

THE NEWSletter

The Newsy Little Paper That Supplements Other kK,

Eileen W. Mooney, editor/publisher

Bulky Waste Collection Is Saturday, April 29

Bulky Waste Collection Day is **Saturday, April 29**, from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the recycling center on Stockbridge Road, across from Monument Mountain Regional High School.

No payment is needed for Great Barrington and Housatonic residents to leave furniture, including couches; rugs and carpets; window and door frames, screens and such.

Not accepted are yard waste, mattresses and box springs, trash, household appliances such as toasters and vacuum cleaners, and tires.

Business items also are not accepted.

More information is available from the town Department of Public Works office at 528-0867 ext. 1.



If your face is green or blue or red, please see page 2 about the status of your subscription. People who get THE NEWSletter by email are notified individually.

In This Issue

— Articles on Warrant for Annual Town Meeting, May 1, 6 p.m., Monument Mountain Regional High School

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— Profiles of and Statements by Candidates on Ballot for May 9 Annual Town Elections

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— Update on 8-Town Regional School District Planning Board and Some Answers to Residents' Questions

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— Reports on Recent Meetings of Selectboard Parks Commissioners (Soccer Is Coming to Olympian Meadows), Board of Library Trustees, and More

CTSB To Show Candidates' Forum

The forum for candidates is **Tuesday, April 25**, at the Claire Teague Senior Center, starting at 6:30 p.m. CTSB will record it for showing on its website, ctsbtv.org, and on Spectrum.

Ken Knox of West Stockbridge will be moderator. He is an associate dean of studies and assistant professor of mathematics at Bard College at Simon's Rock.

THE NEWSletter and the Great Barrington Democratic and Republican town committees are sponsoring the forum.

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Sign Up, Get Releases, More

SUBSCRIBERS CAN SIGN UP to receive information listed below, including minutes of board meetings and obituaries when THE NEWSletter receives them.

This is part of your NEWSletter subscription. There's no added cost.

-Berkshire, BEAT, Berkshire Community Land Trust, Chamber of Commerce, CHP;
-Clinton Church Restoration/W.E.B. Du Bois Center for Freedom and Democracy, Cultural District, District Attorney;

-Dewey Hall, Great Barrington Historical Society, Mahaiwe Theater, Mel King Institute;

-RSYP, Claire Teague Senior Center, Train Campaign, Volunteers in Medicine.

Feel free to suggest more.

Meetings and More in May

MORE BOARDS ARE MEETING in person, often with a Zoom component.

Meeting agendas tell how to attend. THE NEWSletter sends agendas to its email list.

Records of some meetings are on Community Television for the Southern Berkshires at ctsbtv.org, and the Selectboard's website page, townofgb.org. You can watch on your computer or on Spectrum cable channels 1301 (public), 1302 (education) and 1303 (government).

Meetings are also saved on YouTube.

Other websites are Berkshire Hills Regional School District at bhrrsd.org. The town, its police and fire departments and BHRSD have Facebook pages.



MAY

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

-Deadline to apply to vote-by-mail/absentee ballot for town election is May 3, 4 p.m.

-8-Town Regional School District Planning Board meets May 3, 5:30 p.m.

-Second night of annual town meeting, if needed, May 4, 6 p.m., Monument Mountain Regional High School.

-Berkshire Hills Regional School Committee meets May 4 & 18, 6 p.m.

-Board of Health meets May 4, 6:30 p.m.

-TOWN ELECTIONS, State Road Fire Station and Housatonic Community Center, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

-Selectboard meets May 10 & 22, 6 p.m.

-Board of Library Trustees meets May 11, 5:30 p.m.

-Planning Board meets May 11 & 25, 6 p.m.

-Parks Commission meets May 15, 5:15 p.m.

-Finance Committee meets May 16, 6:30 p.m.

-Affordable Housing Trust Fund board meets May 16, 6:30 p.m.

-Conservation Commission meets May 24, 6:30 p.m.

MEMORIAL DAY is May 29. Town buildings are closed.



Libraries, Senior Center, Recycling Information

MASON LIBRARY on Main Street, Great Barrington, is open Mondays through Fridays, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Saturdays 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Its telephone number is 528-2403.

Ramsdell Library on Main Street, Housatonic, is open Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 1 to 6 p.m. Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and Sundays, 1 to 4 p.m.

Ramsdell also has a loaning Library of Things, including visual reality goggles, a sewing machine and a staple gun.

Its phone number is 274-3738.

The libraries' website at gblibraries.org lists programs for all ages and has registration links.

Books, CDs and DVDs can be ordered by calling Mason or emailing mason-ramsdell@gmail.com or bark.cwmars.org.

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

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

THE CLAIRE TEAGUE SENIOR CENTER at 917 South Main St. offers activities, lunches and help with technology, driver license renewals and more.

It provides transportation for elderly and disabled people who call it at 528-1881 at least 48 hours in advance.

Activities and resources are on its website, greatbarringtonseniors.org.

Staff is available Mondays through Fridays to answer calls, offer SHINE counseling and, with a suggested donation, ready-to-go meals.

Big Y donations are available Mondays and Wednesdays.

THE NEWSletter sends "Grapevine," the center's monthly newsletter, to subscribers who have requested it.

THE RECYCLING CENTER on Stockbridge Road, across from Monument Mountain Regional High School, 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.

How to Subscribe to THE NEWSletter

READERS: If you're a senior or have a family and your budget is increasingly tight, send what you can to subscribe.

THE NEWSletter can make this offer only because some subscribers generously send extra when they renew. Thanks to them, THE NEWSletter can hold off on a rate increase, even as all its costs increase.

How To Know When to Renew

IF YOUR FACE on the printed issue is green, your subscription ends with the next issue or the one after that.

If your face is blue, it's time to renew.

Red face? Your paid or free trial subscription ended and you're about to come off the mailing list.

How To Subscribe

Twelve issues (one year) are \$35 for the print version within the 012 zip code or \$30 for the emailed one anywhere.

Cost to get the printed TN by bulk mail outside the 012 zip code is \$38. Cost for first class for a year (12 issues) is \$50.

Available in Large Type

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

Where To Mail Your Check

Checks go to THE NEWSletter at Post Office 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.

You can forward all emails to as many people as you want. Having THE NEWSletter send those emails between issues is \$5 a year for each added name.

Questions? Please email me at thenewsletter@gmail.com.

And a suggestion: THE NEWSletter makes a great gift for new neighbors.

-Eileen W. Mooney

Full details on hours and fares on the website:
www.tritown.org

OFFICIAL BALLOT
ANNUAL TOWN ELECTION
GREAT BARRINGTON, MASSACHUSETTS
PRECINCTS A, B, C & D
TUESDAY, MAY 9, 2023

Walter J. Malone
TOWN CLERK

INSTRUCTIONS TO VOTERS

A. **TO VOTE**, completely fill in the OVAL to the RIGHT of your choice(s) like this ●

B. Follow directions as to the number of candidates to be marked for each office.

C. To vote for a person whose name is not printed on the ballot, write the candidate's name and address on the line provided and completely fill in the OVAL.

<p style="text-align: center;">MODERATOR</p> <p>One Year <input type="radio"/> MICHAEL OWEN WISE <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/></p> <p style="font-size: small;">Wise 173 South Street Candidates for Re-Election</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(Write-In)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">FINANCE COMMITTEE</p> <p>One Year <input type="radio"/> RICHARD PETER GEILER <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/></p> <p style="font-size: small;">Geiler 13 Madison Hill Road Candidates for Re-Election</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(Write-In)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">HOUSING AUTHORITY</p> <p>Five Years <input type="radio"/> PHILIP N. ORENSTEIN <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/></p> <p style="font-size: small;">Orenstein 4 Adams Road Candidates for Re-Election</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(Write-In)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">PLANNING BOARD</p> <p>Three Years <input type="radio"/> MALCOLM R. FICK <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/></p> <p style="font-size: small;">Fick 1 Hampshire Avenue Candidates for Re-Election</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(Write-In)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">SELECTBOARD</p> <p>Three Years <input type="radio"/> BENJAMIN PETER ELLIOTT <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/></p> <p style="font-size: small;">Elliott 3 Adams Road Candidates for Re-Election</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(Write-In)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">LIBRARY TRUSTEES</p> <p>Three Years <input type="radio"/> JOHN BREASTED <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/></p> <p style="font-size: small;">Breasted 191 Devonshire Road Candidates for Re-Election</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(Write-In)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">HOUSING AUTHORITY</p> <p>Five Years <input type="radio"/> PETER J. MOST <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/></p> <p style="font-size: small;">Most 31 East Mountain Road Candidates for Re-Election</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(Write-In)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS</p> <p>Five Years <input type="radio"/> MICHAEL OWEN WISE <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/></p> <p style="font-size: small;">Wise 173 South Street Candidates for Re-Election</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(Write-In)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">BOARD OF HEALTH</p> <p>Three Years <input type="radio"/> RUBY CHANG <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/></p> <p style="font-size: small;">Chang 203 Long Lane Road Candidates for Re-Election</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(Write-In)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">FINANCE COMMITTEE</p> <p>Three Years <input type="radio"/> ANNE L'OPWYER <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/></p> <p style="font-size: small;">L'Opwyer 28 10th Street Candidates for Re-Election</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(Write-In)</p>		

BALLOT QUESTION

Shall the Town of Great Barrington be allowed to exempt from the provisions of Proposition Two and One-half, so called, the amounts required to pay for the bond issued in order to pay the cost of Town buildings and grounds improvements capital projects including but not limited to projects for the Courthouse, Cemetery building and museum, Highway building, Transfer Station, Great Barrington and Housatonic Fire Stations, Mason and Ramsdell Libraries, and Police Station, and related architectural, engineering and planning services; and for the payment of all other costs incidental and related thereto?

YES ☐ NO ☐



Annual Town Meeting Is May 1, MMRHS

GREAT BARRINGTON VOTERS will decide the town's future, including its spending, at the 262nd annual town meeting on **Monday, May 1**, in the Monument Mountain Regional High School auditorium.

Town meeting is going back inside for the first time in three years. Covid restrictions meant the meeting has been in the school's parking lot, with people listening in their cars or outdoors.

If a second night is needed, it will be **Thursday, May 4**, also at 6 p.m. and also in the auditorium.

The warrant, or agenda, has 42 articles. It's available on the town website and is posted in the Town Hall and post offices.

When voters register to enter the meeting, they will receive a copy of the warrant, with the operating budget for every town department.

The Selectboard approved warrant articles at its April 10 meeting with one change: Special funding of \$150,000 from free cash to provide "temporary relief to residents serviced by Housatonic Water Works" was deleted. The town is getting \$150,000 in state funds for that purpose and might get more.

The March NEWSletter had information about financial articles. Any reader who did not get that issue can write the-newsletter@gmail.com for an emailed copy.

Tax Rate Might Increase 61 Cents

Briefly, if proposed financial requests are approved, the present real-estate tax rate of \$14.07 per \$1,000 of valuation could go to \$14.68, an increase of 61 cents per \$1,000.

As town moderator Michael Wise will explain when the meeting begins, voters may question, oppose or support any article. They should raise their hand or stand so Mr. Wise recognizes them to speak.

Quick Review of Warrant Articles

Here is a quick review of the articles. The Finance Committee and Selectboard recommend that voters approve all financial articles.

Article 1. Authorize Revolving Fund Limits. This fixes the amounts that may be spent for revolving funds for plumbing, wiring and gas inspections, cemetery costs and Council on Aging transportation.

Article 2. Elected Officials' Salaries. The only paid officials are the selectmen, who get \$4,900 each.

Article 3. FY24 Operating Budget. The recommended budget is on the town website (townofgb.org) and will be in the warrant handout. It totals \$14,577,919.

Article 4. Capital Spending Authorization for General Fund. The list of items is reproduced in this issue. The total request is \$8,159,100.

Article 5. Authorize Funding of Community Programs. Host community agreements with marijuana establishments provide these funds. Of \$4,580,384 already paid, \$500,000 is proposed to be used.

Article 6. FY24 Wastewater Treatment Plant Budget. Sewer users pay but town meeting voters must vote to approve the budget for the sewer department. Total request is \$2,824,711.

Article 7. Capital Authorization for Wastewater Enterprise Fund. Total request is \$614,000.

Article 8. Authorize Re-Purposing of Wastewater Enterprise Fund Borrowing Appropriation. The article explains that of the \$400,000 authorized in 2020 for sewer line replacements at Main and Maple streets, \$300,000 wasn't needed.

Article 9. FY24 Regional School Assessment. This is the town's assessment for operating (\$19,889,874) and capital (\$443,859) assessments for the Berkshire Hills Regional School District. The capital assessment is the final payment for building Muddy Brook and W.E.B. Du Bois schools.

Article 10. FY24 Out of District Vocational Tuition and Transportation. Towns, not the school district, pay for students who want a program the district does not offer.

Article 11. Authorize Use of Free Cash To Reduce the Tax Levy. The proposed budget information states that the free cash account has \$10,318,568. The amount of \$4 million is proposed, which is \$100,000 less than the present fiscal year.

Article 12. Authorization To Pay Prior Fiscal Years' Invoices. The article shows two invoices totaling \$282.55.

Article 13. Authorize Funding to the Stabilization Account. Town manager Pruhenski proposes \$150,000.

