

THE NEWSletter

The Newsy Little Paper That Supplements Other Media

Volume 30 Number 9 May 2021

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Eileen W. Mooney, editor/publisher

Annual Town Meeting Opens Monday, June 7, 6 p.m.

Great Barrington's 260th annual town meeting is scheduled to start **Monday, June 7**, at 6 p.m. in the parking lot of Monument Mountain Regional High School.

A second night, if needed, will be **Thursday, June 11**, also at 6 p.m. in the parking lot.

A brief review of the 32-article warrant starts on page 3 of this issue.

Two New Faces on Selectboard; One New on Finance Committee



Garfield Reed



Eric Gabriel

Garfield Reed and Eric Gabriel won the two seats on the Selectboard, ousting incumbent Kate Burke in the town's May 11 elections.

And the Finance Committee had a last-minute contest between two write-in candidates. Michelle Loubert, who had earlier announced she would not run again, changed her

(ELECTIONS cont. page 3)

Quotes of the Issue

"I spoke to all 5 of the Selectboard members individually, and we see this as a win-win for the town for numerous reasons."

-Town manager Mark Pruhenski in an email to Janet Elsbach, an owner of the former fairgrounds on South Main Street, and Deborah Levinson, a board member, about Susan and Judd Shoal's plans to acquire the property and put a mixed-use development on it. More from those and other emails is inside this issue.

"... it would be lovely if we could find some engineering to stop that as being a flood plain so that we could put in an industrial park. That would be the park that I would like to see."

-Selectman Garfield Reed during the candidates' forum May 4. Views of Eric Gabriel and Kate Burke on the fairgrounds are on page 6.

* * *

"Mark works long hours and devotes himself to the Town. ... Mark is a very level-headed manager. ... Willingness to listen and implement new initiatives. Affable."

-Comments about Mr. Pruhenski's job performance from various selectmen. Complete quotes and grades are in this issue.



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THE NEWSletter



LATE NEWS

THE TOWN WILL PROVIDE **free transportation to and from town meeting on June 7** and, if a second night is needed, **June 10**. Anyone wanting a ride should call the Claire Teague Senior Center at 528-1881 the weekday before the meeting. Town manager Mark Pruhenski said a van with a lift will be available for elderly and disabled residents and people can be brought home before the meeting ends.

* * *

CONSULTANTS' REPORTS on **Housatonic Water Works** are expected to be presented to the Selectboard late in June, Mr. Pruhenski said during the board's meeting May 24.

* * *

TOWN OFFICIALS, INCLUDING POLICE CHIEFS, from Berkshire Hills Regional School District towns, state legislators, state Department of Transportation personnel and others will be invited to a meeting, date to be determined, to discuss the **need for a traffic light at the intersection of Stockbridge Road/Route 7 and the Monument Mountain Regional High School driveway**.

During the Selectboard's May 24 meeting, selectman Leigh Davis suggested the meeting after a May 12 accident involving a new driver leaving the driveway. DOT District 1 highway director Francisca Heming said a traffic signal is not warranted there. The driveway needs to be relocated, she said. During the discussion, Police Chief Paul Storti said having officers stand in the road directing traffic is an "accident waiting to happen." State Rep. William "Smitty" Pignatelli suggested lengthening the turning lane and modifying the nearby light at Stockbridge Road and Monument Valley Road so it can be turned to red when cars are ready to leave the high school driveway.

What Boards Meet in June and How To Attend

TOWN BOARDS COULD RETURN to actual in-person meetings in June as Covid-19 restrictions in Massachusetts are being lifted May 29.

Agendas will tell how and where to attend. THE NEWSletter sends agendas to its email list.

Records of some meetings are on

Summer Reading Program for Kids Starts at Mason



SUMMER READING FOR KIDS, ages baby to teens, has started at Mason Library.

Registration is on the library's website, <https://gblibraries.org/>.

Also on the website are new books at the library and coming events.

Limited browsing at Mason is 1 through 4:30 p.m. Tuesdays through Fridays. Curbside pickup of books, CDs and other items is 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesdays through Fridays.

Ramsdell Library is not open for browsing but items can be picked up Wednesdays from 1 to 5 p.m. in its lobby.

Books, CDs and other items can be ordered by calling 528-2403 weekdays or by emailing masonramsdell@gmail.com or going to bark.cwmars.org.

Mason Library is on Main Street, Great Barrington. Its telephone is 528-2403. Ramsdell Library on Main Street, Housatonic, is 274-3738.

Wifi is available on both libraries' lawns and Mason's parking lot.

The New York Times, Washington Post and THE NEWSletter can be read free online. Anyone with a Great Barrington library card can sign up for a Boston Public Library card.

Community Television for the Southern Berkshires, www.ctsbvtv.org. You can watch on your computer or on Spectrum cable channels 1301 (public), 1302 (education) and 1303 (government).

Other websites are town, www.townofgb.org; town libraries, www.gblibraries.org; and Berkshire Hills Regional School District, www.bhrsd.org.

The town, its police and fire departments and the school district also have Facebook pages.

JUNE

-Housatonic Improvement Committee meets June 1, 6:30 p.m.

-Town manager's virtual coffee hour, June 2, 10 a.m.

-Tree Committee meets June 2, 5:30 p.m.

-Berkshire Hills Regional School Committee meets June 3, 6 p.m.

-Board of Health meets June 3, 6:30 p.m.

Senior Center News

THE CLAIRE TEAGUE Senior Center at 917 South Main St. provides transportation for elderly and disabled people.

People needing a ride can call the center at 528-1881. At least 48 hours notice is requested. Covid-19 precautions are required.

Center Offers Some Activities

The senior center is open by appointment and offers some activities.

THE NEWSletter sends "Grapevine," the center's monthly newsletter, to its email list.

Staff is available Mondays through Fridays to answer calls, offer SHINE counseling and, with a suggested \$2 donation, ready-to-go meals. Big Y donations are available Mondays and Wednesdays.

-ANNUAL TOWN MEETING IS JUNE 7, 6 p.m., Monument Mountain Regional High School.

-Library Board of Trustees scheduled to meet June 10, 5:30 p.m. but could be changed if town meeting continues.

-Planning Board scheduled to meet June 10, 6 p.m. but could be changed if town meeting continues.

-ANNUAL TOWN MEETING'S SECOND NIGHT IF NEEDED, 6 p.m., Monument Mountain Regional High School.

-Parks Commission meets June 14, 5:15 p.m.

-Selectboard meets June 14, 6 p.m.

-Finance Committee meets June 15, 6 p.m.

-Strategic Sustainability & Livability Committee meets June 16, 5:45 p.m.

-Commission on Disability meets June 16, 6:30 p.m.

-Berkshire Hills Regional School Committee meets June 17, 6 p.m.

-Historic District Commission meets June 17, 6:30 p.m.

-Conservation Commission meets June 23, 6:30 p.m.

-Planning Board meets June 24, 6 p.m.

-Council on Aging meets June 30, 1:15 p.m.



Recycling Center

THE TOWN RECYCLING center off Stockbridge Road is open Fridays, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.; Saturdays, 7 a.m. to 3 p.m.; and Sundays, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The center is part of the town's Department of Public Works, 528-0867 and www.townofgb.org/public-works.

Great Barrington residents can get permits by calling the town clerk's office.

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Cost To Subscribe

Twelve issues (one year) are \$33 for the print version within the 012 zip code or \$28 for the emailed one anywhere.

Cost to get the printed TN by bulk mail outside the 012 zip code is \$36. Cost to mail first class for a year (12 issues) is \$45.

You can also pay for as many issues as you want at \$2.85 an issue for either the emailed version or the print version in the 012 zip code.

Checks go to THE NEWSletter at PO Box 567, Housatonic 01236.

Both the written and emailed versions include free emails — agendas, news updates, forwarded material — sent between issues. Your name and email address

are kept confidential unless you're an elected or appointed public official.

The person who gets those emails can forward them to as many people as desired. Having THE NEWSletter send them is \$5 a year for each added name.

Cost to receive THE NEWSletter in large type is \$30 for 12 issues, plus the annual print subscription.

Available FREE Online

The website for Mason and Ramsdell libraries now has a link for THE NEWSletter so you can read it free, online. The website is at www.gblibraries.org.

The link does not include the emailed agendas, updates and other information sent between issues to subscribers. -EWM

Brief Review of Articles on Town Meeting Warrant

THIS YEAR'S ANNUAL town meeting is Great Barrington's 260th and could be the first time that it follows town elections.

The meeting will open **Monday, June 7, at 6 p.m. at Monument Mountain Regional High School.**

State restrictions on gatherings, imposed because of Covid-19, ended May 29. That means the Selectboard could vote to have the meeting in the school auditorium, where it usually is held.

Otherwise, it will be in the school's parking lot as it was last year. People can sit in their cars and listen on their radios via WSBS, 860-AM, or sit outside on their blankets or lawn chairs.

Last year, town meeting began June 22 and elections were June 30. This year, town elections were the usual second Tuesday of the month, or May 11.

Where To See Warrant

Copies of the warrant for the June 7 annual town meeting are posted at the Town Hall, Mason Library and post offices in Great Barrington and Housatonic.

The warrant is also on the town website at www.townofgb.org.

The warrant has 32 articles. However, two articles are numbered 26, so actually, this is a 33-article warrant.

When 2/3 or Secret Vote Is Needed

If the motion for a financial article calls for long-term borrowing, approval requires a two-thirds vote and a secret ballot, town moderator Michael Wise told THE NEWSletter.

That's because a town bylaw says non-short-term borrowing requires a secret ballot and state law says incurring nonshort-term debt requires a two thirds majority, he explained.

All changes to the zoning bylaws require two-thirds favorable votes.

Proposing an Amendment?

All amendments must be in writing and given to the moderator at the meeting.

If you're thinking of proposing an amendment, or if you decide to do that while listening to the discussion, write it out.

Brief Review of Articles

Article 1. Authorize a new revolving fund. This would be for the **Council on Aging**, for program fees and charges, to be spent by the town treasurer. The Selectboard recommends approval.

Article 2. Set **maximum spending limits for revolving funds** for plumbing (\$15,000) wiring (\$55,000) and gas (\$12,000) inspections; cemetery (\$5,000) and, if Article 1 is approved, the Council on Aging (\$50,000). The Selectboard and Finance Committee recommend approval.

Article 3. Fix the **Selectboard salaries** at \$4,700 for each, or \$23,500 total. The Selectboard and Finance Committee recommend approval.

Article 4. Vote to **accept Chapter 90 funds** from the state Department of Trans-

Town Election Report from page 1

her mind the day before elections and announced she'd be a write-in candidate. Karen Smith, who had been on the committee before, also announced her candidacy.

Ms. Loubert defeated Ms. Smith by 19 write-in votes — 149-130. Phil Orenstein, who was on the ballot, won easily with 746 votes.

