper understanding".

Overall, the hands-on activities gave students an engaging way to learn about nature. As Principal West noted, this new approach to science was designed to "make learning fun and connect the school community."

Becket Roads, continued from page 5

debris had once again dropped into the road.

Still, Warden said she was taken by surprise to recently learn funding had come through and work would start in the near future. "We don't always know what the state is doing until the last minute, but I'm grateful for that money because funds like that are few and far between and it's a real safety issue. Fortunately, our only role will be to direct traffic during the construction period."

According to Mass DOT, the project is out for bid and work is expected to begin in late 2026/early 2027.

County, Yokum Pond and Leonhardt Roads Resurfacing: All of the permits and sign-offs are complete and the projects will be put out for bid next month with responses and pricing expected back sometime in January. Actual construction work is expected to begin in spring 2027.

Becket Highway Department Acquires New Roller and Trailer: Purchase of the new trailer for local dirt and gravel road maintenance and repair was fully funded by a \$151,615 grant awarded through the State's Unpaved Roads Program, which was implemented last year. There are nearly 2,500 miles of locally owned dirt or gravel roads in Massachusetts and \$11.26 million in grants were awarded to 48 towns across the State. Becket has 30 miles of dirt and gravel and 29 miles of paved roads – a near even split.



New Roller and Trailer, photo by Marcia Parnell

Do you wish you had funding for a project in town?

The Community Preservation Committee (CPC) may be able to help! There are currently funds available for projects in the categories of Housing, Historic Preservation, Open Space and Recreation. If you would like to learn more about past projects in Becket, new projects that would qualify and the process to get approval, then join us at our CPC Community Meeting. Refreshments will be provided.

Becket CPC Community Meeting: November 9, 2026 from 6:00 to 7:30 PM

Becket Town Hall Community Room

BWES Ad Hoc Committee to Address School Enrollment

By Cathy Terwedow

As reported in the *Beat's* September issue, the Becket Washington Elementary School (BWES) has launched an ad hoc committee to examine how BWES might become a "destination school" in its efforts to boost enrollment. Look for a quarterly story here going forward where we'll report on the committee's activities and progress.

Guided by Central Berkshire Regional School District (CBRSD) Assistant Superintendent, Aaron Robb and BWES Principal April West, the ad hoc committee is actively working to transform the school's campus into a vibrant and welcoming community center for families across Becket and Washington.

Short-term success is already being felt as enrollment increased to 87 students this fall, up from a projected 82 students. (The committee's ultimate goal is 100 students).

The committee meets monthly in working sessions to advise on and examine school enrollment, to gather community input, and to explore and enact steps for making BWES a school that local parents seek out. Current members include Aaron Robb, April West, Colleen Trager (BWES 4th grade teacher), Jeff Pike (Wahconah Regional High School teacher and local community member), Jan Paxton (community member), and Kate Hubbell (parent). Other parents interested in joining the committee should contact West at awest@cbrsd.org.

Innovative classroom learning is at the top of the list for growing the school's enrollment. New this year are specialized WIN ("What I Need") educational blocks that provide academic and enrichment periods for Grades 2-5. Designed to offer targeted math and reading support alongside creative activities, these blocks give students unique opportunities to explore new interests. A student journalism program has also been added in which 5th-graders actively report on school news and will see their work published in the *Becket Beat*.

Local community partnerships further broaden students' learning through new, hands-on science programs, a watershed unit, and creative collaborations with the Becket Athenaeum and Becket Arts Center.

Another key to growing student enrollment is welcoming the next generation of students by making early connections with local parents. To this end, the committee is exploring special outreach events for families with children aged birth through four. Proposed events include a Birth-to-4 Family Movie Night and activities during February vacation week.

The committee's strategic plan also includes exploring initiatives to enhance Pre-K programming, research the possibility of before- and after-school childcare options, elevate the school environment, and create a strong sense of belonging.

"Our goal is to create a warm, high-quality learning environment where every child succeeds and every family feels connected," noted Robb. "The BWES ad hoc committee is excited to find new and creative ways for the school to serve as the heart of the community."

One Christmas Dinner Becomes a Becket Tradition

By Adele Levine

Five years ago, Laurel Burgwardt learned that her family wouldn't be gathering at her house for Christmas. She didn't dwell on it for long.

"I didn't want to cook Christmas dinner for just my husband Mark and me. Then I thought there must be many other people in the same boat. No one should be alone on holidays."

The longtime Becket resident announced her idea at a service at the Becket Federated Church: a free Christmas dinner for anyone who didn't want to spend the day alone. She then wrote to local businesses, asking each to sponsor a table for \$50.

The response was strong. That first dinner drew 80 people, including couples, singles, seniors, and a few families. Some guests took meals home to enjoy later.