First Town Meeting Was July 22, 1761

According to Taylor's The History of Great Barrington 1670-1922, the first town meeting was Wednesday, July 22, 1761, at 4 p.m.

A second town meeting was held Aug. 16.

"The population of the town, numbering about 500, was composed of somewhat incongruous material, representing but little wealth, with no extraordinary amount of intelligence or ability, and already divided on questions of morals and religion.

"Few matters of special importance agitated the earlier town-meetings. The principal business, aside from the annual election of town officers, consisted in appropriations of money for the support of preaching, schools, highways and general town charges: and on these matters the inhabitants were frequently at variance, and sometimes refused to raise money for these or any other purposes."

-Pages 145-146; paragraphing added.

Article 14. Authorize Funding to the Capital Stabilization Account. The recommended amount is \$150,000.

Article 15. Authorize Establishment of Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) Trust Fund. According to information from Mr. Pruhenski, the town has about \$15 million in unfunded liability. This article would establish a fund for such benefits.

Article 16. Authorize Re-Purpose of Pension Reserve Trust Fund. This would put \$820,918.63 into the new OPEB trust fund.

Article 17. Authorize Transfer Funds from Town's Sale of Cemetery Lots Fund. This would transfer \$30,000 for general maintenance of town cemeteries.

(NEWS continues on page 4)

For Clean-Heat Comfort

JOHN B. HULL, INC.

100 Main St. Great Barrington, MA

413-528-2800

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

Town Meeting Warrant Articles, cont.



Article 18. Authorize Funding to Southern Berkshire Ambulance. This would appreciate \$151,294 from free cash. More information was in the last NEWSletter.

Article 19. Authorize Funding to the Unemployment Trust Fund. This would appropriate \$20,000 from free cash.

Article 20. Authorize Funding to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. This would appropriate \$175,000 from free cash for the trust fund board's use.

Article 21. Authorize Funding for Town Website Upgrade. This would appropriate \$30,600 from free cash to upgrade the website and improve online services.

Article 22. Authorize Funding for Legal Fees Associated With Host Community Agreement Renewals. This would appropriate \$15,000 from free cash for legal fees associated with renewing licenses for marijuana establishments.

Article 23. Rescinding of Old Borrowing Authorizations. This would rescind several unneeded authorizations from 2016 and 2020.

Article 24. Authorizing Closing of Town Offices on Saturday, Per Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 41 Section 110A. Town offices are closed on Saturdays. This would let the offices close "as if such Saturday were a legal holiday."

Article 25. Community Preservation Fund Reserves & Appropriations. This article reserves \$55,000 each for the historic and community housing categories plus \$62,000 for debt service for the Memorial Field project and \$15,000 for administrative expenses for the Community Preservation Committee.

Article 26. Community Preservation Projects. The Community Preservation Committee seeks voter approval to give

grants from CPA funds. Amounts in each category are:

Affordable housing. Affordable Housing Trust Fund, \$265,000; Construct, \$150,000, housing feasibility study, Alander Group, \$250,000 for two affordable units at 322 Main St. for 10 years.

Historic resources, town for Brown mausoleum preservation, \$20,000; First Congregational Church, restore Manse exterior, \$225,000; Alander Group for historic preservation of 322 Main St., \$150,000; BAB Capital 77 LLC, phase 1, preserve Cove, \$50,000;

Open Space & Recreation, Conservation Commission for McAllister Wildlife Refuge preservation project, \$20,000; Berkshire Natural Resources Council for Three Mile Hill Trail improvements, \$40,000.

Article 27. Open Space Land Acquisition. This would acquire about 36,000 square feet of land on Bentley Avenue, now owned by Community Development Corporation of South Berkshire, for open space purposes overseen by the Parks Commission.

Article 28. Acquisition of Land and/or Easements on Lake Mansfield Road. Several parcels of land would be acquired; six draft plans are on file with the town clerk.

Article 29. Amend Town Bylaw for Driveways. This change to the Town Code would permit a third driveway into a property rather than the two normally allowed.

The next six articles seek changes to the town's Zoning Bylaws and require a favorable two-thirds vote.

Article 30. Zoning — Definitions. Planning Board members will explain why they seek changes, shown in the warrant.

Article 31. Zoning — Performance Standards. Again, Planning Board members will explain the changes, which are intended to spell out what is required "rather than leaving these criteria to the discretion of a permit granting authority."

One change would authorize the Planning Board "by special permit" to "authorize a deviation from any requirement set forth in this Section 6.4 ..."

Article 32. Zoning — Table of Use Regulations. This article would allow three-unit residential uses by right, meaning no special permit or other board approval would be needed in any zoning district. (This does not affect areas under the jurisdiction of the Conservation Commission.)

Article 33. Zoning — Residential Regulations. This article would remove the site plan review requirement for accessory dwelling units and for two- and three-unit residential uses.

Article 34. Zoning — Route 7 Tree Requirements. Present landscaping requirements on Route 7 now require a new tree for every 25 feet of frontage. The Planning Board wants the ability to waive or modify this requirement "given the particular characteristics of the site."

Article 35. Zoning — B-2 Zone Affordable Housing. The B-2 zone goes from about the Claire Teague Senior Center on South Main Street to Silver Street, from about the roundabout at the police station at Main and Maple streets to Town Hall, from Elm Street to the red bridge, and from Belcher Square to about Community Health Center on Stockbridge Road, according to the description provided by assistant town manager and planning director Chris Rembold on page 1 of the February NEWSletter.

The article, if passed, would enable a multi-unit residential development of more than nine dwelling units and a mixed use development to be built by Oright — no special permit or site plan review — if at least 10% of the units are dedicated for affordable housing. That means the unit is affordable to a household earning not more than 100% of the area median income.

Buildings could also be four stories and 40 feet, rather than the present three stories and 40 feet.

Article 36. Zoning — Amend Zoning Map on Silver Street. This change would enable about six acres on Silver Street to go from R-2 to R-1-A "in order to allow additional housing to be created at this location."

Article 37. Convey Interest in Land Along Old Route 7 Path. If approved, this article would let the town sell 434B Stockbridge Road for \$10,000.

The following articles are petitions placed on the warrant by citizens.

Article 38. Citizen's Petition. Citizens want to adopt a requirement that applications for wireless telecommunications facilities application requirement require more information, described in the article.

Article 39. Citizen's Petition. This seeks to amend the short-term rental bylaw adopted last year by allowing tenants to offer their rental units for such use if the property owner agrees.

Article 40. Citizen's Petition. This article would also amend the short-term rental bylaw by not allowing the town to "monitor the use of homes/dwellings that may be being used as short-term rentals in order to ascertain compliance" with the bylaw.

Article 41. Citizen's Petition. This article would amend the short-term rental bylaw by deleting any limits on the number of properties, rooms and days someone may offer short-term rentals.

Article 42. Citizen's Petition. This final article on the warrant requests the town "to purchase own and operate the Housatonic Water company."



HOUSATONIC
REAL ESTATE

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housatonicrealestate.com
413.274.5065

THE NEWSletter makes a great gift for new neighbors, former neighbors and out-of-town relatives.



Meet The Candidates Who Want Your Vote

TOWN ELECTIONS are **Tuesday, May 9**, with polls open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. at the State Road Fire Station and Housatonic Community Center.

Voters will decide whether Sharon Gregory or Ben Elliott fills the Selectboard seat that Ed Abrahams had for nine years. He is not seeking re-election.

Voters will also decide a contest for two seats on the Board of Library Trustees. John Breasted, Sandra Pantorno and Rob Shaeffer are running for the seats being vacated by Margaret Heilbrun and Chris Tucci. They first ran three years ago and neither seeks another term.

Profiles of All Candidates

Following are profiles of the candidates in the order in which the position appeared on last year's ballot.

All candidates except those for selectman were asked:

In 300 words or less, please answer the following questions:

What about this board do you especially value and what would you like to change?

Moderator

Elect 1, 1-year term

The moderator presides at town meetings and appoints all committees authorized by them, according to the town code.

Michael Owen Wise

Michael Wise, 75, of 173 Castle St. seeks his seventh term as moderator.

He also is running for another term on the Zoning Board of Appeals.

He describes himself as a retired lawyer and bureaucrat.

He graduated in 1968 from Michigan State University and in 1974 from Yale Law School. He also attended the New England Conservatory.

He was on the Finance Committee from 2014 to 2017; Cultural Council from 2010 to 2016; Tree Committee, 2010 to 2018; and Berkshire Hills Regional School District regional agreement amendment committee, 2015 to 2016.

He was cochairman of the Master Plan Committee from 2010 to 2013, vice chairman of the Town Charter Review Committee, 2011 to 2014, and Town Manager Screening Committee in 2013 and 2019.

He has been on the Berkshire County Education Task Force since 2016. He also is chairman of the Democratic Town Committee.



Mr. Wise's answer:

The Town Meeting is the community embodying its responsibility for self-government; as a lifelong politics junkie and government official, just taking part in that gives me a thrill.

I have been thinking about whether to propose bundling the half-dozen repeated routine items on the Town Meeting agenda into a package for quick action, in order to make more time available for discussion of the tougher items – or, if there aren't too many of those, to get us all home earlier.

Selectboard

Elect 1, 3-year term

Selectmen are the only elected town officials who are paid. Each of the five selectmen receives 4,900.

Selectmen may also participate in the town's health insurance plan.

The town charter states that the Selectboard "shall, through the town manager, exercise general supervision over all matters affecting the town's interests or welfare."

Also, the charter states, the Selectboard is responsible for setting goals, developing long-range plans and adopting policy, and creating committees to perform specific duties, with responsibility for them and general oversight over them;

Also, issuing licenses and performing other quasi-judicial functions provided by General Laws and town bylaws appointing specific committees' investigating town affairs and conduct of town departments, and reviewing the annual proposed budget and making recommendations about it.

Questions for Selectboard Candidates

Candidates for selectman were asked to answer in 500 words or less:

What are your goals for your first year and your first term as a selectman? Why did you choose them?

Ben Elliott

Mr. Elliott, 35, resides at 208 Pleasant St., Housatonic.

He attended Monument Mountain Regional High School and graduated in 2005 from Simon's Rock with an associate of arts degree and in 2008 with a bachelor of arts degree from Columbia College Chicago.

A free-lance copywriter, he works with in-house marketing teams, usually in the education, tech and retail sectors.

He has been on the Housatonic Improvement Committee since last December.



Question on Ballot

"Shall the Town of Great Barrington be allowed to exempt from the provisions of Proposition Two and One-half, so called, the amounts required to pay for the bond issued in order to pay the cost of Town buildings and grounds improvements capital projects including but not limited to projects for the Courthouse, Cemetery building and mausoleum, Highway building, Transfer Station, Great Barrington and Housatonic Fire Stations, Mason and Ramsdell Libraries, and Police Station, and related architectural, engineering and planning services; and for the payment of all other costs incidental and related thereto?"

If voters do not agree, those amounts must come from the operating budget.

Mr. Elliott's answer:

My immediate goal as a member of the Selectboard would be to advocate for a public entity that would provide the residents of Housatonic with safe, clean water.

By taking HWW public, we can access government funds that would allow us to make necessary infrastructure repairs without passing the majority of the costs onto the residents of Housatonic or the taxpayers of Great Barrington.

Beyond that, I'm focused on making Great Barrington an affordable and accessible place for people to work and raise their families.

There are three interconnected areas we need to focus on to make this a reality: access to housing, access to child care and access to a diverse job market.

I'd also like to reexamine pedestrian safety in downtown Great Barrington and the Housatonic village center.

To truly protect our community, we need to find a solution that addresses the "blind spot" on Main Street caused by the four lanes of traffic.

I moved back home two years ago to give my daughter the same amazing childhood that I had. But since I've been back, I've discovered how hard it is to raise a family in this town.

When we decided to move back, we looked for rentals within our budget but found that most units here cost more than we had paid in New York and Chicago.

When we looked for childcare solutions, we discovered that there are limited programs in the area, and if you do get a spot, you'll have to pay a rate comparable to a second rent or mortgage payment.

And, living in Housatonic, I now regularly have to give our daughter baths in brown water, all the while hoping that our filtration system is removing the carcinogenic HAA5 from our drinking water.

I'm running for Selectboard because I love this town. And I'm focusing on expanding access to housing, childcare and a diverse economy because, without bold action in these areas, I worry that Great Barrington is not on a path to a sustainable future.

I'm running for Selectboard because I love this town. And I'm focusing on expanding

THE NEWSletter makes a great gift for new neighbors!

(CANDIDATES cont. on next page)



Meet the Candidates Who Want Your Vote

access to housing, childcare and a diverse economy because, without bold action in these areas, I worry that Great Barrington is not on a path to a sustainable future.

Sharon Gregory



Ms. Gregory, 79, resides at 32 Hollenbeck Ave.

She graduated from the University of California Berkeley with a business degree and did graduate studies at New York University and corporate-sponsored studies with IBM and Citibank.

Now retired, she has been in financial, technological and planning management.

She was on the town Finance Committee from 2011 to 2014 and chairman for the last two years. She also was involved with redevelopment of the former Bryant School, a zoning change on Main Street and art shows at Mason Library.

Ms. Gregory's answer:

I am running for Selectboard because I LOVE GREAT BARRINGTON — its warm and generous community, the culture, its architecture and history, its enormous natural assets, and the magical way it comes together where it counts.

My life's passion is in community work and I'd like to continue to do so where it counts most.