Overall high vote-getter was moderator Michael Wise, who had 836 votes.

High vote-getter in the selectmen's race was Mr. Gabriel with 649 votes, followed by Mr. Reed with 620 and Ms. Burke, 599.

Complete election results are elsewhere in this NEWSletter.

A total of 1087 voters — 21.4% of the 5075 eligible — cast ballots. That included 265 in precinct A; 358 in B; 180, C; and 284, D.

Mr. Gabriel, a Housatonic resident, had 269 votes in that precinct, which is B. Ms. Burke had 184 and Mr. Reed, 167.

However, Mr. Gabriel was last in the other three precincts.

Meet the 'Bullet Vote'

Here's some more analysis from personal history:

When I moved to Housatonic more than 50 years ago, I was introduced to the "bullet vote." It's simple: Vote for one candidate — preferably the one from Housatonic — no matter how many seats are open for that position.

Housatonic voters relied on it to have a selectman who, they felt, represented their community.

The bullet vote seems to have returned. -EWM

portation (MassDOT). The Selectboard and Finance Committee recommend approval.

Article 5. Vote to appropriate the **operating budget that totals \$12,928,888.** The Selectboard and Finance Committee recommend approval. The moderator will go through the different categories. Anyone with a question or opposed to the requested amount should call out "Hold!"

The Finance Committee is expected to introduce an amendment to add \$25,000 to the DPW's budget to pay for roof and windows protection at the former Housatonic School building.

Article 6. Vote to appropriate a total of \$2,415,500 for the **wastewater treatment plant.** Town meeting voters approve this but the funds come from sewer customers. The Selectboard and Finance Committee recommend approval.

Article 7. Vote to appropriate a total of \$1,532,600 for **street and bridge improve-**

ments (\$720,000); **building improvements** (\$265,000); **police cruiser** (\$48,150); three **police portable radios** (\$25,100); seven **laptop tablets** for cruisers (\$32,100); **backhoe/loader** (\$145,450); **truck lift** (\$79,500); **sidewalk plow and sander** (\$124,300); **transfer station ticket kiosk** (\$53,000); and **parks improvements** (\$40,000). The Selectboard and Finance Committee recommend approval.

Article 8. Vote to appropriate \$17,928,812 for the town's **operating assessment** and \$503,586 for the **capital assessment for the Berkshire Hills Regional School District.** The Selectboard and Finance Committee recommend approval.

Article 9. Vote to appropriate \$405,500 for **capital improvements for the wastewater plant.** That includes \$200,000 for sewer manhole rehabilitation; \$185,500

(NEWS continues on page 4)

For Clean-Heat Comfort
JOHN B. HULL, INC.
100 Main St. Great Barrington, MA
413-528-2800

Review of Town Meeting Warrant cont. from page 3

for sewer system management/maintenance plan; and \$20,000 for sewer line replacement. The Selectboard and Finance Committee recommend approval.

Article 10. Authorize the use of **free cash to reduce the tax levy.** The Selectboard and Finance Committee recommend approval.

Article 11. Appropriate from free cash monies received under host community agreements with marijuana establishments to fund various community programs. The Selectboard and Finance Committee recommend approval.

Article 12. Give \$25,000 to the Southern Berkshire Ambulance Squad. The Selectboard and Finance Committee recommend approval.

Article 13. Fund tuition and transportation for out-of-district vocational education. The Selectboard and Finance Committee recommend approval.

Article 14. Pay specified past year's invoices for the Fire Department, Department of Public Works and sewer plant. The Selectboard and Finance Committee recommend approval.

Article 15. Appropriate free cash funds to the stabilization fund. The Selectboard and Finance Committee recommend approval.

Article 16. Appropriate free cash funds to the capital stabilization fund. The Selectboard and Finance Committee recommend approval.

Article 17. Appropriate \$1,190,000 to **buy land for and construct a municipal parking lot.** The land would be for metered long-term parking behind Town Hall. Nei-

Your Basic Right at Town Meeting

PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT point to know when you attend a town meeting is this:

If you don't understand something, you have the right to insist on an answer.

Great Barrington officials are usually very patient about answering questions. But they're not doing you a favor by answering.

They're fulfilling their obligation.

It's not your fault if you don't understand a warrant article. They're sometimes very difficult to comprehend. A couple on this year's warrant make me itch to edit them.

Proposed zoning bylaws can be especially confusing. When you read them or hear them explained, think how it

might affect you and where you live. What if it lets your neighbor do something — would your view or your property be affected?

Planning Board members sometimes forget that people aren't as familiar as they are with the vocabulary of zoning. That's also true of folks on other boards, such as the Finance Committee and financial terms.

But they're capable of explaining in plain language and you have the right to insist that they do.

The moderator may preside at town meeting but you, the voters, are in charge.

YOU make the decisions. YOU have the responsibility. Use it wisely.

— Eileen W. Mooney

ther the Selectboard nor the Finance Committee has made a recommendation.

Article 18. Appropriate Community Preservation Fund Reserves and Appropriations. This ensures \$60,000 in accounts for the required categories of historic resources, community housing and open space, plus \$20,000 for administrative expenses and a balance of \$345,000.

Article 19. Appropriate funds as recommended by the **Community Preservation Committee.** Funds come from the state and a 3% tax levy on real property.

This year's funds in each category are:

-**Affordable housing,** Construct, \$50,000 for rental help and a microloan program;

-**Historic resources,** town Historical Commission, \$6,000; town Ramsdell Library, required archaeological study, \$9,800; First Congregational Church, \$240,859 to restore stone and masonry walls at the manse; Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center, \$15,000 to replace emergency exit doors; and Clinton Church Restoration, \$200,000 for restoration work;

-**Open space and recreation,** town, \$30,000, improvement to Housatonic Rail Trail; town, \$70,000, Lake Mansfield water quality studies; and Conservation Commission, \$31,300, McAllister Wildlife Refuge preservation.

Article 20. At last year's town meeting, voters appropriated funds to acquire land off **North Plain Road for affordable housing.** This article seeks to allow the balance of that appropriation to be used for design, engineering or other predevelopment costs for that project as determined by the Affordable Housing Trust Fund board. The Community Preservation Committee recommends this.

Article 21. Increase fees for birth, death and marriage certificates from \$2 each to \$10. The Selectboard and Finance Committee recommend this.

Article 22. This would **return the end of Manville Street to a town road.** Voters in 2018 had made that portion a private road at the request of a developer who has since abandoned the proposed project.

Article 23. Authorize the Selectboard to set a Tax Increment Financing Agreement — a TIF — and Tax Increment Financing Plan for redevelopment of **79 Bridge St., the former Searles School property.**

Zoning Bylaw Changes

Article 24. The Planning Board proposes **zoning changes to update requirements for the B-3 zone** in the town center. It needs a two-thirds favorable vote.

A **zoning map** is at https://www.townofgb.org/sites/g/files/vyhlif636/f/uploads/zoning_map_2019_.pdf

That's on the Planning Board's page on the town website.

Citizens' Petitions

Article 25. This article would **change the present zoning bylaw regarding marijuana establishments.**

It would require 500 feet — not the present 200 feet — between a marijuana establishment, including a medical marijuana treatment center, and places where children commonly congregate, including libraries, playgrounds, place of worship and a town-owned beach.

It also would establish requirements, such as for odor, noise and illumination, for a facility's operation.

This was submitted as a revised version of Article 28, below, which was on the warrant for last year's town meeting. However, town meeting adjourned before any citizen petition was considered.

Revisions from last year include changing "area" to "surrounding area"; "No outdoor cultivation of marijuana shall be

(WARRANT continues on page 5)

Seeking Real Estate?

Tom Doyle
Broker Associate

Lance Vermeulen
Real Estate

283 Main St.,
Great Barrington

Licensed in MA, NY

Email: scarnaghtom@gmail.com

Cell: 646-438-1329

Meeting Warrant From page 4

allowed within 200 feet of any property line” to “Excluding outdoor home cultivation, no outdoor cultivation of marijuana shall be allowed within 200 feet of any property line.” and adding “No outdoor home cultivation of marijuana shall be allowed within 50 feet of any property line.”

As a zoning bylaw, it requires a two-thirds favorable vote. The Planning Board does not recommend this.

Article 26. This is intended to “**limit the role of unsubstantiated opinion as a factor in the award of Special Permits by the Town Planning Board.**” The Planning Board does not recommend this.

Petition Articles From Last Year

The following petition articles are left from last year’s special town meeting. The numbering used is from last year’s warrant.

Article 26. This seeks to **amend part of the Zoning Bylaw’s Mixed Use Zone and the zoning map.** As a zoning bylaw, it requires a two-thirds favorable vote. The Planning Board does not recommend this.

Article 27. This seeks to allow marijuana establishments and manufacturing in the Industrial 2 zone near downtown. The I2 zone is shown on the zoning map.

As a zoning bylaw, it requires a two-thirds favorable vote. The Planning Board does recommend this.

Article 28. This was originally submitted as the first Article 26, above. As a zoning bylaw, it requires a two-thirds favorable vote. The Planning Board does not recommend this.

Article 29. This would amend Chapter 241 of the Town Code, Division 3, Miscellaneous Rules and Regulations, to ensure that **citizens may speak on an agenda item before a town board votes on it.**

Article 30. This would amend Chapter 189 of the Town Code, Division 2, Selectmen’s Regulations, to **ensure that residents may speak on an agenda item before the Selectboard votes on it.**

Article 31. This would **prohibit “the disposal, dumping or storage of hazardous and toxic waste from any source on the land or in the water”** in Great Barrington, including Housatonic, “under any circumstances.”

Article 32. This supports **closing and outlawing “all privately owned ‘prisons-for-profit’** in Massachusetts.

The next motion presumably is to adjourn this year’s annual town meeting.

READERS: To avoid the appearance of conflict of interest, I do not report on the Great Barrington Housing Authority as I am an elected member of its board.

THE NEWSletter is a great gift!

Gave Funds for Play Equipment

Shovals Want To Buy Fairgrounds

JUDD AND SUSAN SHOVAL probably first came to the public’s attention in December when the town announced they were buying play equipment for the Lake Mansfield recreation area.

The equipment cost \$43,941.82.

Town officials, however, were already aware of the Shovals because of their interest in developing land — including the former fairgrounds on South Main Street and 11 Crissey Road in Great Barrington — and acquiring the town-owned former Cook’s Garage on Park Street, Housatonic.

Shovals Proposal for Fairgrounds

As reported in the last NEWSletter, the Shovals have proposed buying the fairgrounds, building a mixed-use structure

along the front and giving the back 14 or so acres to the town for a walking path along the Housatonic River and other recreational uses.

They told THE NEWSletter, in part, that “... we do hope it will be possible to get this project off the ground for the benefit of the entire community!”