The meal has grown over the years. Today, guests can choose from turkey, ham, all the fixings, rolls, appetizers, and homemade pies baked by church members. People come from throughout the area, including Stockbridge and Lenox. (see story on page 8)

One year, a woman from a nearby Mennonite community picked up 12 dinners to go. Later, she sent a thank-you letter with a photo

continued on page 10

of her group feasting on their meal.

What began as a single Christmas dinner has become a tradition. Thanksgiving and Easter dinners followed, and last year Laurel added Breakfast with Santa. Each gathering is open to everyone and draws about 80 people, a mix of regulars and newcomers. Local businesses help cover the costs, supplemented by a donation jar near the door. Giving is welcome but never required.

For Burgwardt, the purpose is straightforward: “These dinners mean that more people have fellowship and a meal they don’t have to worry about in this economy. They know they can donate if they want, but it isn’t necessary.”

She has seen how a shared meal can change the atmosphere in a room. “Many times people arrive feeling uncertain about what to expect. By the time they leave, they are feeling like they are a part of one big family. Laughter fills the room,” she said.

Burgwardt’s commitment to hospitality has deep roots. Growing up in a family of 10, she watched her parents make sure there was always enough food for family and guests, who were welcomed with hugs and love.

Today, she and her husband, Mark, along with a team of volunteers, also serve free spaghetti dinners on the first Friday of each month and \$10 breakfasts on the fourth Saturday at the Becket Federated Church Parish House. Each meal draws between 50 and 80 people.

Asked about the future, Burgwardt said she hopes to “continue to grow and to get better.” And what are all these meals really about? “Community,” she said.

This year’s free Thanksgiving dinner will be held Thursday, November 26, from 1 to 3 p.m. at the Becket Federated Church Parish House.

Volunteers are always welcome for the monthly breakfasts and spaghetti dinners, as well as the Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter meals. To help, email Laurelburgwardt@gmail.com.

Community Emergency Outreach Program (CEOP)

Winter can be an especially difficult time for families already struggling to make ends meet and who can ill afford an unexpected setback – whether an emergency car repair so someone can get to work, a family experiencing food or fuel insecurity between paychecks, or a neighbor needing assistance to cover the cost of a life-saving prescription.

If you want to know that your charitable donations remain local and go to neighbors in need, consider giving to the Becket Community Emergency Outreach Program [CEOP]

Managed by the Yoked Parish with help from a network of skilled volunteers, it is easy to be a part of the solution: **To Donate**, send a check to Food Pantry, PO Box 306, Becket, MA 01223; write CEOP in the memo line.

If donating to both the Food Pantry and CEOP, please send separate checks.

To Volunteer, call (413) 841-1701



BECKET-WASHINGTON
CHILDREN'S HOLIDAY CELEBRATION

DECEMBER 13, 2026
12:00-3:00PM

CHIMNEY CORNERS YMCA DINING HALL
591 HAMILTON RD, BECKET, MA

The poster features a winter scene with children playing in the snow, trees, and snowflakes. At the bottom, there are two QR codes for sign-up.

FAMILY SIGN-UP
BY DEC 1ST

VOLUNTEER
SIGN-UP

Wild and Scenic Westfield River Committee Engages Wahconah High School Students in Citizen Science

By Meredyth Babcock (Committee Volunteer and Project Coordinator)

You might have seen a glimpse, Tuesday October 13th, of a group of teens trundling through the woods and along the river corridor. The Wild and Scenic Westfield River Committee leaped at the chance to bring 70+ Wahconah students into the watershed and closer to the work we do. Thanks to the vision of science teacher April LeSage, the First Annual October Adventure took flight in Washington and Becket.

In small groups, with ample time to explore and ask questions, we tried to create the best learning environment with a dose of wonder to inspire the next generation of land and river stewards. This was only possible because specialists from local organizations and universities volunteered to share their passions and knowledge. Local landowners offered to host, making the day a pleasure to coordinate.

The morning began with the students boarding two buses in Dalton at 8:30 and being treated to a little history of the Westfield River, Massachusetts's first designated Wild and Scenic River system, and how they could get more involved in protecting and preserving it. All students were then dropped off at eight locations between Washington and Becket where they were greeted by their specialists and given a colorful organic hand-dyed bandana – a memento to wear and identify their group. If you see them out in the community, ask them about their adventure!

Following their morning explorations and lunch in the field, they all headed back to the Washington Town Park where in new groups they shared their experiences and discoveries with each other.

In addition to a presentation about the Committee's successful invasive removal and brine and culvert replacement projects in the ten towns we serve, some of the students have been invited to present at our Annual Remarkable River Potluck. It will be held this year at the Becket Town Hall, November 5th from 6:30 to 8:30pm. All are welcome to attend, just email westfieldriver@gmail.com to share how many are coming and what tasty things you will bring.

For updates from the Committee about events, walks, workdays and training, visit <https://westfieldriverwildscenic.org/> and join the email list.