We live in a time of enormous change, and we are all aware of the challenges we face as a community in education, housing and, in Housatonic, provision of clean water.

The Selectboard needs to identify, plan for and adapt to change, while being mindful of our financial resources.

I support growth, but not to the detriment of the quality of life in our Best Small Town.

The proposed consolidation of Berkshire Hills and Southern Berkshire Regional School Districts will be voted on this year. I support the merger and improvements in educational options, including a focus on vocational-technical programs, and I am a proponent of an equitable distribution of operating costs in the expanded regional structure.

I attended Berkshire County Education Task Force for seven years and 8-Town Committee meetings in the last three years, providing research and analysis.

Our Housatonic hamlet is an important economic development area. I plan to seek a solution to the ongoing water utilities disaster. About four years ago I began researching and analyzing water issues and I sought to raise public awareness through letters to the editor and other efforts.

In June 2022, Denise Forbes and I garnered 1,100 signatures petitioning the Governor, Massachusetts state agencies, our representatives, the Selectboard, and Board of Health calling for action to provide safe water for our residents.

A large protest at Town Hall followed over the Labor Day weekend.

An informed community has been critical to our efforts. With a dedicated Housatonic action group, we posted continuous updates on social media to inform others of DEP reports, legal information, laboratory findings, media updates and ongoing complaints.

I worked with others to request the Finance Committee discuss the problems and potential solutions in December 2022.

Housatonic Center is important to our continued community development. I will help pursue a major 2023-2024 grant for the renovation of Ramsdell as an expanded community center.

Throughout Great Barrington, I have worked to strengthen our community, the greatest of our assets. My support to circumscribe Short-Term Rentals reflects this view, and the town agreed.

I will also advocate strategic planning to tackle environmental issues and the challenges of Great Barrington's housing market to make Great Barrington more livable.

I propose the town study and implement a new Master Plan to deal with the changes in the town over the past decade. My background in planning will help to analyze and interpret the changes so the town can establish its priorities and understand the trade-offs as we balance the time and financial resources available.

I am prepared for the Selectboard position. The seat should be filled by someone with considerable experience working to resolve the issues facing the town. These are well within my area of expertise and experience.

Board of Health

Elect 1, 3-year term

The Health Department is responsible for ensuring compliance with all food service, septic system and well construction, lodging, public-pools, recreational camps, residential housing, and tobacco regulations.

This department also investigates nuisance complaints, reports and follows up on communicable diseases, conducts annual flu clinics for residents, monitors beach waters, and regularly updates and exercises the town's public health emergency plans.

That's from the board's page on the town's website.

Ruby Chang

Dr. Ruby Chang, 66, lives at 253 Long Pond Road. She seeks her third term on the Board of Health.



A pediatrician, she received her medical degree in 1982 from National Taiwan University College of Medicine, and did post-graduate training, her residency and chief residency at Baystate Medical Center.

For the past 37 years, she has cared for newborns to young adults in a primary-care setting.

Dr. Chang's answer:

Meaningful life to me has always meant a life of service.

I have lived in Western Massachusetts since 1982 and here in Great Barrington for the past 10 years. Applying evidence-based medical and public health science, carefully researched, has been the practice I use for my decisions.

The past three years of pandemic living have brought challenges for all of us. I have used my medical knowledge to guide the recommendations and vaccine initiatives during the past several years as the global impact of the pandemic has affected all of us in this community. Broad health initiatives are my main focus, as well as individual rights.

We have taken for granted the natural resources that make living in Great Barrington attractive. However, I cannot over-emphasize the need for work in making sure these resources remain sustainable for generations to come.

Exposure to toxic-forever chemicals threatens our water and soil and the need for clean water for our community now and in the future remain active problems. I hope to gain as much support and knowledge through local and state resources to provide good stewardship.

I am always open to conversations for those in the community and hear their voices.

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee serves as an advisory board, making recommendations to town meeting on the town budget and all warrant articles. In addition, the Finance Committee approves appropriations from the reserve fund.

That's from the board's page on the town's website.

Elect 1, 3-year term

Anne O'Dwyer

Ms. O'Dwyer, 57, lives at 26 Kirk St., Housatonic. She seeks her third term on the board, of which she is a former chairman, now vice chairman.

(CANDIDATES cont. on next page)

Meet the Candidates Who Want Your Vote

Ms. O'Dwyer received a degree in psychology from Boston College in 1987 and a doctorate in social psychology from there in 1996.

She is an associate professor of psychology at Bard College at Simon's Rock and director of its Mind and Brain Program.

She was academic dean at the college from 2008 to 2015.

Ms. O'Dwyer has lived in Great Barrington since 1997.

Ms. O'Dwyer's answer:

I am running for re-election on the Finance Committee because I believe it is an important town committee. Having served six years already, I hope to bring some knowledge and context to the committee's discussions.

What I value most about serving on the committee are the opportunities to work on behalf of GB residents — with the committee, town staff, and the Selectboard.

I appreciate that the committee continues to seek to understand more fully all aspects of the town's budget and finances. I felt we had a series of productive budget meetings this winter/spring with good questions and clarifications raised by committee members.

As for possible areas for change or improvement, we had many discussions regarding the budget and financial policy this year.

As for changes, sometimes, after a long day, I'd like to have shorter meetings, but that would come at the cost of less discussion and debate — which I value more. So, I'm fine with keeping the sessions lasting as long as needed to get the work done.

Elect 1, 1-year term

Richard Geiler



Mr. Geiler, 64, of 19 Hemlock Hill Road, seeks election to the year remaining on the term of Michelle Loubert, who resigned last year. He was appointed last June by the Finance Committee and Selectboard to fill the vacancy.

Mr. Geiler has a degree in music from the University of California-Berkeley.

He was with the office of the district attorney for San Diego County from 1988 to 2018, starting as an intermediate clerk typist and ending as legal support manager.



Mr. Geiler also has been a professional tenor for more than 40 years. He has been with the San Diego Opera Chorus, the First United Methodist Church of San Diego and Congregation Beth Israel of San Diego.

He noted that his work with the district attorney's office provided experience building consensus and oversight related to office policies and procedures, procurement, grants, hiring and human relations.

As a manager, he was in charge of purchasing for several units, divisions and branches of the office and managed a major renovation of a branch office.

Mr. Geiler's answer:

I value the overview of town finances I have had as an appointed member of the Finance Committee this past year.

I especially appreciate the civil and open dialogue we have been able to have within the committee, with the Selectboard, the town administration, the police and fire chiefs, and members of the public to better understand current and future finances and budgets, as well as their effects on the community.

I see significant financial challenges ahead for the town, and hope to remain on the committee and do what I can to maintain and improve the Town of Great Barrington.

Housing Authority

Elect 1, 5-year term

The Housing Authority was created by unanimous vote at Great Barrington's town meeting in May 1963. The Authority now oversees Flag Rock Village off Park Street/Route 183, Housatonic, with 18 family apartments and 32 senior units; Brookside Manor on South Main Street, Great Barrington, with 31 senior units; Dewey Court in Sheffield, with 22 senior/handicap one-bedroom units and 8 family units; and one state Department of Developmental Services house.

The state Department of Housing and Community Development oversees and helps finance these units. No town funds are used.

That's from the board's page on the town's website.

Housing authority boards have five members, with one appointed by the governor. A new state law, which went into effect after last year's town elections, requires that one seat be filled by a tenant nominated by the tenants' organization and appointed by the selectmen.

Two terms end with town elections but voters only fill one. The other will be filled by the tenant appointed by the Selectboard, as described above.

Tom Blauvelt and Philip Orenstein were appointed last June, after three members, including the governor's appointee, resigned. Mr. Blauvelt does not seek re-election. That leaves one vacancy, to be filled by the governor.

Philip N. Orenstein

Mr. Orenstein, 60, lives at 4 Alford Road. He received a degree in economics in 1984 from George Washington University and a master's in business administration in 1988 from New York University.



He wrote that he has more than 30 years of experience as a banker and investment manager, including at JP Morgan Chase and the Royal Bank of Scotland.

He also is chairman of the Great Barrington Finance Committee.

Mr. Orenstein's answer:

I was honored to be appointed to the Great Barrington Housing Authority board last June and I am now running for a full term.

Prior to my appointment I was a close observer of the concerns expressed by its residents in public meetings regarding the GBHA.

We are all increasingly aware that safe and affordable housing is a vital component of a diverse community and the oversight provided by the GBHA board is critical piece of this important effort.

Given my background in finance, I hope to continue focusing my efforts on the budget, accounting systems and financial reporting.

Library Trustees

Elect 2, 3-year terms

Mason in Great Barrington and Ramsdell in Housatonic comprise the Great Barrington Libraries, a municipal department overseen by the town manager.

A six-person elected Board of Trustees is responsible for plans, policies and priorities. A nonprofit Friends of the GB Libraries raises money by selling donated books.

The libraries are funded by the taxes of the people of Great Barrington and strive to provide a variety of current educational and cultural materials as well as welcoming spaces for quiet study, programs and public meetings. Volunteers are very important to the libraries; individuals are encouraged to apply for training.

The Great Barrington Libraries also have their own web site: <http://gblibraries.org/>

That's from the board's page on the town's website.

John Breasted

Mr. Breasted, 75, resides at 151 Christian Hill.

He graduated from Housatonic Valley Regional High School in Falls Village, Conn. in 1964 and from the University of

(CANDIDATES cont. on next page)





Meet the Candidates Who Want Your Vote



Connecticut in 1972 with a degree in chemistry and attended UConn's School of Medicine in Farmington, Conn., from 1972 to 1974.

Mr. Breasted has taken graduate courses at Wesleyan University, Trinity College and Hartford Seminary.

He was a high school and college tutor at Monument Mountain Regional High School from 1995 to 2005 and at Bard College at Simon's Rock from 2002 to 2016.

Earlier, he was general assignment reporter for three weekly newspapers in the greater Hartford area from 1976 through 1981; on the board of Friends Journal, a Quaker magazine, from 1982 to 1985; researcher for a study of children's library services for the Connecticut Commission on Children in 1989; and a lobbyist in the Connecticut legislature in 1983 and 1984.

In 2000, as a member of the Berkshire Hills Regional School District's School Facilities Study Committee, Mr. Breasted headed a subcommittee that studied how the district might renovate and expand an existing building to house kindergarten through grade 8 students. He also served on the Finance Committee in 2011.

Mr. Breasted said he sees the following activities as "evidence of my experience as an observer of and participant in the work of town boards and community groups."

-Acting as an advocate on two community issues: Member of Parents for a Better Plan, which in 1999 successfully opposed a BHRSC proposal to build a three-story K-8 school building behind MMRHS, and opposing in 2013 the hiring of an armed police officer to patrol the three schools.

Mr. Breasted's answer:

Historically, tax-supported public libraries are a uniquely American phenomenon. They seem to me one of the purest illustrations of the observation by the late Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. that "taxes are the price we pay for civilization."

My regular use of the Mason Library began only after the completion in April 2007 of renovations that made the building ADA compliant. (I am an obligatory wheelchair user.)

I have found that its book collection has surprising depth, as does its collection of recorded lectures. Its two main floor study/conference rooms have been very useful for me to meet with people, including at least two public officials, and with some students I tutored there instead of at their own houses which were not accessible.

It has sometimes served as a short-term spiritual refuge from the stresses of everyday life.

When I studied children's library services in Connecticut in the late 1980s, I interviewed at length at least four children's librarians, and one professor whose specialty was the teaching of reading and mentally stimulating games for young children.

He told me that participation in his programs for children was much higher when he offered them in public libraries than when he offered them in schools after hours. The reason, he said, was that parents felt uncomfortable with school settings because they so often had strong negative memories of having been judged there; a public library by contrast felt neutral and nonjudgmental.

I don't yet know the procedural nuts and bolts of how the Great Barrington library board of trustees supports the smooth functioning of our two libraries, but I am a quick study and feel it's time for me to learn how to help provide that support for a vital, beloved piece of our civilization.

Sandra 'Sandy' Pantorno



Ms Pantorno, 72, lives at 63 Monument Valley Road.

She received dual certification in kindergarten-grade 6 education and secondary education grades 7-12 from C.W. Post College in 1972 and a master's degree in liberal studies from

Stonybrook University in 1975.

She taught in grades 7-12 in the Sachem, N.Y., school district. For most of those years, she was a faculty and literary magazine advisor for junior and senior high schools, she wrote.

She and her husband have been coming to the Berkshires since her daughter went to camp here in 1987. They bought land in 2001 and finished building their house in 2004.

Ms. Pantorno retired in 2006 after 34 years of teaching. Mr. Pantorno retired in 2012 as a public library director,

They sold their home in Port Jefferson on Long Island and moved to Great Barrington in 2012.

Ms. Pantorno's answer:

First and foremost, I'd like to thank the library trustees and the library staff for their time, effort, and continued dedication to our libraries.

During COVID, the challenges to staff and community were very real. It was a tall order to keep everyone safe but still maintain the important aspects of a community library.

So kudos to everyone for finding a way for us to borrow library resources and attend library-coordinated programs viewed via Zoom during a very challenging time.

As an advocate for a strong public library that values our communities, I want to work alongside the board and director as we continue to expand our acquisitions and programs, making them accessible to all our community residents from infants to seniors alike.

Rob Shaeffer

Mr. Shaeffer, 68, resides at 228 Division St.

Mr. Shaeffer has a degree in American studies from the University of California at Santa Cruz and a master's in book arts from Mills College.

