

THE NEWSletter

The Newsy Little Paper That Supplements Other Media

Volume 33 Number 10 January 2025

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Proposed Town Budget To Be Presented Feb. 11

MEETINGS ON THE PROPOSED TOWN BUDGET start **Feb. 11** at 6 p.m. when the proposed budget will be presented at a joint meeting of the Selectboard and Finance Committee. Review of that budget will continue in meetings of the two boards on **Feb. 12, Feb. 18, & Feb. 20**, all at 6 p.m., with a **public hearing scheduled for March 5** at 6 p.m.

Meetings are in-person in the Town Hall meeting room and on Zoom.

Voters at the **May 3** annual town meeting have final say on the budget, which is for the fiscal year that starts July 1.

According to the posted agendas, the **Feb. 11** meeting will include overview of the proposed operating budget and discussion of proposed budgets for selectboard/town manager, Finance Committee and reserve fund, town accountant, technology, assessors' office, collector/treasurer, human resources, town clerk, building inspector, health department, debt service, retirement, insurance, community services, veterans' affairs, boards and commissions, and celebrations and events.

Proposed budgets to be discussed **Feb. 12** are for Conservation Commission, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, planning/community development, Council on Aging, libraries, buildings and grounds, highway, parks and recreation, and wastewater.

Scheduled to be discussed **Feb. 18** are budgets for Police Department, Fire Department, emergency management, animal control, plus proposed special articles and proposed capital.

The **Feb. 20** agenda is for budget review and discussion.

Public Involvement

Both the selectmen and Finance Committee members usually allow attendees — in-person or on Zoom — to ask questions during discussion. Questions and comments also

(NEWS continues on page 3)

Higher BHRSC Budget Is Expected

The Berkshire Hills Regional School Committee will hold a public hearing on the school budget **Feb. 27** at 6 p.m. at Du Bois Regional Middle School and on Zoom.

The budget will be presented to the school committee at its next meeting, **Feb. 13** at 6 p.m.

Rich Dohoney, chairman of the committee's finance subcommittee, cautioned Jan. 30 that a level-funded budget is "almost a nonstarter" and "the budget will take a lot of thought and analysis."

A draft budget, presented Jan. 30 to the finance subcommittee, is reproduced below. No budget has been recommended yet as some amounts, such as for health insurance, which will increase, and state revenues, are not yet received.

Superintendent Peter Dillon said this is the most difficult budget year since he came to the district in 2009.

Eighty percent of the costs are for people, he told the subcommittee, adding that costs for people "can't be cut the way paper clips can be."

FY26 Preliminary Working Budget with Reductions, after House 1 & Rates

	SC Adopted 2024-2025	Proposed 2025-2026	Change	
Great Barrington	\$21,040,872.00	\$22,471,591.00	\$1,430,719.00	6.80%
Stockbridge	\$3,866,686.00	\$4,136,016.00	\$269,330.00	6.97%
West Stockbridge	\$3,653,683.00	\$3,590,912.00	(\$62,771.00)	-1.72%
Total	\$28,561,241.00	\$30,198,519.00	\$1,637,278.00	5.73%



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LATE NEWS!

An early look at the proposed budget arrived from the town after the rest of THE NEWSletter was written. Here's information from the town's news release. For lack of space, this is not the complete release but THE NEWSletter emailed the complete release to subscribers.

Also, the town clerk's office received no citizens' petitions for the May 3 (a Saturday) annual town meeting.

The following is reproduced from the news release:

Proposed FY26 Expenses At-a-Glance:

- **Town Operating Budget:** The proposed operating budget for the coming year is **\$16,803,173**, reflecting a **2.59% increase** (\$423,766) over FY25.
- **Wastewater Treatment:** The proposed Enterprise Fund operating budget is **\$3,188,167**, an **increase of 1.11%** (\$34,872) over FY25. The proposed Capital Budget for the Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) is **\$4,735,500** for projects outlined in sections 7 and 8 of the budget books.
- **Capital Budget:** The general fund capital budget requests a total authorization of **\$17,514,100**, with **\$7,592,000** expected to be funded through alternative sources such as CPA funds, grants, and Chapter 90 funding.
- **School Assessment:** The estimated assessment for Great Barrington's share of the **Berkshire Hills Regional School District Budget** is **\$22,092,916**, a **5% increase** (\$1,052,044) over FY25. The final school budget has not yet been released.