Elsbachs Don’t Like Proposed Use

A major roadblock, however, is that fairgrounds owners Janet and Bart Elsbach don’t want to sell — and they don’t want the Shovals’ proposed use on the property, as Janet Elsbach emailed town manager Mark Pruhenski.

(FAIRGROUNDS cont. on page 6)

Plan To Be Presented for 11 Crissey

SUSAN SHOVAL is manager of Berkhill LLC, which owns 11 Crissey Road, 72 Stockbridge Road and 777 South Main St.

She and her husband, Judd Shoval, own Shoval Enterprises, a property management company in Wilkes-Barre, Pa.

Emails between representatives for the Shovals and town officials show their interest in developing 11 Crissey and acquiring the town-owned former Cook’s Garage on Park St., Housatonic.

About 15 emails concern play equipment for Lake Mansfield recreation area. The Shovals paid for the equipment. Those emails start Nov. 11 and are continuing.

On Feb. 1, assistant town manager and planning director Chris Rembold wrote Neil Elms of Shoval Enterprises to tell him where he could find environmental reports regarding Cook’s Garage and thanked him for chatting.

Interest in Buying Cook’s Garage

Mr. Elms responded with information on where to find the water source for 426 Park St. and added:

“As for Cook’s Garage, I asked Judd after our call and the Shoval’s would be interested in purchasing the site from the town.”

In a Jan. 28 email, Mr. Elms wrote Mr. Rembold, with copies to Ms. Emberlin and Judd Shoval:

‘Cleanest Water’ in Housatonic

“Attached is the water test we did for the property adjacent to Cook’s Garage. The well is shared between the two properties per the deed.

“In summary, it is the cleanest water I have seen in Housatonic. It is within the parameters of potable water.

“Although the source of the well in unknown, I believe it is worth the effort to find it. This could be a solution for some of the water issues in Housatonic. I measured the flow rate too: approx. 440 gallons/minute; that would need to be verified.”

Plans for 11 Crissey Road

Mr. Elms also wrote Mr. Rembold about his plans for 11 Crissey Road.

As envisioned originally in a Feb. 23 email to Mr. Rembold:

“SRA has nearly completed their assignment for Team Shoval; master planning the 11 Crissey Road site for a conversion to Live/Work units. Attached is their PRELIMINARY submission and I wanted to share it with you.

“Could you please take a quick look for me before I send the design team onto their final submission to the Shoval’s? I want to make sure the design team is on the right track.”

Problems apparently arose, however, as Mr. Rembold on March 15 asked “how will you deal with the nonconforming structure issue? Will you somehow be making the structure conforming as well? If not then we’re back in front of the ZBA, which is where it stalled last time.”

Mr. Elms responded March 15 that “our ‘Live/Work’ master plan effort at Crissey Road is falling flat due to a \$20MM construction cost.

“Plans to add the 30,000SF building in the rear have also been scratched due to costs. We know we have 2 strikes against any development at the site: non-conforming use and non-conforming structure.”

He went on to describe a proposal and asked how to get approvals.

At the NEWSletter’s deadline, nothing has been presented to any town board.

Shovals Want To Buy Fairgrounds, cont. from page 5

THE NEWSletter learned about the plans and concerns from emails the town provided as a result of public records requests.

Mr. Pruhenski's emails, like most public officials', end with the statement that "The Secretary of State's office has determined that most e-mails to and from municipal offices and officials are public records. Consequently, confidentiality should not be expected."

In quoting from several of the emails that follow, THE NEWSletter has not included salutations or closing comments and has broken some long paragraphs into shorter ones for easier reading. Also, in some emails, "Shovals is written as "Shoval's."

Subscribers wanting to see the emails could request them from Mr. Pruhenski or write thenewsltr@gmail.com or call it at 413-274-6100.

Start of the Email Trail

The email trail provided to THE NEWSletter begins Oct. 29, 2020, when Mr. Pruhenski wrote assistant town manager/town planning director Chris Rembold:

"During SB speak time on Monday, Bill Cooke asked about the status of the Fairgrounds property an requested we reach out to Bart. Can you reach out to him and set up a time for us to talk about the future of that property? I was thinking just the 3 of us. It's not urgent. Even if we only have a date set in time for my updates on the 9th that would be fine."

Mr. Rembold wrote Mr. Elsbach on Oct. 29:

"I'm writing to follow up on a question from a Selectboard member about the status of the Fairgrounds. Also, the Town is developing an Open Space and Recreation Plan, and it would be great to include an

update on this prominent open space. Would you be available to chat, say the week off November 16 or so?"

Then-selectman Cooke emailed Deborah Levinson on Dec. 9 that he was "concerned about the condition of the Fairgrounds and the lack of progress in revitalizing it as a community resource."

He was writing her, he said, because she is a member of the Great Barrington Fair Grounds. He asked if they could meet.

Ms. Levinson, who is also with Berkshire Property Agents, responded Dec. 11 with an image of "what we envisioned and where we were going at the beginning of the Elsbach's stewardship of the Fairgrounds."

That 2011 image is reproduced on page 7.

Start Talking About Purchase

On Feb. 5, Mr. Pruhenski wrote Ms. Levinson:

"I was asked recently by the Selectboard to reach out to you and the Fairgrounds board to begin a conversation about a potential purchase by the town.

"Would you be willing to chat by phone sometime next week?"

On March 7, Mr. Pruhenski emailed Catherine Emberlin of Shoval Enterprises that the Elsbachs could not make a March 10 meeting.

Ms. Emberlin emailed him March 8:

"Thank you for this. You can tell them our intentions about a park etc. Could you see what dates work for them and we will make it work."

Mr. Pruhenski then wrote Ms. Levinson that he had cancelled the proposed meeting with the Shovals "but we'd like to try and schedule another time if possible.

'Public/Private Purchase'

"I'd also be happy to provide more specifics before we meet, but basically we'd like to partner with the Shoval's on a public/private purchase.

"This would mean that the Shoval's would purchase the property and donate the open space in the rear (15-20 acres) to the town (all of which can be included in the P&S).

"The town would then be able to develop that area into a park/dog park/community garden space, connect the trail along the river, maybe create an ice rink, picnic areas ... and other park-like uses similar to those envisioned by your board, and managed by our Parks Department or another similar board/committee."

Shovals: How Use Property?

Ms. Levinson wrote Mr. Pruhenski on March 9:

"The Elsbachs have asked how the front part would be used. They did not get involved with the property in the first place to contribute to an unsightly commercial development. This is the big thing I believe many miss about (elsbachs) ownership.

"Folks may complain about the old Fairground property just sitting there but things could be much worse.

"Providing more information on the Shoval's interest would go a long way in getting the Elsbachs to agree to a meeting.

"The Town's use is understood. That is but only one bit. Not the Shoval's intentions in terms of their use.

"Clarity will help get the Elsbachs to agree to meeting.

"See what you can do in providing additional info. Thank you."

(FAIRGROUNDS cont. on page 7)

How Candidates Said They'd Like To Use Property

DURING THE MAY 4 candidates' forum, the three candidates for Selectboard gave their views on what should happen to the former fairgrounds property on South Main Street.

Here's what they said, from a reader's transcript. CTSB taped the forum, which can be seen at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wHCBYCALvVE>. The transcribed part starts at about 26:23 minutes.

Ninety-seven people attended the virtual forum, moderated by Ken Knox and sponsored by the Democratic and Republican town committees and THE NEWSletter.

Moderator Ken Knox: "There has been some suggestion that it [the fairgrounds] should be purchased by the town and turned into a park. Would you support that effort?"

Candidate Garfield Reed: "I would not support that effort. We have many parks in this town. Don't get me wrong. I love parks. But if you look around Great Barrington there are many small parks that

aren't even utilized now.

"I would like to think that there is some way — I am not an engineer, but it would be lovely if we could find some engineering to stop that as being a flood plain so that we could put in an industrial park. That would be the park that I would like to see.

"We have plenty of parks in our town right now, so I don't think that I would like to turn that into a park. I would like to turn it into something more, something utilized more by the citizens of Great Barrington. Again, we have many parks in our town."

Candidate Eric Gabriel: "Hoping something is going to occur there. It makes me nervous for Great Barrington to be involved in the real estate market. I would be hesitant. It is not for sale. The other thing that we heard about is somebody buying the fairgrounds and donating property to Great Barrington, that sounds very interesting to me, but I would have to see the whole plan — what they were going

to do with the front section of the fairgrounds and how that would relate to what the town could do in the back.

"But as far as the town actually buying the fairgrounds themselves, I am personally not interested. But more open space in Great Barrington and more parks, if it were the right situation, I am definitely not opposed to."

Candidate Kate Burke: "I think that it is something that is a sore subject in Great Barrington, just in general, and what could be the potential for that and I think it is worth entertaining any idea but it certainly doesn't mean that idea has to go forward.

"It is currently privately owned by a non-profit. Taxes are paid on the section that has the solar panels, so it does generate some income. But it is a rather unusable, undevelopable piece of land as most of it is wetlands. So it is a challenge. It's a real challenge.

"It's nice to see some interest in progress but it might not be the right thing. But it's still nice to have conversation about it."

Fairgrounds, continued from page 6

Selectmen Said To Like Shoval Plans

On March 10, Mr. Pruhenski wrote Ms. Levinson and Ms. Elsbach:

"I don't know a great deal about the Shoval's plans for the front portion of the property if they were able to acquire it (I've only discussed this with them on one occasion), but I believe it includes using some portion for mixed-use retail/office/housing along the road, and a small portion for parking in the southwest corner.

"I spoke to all 5 of the Selectboard members individually, and we see this as a win-win for the town for numerous reasons.

"The reality for us, is that it's unlikely the town would be able to purchase the property on our own since the purchase, continued clean-up, development, and ongoing care will be too expensive with all of the other capital projects coming down the road for us (Housatonic water system upgrades, wastewater upgrades, parking, bridges, the Housy School, our High SchoolI could go on all day.)

"This partnership would allow for us to acquire a significant portion of the property without any up-front investment and have more resources available for developing the open space in the ways I described below.

"Anyway, I hope that's helpful. It's not a well-developed plan at the moment only because we're so early on in the process, but I'm hopeful that we can discuss this in more detail with you very soon."

Mr. Pruhenski sent a copy of the email to Ms. Emberlin of Shoval Enterprises.

On March 16, Mr. Pruhenski wrote Ms. Levinson that he'd been "asked to provide an update to the board on Monday evening and would like to at least be able to report that we have been communicating and/or have something scheduled."

Elsbachs Don't Like What's Proposed

Ms. Levinson wrote him March 17 that "In touching base with Elsbach's and re-viewing my last mail to you regarding use of the property. It emphasizes again that the 'vision' for the front acreage as they understand it runs counter to what they set out to do with/for the property.

"They appreciate that folks have renewed interest but they are not going to be able to advance the conversation beyond this point before their Monday meeting."