While semi-retired, he edits children's books and works on book project development with authors.

For almost 30 years, he worked for Chronicle Books and Princeton Architectural Books.

For the first 20-plus years, he focused on sales and marketing. For the past 10 years, he was an acquisition editor for adult and all foreign rights titles.

He also was program director for children's books, acquiring 12 to 16 titles a year.

Some of his acquisitions titles for Princeton Architectural Press are, adult, *Letters to a Young Farmer: On Food, Farming, and Our Future*, *Natural Palettes: Inspiration From Plant-Based Color*, and *Seasonal Family Almanac: Recipes, Rituals, and Crafts to Embrace the Magic of the Year*.

Children's books include *Chickenology*, *Pigology*, *Sheepology*, and *When I Am Big, Walk in the Forest*, written and illustrated by Maria Dek.

He wrote that "For much of my adult life, I have volunteered at nearly every local library where I have lived. Most recently, for three years I served on the Friends of the Library committee in Hastings on Hudson, N.Y."

Mr. Shaeffer's answer:

I love that the library is a public institution open to everyone. The Library Board connects the community to the library, bringing another layer of ideas and support for the staff to expand programs and collections.

In addition to lending books, our libraries encourage patrons to spend time there by providing meeting space, newspapers, magazines, printouts of games from the New York Times, and internet access.

Our town libraries also provide a link to the broader community by offering passes to museums in the Berkshires.

If elected, I'm excited to have an opportunity to collaborate with others on supporting the growing vitality of the libraries.

(CANDIDATES cont. on next page)

Meet the Candidates Who Want Your Vote

Coming from the world of publishing, the movement to ban books is an area of great concern to me.

If elected, I would join the Library Board with the intention of first observing and learning about the current work and about how decisions are made before I suggested changes. I would then work to strengthen outreach to the Great Barrington community that will encourage more people to take advantage of all that our libraries offer.

Planning Board

Elect 2, 3-year terms

The responsibilities of the Planning Board are established by state General Law and include, but are not limited to:

- Adopting a master plan and official map of the town,
 - Adopting subdivision rules and participating in definitive plan reviews,
 - Drafting and submitting zoning amendments to town voters for consideration,
 - Holding public hearings and reporting on such zoning amendments,
 - Recommending roads for municipal consideration,
 - Serving as site plan review authority.
- That's from the board's website page.

Malcolm Fick



Mr. Fick, 74, lives at 1 Maplewood Ave. He seeks his fourth term on the Planning Board.

He graduated in 1972 from Pennsylvania State University and received a master's degree in information science in 1977 from Drexel University.

He is retired from running several software and software-

related businesses and then a short career as an elementary- school librarian.

Mr. Fick is chairman of the Historical Commission, which he has been on since 2012. He is also on the Selectboard-Planning Board housing subcommittee.

He is vice chairman of the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, which he's been on since 2014. He also serves on BRPC's regional issues and environmental review committees and has been treasurer and on the executive committee since 2019.

He led the Solarize Great Barrington project in 2014.

Mr. Fick was an associate member of the Planning Board before running for his first term in 2014.

Mr. Fick's answer:

I have served on the Planning Board for three terms, beginning in 2014, shortly after the Master Plan was approved.

During every one of those nine years, we have presented the annual town meeting with zoning changes that addressed specific goals of the Master Plan.

Many of these changes were related to increased housing, especially affordable housing, in the town.

Among those changes were the adoption

of Smartgrowth districts for affordable housing; the loosening of zoning restrictions on multi-family housing, accessory dwelling units and tiny homes; the adoption of an overlay district in Housatonic that reduces red tape for those who want to improve their properties; and the creation of special zones and overlay districts to encourage mixed commercial and residential uses on Route 7 above and below downtown.

What I value most about my experience on the Planning Board is its members. They bring expertise as an engineer and as architects that many small-town Planning Boards lack. The members care for the town and work hard to solve its problems to the limited extent that zoning, in itself, can solve them.

There remain many issues that still need to be addressed. For example, the board is grappling with zoning changes to Stockbridge Road that would encourage the development of a more attractive corridor.

The board also must do a better job communicating the need for increased housing in the town so that neighbors can be participants in change rather than feeling as if they are victims.

Jonathan Hankin

Mr. Hankin, 77, lives at 43 West Plain Road. He has been on the Planning Board since 1997, serving as its chairman and vice chairman. He now is its clerk.

He graduated in 1967 from Yale University with a degree in English and in 1977 with a master's degree in architecture from the University of California—Los Angeles.

He is a retired California architect and a Massachusetts real estate broker.

He also is on the Design Advisory Committee.

He was on the Master Plan Committee from 2010 to 2013. He has also served on the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, the Affordable Housing Trust, the Tree Committee, and the Selectboard-Planning Board housing subcommittee.

Mr. Hankin's answer:

Zoning, to me, is probably the most powerful tool we have as citizens to shape the environment we live in and the civilization we aspire to be.

It has been an honor to have served the town all these years as well as a delight to have had the chance to work with so many smart, talented volunteer board members.

While we have certainly had our differences of opinion, we on the Planning Board have consistently managed to work together in a polite, harmonious fashion. I love that!

Working as a real-estate broker has made me painfully aware of the difficulties many of our citizens have in finding affordable housing. This awareness has driven, and will continue to drive, my efforts to address this



painful situation while seeking to make Great Barrington an even more amazing town to live in.

I understand that change can be fearful. Without change, however, we can never address problems that haunt our society. While zoning does not create change — it can enable it. That change, for better or worse, moves at a very slow pace historically in Great Barrington.

Zoning Board Of Appeals

Elect 2, 5-year terms

Terms are back to five years after the office of a previous town clerk mistakenly listed them as three years.

The ZBA has the power to hear and decide upon appeals by persons who have been unable to obtain a permit or enforcement action in accordance with Great Barrington's zoning bylaw and related zoning provisions of Massachusetts law.

The board also hears and decides on applications for variances from requirements of the town bylaws and applications for special permits under the "grandfather" provisions of the bylaws.

Peter Most

Mr. Most, 58, lives at 19 East Mountain Road. He has been an associate member of the ZBA since last year.

He graduated in 1986 from the University of California at Santa Barbara with a degree in history and in 1989 from George Washington University Law School.

He is a member of the Massachusetts, New York and California bars, remotely practicing civil litigation for Mancini Shenk LLP, a **Mr. Most's answer:**

From what I have observed, the Zoning Board has consistently acted fairly in determining zoning issues.

Having observed its process, I appreciate its efforts to correctly call balls and strikes. As for change, it is not evident to me that the board requires any. As a practicing attorney, I would be very pleased to be able to assist the board in continuing its good work.

Michael Wise

Mr. Wise's background and photo are under Moderator.

Here is his statement for the ZBA:

The ZBA oversees application of the town's land-use regulations, applying community judgement as well as checking compliance with the law.

In the 10 years I've been on the ZBA, those two functions have harmonized well. Some matters that come before the board are contentious, but many are routine; for the latter, I think the board might do more to help applicants deal with the formalities and thus reduce the costs that the process imposes on their projects.





Letters to the Readers

Sharon Gregory is running for a seat on the select board in Great

Barrington's upcoming election on Monday, May 9. She is seeking to fill the vacancy created by Ed Abraham's retirement after many years of service. Sharon is an outstanding candidate and I urge Great Barrington voters to elect her to the board.

Sharon has a well-established record in community and cultural development, both in an official capacity and as an active and dedicated volunteer. She is deeply committed to our community and is an objective thinker who will make the right policy decisions, grounded in facts and a thorough understanding of the issues.

We live in a time of significant challenges in our community, whether it is providing the best education and safe school environment for our children, a housing opportunity for all our residents, and, most importantly, clean and safe water for people in Housatonic. Given these and other challenges, our select board needs to identify, plan for, and adapt to change, while being mindful of the need to optimize and preserve taxpayer's resources.

Sharon will be an outstanding addition to the current board given her significant civic and professional experience, impressive analytical skills and policy-making expertise. She will help establish the right priorities and properly balance any future trade-offs in order to maintain what makes our town so special.

Milena Cerna
Great Barrington

Disclaimer: While I am an elected member of Great Barrington Finance Committee, this endorsement reflects solely my opinion as a private Great Barrington resident.

How To Reach State Senator, Representative

STATE SEN. PAUL MARK has office hours in the Great Barrington Town Hall the first and third Monday of the month from 9 a.m. to noon.

His district office is at 773 Tyler St., Pittsfield. Telephone number is 413-464-5635 there and 617-722-1625 at the State House in Boston.

His constituent services director, Casey Pease, is at casey.pease@masenate.gov.

STATE REP. SMITTY PIGNATELLI does not have office hours but is at rep.smitty@mahouse.gov.

His district office number is 413-637-0631 and the State House number is 617-722-2692.

Staff director Julia Murphy is at julia.murphy@mahouse.gov and legislative aide Trey McNinch, is robert.mcninch@mahouse.gov.

The office is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays.

Sharon Gregory is a long-time resident of Great Barrington, and a former member of the Finance Committee.

Sharon loves our town and is always up on the latest goings on in our town. She does her homework and looks at the whole picture before she makes an informed decision.

If you want a fair and dedicated person on your Selectboard, vote for Sharon Gregory.

Garfield C. Reed
Great Barrington

I'm supporting Rob Shaeffer for Library Trustee, because he loves the community, and believes that public libraries are vital to the community. Rob will work to strengthen both the downtown and the Housatonic libraries.

I met Rob at the Great Barrington farmers market many years ago, and collaborated with him on events to support local farming, so I saw how committed he is to building community.

Rob loves our libraries because they offer so many diverse activities that bring us together — including craft Saturdays, summer reading programs, Arbor Day events, read and wag with Mason Library's therapy dogs.

Plus Rob brings an understanding of the business of books. He has worked in the book publishing business for over 30 years.

I hope you'll join me to support Rob Shaeffer for one of the Library Trustee positions.

Barbara Zheutlin
Great Barrington

I have had the pleasure of getting to know Rob Shaeffer over the last few years as a friend and supportive community member. Rob's commitment to his community, strong desire to help in any way he can, and consistency in his commitments is exactly what our Library needs.

I first met Rob as a friend and farmers' market shopper, then he became a volunteer during the height of the pandemic. He arrived every Saturday at 7:30 a.m. to help us set up all of the safety precautions for the market. We could not have made it through the seasons without his help. He continues to volunteer to this day.

Rob also began showing up at my house with children's books that he had published. On his own, he recognized how hard it was to be home with small children during that time and took it upon himself to make life a little easier.

I am forever grateful for the gesture and strong in my conviction that Rob instinctively knows how to help.

As his lifetime work in publishing proves his commitment to literature, so does his 35+ years of volunteering for libraries in the communities he has lived in. Rob recognizes that libraries are not only a source of reading content but also a space for our community to gather.

As his lifetime work in publishing proves his commitment to literature, so does his 35+ years of volunteering for libraries in the com-

munities he has lived in. Rob recognizes that libraries are not only a source of reading content but also a space for our community to gather.

As a mother of small children, I have used the library as a source of sanctuary and gathering. During the pandemic I attended some Selectboard meetings from my car in the Mason Library parking lot for the internet and peace and quiet.

The success of our community is tightly tied to the success of the libraries in our town. Rob is the exact candidate I want to represent my family. I know he will ensure our libraries continue to be safe spaces for everyone to gather.

Rob, as a proponent of libraries as community spaces, is the perfect person to be involved in the future of the Ramsdell Library.

As we watch libraries fall under attack across this country, we need a committed volunteer who fully understands that libraries are an invaluable source of support for our entire community.

Rob Shaeffer is exactly this person. I endorse Rob Shaeffer for Library Trustee.

Please vote on Tuesday May 9th.

Kate Burke
Great Barrington

Rob has over 30 years of professional publishing experience, including planning, policy making and establishing priorities.

He also values a Library as a place to learn things and serve the community. Rob has volunteered at his local library every place he has lived.

We have known Rob Shaeffer since he arrived here in 2015. He's become a great friend, and neighbor. He is patient, energetic and a great listener.

Rob is also reliable, creative, well organized AND a team player: you may have met him at the Berkshire Grown Farmers Markets at the HousiDome supporting the vendors with setups, take-down and product supply.

As a passionate supporter of Great Barrington's Mason Library, Rob Shaeffer will be a tremendous asset as a Library Trustee.

The Hogans urge all our friends and neighbors to attend Town Meeting on May 9 and elect Rob Shaeffer to the Mason Library Board of Trustees.

Dennis and Pat Hogan
Great Barrington

We enthusiastically endorse Rob Shaeffer for Library Trustee. With over 30 years in the publishing business, his deep understanding of the power of books will bring a valuable perspective to the position.

His respect for libraries as an active player in offering family activities and events will only strengthen that aspect of a library's contributions to our community as well.

Rob is an ideal candidate for this position. Dan Mead and Sally Eagle
Great Barrington

Airport Special Permit Can't Be Transferred; Soccer

ON A 4-1 VOTE, the Selectboard on April 10 granted a special permit to **Berkshire Aviation Holdings Inc.**, which operates the Great Barrington airport at 70 Egremont Plain Road.

Ed Abrahams voted against granting the special permit. His reasons are in a statement he read before the vote. It is reproduced in this NEWSletter.

The airport had been allowed in the residential district because it existed before zoning was adopted in town but it could not be altered without the selectmen's permission.