Estimated FY26 Revenues At-a-Glance:

- **Property Taxes:** This year's budget assumes that **\$30,758,810** of revenue will be collected through local property taxes, an **increase of \$752,087 or 2.5%**.
- **Local Receipts:** This year's budget assumes that **\$2,965,250** will be collected through local revenue streams. This conservative estimate remains unchanged from last year and includes motor vehicle excise taxes, license/permit and inspectional fees, and local option taxes from rooms, meals, and the sale of retail marijuana products.
- **State Aid:** The budget assumes an estimated **\$1,734,174** in state aid, reflecting an **increase of \$301,093 or 21%**.
- **Free Cash:** The conservatively estimated free cash reserve is **\$10,000,000**. This year's budget proposes to apply **\$3,675,000** in Free Cash to reduce the tax levy, the same amount as FY25.
- **Wastewater Enterprise Fund:** Retained earnings for the Wastewater Enterprise Fund are estimated at **\$5 million**.

BUDGET MAY BE FOUND ONLINE HERE: https://www.townofgb.org/sites/g/files/vyhlf636/f/uploads/fiscal_2026_municipal_budget.pdf

MEETING AGENDAS MAY BE FOUND ONLINE HERE: <https://www.townofgb.org/node/1319/agenda/2025>

Link to webinar: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87435677107>

Dial-in: (929) 205 6099 | Webinar ID: 874 3567 7107

In Person: Town Hall, 334 Main Street, Great Barrington

Meetings and More Scheduled in February

MEETING AGENDAS are posted on the town's website at townofgb.org, and sent by THE NEWSletter. The agendas tell where to attend and provide a Zoom link, if needed.

A meeting held with all members there in person may still be held even if a Zoom link doesn't work, according to the Division of Open Government.

Watch Past Meetings Online

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

Some boards, the Claire Teague Senior Center and town libraries have their own websites.

The Berkshire Hills Regional School District's website is at bhrsd.org. It, the

town, Cultural Council, police and fire departments also have Facebook pages.

The following meeting dates may change and more almost certainly will be added.

February

-Parks Commission meets Feb. 3, 5:15 p.m.

-Berkshire Hills Regional School Committee's sustainability subcommittee meets Feb. 4, 2 p.m.

-Tree Committee meets Feb. 5, 5 p.m.

-Selectboard meets Feb. 10 & 24, 6 p.m.

-Joint Finance Committee-Selectboard meetings on proposed budget for FY 2026 are Feb. 11, when proposed budget is presented, Feb. 12, Feb. 18, & Feb. 20, all at 6 p.m., with public hearing March 5, 6 p.m.

-Library Trustees meet Feb. 12, 5:30 p.m.

-BHRSC's Building Committee meets Feb. 12, 5:30 p.m.

-Planning Board meets Feb. 13 & 27, 6 p.m.

-Berkshire Hills Regional School Committee meets Feb. 13 & 27, 6 p.m.

-“What is Malware? Mason Talks Tech” with assistant library director and former Geek Squad agent Jamie Nicholson, Feb. 14, 4 p.m., Mason Library community room.

-Historic District Commission meets Feb. 20, 5:30 p.m.

-Du Bois Legacy Festival Feb. 23 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Mason Library.

-Conservation Commission meets Feb. 26, 6:30 p.m.

-Housatonic Improvement Committee meets Feb. 27, 6:30 p.m.

Libraries, Senior Center, Bus Services, Recycling

THE TOWN'S TWO LIBRARIES' website at gblibraries.org lists programs for many interests and different ages.

THE NEWSletter sends the libraries' monthly newsletter to its email list.

The New York Times, New York Times Cooking, Berkshire Eagle, 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.

Books, CDs and DVDs can be ordered by calling Mason Library at 528-2403 or emailing masonramsdell@gmail.com or bark.cwmars.org. Wifi is available on both libraries' lawns and Mason's parking lot.

Museum passes are also available.

Mason Library

Mason Library on Main Street, Great Barrington, is closed Sundays and open Monday through Fridays from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Its phone number is 528-2403.

Ramsdell Library

Ramsdell Library on Main Street, Housatonic, is open Sundays from 1 to 4

p.m., Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 1 to 6 p.m.; closed Thursdays and Fridays, and open Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Its phone number is 274-3738.

Ramsdell has a loaning Library of Things that includes visual reality goggles, a sewing machine, a staple gun and a button maker.

* * *

THE CLAIRE TEAGUE SENIOR CENTER at 917 South Main St. offers activities and fitness classes, lunches and help with technology, driver-license renewals, and more. Its phone number is 528-1881.

Its website lists lunch menus and is at greatbarringtonseniors.org.

Staff is available Mondays through Fridays to answer calls and offer counseling for SHINE, Serving the Health Insurance Needs of Everyone.

Big Y donations are available Mondays and Wednesdays.

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

* * *

SOUTH COUNTY CONNECTOR, fka Tritown Connector, bus service has a new website, socoride.org.