Pruhenski: 'One Hour of Discussion'

Mr. Pruhenski replied early that evening that he was asking for:

"One hour of discussion about the future of the former fairgrounds. I don't want to misrepresent the Shoval's intentions because I can only tell you what the town's vision would/could be if we were to acquire a portion of the property.

"I won't pursue it any further, but please feel free to reach out if they have a change of heart. That parcel is really important to the town and we'd love to see it utilized in some form again."

Levinson: Need Discuss Frontage

On March 18, Ms. Levinson wrote Mr. Pruhenski that "There is a lot of history over the past almost 10 years regarding the Fairgrounds and the Town and its supporters ranging from the utmost positivity to conflict to back burner attention to recent ...oh Hello we are back again. ...

"Coming in to it and viewing it as a cold slate ... your vision for the back portion of the Fairgrounds is spot on. Conversion of the actual building portion of the property needs to be addressed.

"That bit is sensitive. You are right for the Town to wait for a conversation that is acceptable to all parties."

Mr. Pruhenski wrote Ms. Levinson March 22 that he and Chris Rembold would be glad to discuss the property with her and/or the Elsbachs.

Selectmen Critical of Elsbachs

The selectmen at their March 22 meeting were critical of the Elsbachs for not meeting with them, Board chairman Steve Bannon asked, rhetorically, what the fairgrounds ownership has done for the town.

It doesn't pay taxes, he noted.

The Great Barrington Fair Grounds website at https://gbfg.org/about_us/ notes that "In 2013 Fair Ground Community Redevelopment Project attained 501(c)3 non-profit corporation status."

It is liable for taxes on its solar array, however, and is appealing the town's assessment of \$360,000.

Mrs. Elsbach on March 26 sent Mr. Pruhenski the statement that was reproduced in the last NEWSletter and is at www.facebook.comGreatBarringtonFair

grounds/

The statement notes that with volunteer help, the property is being cleared and has hosted events and been available to local organizations.

Pruhenski: 'Partner in Some Way'

On March 29, Mr. Pruhenski wrote Mrs. Elsbach that if she would "consider meeting with staff (only) at some point, we'd be happy to.

"I was unaware of any history between the town and GBFG until Deborah mentioned it in her last email, but I hope we can move beyond that at some point and partner in some way. I think our two visions for the possibilities at the former fairgrounds property have more in common than not based on what I read about GBFG leading up to our inquiries."

On March 30, Ms. Levinson sent Mr. Pruhenski an email with an attachment about Fair Ground Community Redevelopment Project's plan to rebuild the cowshed barn and noted:

"This is/was the energy/intent/spirit surrounding Elsbach's purchase of the Fair-ground."

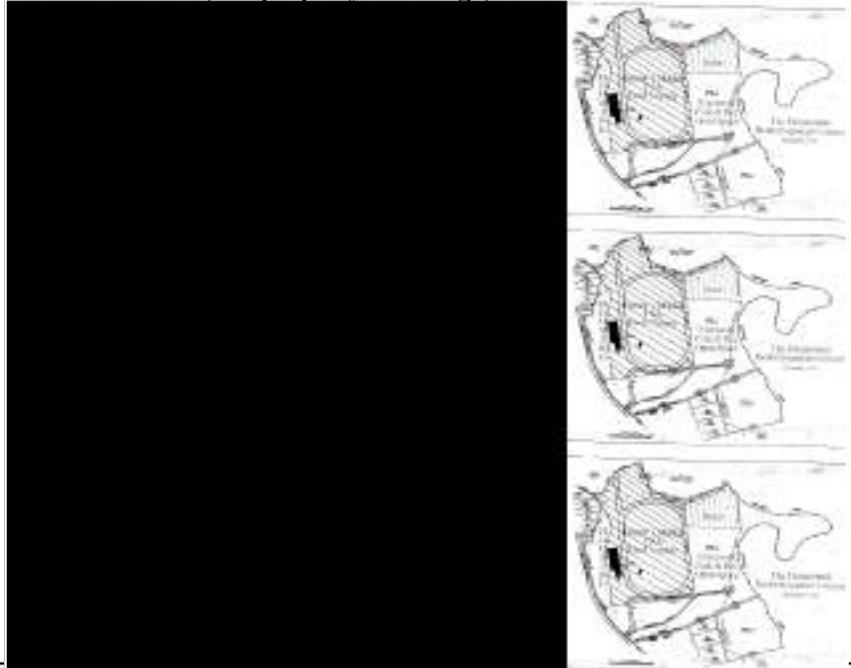
Appealing Assessment on Solar

Mrs. Elsbach responded April 9 that she had been trying to reach Mr. Pruhenski and that:

"A substantial amount of time must now be devoted to defending ourselves in the lawsuit that resulted from the Town's tax assessment of the solar array, but we will be in touch about a conversation soon."

As noted elsewhere in this report, the solar array is assessed at \$360,000. The Elsbachs are appealing that amount.

Below is the image, dated December 2011 and referred to in Deborah Levinson's Dec. 11 email to Great Barrington town manager Mark Pruhenski. South Main Street, the property's frontage, is at the left.



BHRSC: Fix MMRHS Building; Housatonic News

RENOVATION OR REPLACEMENT of the Monument Mountain Regional High School building could be done with or without state funding help.

No formal vote was taken but no one at the Berkshire Hills Regional School Committee's May 20 meeting voiced opposition to that approach, proposed earlier at a meeting of the finance and building and grounds subcommittees.

The committee should be ready for the design phase next year, with or without state School Building Authority funding, Richard Dohoney, finance subcommittee chairman, declared May 20.

The committee needs to communicate with selectmen and finance committee members in the school district's three towns, Bill Fields, a member of both subcommittees, advised.

To Seek Consultant

District superintendent Peter Dillon provided a two-track approach that concluded: "In the next six week we will advertise and interview for the consultant's role."

His memo is reproduced below.

Also during the meeting, the committee — Sean Stephen was absent — agreed that the draft Statement of Interest should be revised before it is submitted to the SBA for possible funding.

THE NEWSletter sent the draft SOI

Supt. Dillon's Memo

BHRSD Two Track High School Building Project Process 5.20.2021

There are two possibilities moving forward: 1) working with the MSBA or 2) doing a locally supported project.

The MSBA project is defined clearly on their website.

We will edit and submit the SOI before the June deadline.

A locally driven project would follow the same base structure and path including laws, codes, and regulations, but the process for funding would be very different.

In the short term, we propose hiring a consultant to outline the process we are going to take including all legal and code requirements.

It would be in our best interest to hire a consultant who also has experience as an owner's project manager and who has experience working both with and outside the MSBA.

Further research is necessary to determine the exact steps of hiring said consultant and in determining our potential investment in that role. All of this work is subject to public purchasing laws.

In a parallel way, we will analyze similar processes for paying and financing all aspects of this work.

In the next six weeks we will advertise and interview for the consultant's role.

Want To Evaluate The Town Manager?

Evaluations by the previous Selectboard and some department heads are reproduced in this NEWSletter.

Use that form for your evaluation. Then email or regular-mail it to THE NEWSletter by **June 15**. Include your name. (I won't identify you without your permission but I do need to know who submitted the evaluation.)

I'll do a readers' report in the June issue.
—EWM

to its email list. Any subscriber who wants it should email thenewsltr@gmail.com.

A revised SOI draft and formal vote are scheduled for the committee's virtual meeting **June 3** at 6 p.m. Deadline for submission to the SBA is June 25.

The SBA's website is <https://www.massschoolbuildings.org/building>.

Mr. Dillon said that for the revision, he will seek input from teachers and look at SOIs submitted by other school systems. He asks anyone with a suggestion for the revision to email him at peter.dillon@bhrsd.org.

Mr. Fields said the SOI should emphasize that the present high school building has some "terrible facilities."

The automotive facility can't put a truck on a lift because of the building's low roof, he noted. Other committee members listed more deficiencies.

The SOI also needs to point out that the district has tuition agreements and serves more towns than just its three members, Mr. Dohoney said.

During the May 13 meeting of the building and grounds and finance subcommittees, he suggested that some renovation could be done now, with the building's wings replaced gradually.

"Time is the enemy, not money," he observed.

When the committee discussed this at its May 6 meeting, Sean Stephen observed "that building is a disaster."

He also expressed concern that going to the district's three towns now for funding could mean towns will pull out of the district. Mr. Bannon said he agrees.

During the discussion, Mr. Fields said he will vote "no" on using SBA funds.

"We're going to be our own boss," he stated.

It's dollars and cents so we need the SBA, Mr. Bannon said. He likes the two-track approach, he added.

* * *

AS NOTED IN this issue's review of articles on the warrant for the June 7 annual town meeting, the **Finance Committee** is expected to move that \$25,000 be added to the Department of Public Works' budget so

a temporary cover can be put on the roof of the former **Housatonic School building** and boards put on its broken windows.

The committee had earlier agreed that it would transfer funds from the town's reserve account so the work could be done quickly. Funds appropriated at town meeting must wait for the new fiscal year to start July 1 before they may be used.

However, at the Finance Committee's April 27 meeting, town manager Mark Pruhenski explained that DPW superintendent Sean VanDeusen would be unable to complete the work during this fiscal year.

Since funds would have to be used in the present fiscal year, a transfer would not legally work, he explained.

Also, Mr. Pruhenski said, he was waiting for a recommendation from the Housatonic Improvement Committee on what to do with the building — raze it or repair it.

Finance Committee member Michelle Loubert said she was "very frustrated" by the delay and felt the building "is being allowed to fall apart."

Several Said Interested in Building

THE NEWSletter asked Mr. Pruhenski during the meeting whether anyone has followed up with the Berkshire Waldorf High School in Stockbridge.

As THE NEWSletter has reported, a school representative attended a HIC meeting and expressed interest in acquiring the building.

Mr. Pruhenski said other people have also expressed interest in the building, including two or three developers during the pasts six months.

Bailly: 'Incredible Frustrated'

At the HIC meeting May 20, chairman Dan Bailly said he was "incredibly frustrated" that the Selectboard was waiting for a decision from the committee before doing work on the school building.

Someone could have told this to the committee, he said.

HIC members — vice chairman and newly elected selectman Eric Gabriel, Angela Lomanto, Beverly Nourse and Patrick Barrett — all voted that the work should be done as soon as possible.

Mr. Bailly said he will update the Selectboard in June.

No date has been confirmed for architects to consider possible uses for the former school building.

To Draft Letter About HWW

Mr. Bailly also suggested the committee ask the Selectboard to look into problems with dirty water from Housatonic Water Works.

He said he'll draft a letter about this for HIC approval at its next meeting, **June 1** at 6:30 p.m.

Mr. Bailly also noted that he has several issues regarding newly installed **sidewalks in Housatonic**. Width and slope in some

(NEWS continues on page 9)

Finance Committee, Health Board, Four More Boards

areas don't seem to meet building code requirements, he said.