The special permit means its use is recognized and it is entitled to make alterations unless the special permit does not permit such a change — and the first condition seems to prohibit some changes.

Can't Add Airport-Related Activities

The condition states in part that "The addition of any other airport related activities not conducted at the Airport at the time of the special permit application is prohibited under this Special Permit."

A draft of the special permit's findings and conditions are in the agenda section on the town website's selectmen's page. THE NEWSletter will reproduce the finished special permit.

The packet also includes the airport's application, including its proposed conditions. Also available are packets of letters for and against granting the special permit.

27 Conditions Set

Twenty-seven conditions are imposed, intended to meet residents' concerns about noise, safety and protecting the aquifer beneath airport property.

Special Permit Not Transferable

Although special permits generally go with the land, one condition is that this goes only to the present ownership:

"23. This Special permit is granted solely to Berkshire Aviation Holdings, Inc., formerly known as Berkshire Aviation Enterprises, Inc., as presently constituted, for the purposes described herein, and is not transferable. The Special Permit shall not run with the land. Upon sale or transfer of ownership of the subject property, whether partial or total, the Special Permit shall terminate."

The final, or 27th, condition states:

"This Special Permit is granted on the express basis that every condition imposed hereunder is essential to mitigate the impact of the Airport on the surrounding residential/agricultural neighborhood. The Selectboard finds that none of these conditions is severable, and if any of these conditions is found invalid or otherwise unenforceable in any judicial review or by a governmental authority having jurisdiction, the Special Permit shall automatically become null and void."

Some Other Prohibitions

Other conditions prohibit "continuous takeoffs and landings of aircraft after 6:00 pm." and "unnecessary aircraft 'run-ups,' including engine starting, idling or thrusting, before 8:00 am or after 7:00 pm."

Also, "On Sundays, there shall be no continuous takeoffs and landings of aircraft before 9:00 am or after 5:00 pm."

Finding: Reduced Tax on 54 Acres

The final finding notes that the airport has more than 52 acres of land in Chapter 61A agricultural land taxation program, which means total real estate tax in fiscal year 2023 will be less than \$200, "roughly \$4,500 less than it would be if assessed at full value."

Assistant town manager and planning director Chris Rembold and town counsel David Doneski of KP Law, town counsel, prepared the findings and conditions based on the selectmen's comments during the hearings, which began Feb. 27 and continued March 13 and April 3.

Mr. Doneski attended the hearings, which would have required a larger meeting room had Zoom not been available.

Selectboard chairman Steve Bannon said 73 people were on Zoom on April 10 and the meeting room, which can seat about 50 people plus board members, was packed.

* * *

SOCCER CAN BE PLAYED at Olympian Meadows this summer.

Lines are being drawn on a field also used for softball. Commissioners visited the field before the April 12 meeting.

Anyone interested in playing soccer should call commissioners Bill Meier or Tom Norton, Karen Smith, Parks Commission chairman, told THE NEWSletter.

Mr. Meier and Mr. Norton had proposed adding the field, as reported in the last issue.

Pickleball Indoors in Housatonic

The commissioners also agreed that pickleball may be played Saturday mornings at the Housatonic Community Center.

About 35 people already play there Tuesday and Friday mornings, said Ms. Smith, one of the players.

This is the only indoor court in South County, she said.

The commission agreed Great Barrington residents may bring guests to play, provided they sign a waiver and release of liability. Those forms are on the commission's page on the town website, townofgb.org.

Added hours also must not affect basketball or farmers markets at the Housatonic facility, commissioners agreed.

Staffing at Lake Mansfield Discussed

They also agreed that South Berkshire Regional Community Center should provide at the **May 15** meeting a proposal for **staffing at Lake Mansfield** this summer.

At least two lifeguards are needed for a shift but the counter no longer is needed, members felt. The counter position began to ensure the beach was not overcrowded during Covid attendance restrictions.

The beach and recreation area have been staffed from 11:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Commissioner Paul Gibbons proposed it be open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. seven days a week but Ms. Smith and Steve Bannon, a commissioner and

selectmen chairman, noted that the budget is already proposed and not sufficient for added hours.

The proposed parks' budget is on page 25 of the proposed municipal budget on the town website. It will be presented for voter approval at the May 1 town meeting.

Keep Housatonic Summer Program?

Also to be discussed May 15 is a plan for the **children's summer program at Alice Bubriski Park in Housatonic**.

(NEWS continues on page 12)

Clerk's Corner

By Town Clerk Jennifer Messina and
Asst. Town Clerk Katherine Couch

Welcome to The Clerk's Corner.

The saying goes "April showers bring May flowers." It also brings the Annual Town Meeting and the Town Election.

—**Annual Town Meeting: Monday, May 1** at 6 p.m. and **Thursday, May 4** at **6 p.m.** (if needed) at Monument Mountain Regional High School auditorium

—**Town Elections: Tuesday, May 9**, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Precincts A, C and D vote at the Great Barrington Fire Station and Precinct B at the Housatonic Community Center.

The Secretary of the Commonwealth has published a great guide. "Citizen's Guide to Town Meetings" can be accessed by going to sec.state.ma.us/cis/cistwn/twnidx.htm.

The Annual Town Meeting is called to decide major things such as to appropriate money to run the town and to vote on the town's local statutes, called by-laws.

Why can't I absentee vote or vote by mail at the Town Meeting?

Each article on the warrant can be amended, rescinded, reconsidered or tabled at any time while it is being discussed. Therefore, the warrant article would not be the same as the article that you cast your absentee ballot for.

Please take a moment to check that you are registered to vote and that we have your correct address. You can easily do this by going to voteinma.com. You can register to vote, check your voter registration, update your voter registration and more!!

Or stop by our office or give us a call.

You can reach us at 528-1619, press 2 then 1. If we don't answer PLEASE leave a message — we WILL call you back.

The office is open daily from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. We close for lunch from 1 to 1:30 p.m.

Happy Spring!

Jenn and Kathy

Parks Commission continued; Library Trustees

Not many children participate, commissioners have noted. They do not know whether that is lack of interest or that few families know about it, commissioners have said.

Department of Public Works superintendent Joe Aberdale suggested that rather than a partial day program, a better approach might be full days perhaps twice a week.

Mr. Gibbons said he does not want another year of the program in Housatonic.

Recommend Glyphosate Ban

Also during the April 12 meeting, commissioners agreed to recommend that the Board of Health adopt a restriction prohibiting the use of glyphosates on land owned or managed by the town.

Glyphosates are not used on town properties, Mr. Aberdale said.

The vote was not unanimous as Mr. Gibbons voted against it. Tom Norton of Housatonic was absent.

Public Input Sought on Two Parks

Julie Anidjar and Sidevi Reddy will hold a public meeting, perhaps May 30, to learn what residents want in the Grove Street Park and Dewey parks.

Ms. Anidjar has proposed a different approach, one she calls more adventurous and with no plastic.

Volunteer Workdays Start May 6

Also during the meeting, the commission approved summer volunteer workdays at Lake Mansfield for the Great Barrington Land Conservancy, starting May 6 from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m.

Scheduled work is cleaning the outside of garbage/recycle containers and repainting tops of picnic tables.

On **May 20**, also from 9:30 to 11:30, volunteers will clean litter, mulch trees and shrubs and plant annuals.

Other workdays are scheduled for **June 10 and July 9**. A fundraiser is scheduled at the beach for **Aug. 27** from 3 to 6 p.m. with music and food. The area will remain open to the public.

* * *

LIBRARY TRUSTEES at their April 13 meeting confirmed their vote from last October to donate artifacts pertaining to the **Mohican Nation's Stockbridge-Munsee Community's Arvid E. Miller Library Museum** in Bowler, Wis.

The nation is native to the Berkshires.

In exchange, the Tribal Historic Preservation Office will provide a copy of an exhibit panel and share photogrammetry images.

Collection Can Be Loaned Back

The collection can be loaned back to the library or other local institutions upon request, according to a letter from Bonney Hartley, tribal historic preservation manager.

Reproduced in this issue are her letter and a memo to the trustees from Talya Leodari, assistant library director.

In her memo, Ms. Leodari describes meeting with Ms. Hartley and Jeff Bendremer, archaeologist and tribal historic preservation officer, at their extension office in Williamstown.

She has already given some of the collection to them for cataloging and assessment.

The trustees' confirmation of the October vote to donate the collections enables the rest of the collection to be donated. In her memo, Ms. Leodari states it includes "many fine examples and unique cultural heritage items that the tribal museum would be pleased to receive and use in displays about the tribe's deep history in the Berkshires."

Trustees said they are proud Ms. Leodari is on the staff.

Revised Borrowing Policy Accepted

Also during their April 13 meeting, the trustees accepted a revised borrowing policy, which removes late fines, and agreed to a proposal for a year-long "literature garden" at Mason and Ramsdell libraries.

New Program To Start in June

Literature, visual arts, sculpture, puppetry, music composition and community will all be used, MAPS' Aaron Rourke and Rachel Sherk said in their proposal.

The program to start in June, community dialogues and programs with MAPS Artists-in-Residence of Great Barrington.

(NEWS continues on page 13)

Assistant town manager and planning director Chris Rembold prepared the following information. The 30 units on North Plain Road are now 20 units.

Residential Growth: Multi-unit Housing Production and Population Estimates, Great Barrington, 2013 - 2028

	Completed		Permitted		Planned	
	Units	Population	Units	Population	Units	Population
316 State Rd	11	28				
899 Main St	31	52				
47 Railroad St	15	28				
32 Bridge St	22	53				
20 Bentley Rd	45	101				
910 Main St			49	147		
546 Main St			22	48		
343 Main St			15	21		
148 Maple Ave			30	75		
Blue Hill Commons			47	141		
684 Egremont Rd			13	30		
34 Bridge St (Ph.2)			27	66		
North Plain Road					30	90
322 Main St					11	33
Housatonic School					10	30
445 Monterey Rd					8	12
100 Bridge St					20	60
	124	262	203	528	79	225

Total new units in the above multi-unit projects:

406

Does not include single- or two-unit homes

Estimated population in the above multi-unit projects:

1,015

Some may be permanent, some may be part-time

**Real Estate
To Buy or Sell?**

Tom Doyle

scarnaghtom@gmail.com

Cell: 646-438-1329

Licensed in Massachusetts,
New York and South Carolina.

Received Berkshire Realtor's
Good Neighbor Award in 2020

**Bishop West
Real Estate Inc.**
Massachusetts, New York,
Florida, Vermont

**Dunes Real Estate
Hilton Head, S.C.**

Library Trustees cont.; Appointment; 8-Town Board

Information from MAPS said \$51,000 will be needed and grants will be sought from the Great Barrington Cultural Council, foundations and businesses.

Library director Samara Klein said state funds may be used. Trustees unanimously approved applying \$4,000.

Concern About Mason's Landscape

During citizens speak, Karen Johnson of State Road said she was concerned about the proposal to change Mason's landscape with paving on what is now front lawn.

The plan is to honor Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois, trustee Lauren Clark told her.

Dr. Du Bois, a founder of the NAACP and author of "The Souls of Black Folk," was born in Great Barrington on Feb. 23, 1868, and died in Ghana on Aug. 27, 1963.

Ms. Clark is also a director of the W.E.B. Du Bois Sculpture Project, which is raising funds for a sculpture of Dr. Du Bois seated on a bench on a paved plaza in front of Mason.

More information is available at the project's website, webduboisculpture.org/.

Although the trustees have approved the concept, it also needs approval by the Selectboard.

Ms. Klein, library director, is the daughter of the late Freke Quirine Vuijst, who first proposed a statue to honor Dr. Du Bois.

Grant Application for Ramsdell

Also during citizens speak, Michelle Loubert questioned whether the board had been involved in the decision to seek a state grant to renovate Ramsdell Library.

Town manager Mark Pruhenski said at the selectmen's April 10 meeting that the application is not being sought because it is very competitive, two previous applications for Ramsdell were already rejected, and the application requires funds that have not been appropriated and plans that have not been prepared.

He said other work at Ramsdell, including handicapped accessibility, will be done.

Trustee Margaret Heilbrun noted that she has been a librarian and worked on a magazine that evaluated libraries, and she does not think Ramsdell qualifies for the grant because it lacks enough attendance and is the second library in town.

She and Chris Tucci voted against seeking the grant at the March 9 meeting. The other trustees voted to apply.

Ms. Heilbrun observed that this was her last meeting. That's good, Mrs. Loubert told her.

Neither Ms. Heilbrun nor Mr. Tucci sought re-election after their first terms.

THE SELECTMEN have appointed Ambrose Clausen of 2 Samantha Lane as an alternate member of the **Agricultural Commission**.

In his application letter, Mr. Clausen wrote that his experience "farming over the

last 12 years has given me opportunity to learn not only about growth, but also about how farms impact their community and vice-versa."

He noted that he completed Holistic Management International's course for farm and ranch planning and has worked at area farms.

Mr. Clausen is working this year for Taft Farms and for Berkshire Conservation District, where he will build its healthy soils initiative and coordinate its no-till program.

According to the Agricultural Commission's page on the town website, it "serves as facilitators for encouraging the pursuit of agriculture in Great Barrington and promote agricultural-based economic opportunities in Town."

Commissioners are chairman Vivian Orłowski, Krysia Kurzyca and Andrea Panaritis. There are two vacancies.