Wild & Scenic Remarkable River Potluck

Thursday Nov. 5th 6:30pm

At the Becket Town Hall

Slides & sharing from 7 – 8:30pm

All welcome, volunteers & community members



**It's time to gather, eat and share our,
Wild & Scenic work & adventures from 2026**

Hope to see you there

**Let us know you're coming,
and tell us what yummy thing you are bringing!!**

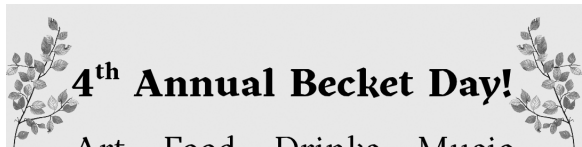
Call 413 207-4282

Or email westfieldriver@gmail.com

<http://www.westfieldriverwildscenic.org>



Students (above), Specialist (below), photo provided by Meredyth Babcock



4th Annual Becket Day!
 Art ~ Food ~ Drinks ~ Music

Becket Arts Center
Becket Athenaeum
Becket Country Store
Dreamaway Lodge
Himalayan High
Neon Newt
Route 8 Pub

Saturday, November 7th
 All Day!

#BECKETDAY2026



Becket Federated Church
Christmas Bazaar
 3391 Main Street, Becket
Saturday, November 14, 2026
From 9 am until 3 pm

Vendors, Raffles, Bake Sale
 Church Thrift Store will be open
 Breakfast and Lunch will be available
 for purchase

Proceeds support the Becket
 Federated Church and the
 community in need

Becket Beat

Business Manager
 Adele Levine

Editors
 Kathy Baugh
 Marcia Parnell

Photo Editor
 Art Alpert

Layout/Design
 Aaron Beatty

Facebook Administrator
 Jeanine McAdam

Advertising Manager
 Shelley Chanler

Circulation Managers
 Amy Alpert
 Shelley Chanler
 Ann Krawet

Staff Writers
 Kathy Baugh
 Austin Bazydlo
 Joe Bazydlo
 Al Blake
 Kathy Dickinson
 Marcia Parnell
 Cathy Terwedow

Contributing Writers
 Meredyth Babcock

Treasurer
 Cathy Terwedow

Webmasters
 Jeremy Dunn
 Dave Labrecque

The Becket Beat is published monthly (combined Jan/Feb issue). Articles may not be reprinted without obtaining author permission from the Becket Beat.

Find the Becket Beat at:
 Becket Arts Center; Becket Athenaeum; Becket Country Store; Becket Post Office; Becket Town Hall; Becket Washington School; Neon Newt; Jacob's Ladder Tavern; Route 8 Pub; Sherwood Shoppe; Transfer Station

BECKET WASHINGTON COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP (BWCP) NEWS

November at the Becket Arts Center

The Becket Arts Center has a full calendar of activities this November, offering plenty of opportunities for creativity, connection, and community. A highlight of the month is the Holiday Marketplace on Saturday, November 14, a great opportunity to get a head start on holiday shopping, discover unique, locally made gifts, and support area artists and artisans. Other events include Maker Mondays (November 2), a free gathering for local artists and crafters; A Celebration of Words (November 7), presented with Stories by Firelight; a three-part Zentangle workshop series (November 8, 15, and 22), offering a relaxing and creative way to explore drawing; and a special Cabaret Evening featuring Lara Tupper, Benny Kohn, and Bobby Sweet (November 21). The Center will also host Community Music Circles (November 10, 17, and 24), welcoming musicians and listeners of all abilities, along with weekly yoga and Tai Chi Chih classes. Whether you're looking to try something new, enjoy local talent, or connect with neighbors, there's something for everyone at the Becket Arts Center this November. Visit www.becketartscenter.org/calendar for event details, registration, and more information.

BECKET ARTS CENTER

Offerings and Asks in November at the Athenaeum

Along with fellow Becket organizations and businesses, we're honored to be part of celebrating Becket Day on 11/7. All ages are welcome throughout the day (10-4) to make Becket-centric crafts and enjoy all of the library's usual offerings. Take-home craft kits will be available at no cost to participants (while supplies last) and Becket historical maps, prints, and books will be available for purchase. Save 20% when you mention Becket Day. On 11/10 at 4pm, Russ Jarowski offers an info session and Q&A on the features of Google Workspace; have questions about Gmail, Google Docs or Google Sheets? This one's for you! With local schools on break the last week of the month, we'll be offering extra drop-in crafts for all ages starting 11/21 and available during open hours that week. Lastly, help us continue to provide the robust services & materials that you and your neighbors value so highly! A healthy library consistently responds to the evolving needs of the community and in order to grow with our patrons – we need your support. There are multiple ways you can help: 1) Bid in our online Silent Auction starting 9am on 11/23: bwlibrary.org/auction26 and 2) Donate by check (mail to PO Box 9 Becket, MA 01223), via Venmo, or online: bwlibrary.org/donate. We are so grateful for our loyal group of donors.