Berkshire Pulse Represented

During the meeting, Bettina Montano of Berkshire Pulse in a former mill building off Park Street/Route 183, near the bridge, described what the dance studio has been doing during the Covid-19 pandemic.

She noted that Pulse serves people from Massachusetts, Connecticut and New York.

She has many questions about the adjacent Cook's Garage property, now owned by the town, she said. The roof seems about to fall off, she explained.

Selectman Leigh Davis also attended the meeting.

The HIC has two vacancies.

FINANCE COMMITTEE members have questions about how a **senior tax deferral program** might affect town finances.

A report by principal assessor Ross Vivori and finance director Susan Carmel is reproduced in this NEWSletter.

Vivian Orlovski's proposal of the program was in the last issue. The program would enable seniors to defer tax payments.

At the Finance Committee's May 18 meeting, newly re-elected member Michelle Loubert questioned whether younger families would have to make up a financial shortfall.

Newly elected Phil Orenstein said he agrees with much of the proposal but feels it needs more study.

"People don't want to do this unless they're really desperate," Mrs. Orlovski told the committee.

It's an investment, she said.

Unlike other investments, however, the interest would not be realized every year, Mr. Vivori responded. The budget would be affected, Ms. Carmel added.

Committee chairman Anne O'Dwyer said she will prepare a report of the discussion.

She was re-elected as chairman with Mrs. Loubert as vice chairman. Not present were members Meredith O'Connor and Tom Blauvelt.

THE BOARD OF HEALTH agreed May 6 to bring Deborah and Harry Sano, owners of 232 Stockbridge Road, to state **Housing Court** to seek corrections of violations remaining in four units in the building.

Egresses and emergency exists have not been fixed, health agent Rebecca Jurczyk said.

The board is moving toward enforcement, not condemnation, chairman Michael Lanoue noted. It doesn't want to see the tenants made homeless, Ms. Jurczyk added.

A Housing Court hearing date had not been set at THE NEWSletter's deadline. The health board continued its hearing on the matter to its next virtual meeting, **June 3** at 6:30 p.m.

Health board member Dr. Ruby Chang said she attended a May 5 site inspection with Ms. Jurczyk and felt the egress for a

third-floor apartment was "very concerning."

Douglas Mishkin represents the tenants.

Housing Tenant Reports Odor

Also during the meeting, a tenant of Bostwick Garden at 899 South Main St. described odor problems in her unit. Ms. Jurczyk said she is getting information about that.

Report on Covid-19 in April

She noted that 35 local cases of Covid-19 were reported in April but, for the first time in about a year, she had zero complaints about masks not being worn or similar issues.

Grant Received

Ms. Jurczyk also reported that the Great Barrington Board of Health will share a grant of \$300,000 a year for 11 years with Mount Washington, Alford, Monterey, New Marlborough, Otis, Sheffield and the Tri-Town Health District, which includes Lee, Lenox and Stockbridge.

The grant, through the state's Public Health Excellence Grant Program, will enable the towns to hire two full-time nurses.

One part-time nurse now covers 12 towns, she noted.

THE CULTURAL COUNCIL has awarded 21 grants totaling \$7,397. Funds came from the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

Grant recipients, grant amounts and topic are:

Berkshire Bach Society for Bach to the Future, \$350; Berkshire Children's Chorus, \$300, Take the Lead!; Berkshire Music School, \$500, Global Influences on American Music;

Also, Berkshire Pulse, \$350, Moving Life Stories at CLuB" Bernice Lewis, \$350, History Alive; BodySonnet, \$350, Blue Vice;

Also, Great Barrington Public Theater, Solo Festival, \$350; Greenagers Inc., Nurturing a New Generation of Environmental Stewardship, \$450;

Also, IS183 Art School of the Berkshires, professional development for BHRSD educators, \$250; Jenise Lucey, Berkshire Ukulele Band and Berkshire Sings!, \$300;

Also, Lev Natan, observing Indigenous People's Day with a walk, \$600; Marney Schorr, Arts in Recovery for Youth, \$797.

Also, Music in Common, Berkshires Worldwide, \$400; New Stage Performing Arts Center, Rites of Passage: 20/20 Vision, \$150; Pittsfield Shakespeare in the Park, 2021 season, \$150;

Also, Robin O'Herin, Melting Pot of American Music at Dewey Hall, \$200; Second Nature Arts, Light Bright Art, \$350;

Also, Shakespeare & Company, \$300, 2021 Fall Festival of Shakespeare; Stockbridge Sinfonia, 2021 concert series, \$400;

Also, Timothy Likarish, Du Bois Legacy Festival, \$150; and Tom Truss, ReWritten, \$350.

Council members are co-chairs Ellen Shanahan and Patrick Barrett, secretary Haley Barbieri, Milena Cerna, Stacy Ostrow,

Elissa Haskins-Vaughan, Erica Mielke and Tate Coleman.

The council has a vacancy.

THE NEW COMMISSION ON DISABILITY had its first meeting March 10 and elected Richard Flach as chairman, Patrick Hollenbeck as vice chairman and Jeanne Bachetti, treasurer.

Other members are Trevor Cobb and Denise Flynn.

They are responsible for coordinating Massachusetts Office on Disability programs "to bring about full and equal participation in all aspects of life in the Town of Great Barrington for people with disabilities," according to the website at www.townofgb.org/commission-disability

Their fourth meeting is **June 16** at 6:30 p.m.

FRED CLARKE is now chairman of the **Affordable Housing Trust Fund board**.

Bill Cooke declined to continue as chairman. He also did not run for re-election as a selectman.

Larissa Yaple is vice chairman. Other members are John Katz and Garfield Reed.

At the May 13 meeting, Mr. Cooke said he wants funds to buy and renovate houses.

Mr. Clarke said the board needs to look at houses that could become up to four units of housing. The board also needs to remind the Community Preservation Commission of its obligation to fund affordable housing, he said.

The board is preparing to select a developer to renovate 40 Grove St.

STEVE BANNON CONTINUES as chairman of the **Selectboard**, with Leigh Davis as vice chairman and clerk.

Garfield Reed nominated Ms. Davis and Eric Gabriel seconded at the reorganizational meeting May 12.

Ed Abrahams, who had been vice chairman and clerk, nominated himself. He and Mr. Gabriel voted for him. Mr. Reed and Ms. Davis voted for her.

Mr. Bannon, about to break the tie, said he did not recall a previous situation like this.

Mr. Gabriel then voted for Ms. Davis, breaking the tie.

NEWSletter Offerings

Subscribers to THE NEWSletter can get, by email, meeting minutes and obituaries when THE NEWSletter receives them, rather than waiting for the next issue, plus the Chamber of Commerce newsletter, Cultural District news, and all news releases from the Berkshire County District Attorney's office, whether or not they are about Great Barrington.

Just email thenewsltr@gmail.com and tell what you want.

Police Reports During April

Police can be reached by calling 911 for an emergency or 528-0306. The department's website is <https://greatbarringtonpolice.com> and its Facebook page is <www.facebook.com/GBPDMA/>

THE NEWSletter sent its email list a police news release April 21 about the arrest of a man on an active Connecticut warrant for probation violation.

He was arrested after fleeing from police who were responding to the report of a fight at Cumberland Farms.

State police and officers from Sheffield, Egremont, New Marlborough, Stockbridge and West Stockbridge helped in the search.

In other police news, 16 motor vehicle accidents were reported in April, including one in which someone was taken to Fairview Hospital.

One driver hit a bear and another hit a deer.

Police also stopped 34 vehicles, resulting in 25 citations/warnings.

They conducted radar 101 times. That included 22 times on Main Street, 11 on State Road; 10 each, Maple Avenue and Stockbridge Road; eight, North Plain Road; six, South Main Street;

Also, five each, Old Stockbridge Road, East Street and VanDeusenville Road; four each, Park Street/Route 183 and Monument Valley Road; three, mobile, Division Street;

Fire Department's Report for April

The Fire Department is at 528-0788 or, in an emergency, 911. Its website is www.townofgb.org/fire-department and its Facebook page is www.facebook.com/gbfiredept/

LOCAL FIREFIGHTERS responded to 92 calls during April, including sending a truck to a fire that damaged a house on Dublin Road, Richmond, April 12.

They responded with Southern Berkshire Ambulance squad personnel to 47 calls for medical help and to two motor vehicle accidents.

They helped rescue two hikers on Monument Mountain.

They also responded to four grass fires, one in Sheffield.

Firefighters checked 27 smoke, carbon monoxide or fire alarms that malfunctioned.

Reminder from Fire Chief Charles Burger: Make sure your heating appliances are serviced, chimney is cleaned, ashes disposed of outside and away from buildings, and smoke and CO detection work.

twice each, Alford Road and Taconic Avenue; and once each, Seekonk and Monterey roads.

NOTE: Anyone wanting radar used on a particular street can call the police station at 528-0306.

The parking enforcement officer — a new listing in the police log — reported writing 67 tickets.

Suicidal people were reported three times. Police responded each time with a licensed clinician from the Brien Center.

Underaged females accused of shoplifting from Big Y were turned over to their parents.

Police responded to a domestic disturbance and to the report of a disturbance at a laundromat because someone was not wearing a mask.

Police and the Fire Department helped rescue hikers in two separate incidents on Monument Mountain. One hiker had a vertigo attack, the other a broken ankle, according to the report.

A local day care reported finding edible marijuana in a child's backpack.

Officer Beko made several visits, including to local businesses, Mason Library, Fairview Hospital emergency room nurses on their break, Berkshire South, the Claire

SBAS Report

Great Barrington police handle dispatch, which is 911.

SOUTHERN BERKSHIRE AMBULANCE SQUAD covers Great Barrington, Alford, Ashley Falls, Egremont, Monterey, Mount Washington, and Sheffield.

It is based at Fairview Hospital and has 36 employees and six volunteers. Its website is www.sbvvas.com, email is office@sbvvas.com and telephone is 528-3632.

The squad goes primarily to Fairview Hospital but also to Berkshire Medical Center, Baystate and Albany Medical hospitals.

Total Calls in April

Squad personnel responded to 332 calls in April. Of those, 289 calls involved transportation to a medical facility.

Five people were evaluated or treated at the scene; 12 were evaluated with no treatment required; 17 refused an evaluation; and two were dead at the scene.

Five calls were cancelled.

Squad members twice helped the public.

Calls in Great Barrington

Of the calls, 128 were in Great Barrington.

That included 103 transported to hospitals; 11 treated/evaluated at the scene; 12 who refused evaluation; and one dead at the scene.

The squad also helped one member of the public.



Officer Beko, the Great Barrington Police Department's comfort dog.

Teague Senior Center, and W.E.B. Du Bois Regional Middle School.

Two parents and children visited Beko at the police station.

Anyone wanting to meet Officer Beko is asked to call the Police Department.

Scams Reported

A caller reported receiving calls about Amazon purchases made with a VISA card. However, the caller doesn't use Amazon or that credit card, she told police.