JAMES BAILLY of Housatonic now represents Great Barrington on the board of South Berkshire Veterans Service.

The Selectboard appointed him April 10 to succeed long-time director Andy Moro, who resigned.

In his application email, Mr. Bailly wrote that he is a veteran, a member of Adams Budz VFW Post 8183 since 1994 and a supporter of veterans.

Board chairman Tom Gage told the selectmen that the service's director, Laurie Hils, is retiring.

South Berkshire Veterans Service has a page on the town website at townofgb.org/veterans-agent/.

THE 8-TOWN REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT PLANNING BOARD expects to discuss **May 3** whether to recommend that voters approve a plan to handle finances if the **Berkshire Hills and Southern Berkshire districts merge**.

The May 3 meeting is scheduled to start at 5:30 p.m. via Zoom.

Although the board has not yet made a recommendation, members expect the eight towns to vote in September or October on whether to merge.

At the planning board's April 11 meeting, Nadine Hawver, a Sheffield selectman, and project manager Jake Eberwein presented the proposal from the finance subcommittee, which Ms. Hawver chairs.

The proposal is on the 8-Town's website at 8towns.org. The second-to-last slide in it is reproduced below.

The proposal has a "safety valve" of 2% to avoid large financial increases for towns.

Shared Cost for a New School

It would have Berkshire Hills' three towns of Great Barrington, Stockbridge and West Stockbridge initially pay 90% of the cost of a new high school, with 10% paid by Southern Berkshires' five towns of Alford, Egremont, Monterey, New Marlborough and Sheffield.

All students in grades 9-12 would attend the high school, which would also provide career-vocational-technical education.

Coburn: Towns Told Not Have To Pay

During the April 11 presentation, board member Don Coburn of Monterey said people in Southern Berkshire towns remember that when a merger was proposed, they were told they would not have to pay for a new high school.

George McGurn of Egremont, also a board member, thought the high school cost — an estimated \$100,000 — looks low. It's a hard sell, he stated.

At THE NEWSletter's deadline, the Berkshire Hills district was waiting to hear from the state School Building Authority whether it can proceed to design a new or renovated school.

The district's three towns are not expected to vote on a new or renovated school until next year.

FULL FISCAL PICTURE, MERGER VS. NO CHANGE

COMPARISONS:

\$35,000,000

FY26

\$30,000,000

\$25,000,000

\$20,000,000

\$15,000,000

\$10,000,000

\$5,000,000

\$-

MERGER

NO MERGER

MERGER

NO MERGER

MERGER

NO MERGER

MERGER

NO MERGER

MERGER

NO MERGER

MERGER

NO MERGER

■ CAPITAL

■ OPERATING/CVTE

\$544,532

\$652,051

\$2,447,119

\$2,735,790

\$16,279,243

\$17,221,742

\$28,232,960

\$28,754,657

Police Report for March

Great Barrington police can be reached by calling 911 for an emergency or 528-0306.

The department's website is greatbarringtonpolice.com and its Facebook page is www.facebook.com/GBPDMA/

Police at 911 handle ambulance dispatch. The police station is at 465 South Main St.

Police officers now wear cameras to help document investigations and incidents.

The department participates in the state Disability Indicator Program. Individuals with safety, communication or other needs are encouraged to download a form at mass.gov/doc/disability-indicator-form.

The following is a summary, not a complete account, of what police did in March.

GREAT BARRINGTON POLICE responded to 15 two-car accidents in March, including one that sent someone to Fairview Hospital and one resulting in an arrest for unlicensed operation, negligent operation and leaving the scene of property damage.

They also responded to five one-car accidents, including one in which a car hit a deer on State Road and a car hit a turkey on Egremont Road.

A woman said her tire blew out and she hit a mailbox.

Police stopped 57 vehicles, all resulting in citations/warnings.

Radar Used on 12 Streets, Roads

Radar was used 14 times on Stockbridge Road, including six times at Fountain Pond.

It was used 13 times on State Road; five times on Main Street, including once on South Main Street; and four times on Monument Valley Road.

Radar was also used three times on East Street; twice on Front Street, Housatonic; and once each on Egremont Plain, Old Stockbridge, North Plain and Monterey roads and Division Street.

Fake Call About MMRHS

Police responded to a "swatting" fake call at Monument Mountain Regional High School on March 28.

The caller said a male in a bathroom had shot and killed six people. Everyone was fine. Several such calls were reported across the state.

Other Police Actions

A blizzard March 14 caused several trees and tree limbs to fall on cars, wires and roads.

Police responded to 17 calls for wellness checks on different people who had not been seen or did not answer the telephone.

They opened vehicles for six people who were locked out.

A watch group notified the station that a commercial airliner reported a "green laser strike" while traveling over Great Barrington.

Police arrested a Brookside School student on a charge of assault and battery after being called there with Stockbridge police when students were reported to be assaulting staff.

Three people were arrested for shoplifting at three businesses in town.

A man was taken into custody three times for trespass.

Want to meet Archer, the police department's comfort dog? You can arrange a meeting by calling the police station at 528-0306.



A caller reported that while she was hiking on Monument Mountain, someone broke into her vehicle and took her pocketbook.

Another woman was arrested for disorderly conduct, assault and battery and vandalizing the jail after she was evicted from a local bar.

A woman was taken into custody as she was drunk and verbally aggressive, according to the police report.

Two units went to help keep peace at Southern Berkshire District Court on Gilmore Avenue where, according to the report, a trial had a "packed court room and heated exchanges."

Someone reported unauthorized use of a bank card. Someone else reported receiving a letter that payment was due on a loan he didn't take out.

Funds Deposited in Wrong Account

Someone else reported that her bank account was broken into and \$2,200 was deposited in it and \$280 was taken out. She was advised to call her bank's fraud department.

Several loose dogs were reported but, as in February, no bears.

Someone reported a deceased dog in a road. It was a rug, according to the police report.

Sheep were reported on Seekonk Cross Road.

Fire Report for March

FIREFIGHTERS RESPONDED to four fires during March.

Fires at 85 Castle Hill Ave. and 33 West Sheffield Road were confined to the chimneys. A cooking fire at 10 Stanley Drive was confined to its container.

A brush fire at 70 Division was confined to leaves and grass under trees. It started when someone dumped what were thought to be cool ashes from a fireplace. They were not, Interim Fire Chief James Mead told THE NEWSletter.

Also during March, firefighters provided medical assistance 39 times, including at a vehicle accident with injuries.

They responded a total of 20 times to alarms for hazardous-materials release with no hazmat and carbon monoxide or fire alarms activated because of malfunction or unintentionally.

They had four calls of power lines down, two on Monument Valley Road and one each on Hurlburt Road and one on Egremont Plain Road.

They also responded to one call about the odor of smoke.



GBAHTF

Buying a house?

A family of 4, with an annual household income of less than \$92,100, can qualify for the Affordable Housing Trust Fund's **Down Payment Assistance Program** – an interest free loan of 10% of the purchase price, up to \$25,000! The loan does not need to be repaid until the house is sold or transferred.

Visit www.gbhousing.org for details.

AN UNPAID PUBLIC SERVICE AD

THE NEWSLETTER MAKES A GREAT GIFT FOR FRIENDS.

Trust Fund Renews Construct Rental Grant

THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING Trust Fund board has renewed a grant of \$50,000 for Construct to use to help Great Barrington renters.

The financial aid will be available for households at or below 100% of area median income, or AMI. It is only for housing units in Great Barrington.

Funds will remain in Great Barrington's bank account until Construct sends an invoice that the board approves, trust fund chairman Fred Clark explained at the April 18 meeting.

Rental assistance has averaged about \$1,000 a family, although some households have accrued larger amounts, Ms. Ralph said.

She has not needed rental funds from Great Barrington for about a year, but she really needs them now, she said.

Rent Up; Income Flat

Rent has increased "exponentially for many Great Barrington residents while income has remained flat," she wrote in the grant request.

The request notes that Construct's Housing Navigator provides "financial coaching, microloans and other economic sustainability tools administrated through Greylock Federal Credit Union or Lee Bank."

The local board began giving Construct grants for rental funds about a month after Covid closures started. Ms. Ralph said having such funds makes it easier to go to other towns for funding.

Mr. Clark told director Jane Ralph, that he has been very impressed by the efficiency and competency of Construct's staff.

Also at the meeting and voting for the grant were board members Bill Cooke, Garfield Reed and Joseph Method.

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.

-Victorine J. G. Torrico & Cathy Torrico, trustees, Mountain Realty Trust, to Double H. Properties LLC, 11 & 2 School St., Great Barrington, \$675,000.

-Richard P. Sim212on, trustee, Richard P. Simon Revocable Living Trust, & Kathleen S. Simon, trustee, Kathleen S. Simon Revocable Living Trust, to Nicole Marie McEnness Giannini, trustee, Nicole Giannini Revocable Trust, 321 West Road, Alford, \$3.17 million.

-Fairview Hospital to Berkshire Natural Resources Council Inc., property on Mount Hunger Road, Monterey, \$750,000.

-Sandra M. Farnham, trustee, Sandra M. Farnham Nominee Trust, to Berkshire Natural Resources Council Inc., property on Mount Hunger Road, Monterey, \$820,000.

-Peter Murphy & estate of Adele Kania to Wylie A. Goodman, 224 Highland St., Great Barrington, \$335,000.

-Patricia Boyd, estate of Patricia M. Keefner, estate of Thomas F. Keefner & Joeann Gagnon to Shunit Sarid, 26 Pleasant St., Great Barrington, \$594,000.

-Sharman I. Dubos, Sharman I. Palmer & Michael C. Dubos Sr. to Kenneth C. Benson & Anna K. Benson, 0 West Center Road, West Stockbridge, \$55,000.

-Donna Buono & Linda E. Laqueur, trustee, Laqueur Family Nominee Trust, to Steven Goodman & Steven R. Goodman, 94 Brett Road, Monterey, \$375,000.

-Susan Leo to Steven Schulz, 4 Lenox Road, West Stockbridge, \$405,000.

-Leigh Curtiss to John P. Humes & Elisabeth R. Humes, 102 Egremont Plain Road, Egremont & Great Barrington, \$275,000.

-Danny Charles Smith to Hilltown Hot Pies LLC, 224 Hillsdale Road, Egremont, \$767,500.

-Douglas J. Flackman to Adam R. Brebner & Miranda L. Purves, 402 West Road, Alford, \$419,000.

-Wanda M. Beckwith, trustee, Wanda M. Beckwith Revocable Trust, to Leila Hirvonen, 64 Lenox Road, West Stockbridge, \$370,000.

-35 Silver Street Nominee Trust, Karen M. Carson trustee, to Blackwater Realty LLC, 35 Silver St., Great Barrington, \$895,000.

-Mary A. Korte, Peter A. Buratto & estate of John Peter Buratto to Eighty-One Wilson Street Nominee Realty Trust, Mary A. Korte & Peter A. Buratto, trustees, & Dean Hill Capital LLC, property on Cross Road, West Stockbridge, \$170,000.

Stockbridge

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

-Notre Reve Inc. to Coco Lulu Hospitality Inc., 30 East St., Stockbridge, \$1.85 million.

-Leslie Beal, estate of Rosalie Beal & Helaine Koch to Thomas G. Jones & Leslie P. Beal, 1 Emerson Lane, Stockbridge, \$567,000.

-Kevin C. Charlton to Peter Arger & Heidi Reis-Arger, 11 Glendale Road, Stockbridge, \$180,000.

-Sharon Loraine Weiss to Virginia S. Hecker & John C. Hecker, unit 8, 41 Main St., Stockbridge, \$140,000.

Building Permits for March

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

His Town Hall office 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; and 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;



Also, new windows, wood stoves, insulation, sprinkler system, photovoltaics; tents, pools, hot tubs, spas, alarms, sprinklers, sheds, solar installations, and home occupations.

Building Permits in March

Fifty-three building permits were issued in March with fees paid of \$22,950 and estimated construction costs of \$3,380,321.

Fourteen permits were given for solar installations. Building fees totaled \$3,857 and construction costs were given as \$617,729. (THE NEWSletter no longer lists individual permits for solar panels.)

Following are permits issued in March, except for solar panels, with estimated building costs of \$35,000 or more and contractor if not the homeowner:

-AK Berkshire Properties, remodel unit with new kitchen, bath and vinyl windows at 116 West Ave., Joseph Reed, \$53,000.

-Frank Curcio, add porch with deck at 30 Kalliste Hill, James Waldman, \$63,500.

-Great Barrington Owner LLC, partial shell buildout at former Subway for leasable space at 323 Main St., Carl Mercieri, \$135,550.

-David Lagarce, two-story house at 25 Kalliste Hill, \$850,000.

-Dawn Colli, replace windows & renovate 34 Crosby St., Joseph Kennedy, \$48,000.

-Michael Kolber, addition to house at 110 Christian Hill Road, Richard Guyette Jr., \$1,125,500.

-Adam Kendall, remodel kitchen & two bathrooms at 300 Blue Hill Road, Jeffrey Heaton, \$165,000.

-Stephen Burton, remodel two bathrooms at 22 Hemlock Hill Road, Henry Kirchdorfer III, \$38,717.

THE NEWSletter unfortunately lacks the space to include all information., including all survivors.

Susan W. Mayo Bonak

Susan W. Mayo Bonak, 83, of Webster, formerly of Stockbridge, died April 3.