Two people said they received calls that possible federal arrest warrants had been issued for them.

Another caller said someone tried to access a bank account.

Bears, Birds, Sheep

A large black bear — or perhaps different ones — was/were reported on a porch and in backyards on Monterey Road, Castle Hill Avenue, East Street, State Road, walking around the parking lot at 29 Lewis Avenue, and behind an entrance at Fairview Hospital.

Two birds flew into Drake's Petroleum on Main Street. They were taken to a veterinary hospital and reclaimed by their owner who told police they flew outside when someone opened a door.

Loose sheep were reported twice on Seekonk Road.

Who To Call for Dogs, Cats, Bobcats & More

FOR LOST dogs or cats, people should call the animal control officer, Shep Evans, at the police department, 528-0306 ext. 9.

Calls about bears go to the police.

For wildlife such as turtles, skunks, groundhogs, bats, snakes, coyotes, bobcats, etc. calls go to agents licensed by the state Division of Fisheries and Wildlife.

They include:

-Chris Bloom, Appalachian Trapping & Wildlife Management, Lee. 401-626-6948

-Brian Fenner, Berkshire Animal Control, Lee. 413-441-6118

-Eric Ives, Berkshire Wildlife Solutions, South Egremont. 413-528-9813; 413-250-5094.

-Tim Williams, East Lee Animal Control, East Lee. 413-822-9826; info@eastleeanimalcontrol.com

-Mike Callahan, Beaver Solutions for beaver deceivers and flow control devices, Berkshires, Hampden and Hampshire counties Berkshires. 413-527-6472; 413-695-0484.



Recent Real Estate Transactions

The Southern Berkshire Registry of Deeds is in the Great Barrington Town Hall and open from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. weekdays. Documents are online at www.masslandrecords.com.

Following are recent transactions of \$35,000 or more in Great Barrington (including Housatonic), Egremont, Monterey, Alford & West Stockbridge.

-Ian Minushkin & Renee Minushkin to DN21 LLC, 9B Monument Valley Road, Great Barrington, \$501,000.

-Majestic Oak Estates LLC to Jeffrey C. Ramsey & Mary Olivia Ramsey, property on VanDeusenville Road, Great Barrington, \$235,000.

-David E. Lanoue Inc. to Chauncey Edward Hazen & Elizabeth B. Hazen, 33 Pixley Hill Road, West Stockbridge, \$1.22 million.

-Powerhouse Square LLC to Frank T. Rudnicki & Rosemary S. Rudnicki, unit 204, 34 Bridge St., Great Barrington, \$370,000.

-Donald R. Torrico & Jane E. Whittaker to Raymond Sabatelli, 186 Egremont Plain Road, Egremont, \$585,000.

-Joshua I. Krancer & estate of Helen L. Krancer to Melanie Marie Berliet, 29 Blunt Road, Egremont, \$585,000.

-Allegrone Homes Inc. to Marie E. Langway, trustee, Langway Revocable Trust 2016, 84 Christian Hill Road, Great Barrington, \$125,000.

-Peter E. Drucker to Canyon View LLC, 38 Blue Hill Road, Great Barrington, \$75,000.

-Peter E. Drucker to Gerald A. Sherman

& Olga E. Khorkova Sherman, 42 Blue Hill Road, Great Barrington, \$75,000.

-Peter E. Drucker to Howard W. Jacobs & Jane B. Jacobs, 40 Blue Hill Road, Great Barrington, \$75,000.

-Wendy T. Linscott & estate of Laurily K. Epstein to Leon J. Weil Jr., unit 3, 6 Copper Beech Lane, Great Barrington, \$660,000.

-Marc Puntus & Amy Puntus to Daniel Eric Wachsman & Jacqueline Wachsman, 9 Mount Hunger Estates Road, Monterey, \$1.5 million.

-Andrew Donnelly, Margaret Montgomery Morse, John H. Barrett, Susan N. Thompson, Gregory L. Fiske, Patricia Terrier-Fiske, Robert L. Watkins Jr., Barbara L. Watkins, Butternut Lane LLC, Jan Conn, Carl Schlichting, Edward Brown, estate of Rochelle Brown & Olga Schwede to Cynthia M. Dartley & David M. Ashe, lot 11, Lake Buel Road, Great Barrington, \$88,000.

-Linda A. Kelly to Bruce Cowles Malloy & Jocelyn Fay Gordon, 91 Hillsdale Road, Egremont, \$815,000.

-John M. Trierweiler, trustee, Maw Realty Trust, Matthew Rote, Mitchell Rote, Morgan Rote, Jessica Trierweiler Kinney & M.A. Rote to Blackwater Realty Trust & Linda Shafiroff, trustee, 16 Lake Ave., Great Barrington, \$500,000.

-Mex Realty Trustee, John M. Trierweiler, trustee, Maw Realty Trust, Matthew Rote, Mitchell Rote, Morgan Rote, Jessica Trierweiler Kinney, & M.A. Rote to Blackwater Realty Trust & Linda Shafiroff, trustee, lot 2, Lake Avenue, Great Barrington, \$100,000.

-Roland Anthony Dudney, estate of

Roland Llewellyn Dudney, estate of Regina Katherine Dudney & estate of Regina Katherine Mellor to Robert Eckhardt & Leeta Eckhardt, 31 Stockbridge Road, West Stockbridge, \$480,000.

-Paula M. Lewis & Daniel R. Lewis Sr. to Lindsey Siegal, 233 Main Road, Monterey, \$513,500.

-Duong Nguyen & estate of Thanh Nguyen to Craig A. & Tracy O. Crawford, 14 Berkshire Circle, Great Barrington, \$348,000.

-Linda A. Johnston & Michael Angelini to Champika Fernando & Robin E. Bankert, 16 Great Barrington Road, West Stockbridge, \$350,000.

-Andrew W. Soborski & Cecylia B. Soborski, trustees, Kurys Nominee Trust, to Sheldon Hanau & Lynn Hanau, 0 Dowd Road & Charcoal Lane, Monterey, \$345,000.

-Youdelman Lake Buel Road Nominee Realty Trust, Karen L. Youdelman & Robert A. Youdelman, trustees, to Louise N. Lieblich, 18 Berkshire Circle & Lake Buel Road, Great Barrington, \$87,500.

-David F. Troiano to Gregory P. Paolini & Marianna M. Paolini, 1074 Main St., Great Barrington, \$342,000.

-Donna Mooney to 24 Cottage LLC, 24 Cottage St., Great Barrington, \$354,000.

-Thomas A. Race, trustee, Terra Ferma Nominee Realty Trust, to Cynthia Race, lot 3, Terra Ferma Drive, Egremont, \$72,250.

-Mary Pat Akers to Carolyn Cryer & Lee Steven, 0 Christian Hill Road, Great Barrington \$119,000.

(REAL ESTATE cont. on next page)

Building Permits for April

Building Commissioner Ed May issues permits and inspects projects. He is also Great Barrington's zoning enforcement officer.

Assistant building inspector is Matthew Kollmer.

Their office in the Town Hall is open weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. The telephone number is 528-3206. Mr. May's email is emay@townofgb.org.

Inspectors; What Needs Permit

Other inspectors are gas, Robert Gennari at 274-0267; plumbing, Robert Krupski, 229-8019; electrical, Theodore Piontek, 274-6605.

Permits are needed for siding, roofs, signs, foundations, fences, and temporary structures; to demolish structures; and to install chimney linings, alarm systems, new windows, wood stoves, insulation, sprinkler systems, photovoltaics;

Also, tents, pools, hot tubs, spas, alarms, sprinklers, sheds, solar installations, and home occupations.

Building Permits in April

One-hundred and twenty building permits were issued in April with fees paid of \$20,505 and estimated construction costs of 2,585,891.

Following are permits during April with estimated building costs of \$35,000 or more and the contractor if not the homeowner:

-Bettina Schwartz & Mark Firth, renovate interior of 16 Avery Lane, \$50,000.

-Jane Glaubinger, install fiberglass pool at 22 Lake Ave., Clarence Kaye contractor, \$59,500.

-AK Berkshire Properties LLC, replace roof on main two-story building at 116 West Ave., Joseph F. Reed, \$50,000.

-Swann Real Estate Trust, build 2.8 megawatt solar ground array at 671 Stockbridge Road, Ronald Bennett, \$900,000.

-John & Deborah Helmke, alterations at 125 Christian Hill Road, Mark Holmes, \$44,900.

-David Margulies, new home at 14 Thrushwood Lane, Michael Levesque,

\$212,948.

-Eric Brett Aber, trustee, add two-car garage at 19 Kalliste Hill, Greg Weltenkamp, \$306,000.

-Ruby Chang & Jan Wojcik, new home at 253 Long Pond Road, Arthur Jackson, \$794,100.

-Ruthanne & Frank Mirchin, two-story addition & new rear-entry porch at 73 Castle Hill Ave., Daniel Supranowicz, \$349,600.

-Patricia Papernow, install 32 solar panels on roof of 318 Park St. North, SunBug Solar, \$35,000.

-342 Main Street LLC, rebuild front porch & reroof 342 Main St., \$300,000.

-Lenox Landings Barrington Brook Holdings LC, new home on Thrushwood Lane, Michael P. Levesque, \$212,948.

-Berkshire Mental Health Community, new roof at 60 Cottage St., Jason Smegal, \$35,000.



Recent Obituaries

Roger E. Abbott

Roger E. Abbott, 66, of Ashley Falls died April 21 at home.

He graduated in 1972 from Mount. Everett Regional High School, where he played baseball.

He was a truck driver for Williams Paving in West Stockbridge for more than 30 years, retiring in November 2020.

Mr. Abbott leaves his wife of 16 years, Suzanne Mortensen Abbott; three sons, E.J. Abbott III of Lee, Michael Abbott of Ohio and J.L. Mortensen of Pittsfield; a daughter, Katherine Mortensen of Pittsfield; a sister, Terri Dumont of Ashley Falls; and two grandchildren.

Birches-Roy Funeral Home handled arrangements.

Memorial donations are suggested to Berkshire Humane Society through the funeral home.

Osborne E. Dugan

Osborne "Ozzie" Dugan, 93, of Monterey died May 5.

He enlisted in the Navy during his senior year of high school in 1944. Most of his time was spent as a PT boar gunner. He was discharged as a seaman second class in 1947.

He received his diploma from Attleboro High School in 1945 and graduated from New England School of Banking.

He and his wife had lived in Monterey for more than 50 years.

Mr. Osborne was on the Monterey Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals and the Southern Berkshire Regional School Committee.

He was a high school football referee for 35 years. He was inducted into the National Football Foundation Hall of Fame, Western Mass. Chapter, in 1997.

His wife of 61 years, the former Etta Carpenter, died last November. He was also predeceased by his brother and sister.

Mr. Dugan leaves his son, Robert, of Miami; his daughter, Lynn Barry of Great Barrington; and three grandchildren.

Finnerty & Stevens Funeral Home handled arrangements.

Memorial donations are suggested to the Jimmy Fund through the funeral home.

Liselotte 'Lee' Jansen

Liselotte "Lee" Jansen, 99, of Great Barrington died Feb. 27, six weeks before her 100th birthday.

Born in Bonn, Germany, she and her husband, Leo, were both half Jewish and survived the Holocaust. Mrs. Jansen was hidden by friends and acquaintances but lost her father, brother, aunt and grandmother.

She and her husband emigrated to the United States in 1956 with their daughter, Claudia, and settled in West Hartford, Conn.

They moved to Great Barrington in 2005.

Mr. Jansen died in 2015. They had been married for 69 years.

Mrs. Jansen leaves her daughters, Claudia Ziobro of Sheffield and Patricia Kowalski of Lake Worth, Fla.; four grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren.

Finnerty & Stevens Funeral Home handled arrangements, which will include a celebration of Mrs. Jansen's life in September.

Memorial donations are suggested to Berkshire Humane Society through the funeral home.

Susan L. Simonelli

Susan L. Simonelli, 73, of Risingdale died April 30 at Fairview Commons.

The former Susan L. Keefner, she attended the former Searles High School and graduated from Monument Mountain Regional High School.

She worked for the former David Hat Shop, Sheffield Plastics and Great Barrington Price Chopper. For 26 years, she was a cook in the Berkshire Hills Regional School District, first at Stockbridge Plain School and then at Muddy Brook Regional Elementary School.

She was a 30-year survivor of breast cancer.

Mrs. Simonelli leaves her husband of 49 years, Paul Simonelli; two daughters, Terra Burns of Atlanta, Ga., and Lisa Simonelli of Lee; a brother, Mark Keefner of Pittsfield; two sisters, Melody Hess of Valatia, N.Y., and Linda Steinberg of Pittsfield; three grandchildren; and eight great-grandchildren.

Birches-Roy Funeral Home handled arrangements.

Memorial donations are suggested to St. Jude's Research Hospital through the funeral home.

Frances Toolin

Frances Toolin, 90, of Great Barrington, died May 15.

The former Frances Skorput, she graduated in 1948 from the former Williams High School in Stockbridge.

After graduating, she worked at the former Rising Paper Co. in Housatonic. She and her husband, Robert Toolin, resided on North Plain Road, Housatonic, until he died in 1988. They had been married for 36 years.

After Mr. Toolin died, Mrs. Toolin resided with her sister, Dorothy Hotchkiss, in Great Barrington.

She worked at the former Jenifer House in Great Barrington. After she retired, she and her sister ran the gift shop at Fairview Hospital.

Besides her sister, Mrs. Toolin leaves her daughter, Noreen Solimine, and a granddaughter and great-granddaughter in Maine.

Birches-Roy Funeral Home handled arrangements.

Memorial donations are suggested to Berkshire Humane Society, 214 Barker Road, Pittsfield.

Real Estate

From last page

-Donald W. Waite & Donna J. Leep, trustees, Donald W. Waite Revocable Trust & Donna J. Leep Revocable Trust, to Cloud Kingdom 2020 LLC, 303 East Road, Alford, \$759,000.

-Ronald Goldfinger & Christine Goldfinger to Matthew C. Vella & Carey E. Dalton, 99 Beartown Mountain Road, Monterey, \$670,000.

-Kathleen Triem, Susan Steinberg & Peter Franck to Susan S. Walker & Bart A. Walker, 23 Castle Lane, Great Barrington, \$1.248 million.

-Housatonic Holdings II LLC to Suresh-kumar S. Patel & Priyankaber Patel, 18 Meadow St., Great Barrington, \$150,000.

-Housatonic Holdings II LLC to Hemi Realty LLC, 10 Depot St., Great Barrington, \$635,000.

-Rose L. Tannenbaum to Michael Singer & Margaret F. Singer, 10 South St., Great Barrington, \$325,000.

-Delmore Kinney & Georgette Ashe-Kinney to Sanney H. Makki & Anna A. Makki, 0 Blunt Road, Egremont, \$70,000.

-Daniel M. Klein to Radovan Kovacevic & Olga Bakic, 208 Division St., Great Barrington, \$510,000.

-John Krummel & Rachel Shapiro to Alexander Musayev & Rana Joy Boland, 109 Seekonk Cross Road, Great Barrington, \$678,000.

-Carolann Strickling & Carolann Blanco to Derek J. Neaz-Nibur & Heather J. Neaz-Nibur, 21 Pope St., Great Barrington, \$331,900.

-Powerhouse Square LLC to Amy Harren, unit 201, 34 Bridge St., Great Barrington, \$500,000.

-Isobel H. Noble to Charles Frey & April Littell, 48 Boice Road, Egremont, \$579,000.

-Michele C. Lelandois to Claudia L. Lashie, 0 Pumpkin Hollow Road & Egremont Plain Road, Great Barrington, \$187,500.

-Lisa McGrath & Marla Maritzer to Michael Kantrowitz & Daniel DelRocilli, 42 West Alford Road, West Stockbridge, \$2.775 million.

-Penelope T. Greene to Amichaim Abramson & Yona Shem-Tov, 4 Robin Road, West Stockbridge, \$648,000.

Stockbridge

The Middle Berkshire Registry of Deeds at 44 Bank Row, Pittsfield, is open from 8:30 a.m. to 3:59 p.m. weekdays.

-Quittin Time Revocable Trust, Gary I. Gray & Carol H. Lewbell-Gray, trustees, to Erik K. Gray, 58 Lake Drive, Stockbridge, \$425,000.

-George Richards to Sharon Loraine Weiss, unit 8, 41 Main St., Stockbridge, \$100,000.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DATE: May 14, 2021

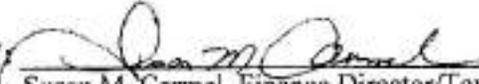
TITLE: MGL Chapter 59, Section 5, Clause 41A Senior Property Tax Deferral

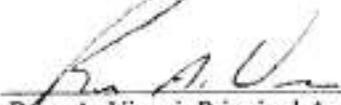
BACKGROUND: Massachusetts General Law allows Cities and Towns the ability to provide qualified taxpayers with certain property tax exemptions. An exemption discharges the taxpayer from the legal obligation to pay all or a part of the tax assessed for that given fiscal year. Exemptions are found in various clauses of Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 59, Section 5 (M.G.L. c. 59, § 5). Under Clause 41A, a municipality can elect to give qualifying seniors the option to delay payment of their property taxes. This property tax deferral does not discharge the tax obligation like an exemption does. Instead, it defers payment until the qualifying senior sells the property or passes away. A deferral gives the seniors the ability to use resources that would go to pay taxes to defray living expenses instead. Taxpayers who qualify for personal exemptions under other clauses in M.G.L. c. 59, § 5 (for example, for seniors, disabled veterans, blind persons or surviving spouses) may also defer all or part of the balance of their reduced taxes under this clause. In order to implement this clause, the Town would set in place the following qualifying items (age, income eligibility, and annual interest rate). Any qualifying senior must enter into a written tax deferral and recovery agreement with the Assessors' Office. At that time, a lien will be placed with on the property with the Registry of Deeds. This secures payment of the deferred taxes. Joint owners, "remainder men" and mortgagees must give prior written approval.

FISCAL IMPACT: If the Town were to implement this program, this would force a redistribution of the tax burden onto the non-qualifying taxpayers, resulting in a larger increase of property taxes for a majority of the community. All non-resident homeowners, regardless of assessment, will also see a tax increase. The potential for revenue loss in the impacted fiscal year is likely.

RECOMMENDATION: Exemptions are intended to service a majority of people as opposed to a small group or individual. This particular Clause 41A does not relieve the taxpayer of the financial tax burden like an exemption, in fact it will increase it due to the deferred interest payment that will be added to the tax obligation down the road and only defers it to some point in the future (i.e. senior sells property or passes away). It is the recommendation of staff that the Selectboard and Finance Committee take no action at this time and that we continue to do more research, have more discussions and carefully consider all of the factors with a goal of re-visiting this in the fall.

PREPARED AND REVIEWED BY:


Susan M. Carmel, Finance Director/Town Accountant


Ross A. Vivori, Principal Assessor

APPROVED:


Mark A. Bruhenski, Town Manager

Date:

5/14/21

**Board Committee Vacancies
as of 5/7/2021**

Board Name	Max Member Count	Current Member Count	Vacant Positions
Affordable Housing Trust Fund	7	5	2
BHRSD School Committee	5	5	0
Board of Assessors	3	3	0
Board of Health	3	3	0
Board of Library Trustees	6	6	0
Board of Registrars	4	4	0
Cable Advisory Committee	3	3	0
Cemetery Commission	4	4	0
Commission on Disability	5	5	0
Community Impact Funding Committee	5	5	0
Community Preservation Committee	9	9	0
Conservation Commission	7	6	1
Council on Aging	9	9	0
Cultural Council	22	9	13
Design Advisory Committee	7	7	1
Fence Viewer	2	2	0
Finance Committee	5	5	0
Historic District Commission	7	7	0
Historical Commission	7	7	0
Housatonic Improvement Committee	7	5	2
Housing Authority	4	4	0
Lake Mansfield Improvement Task Force	6	6	0
Open Space & Recreation Plan Task Force (OSRP)	7	7	0
Parks and Recreation Commission	9	9	0
Planning Board	6	6	0
Planning Board Associate Members	2	1	1
Regional District Planning Committee	3	3	0
Regional Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC)	6	9	0
Selectboard	5	5	0
Selectboard & Planning Board Housing Subcommittee	4	4	0
Strategic Sustainability & Livability Committee	7	6	1
Tree Committee	7	7	0
Veterans Grave Officer	1	1	0
W.E.D Du Bois Legacy Committee	12	11	1
Zoning Board of Appeals	5	5	0
Zoning Board of Appeals Associate Member	2	0	2

THE NEWSletter prepared the following compilation showing how selectmen and some department heads rated town manager Mark Pruhenski. Individual evaluations are public documents, available from the office of the selectmen/town manager or on the town website at https://www.townofgb.org/sites/g/files/vyhlf636/f/agendas/sb_may_10_2021_agenda_packet.pdf.

Selectboard's Evaluations of Town Manager

- 5 = Excellent (almost always exceeds the performance standard)
- 4=Above average (generally exceeds the performance standard)
- 3=Average (generally meets the performance standard)
- 2-Below average (usually does not meet the performance standard)
- 1=Poor (rarely meets the performance standard)

Any item left blank will be interpreted as a score of "3=Average."