She graduated in 1958 from the former Williams High School and in 1961 from Henry W. Bishop III Memorial School of Nursing in Pittsfield.

She later earned a degree in health care administration from Saint Joseph's College. She received her administrator's license in long-term care in 1986.

She was a nurse at the former Pittsfield General Hospital, Fairview Hospital and Berkshire Medical Center. She also worked for Dr. Richard Clark in Great Barrington and for the federal professional standards review organization.

Mrs. Bonak also had been an emergency medical technician with the Southern Berkshire Ambulance Squad.

She retired in 1992 as administrator of Dalton Nursing Home.

She had served on the Stockbridge Historic Preservation Commission.

Her husband of 55 years, Chester Z. Bonak, died in 2018. She was also predeceased by her brother, William S. Mayo, in 2015.

Mrs. Bonak leaves her daughter, Susan M. Rabbitt of Fiskdale; her son, Michael S. Bonak of Chandler, Ariz.; and a grandson.

Birches-Roy Funeral Home handled arrangements.

Memorial donations are suggested to Berkshire Humane Society, 214 Barker Road, Pittsfield 01201; Southern Berkshire Ambulance Service, 31 Lewis Ave., Great Barrington 01230; or Tri-Valley Elder Services, 10 Mill St., Dudley 01571.

Krista Haley

Krista Haley, 53, of Great Barrington died March 22.

After graduating from Hotchkiss School and Mount Holyoke College, she worked in New York City and then, for 17 years, in Los Angeles.

In 2014, she and her husband moved to Great Barrington.

Mrs. Haley leaves her husband of 17 years, Justin Haley; a son, Reese; her mother, Marjorie Grossman; her sisters, Lori Belter and Beth Piantek; and her brother, Tom Grossman.

She was predeceased by her father, Carl Grossman.

Birches-Roy Funeral Home handled arrangements.

Recent Obituaries

Judith Shaw Hayes

Judith Bidwell Shaw Hayes, 85, of Monterey died March 30.

After graduating from the former Searles High School and Westfield State Teachers' College, she taught elementary school in New Jersey.

Her husband, Arnold Hayes, was in the Army and stationed at military bases in Fort Monmouth, N.J.; Panama; Edgewood Arsenal, Md.; Fort Devens; and Fort Meade, Md.

She was president of the NCO Wives Club.

The family moved to Monterey in 1977 when Mr. Hayes retired. She was children's librarian at Mason Library and sang with the Cobbletones and Hill and Dale Singers.

Mr. Hayes died in 2020. She was also predeceased by her sister Deborah Shaw.

Mrs. Hayes leaves her sister, Susan Shaw Kaplan of Texas; two daughters, Karen Hayes Traynor of Halifax and Linda Hayes Lentz of West Milford, N.J.; and a son, David Smith of Fairhaven, N.J.; eight grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

Finnerty & Stevens Funeral Home handled arrangements.

Memorial donations are suggested to any Monterey charitable organization such as Bidwell House Museum, Food Pantry, Public Library or First Responders.

Cathy J. Kellogg

Cathy J. Kellogg, 64, of Great Barrington died March 30 at Fairview Commons.

The former Cathy Chamberland, she graduated in 1976 from Monument Mountain Regional High School.

She was a stocker for K-Mart for many years.

Mrs. Kellogg leaves her son, J.R. Kellogg; five brothers, Major Raymond F. Chamberland III, Terry M. Chamberland, Brian K. Chamberland and the Rev. Gary S. Chamberland; her sister, Karen I. Chamberland; and her former husband, Jerry Kellogg.

She was predeceased by her sister Ann Marie Chamberland.

Birches-Roy Funeral Home handled arrangements.

Memorial donations are suggested to breast cancer or HospiceCare through the funeral home.

Terry Martin Moor

Terry Martin Moor, 80, of Stockbridge died March 17.

He was raised in Beaumont, Texas, and graduated in 1965 from the University of Texas-Austin with a degree in architecture. In 1964, he joined the Peace Corps in Tunisia, helping with urban development.

Mr. Moor earned a master's of liberal arts degree from Harvard University in 1989.

After managing his architectural design firm, he taught architecture at Wentworth Institute of Technology in Boston, where he became department head and dean of the Department of Architecture.

Mr. Moor developed and directed a study-abroad program for students to learn about architectural design in the south of France.

He designed Scotland House, an adult health center for Thompson Senior Center in Hartford, Vt.

He wrote "Reinventing an Urban Vernacular Developing Sustainable Housing."

Mr. Moor leaves his wife, Susan; his children, Katherine and Benjamin; his stepchildren Emily and William; and 11 grandchildren.

He was predeceased by his brother, Theodric "Ted" Edwin Moor Jr., in 2015.

Finnerty & Stevens Funeral Home handled arrangements.

Memorial donations are suggested to The People's Pantry, PO Box 1115, Great Barrington 01230.

Marilyn Stevens

Marilyn Stevens, 95, of Housatonic died April 3.

After high school in New York City, she worked for Metropolitan Life.

She and her husband, Frank Stevens, moved to Housatonic and opened Country Carpets.

Mrs. Stevens was an election poll worker and sang in local choral groups. For more than 60 years, she was a leading soprano in the First Congregational Church choir.

Mr. Stevens died in 1993. They had been married for 42 years.

Mrs. Stevens leaves her sons, Jeffrey of Great Barrington and Frank Christopher of South Egremont; a daughter, Cynthia of Pittsfield; six grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren.

Finnerty & Stevens Funeral Home handled arrangements.

Memorial donations are suggested to the First Congregational Church of Great Barrington, Southern Berkshire Ambulance Squad and Fairview Hospital through the funeral home.

Sustainability Committee Officers Suggesting It Be Dissolved

Chairman Natalie Narotzky and vice chairman Jovanina Pagano of the Strategic Sustainability & Livability Committee are recommending that it be dissolved.

"While the committee has engaged in some really meaningful work over the 5 years, we no longer have a quorum, and more importantly, our individual energy to keep it going has diminished," they wrote people interested in their work.

"We both still are very passionate about helping Great Barrington and the local area become a place where everyone is able to live healthily and safely ..." they wrote.

The committee's goals on its website page state in part:

"By advancing broad sustainability initiatives, the Town may be able to better retain and attract young residents to improve the vitality and economic sustainability of the Town."

Minutes posted on the town website show that the committee's first meeting was in December 2019. The last minutes posted are for May 25, 2022.

Why Selectman Abrahams Voted 'No' on Airport SP

This is the statement that Ed Abrahams read before the Selectboard's vote on whether to grant a special permit to the Walter J. Koladza Airport. The vote was 4-1, with Mr. Abrahams dissenting.

An airport in a residential neighborhood is a delicate balance. We missed an opportunity to really listen to various opinions and try to reach a compromise.

Here are my reasons why we can't approve this permit:

The applicant has stated that this decision is about having an airport vs. not having an airport, that if the town loses in court it turns the clock back to 1932. That isn't correct. We are not deciding if there should or shouldn't be an airport in that location. We are deciding if the benefits of granting a permit outweigh the detriments.

The airport is pre-existing, non-conforming so it can continue to be an airport with or without this permit.

Everything that every speaker said they liked about the airport can continue with or without this permit.

What can't continue without the permit is increasing the nonconformity.

If we lose in court, we can still permit specific expansions of nonconforming use and buildings.

If court says no medivac, we can permit that.

Without a permit, the Town controls growth. With it, we are at the mercy of the courts upholding our issuing of conditions normally reserved for FAA and DOT.

We saw the applicant install an underground gas tank on top of our water supply despite the fact that our zoning doesn't allow underground tanks in the WQPOD.

They were allowed to do that because it was the same size as the existing underground tank, not because it is a good idea to have underground tanks over an aquifer..

The Town should retain control over decisions about growth and change.

Too many of our conditions are potentially unenforceable.

According to our attorney, we may not be able to, and according to DOT we can't, enforce any conditions about # of flight operations, type of aircraft, or the hours of operation.

Even if these conditions are enforceable, the town doesn't have the staff or resources to enforce them.

If any condition becomes unenforceable, we don't know that we can revoke the permit.

If it is this board's opinion that the conditions are necessary to make the benefits outweigh the detriments,

And, if we can't be sure that we can enforce all the conditions,

And, if we can't be sure that we can revoke the permit if conditions are voided, how do we say the benefits still outweigh the detriments?

The major complaint is noise and we have done very little to address it. No information was provided by the applicant about how loud it is, nor how an increase in noise will be mitigated, and the applicant has stated that they are unable to enforce the noise mitigating flight paths. Some conditions will help (if we can enforce them), but not nearly enough. Our conditions only offer minor adjustments to the hours that noise will be a nuisance.

We are allowing continuous takeoffs and landings from 9-5 on Sundays.

Otherwise we are allowing them starting any time at all, including Christmas, Thanksgiving, and every other holiday except two.

We have set no limits on the number of annual flight operations or the amount of private helicopter activity.

We can't meet zoning bylaw 7.2.1.1

It shall be so located that it is not likely to become objectionable to adjoining and nearby property because of noise, traffic or other objectionable condition.

We have been asked to overrule Town Meeting and to rewrite 7.2.1. (which was approved by the AG) so that it says "more objectionable."

Even if we had the authority to do that, the applicant doesn't know the current or recent air traffic volume so can't say if it is increasing or decreasing, and didn't offer any evidence of either.

Abutters and others not living near the airport reported it has gotten busier in recent years.

DOT in 2020 said they expected a slight increase in air traffic.

How do we say it won't be more objectionable in the future if we don't know how busy it is or how busy it is likely to get?

How do we say it won't be more objectionable in the future if we don't know how many aircraft are there, how many flights, or how many students are doing continuous takeoffs and landings.

How do we say it won't be more objectionable in the future if we don't know and can't place secure limits on, operating hours, number of planes housed, types of aircraft, number or frequency of operations now, how much busier it has or hasn't gotten in recent years, and how busy it is likely to become in the future,

How can we possibly ensure 7.2.1 given ANY interpretation?

In 2020 we denied 7.2.1 because even a little increase in use would make the airport more objectionable to neighbors. It has gotten busier since then. Unless the Applicant is offering evidence that the use, noise, traffic, etc won't grow, how do we grant this permit?

They didn't provide any evidence that it won't get more objectionable.

We are being told that WQPOD doesn't apply, but the risks of toxic substances above our water supply is still an issue that we can and should consider with respect to the other relevant zoning by laws. The 2003 SWAP report says the airport is the biggest threat to the water supply. That's a huge negative.

Other than "we'll keep doing what we've been doing," the applicant hasn't told us how they will keep our water safe. If we give this permit, we do so:

Without knowing if there is sufficient liability insurance in case of a disaster,

Without knowing if there are proper protocols in place for water protection or if the Town has the ability to police those protocols,

Without knowing what hazardous materials are being used or whether any of them are included on the State's list of 600 or so prohibited substances,

Without knowing how much hazardous waste is stored and disposed of each month,

Without taking into account the environmental concerns, not just water, but air and noise pollution and fossil fuel use which will only get worse with growth.

The application was incomplete:

We weren't told and we don't know::

Existing land uses (how much and where is the Chapter 61A land) Location of wells within 400 ft of the lot line

Complete list of Hazardous Materials including storage and disposal method. Correct description of Open Space

If we approve this permit, we are doing so not really knowing how much open space we are talking about.

No numbers were provided to back up the claim of positive economic impact.

How many visitors to GB are staying for how many days, spending how much money? Even if there is currently a positive economic impact, If the airport doesn't get substantially busier with this permit than it is now, how will awarding this permit increase the positive economic impact?

Finally, what has changed since 2020?

From 2020 findings: "With the exception of the proposed hangar buildings, the Applicant does not propose to alter the character of the site, nor does it seek to substantially expand the airport use or operations."

From 2023 Application: Other than the hangars: "To be clear, this application contemplates the continued existence of the airport as currently constituted - the applicant does not propose any new construction or other expansion of the current nonconforming use.

In our 2020 decision denying a special permit, we found that "the benefits of the proposal do not outweigh the potential detriments." I won't list all the detriments, but the vast majority of them had nothing to do with the hangars.

For all of these reasons, it is clear that we cannot grant this permit.

TO: Trustees of the Great Barrington Libraries
FROM: Talya Leodari, Assistant Library Director
RE.: Stockbridge-Munsee Community Artifacts Repatriation - UPDATE
DATE: April 7, 2023

After the October 2022 meeting in which the Trustees voted to return the artifacts in the Taylor Collection to the tribes from which they came, I undertook a review and sorting of the collection. I divided the items into four basic categories: items that were associated with collection cards and are from the Great Barrington area, items that have no cards but are similar enough to the Great Barrington ones that they can realistically be assumed to be local, items with collection cards from elsewhere, and items with no extant collection cards associated with them. There was also a small box of items that are possibly of social or historical importance but unlikely to be of indigenous origin (these include two shark teeth found off the coast of Maine and pieces of the Berlin Wall). I repacked the items in clean bags and new boxes, carefully labeled. There were a few items that I thought might be of religious or ritual importance, or that were marked as being found with human remains and these I packed separately with a pinch of tobacco and covered with a piece of linen fabric, as requested on the Stockbridge-Munsee's repatriation brochure. I will contact the tribes associated with the other artifacts once this repatriation is complete.