Performance Category Scoring

1. Individual Characteristics

- Diligent and through in the discharge of duties, "self-starter"
- Exercises good judgment
- Displays enthusiasm, cooperation and will to adapt
- Mental and physical stamina appropriate for the position
- Exhibits composure, appearance and attitude appropriate for executive position

Steve Bannon	4.96	Kate Burke	4.80
Ed Abrahams	5	Leigh Davis	5
Bill Cooke	5		

2. Professional Skills and Status

- Maintains knowledge of current developments affecting the practice of local government management.
- Demonstrates a capacity for innovation and creativity
- Anticipates and analyzes problems to develop effective approaches for solving them
- Willing to try new ideas proposed by Selectboard members and/or staff
- Sets a professional example by handling affairs of the public office in a fair and impartial manner

Steve Bannon	4.84	Kate Burke	5
Ed Abrahams	5	Leigh Davis	5
Bill Cooke	4.20		

3. Relations With Elected Members of the Selectboard

- Carries out directives of the body as a whole as opposed to those of any one member or minority group
- Sets meeting agendas that reflect the guidance of the Selectboard and avoids unnecessary involvement in administrative actions
- Disseminates complete and accurate information equally to all members in a timely manner
- Assists by facilitating decision making without usurping authority
- Responds well to requests, advice and constructive criticism

Steve Bannon	4.92	Kate Burke	5
Ed Abrahams	5	Leigh Davis	5
Bill Cooke	4.60		

4. Policy Execution

- Implements Selectboard actions in accordance with the intent of council
- Supports the actions of the Selectboard after a decision has been reached, both inside and outside the organization
- Understands, supports and enforces local government's laws, policies and ordinances
- Reviews ordinance and policy procedures periodically to suggest improvements to their effectiveness
- Offers workable alternatives to the Selectboard for changes in law or policy when an existing policy or ordinance is no longer practical

Steve Bannon	4.76	Kate Burke	4.80
Ed Abrahams	5	Leigh Davis	5
Bill Cooke	4		

5. Reporting

- Provides regular information and reports to the Selectboard concerning matters of importance to the local government, using the Town charter as guide
- Responds in a timely manner to requests from the Selectboard for special reports
- Takes the initiative to provide information, advice and recommendations to the Selectboard on matters that are nonroutine and not administrative in nature
- Reports produced by the manager are accurate, comprehensive, concise and written to their intended audience
- Produces and handles reports in a way to convey the message that affairs of the organization are open to public scrutiny.

Steve Bannon	4.8	Kate Burke	5
Ed Abrahams	5	Leigh Davis	5
Bill Cooke	4		

6. Citizen Relations

- Responsive to requests from citizens
- Demonstrates a dedication to service to the community and its citizens
- Maintains a nonpartisan approach in dealing with the news media
- Meets with and listens to members of the community to discuss their concerns and strives to understand their interests.
- Gives an appropriate effort to maintain citizen satisfaction with Town services.

Steve Bannon	4.53	Kate Burke	4.60
Ed Abrahams	4.40	Leigh Davis	5
Bill Cooke	4.		

7. Staffing

- Recruits and retains competent personnel for staff positions
- Applies an appropriate level of supervision to improve any areas of substandard performance
- Stays accurately informed and appropriately concerned about employee relations
- Professionally manages the compensation and benefits plan
- Promotes training and development opportunities for employees at all levels of the organization

[Aiming to prevent tragedy, local officials renew](#)

• 8 hrs ago

Steve Bannon	4.64	Kate	
Burke	5		
Ed Abrahams	4.40	Leigh Davis	5
Bill Cooke	3.80		

Department Heads who evaluated Mr. Pruhenski gave this a combined 4.8.

8. Supervision

- Encourages heads of departments to make decisions within their jurisdictions with minimal Town manager involvement, yet maintains general control of operations by providing the right amount of communication to the staff.
- Instills confidence and promotes initiative in subordinates through supportive rather than restrictive controls for their programs while still monitoring operations at the department level
- Develops and maintains a friendly and informal relationship with the staff and work force in general, yet maintains the professional dignity of the Town manager’s office.
- Sustains or improves staff performance by evaluating the performance of staff members at least annually, setting goals and objectives for them, periodically assessing their progress and providing appropriate feedback.
- Encourages teamwork, innovation and effective problem-solving among the staff members

Steve Bannon	4.8	Kate Burke	5
Ed Abrahams	5	Leigh Davis	5
Bill Cooke	4		

9. Fiscal Management

- Prepares a balanced budget to provide services at a level directed by council.
- Makes the best possible use of available funds, conscious of the need to operate the local government efficiently and effectively.
- Prepares a budget and budgetary recommendations in an intelligent and accessible format
- Ensures actions and decisions reflect an appropriate level of responsibility for financial planning and accountability
- Appropriately monitors and manages fiscal activities of the organization

Steve Bannon	4.8	Kate Burke	4.80
Ed Abrahams	5	Leigh Davis	5
Bill Cooke	4.20		

10. Community

- Shares responsibility for addressing the difficult issues facing the Town
- Avoids unnecessary controversy
- Cooperates with neighboring communities and the county
- Helps the council address future needs and develop adequate plans to address long term trends.
- Cooperates with other regional, state and federal government agencies

Steve Bannon	4.92	Kate Burke	5
Ed Abrahams	5	Leigh Davis	5
William Cooke	4.60		

Narrative Evaluation

What would you identify as the manager's strength(s), expressed in terms of the principle results achieved during the rating period?

Mr. Bannon: Mark works long hours and devotes himself to the Town. When working on a project or task he and his staff finish in a reasonable amount of time. His executives summaries are unbiased and the conclusions are clear. This year has been especially challenging especially in light of the pandemic. Mark is rarely flustered and always able to focus on the task at hand no matter how many are thrown at him.

Mr. Abrahams: Mark's ability to absorb an enormous number of assignments, prioritize and process them without dropping the ball is amazing.

Mr. Cooke: Mark is a very level headed manager. I've never known him to get upset or defensive during discussions. He always maintains a professional demeanor and looks for solutions whenever problems arise. I would be comfortable to have Mark be in charge during any crisis situation. His organizational skills are top notch. Creating the Annual Operations Calendar was brilliant. It should have been done years ago.

Ms. Burke: Mark has been incredibly effective in guiding his staff and the town through the pandemic. He has made so many pivots in the last year and made them look effortless. I have never met a person more equipped emotionally and professionally. His ability to handle all of what the town and this year has thrown at him has exceeded anyone's wildest dreams.

Ms. Davis: Organization. Communication skills. Willingness to listen and implement new initiatives. Affable.

What performance area(s) would you identify as most critical for improvement?

Mr. Bannon: The one area that has been troublesome is staffing especially department heads. I am not sure you can blame the Town Manager for the turnover in a few key areas but he is the Town Manager and therefore they come under his watch.

Mr. Abrahams: The only item less than a 5 was this one, which I assigned a 3: Responsive to requests from citizens. I have heard from several (but not many) people that Mark hasn't returned emails. The two times I brought it to his attention he said he had returned the emails and hadn't heard back, so this may not be an issue at all.

The supervision category I gave all 5s so as not to lower the overall score due to my lack of first hand knowledge on the subject. It is an annual complaint of mine that this evaluation process doesn't include any formal feedback from staff. I have not heard complains about Mark from staff, but I'm not sure I would.

Mr. Cooke: Some departments may require more oversight than he anticipated. He does give department heads an appropriate amount of authority and independence, but in some cases a bit more supervision is required. Trust, but verify.

Ms. Burke: There is some historic knowledge of relationships in town with either businesses, politics or property owners that Mark lacks knowledge in. This is by no means his fault, but I think more research into certain topics when they arise would help Mark come up with better plans on how to approach different subjects that may be sticky without that information.

Ms. Davis: I can't think of anything. Last year I raised concerns about an imbalance in communication to Selectboard members. Mark has ad-

dressed those concerns. I had also raised a point about hoping to see him take more initiative, which he has also done this year.

What constructive suggestions or assistance can you offer the manager to enhance performance?

Mr. Bannon: Keep up the good work.

Mr. Cooke: Don't be afraid to ask for help when difficult personnel issues arise —either from Selectboard members or human resource professionals. Work with surrounding towns to possibly share a part-time HR person.

Ms. Burke: See above. And I hope we can work with Mark to find better ways to engage our other boards in town. They need help managing themselves and relating to the rest of the happening in the town. We also have to figure out a better way to take their suggestions and run with them. There have been a few times that I think despite the work of these volunteer boards the Selectboard with the help of Mark and staff have made different decisions than suggested by the committees. We should engage with those committees during the process to make sure we come to a conclusion together.

What other comments do you have for the manager; e.g., priorities, expectations, goals or objectives for the new rating period?

Mr. Bannon: This year can be called the year of infrastructure. There are numerous road projects, sidewalks, retaining walls, bridges plus Town Hall improvements, the Housatonic School and the Housatonic Community Center all happening in the next few years. These projects need to stay on or under budget and be completed on time. They also will stretch a thin staff yet there are many other important priorities occurring simultaneously. The challenge will be to complete all scheduled infrastructure projects plus keep the Town running smoothly and continuing to improve.

Mr. Cooke: Town-wide broadband would be great. Solving the water crisis in Housatonic, even better.

Ms. Burke: I would like to see Mark and staff prioritizing infrastructure projects that we can have dig ready when money becomes available from federal and state grants as we look to see how stimulus is distributed. That could mean moving forward quickly on purchasing Housatonic Water Co, bridge and sewer plans and such that are already underway, but perhaps need to be pushed to the front of the line. We should also prioritize looking into county dispatch for our police, fire and EMT. I expect Mark to continue to do an excellent job as I know he is very capable of that.

Ms. Davis: Thanks for a great year. Keep up the good work!

Here are some comments from department heads. Again, more information is at https://www.townofgb.org/sites/g/files/vyhlif636/f/agendas/sb_may_10_2021_agenda_packet.pdf

Assistant town manager/planning director Chris Rembold: I have found Mark's management style to be a very effective combination of supervising and giving director to department heads, combined with trusting in his department heads to carry out day-to-day as well as larger strategic priorities without needing to look over our shoulders. I feel that his door is always open, should we need to speak with him, and he prioritizes staff needs appropriately. But otherwise he trusts us to do our jobs and is confident we will do them well. He uses Dept. Head meetings, in person meetings, and emails to connect Dept. Heads regularly to each other, and to ensure we know what his priorities are.

I think he has a difficult job at this but does it really well. Difficulties are presented by limited budgets and by bad press and/or public statements against the Town. That's unfortunate because this really is a very good team to work for/with, and Mark does well to recruit people into it.

Department of Public Works superintendent Sean VanDeusen: Mark is one of the best Town Managers I have ever worked with. He does not micro manage but is always available to assist with any issue 24/7. Mark is a strong yet modest leader and he has the Town headed in a very positive direction.

Fire Chief Charles Burger: Mark does a fantastic job on these last five points [under Supervision]. He trusts me to do my job, does not micromanage, but provides support whenever I need it.