I contacted Bonney Hartley, the Tribal Historic Preservation Manager based at Williams College, and broached the topic of the collection and repatriation. On November 9, 2022 I took the entire collection to Williamstown and met with Bonney and Jeff Bendremer, archaeologist and Tribal Historic Preservation Officer. I left the parts of the collection that are local with them for cataloging and assessment. In December Bonney contacted me with a few additional questions and to let me know that she wanted to discuss the collection with the tribe's Cultural Affairs Director. **On March 17, 2023 she emailed me to say that they had identified 16 items as being likely funerary in nature and the Tribe wishes to claim them under the "unassociated funerary objects" category of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA).** She attached an inventory of those items and I have begun the NAGPRA process with the National Parks Service.

The remainder of the collection includes many fine examples and unique cultural heritage items that the tribal museum would be pleased to receive and use in displays about the tribe's deep history in the Berkshires. **I am asking that the Trustees confirm their vote from the October 2022 meeting so that the Library may make a voluntary donation of the remainder of the collection pertaining to the Stockbridge-Munsee to the Arvid E. Miller Memorial Library Museum of the Mohican Nation in Bowler, Wisconsin.**

For further information, please see the formal request letter from Bonney Hartley, Tribal Historic Preservation Manager for Stockbridge-Munsee Band Community, attached.

Stockbridge-Munsee Tribal Historic Preservation

*Arvid E. Miller Library Museum
N8510 Mohheconnuck Road
Bowler, WI 54416*

*Extension Office
86 Spring Street
Williamstown, MA 01267*

Great Barrington Libraries Board
231 Main Street
Great Barrington MA 01230
c/o Talya Leodari, Ph.D., Assistant Director
via email only

April 6, 2023

Re: Donation of artifact collection

Dear Great Barrington Libraries Board:

Stockbridge-Munsee Community is the Tribal Nation indigenous to the Berkshires. Due to multiple removals we were forced to endure from these beloved homelands, our community now is based in Bowler, Wisconsin. Our Tribal Historic Preservation Office, in Williamstown, Massachusetts, has been pleased to work with Dr. Leodari on assessing the artifact collection of the Great Barrington Libraries. We worked to consult on the items that we identified as likely from burial contexts and therefore subject to the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), a Federal process with which we are underway and on track to complete in the next two months. When completed, these items will be reburied by the Tribe.

For the remainder of the items that we assessed, our Arvid E. Miller Memorial Library/Museum in Wisconsin—the repository of the Tribe's material culture and archive—would like to request the collection as a voluntary donation. Despite the lack of detailed provenance records for the collection, there are many unique cultural heritage items that our Museum would be pleased to receive and better connect our community with our deep history in the Berkshires.

If you approve, our Tribal Historic Preservation office would plan to first keep the collection here to work with Williams College students on producing a display on the Tribe's cultural history that is reflected in these materials, and to work with the Williams College Museum of Art on creating 3D photogrammetry images of some of the unique pieces. We would be happy to make a copy of the exhibit panel for your library if desired, and to share the photogrammetry images with you. Once the collection transfers to the Arvid E. Miller Memorial Library/Museum, the collection could always be loaned back to the Great Barrington Library or other local institutions upon request.

Thank you for consideration of this request to approve donation of the non-NAGPRA sensitive artifact collection to Stockbridge-Munsee Community.

Sincerely,

Bonney Hartley

Bonney Hartley
Tribal Historic Preservation Manager

(413) 884-6048

Email: preservation@mohican-nsn.gov



8 Town Regional School District Planning Board Update

GET THE FACTS. BE INFORMED. YOU DECIDE.

Merger Model under Consideration: In April 2022, the 8 Town Board voted to continue to develop the merger model recommended by our research team – merging the Berkshire Hills Regional School District and the Southern Berkshire Regional School District into a single preK-12 district, maintaining the existing elementary and middle schools as they are, but creating a new merged 9-12 high school to be built on the Great Barrington campus.

Progress on 8 Town Regional School District Agreement. Since our February 2023 update, the 8 Town board has made substantial progress on developing the terms of a regional school district agreement that would govern an 8 town district. Except for assessment methodologies (which continue under board deliberation), the board has reached agreement on most all of the substantive provisions. Among the most important, we have reached agreement on new school committee governance, district transition provisions, and which issues would require a 2/3 supermajority school committee vote (including votes to approve school budgets and incur debt, any vote to amend the regional agreement, and any vote to close a school).

On school closures, the Board agreed on a detailed process that would have to be followed before any school committee vote. It also agreed that in addition to a supermajority at the school committee level (with a requirement that the majority include affirmative votes from school committee representatives resident in 6 of the 8 towns), any vote to close a school would need to be approved by the voters of 6 of the 8 member towns. The Board also agreed to include provisions that would allow for intra-district choice. Parents would have the option to keep their children in their existing schools through all grade levels offered in that school (and associated middle grades) even if that school were not the one in closest proximity to their home. Intra-district choice would also be available to students to attend programs unique to a school, and, subject to seat availability, for general family preferences.

Finance Subcommittee Recommendation on Assessment Methodologies. At the April 11 board meeting, our finance subcommittee presented its recommendation on how costs of a merged district would be assessed across its 8 member towns. The methodologies cover operating costs (always the largest share of a town's assessment), capital costs generally, and capital costs for construction of a new high school in Great Barrington. The full presentation of that finance subcommittee recommendation is posted on the 8towns.org website [HERE](#). The finance subcommittee vote in favor of the recommendation was unanimous among the 5 voting members of the subcommittee, and 9-1 among the 10 RSDPB members who actively participated in the finance subcommittee deliberations (which spanned 14 meetings over 9 months). Full board deliberations on the recommended methodologies will begin at the next board meeting on May 3.

Timeline: The 8 Town board is targeting late May/early June for a vote on a recommendation on the proposed merger and a proposed regional agreement. If the board votes in favor of merger, that recommendation would be put before the voters at special town meetings to be held this fall to allow for additional community education and outreach.

Lucy Prashker, Chair of the 8 Town Regional School District Planning Board
Jake Eberwein, RSDPB Project Manager
April 2023

This is page 4 of the March-April Sheffield Times at sheffieldtimes.org. 8-Town Regional School District Planning Board's project manager, Jake Eberwein answers questions in it on the next two pages.

Community News

MORE ANSWERS NEEDED BEFORE SCHOOL MERGER VOTE, LIKELY IN FALL

The latest update from the 8 Town Regional School District Planning Board says that the Board's recommendations will probably be put before voters at special town meetings in the fall rather than at the eight town's annual meetings in May and June.

The press release says that the Board "continues to make solid progress" on how a new regional agreement would operate. The finance subcommittee is analyzing various ways to assess operating and capital costs and expects to present its recommended approaches to the full board in March.

The merger model the Board is recommending would combine the Berkshire Hills Regional School District (Great Barrington, Stockbridge and West Stockbridge) and the Southern Berkshire Regional School District (Alford, Egremont, Monterey, New Marlborough, Sheffield) into a single pre-K-12 district, maintaining the existing elementary and middle schools as they are, but creating a merged 9-12 high school to be built on the Great Barrington campus.

Community meetings raise questions. The 8 Town Board is working with two facilitators to explore what possibilities community members see for a merged high school. One such meeting was held at the Sheffield Senior Center on Jan. 21 and a second is scheduled at the Great Barrington Senior Center on March 18. (Register at the Board's website.) In addition, a larger community meeting is being planned for mid-May.

At the Sheffield meeting and other public meetings, questions made it clear that, despite voluminous and complicated information posted on the Board's website, basic questions have still not been answered in people's minds. For example, why not merge the high schools using the existing Mt. Everett building since it was built to accommodate the projected number of students? The Board's answer is that the idea was rejected because Sheffield is too far south to keep travel times more equivalent for all students in the new, larger district. People wondered if the decision shouldn't be revisited, given that it would save millions in construction costs. It was also noted that an Ashley Falls sophomore would have at least a 20-minute longer bus ride to a high school in Great Barrington.

Other questions heard at the meetings:

- If Mt. Everett's building isn't used for a merged high school, what would it be used for?
- How much money would Sheffield taxpayers save by agreeing to the merger, and would those savings last?
- What guarantee is there that the Egremont and New Marlborough elementary schools won't be closed, since if a merger takes place, decisions would be made by an all-new school committee?
- Which town(s) would have the power in the merged districts?
- What of the two districts' differing cultures and educational approaches would be maintained in a merged school? It was noted that

people can now choose which high school best suits their children's needs.

- What will happen to Mt. Everett's new partnership with Bard at Simon's Rock?

- What will happen to the SBRSD teachers, staff and superintendent long-term after a merger? The Board has indicated that union requirements mean very few positions would be lost initially?

Enhanced vocational and technical education. One of the benefits envisioned for a larger, merged district is more state-approved, Chapter 74 vocational programs. Vocational education professionals who live in the community have asked why the current merger plan covers so few programs of study. Currently, students at Monument Mountain can get training in two such programs, for automotive and horticulture careers. Mt. Everett offers internships and graduation pathways in six areas, but they're not Chapter 74-accredited.

Sheffield's representatives on the 8 Town Board currently are Bonnie Silvers, who is also a member of the SBRSD School Committee; Nadine Hawver, who is also a Selectman; and Colin Smith, a local CPA who is also on the Finance Committee. They are happy to answer questions, as are Lucy Prashker, chair of the 8 Town Board, and Jake Eberwein, its project manager. Use the contact form on the 8 Town website home page (www.8Towns.org). You can also find the Board's meeting schedule—and a voluminous Frequently Asked Questions.

UNCLE MILTON'S MEATLOAF DINNER

being served on Saturday, March 25
at Trinity U.M.C. on Rt. 7A in Ashley Falls

☛ Adults \$12.50

*Dinner includes meat loaf with potatoes & carrots
And homemade desserts!*

☛ Serving take-out only, curb-side pickup, from 4:00 to 5:30 pm
To reserve your dinner, call 229-8529 or 518-944-5303

Thank you for supporting our church!

EASTER EGG HUNT

to be held on Saturday, April 1, at 11:00am
at Trinity U.M.C. on Rt. 7A in Ashley Falls



In snow, rain or sun! It's
the largest egg hunt
in Southern Berkshire County

**ALL ARE WELCOME!
ALL CHILDREN GET A PRIZE!**



REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT PLANNING BOARD
8TOWNS.ORG

April 17, 2023

The following represent some of the most common questions asked. The questions below were raised in the Sheffield Times. Responses below:

Why not merge the high schools using the existing Mt. Everett building since it was built to accommodate the projected number of students?

The reasons are capacity and geography. Mt. Everett is not big enough to hold the combined current enrollment and grade structures of the two high schools (including grades 6-8 at SBRSD). Also, the Great Barrington high school is more centrally located (all 7 towns border Great Barrington, whereas only 2 towns border Sheffield) and has the added advantage of drawing from all directions in south county (including not just the 8 towns, but Farmington River, Richmond, Lee, and Lenox).

If Mt. Everett's building isn't used for a merged high school, what would it be used for?

Under the recommended model, grades 6-8 would remain at Mt. Everett with associated staff, and the building would remain operational as a middle school. Excess space could be repurposed for other uses.

How much money would Sheffield taxpayers save by agreeing to the merger, and would those savings last?

A recent finance presentation suggests that Sheffield could save as much as \$700,000 on total assessments in FY26 (combined capital and operations cost). Of course, the new school committee could determine to reinvest some of the anticipated operating costs savings into educational enhancements.

What guarantee is there that the Egremont and New Marlborough elementary schools won't be closed, since if a merger takes place, decisions would be made by an all-new committee?

The draft regional agreement requires that prior to any school closure, a study and public meetings would occur. A supermajority vote would be required of the school committee to close any school (2/3 of school committee members with six of those votes coming from members of 6 of the 8 towns), before the vote could be put to town voters for approval by 6 of the 8 towns. (Note: there is no guarantee now that those schools won't be closed by the SBRSD under its regional agreement, whose provisions are less robust than those in the draft 8 town agreement.)

Which town (s) would have the power in the merged district?

Like all public districts in the Commonwealth, school committees have the power to manage a public school district, not town officials or town voters. The proposed governance structure provides for district wide voting in the election of school committee members with residency requirements, assuring that the school committee includes residents from all 8 member towns.

What of the two districts' differing cultures and educational approaches would be maintained in a merged school?

There is considerable debate about the nature and extent of those differences. In terms of mission statements, objectives, and educational indicators, the districts are quite similar. During the transition period, all constituencies (staff, transitional school committee, and community) would be involved in educational planning for a merged, new high school. We anticipate those groups will continue the educational visioning work that the board has begun of examining preferred programming, courses, co-curriculars, schedule, school facility design, and additional educational enhancements, etc.

What will happen to Mt. Everett's new partnership with Bard at Simon's Rock?

It is expected that early college programming, along with innovation and career-vocational pathways, would continue to be available in a merged high school.

What will happen to the SBRSD teachers, staff and superintendent long-term after a merger?

Recognizing the reality that any merger/consolidation will take place over a number of years, it is expected that full time equivalent (FTE) reductions will be realized through attrition, defined as the natural movement of staff out of a district typically through retirement or resignation. Importantly, the current proposal would result in a significant increase in salaries for SBRSD faculty, whose salaries would be brought up to BHRSD pay scales. There would be a single superintendent for a merged district who would be chosen by the new school committee for the merged district.

Please submit any additional questions to 8towns.org or jakeeberwein@gmail.com