The town transit program provides transportation for people who call 413-591-3826 at least 48 hours in advance.

A Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation grant lets the program offer free service until 11:30 p.m. Fridays for veterans, except for Pittsfield medical rides; and for seniors and for people with disabilities needing transportation to local food pantries and free meal sites.

Berkshire Regional Transportation's website is at Berkshirerta.com.

* * *

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.

Its fees are at townofgb.org/recycling-transfer-station.

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Cost to receive THE NEWSletter in large type is \$40 for 12 issues, plus the annual print subscription.

Checks should be payable to THE NEWSletter and mailed to it at POB 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 everything to as many people as you want, but having THE NEWSletter send the emails between issues is \$5 a year for each name.

-EWM

Budget cont. from page 1; Selectboard News

can be provided during citizens' speak time, a town bylaw-required item on all agendas.

Questions and comments can be more detailed than at a town meeting, when many other articles are on the agenda, or warrant, and people tend to be impatient to finish.

Budget Concerns Expressed

Selectboard and Finance Committee members are already hearing from residents concerned about increases to their taxes, called difficult to pay for people on fixed incomes.

During the Jan. 13 Selectboard meeting, Charles Williamson complained that the Berkshire Hills Regional School accepts students from nondistrict towns through school choice, which, he noted, means a cost to the district because the state's reimbursement doesn't cover the actual cost to educate that student and the family doesn't pay anything to the district.

The town needs "to get spending under control," James Bailly stated.

The Affordable Housing Trust board should be elected, not appointed, and the Community Preservation Committee funds "people's pet projects," he stated.

Michelle Loubert said she was also concerned about the CPC recommendations.

'Be Extremely Honest'

At the Finance Committee meeting the next night, Mr. Bailly told members they must "be extremely honest with taxpayers and voters" about costs and how much the state provides.

Jan Wojcik and James Garzon also expressed concern about finances, with Mr. Wojcik saying it was not appropriate for CPC funds to be used for private projects.

The CPC's recommendations were reported in the December NEWSletter. They are recommendations to town meeting voters, who make the final decision.

Funds for community preservation expenditures come from a yearly 3% surcharge on real estate taxes, discounting the first \$100,000 of assessed value. The state Community Preservation Trust Fund also provides funds.

* * *

NOMINATION PAPERS are available until **March 24** at the town clerk's office in the Town Hall. A candidate will be on the printed ballot if 30 registered voters sign.

Town elections will be **May 13** with polls open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

The Selectboard has two seats up. One is a vacancy to fill the seat of Leigh Davis, who resigned and is now a state representative. The other is that of Steve Bannon, who has announced he seeks re-election.

Philip Orenstein announced Feb. 3 that he seeks election to the Selectboard.

The town clerk's office corrected its listing of library trustees' terms. Sharon Shaloo's term ends in 2026, not this year. Up

this year are Lauren Clark and Dr. Ruby Chan; both seek re-election.

Other incumbents seeking re-election are moderator Michael Wise, Finance Committee member Milena Cerna and Planning Board member Brandee Nelson

Board of Health chairman Michael Lanoue said he is undecided.

Not seeking re-election is Zoning Board of Appeals member Carolyn Ivory.

The Housing Authority has two vacancies.

Candidates' Forum April 30

The Democratic and Republican town committees and THE NEWSletter will hold a candidates' forum **April 30** at 6:30 p.m. at the Claire Teague Senior Center.

* * *

THE SELECTMEN HAVE APPOINTED the charter-required **seven members of this year's town manager search committee.**

They are former selectmen Kate Burke and Sean Stanton; former town clerk Marie Ryan, who is now West Stockbridge town administrator; community liaison Jovanino Pagano; former Finance Committee member Tom Blauvelt; SoCo Creamery owner Eric Bruun; and Affordable Housing Trust co-chairman Fred Clark.

Working with Community Paradigm Associates of Plymouth, they will interview candidates to succeed Mark Pruhenski, who has is now town manager of Middlebury, Vt.

Thirty people applied for the committee. A list of the applicants is on the town website in the packet for the Selectboard's meeting.

When the item started to be discussed at the Jan. 27 meeting, selectman Eric Gabriel suggested appointing Ms. Ryan and the six former selectmen who had applied — Ed Abrahams, Deb Phillips, Walter Atwood, Peter Fish, Mr. Stanton and Ms. Burke.

Diversity Needed on Committee

That could be a set mindset, Ms. Loubert observed, noting that she was not an applicant. Some diversity is needed, she said, adding that it was the "easy way, but sometimes the easy way isn't the best way."

Others agreed, including Claudia Shapiro, Ellen Lahr, selectman Garfield Reed and Maureen Quigley.

Votes on those finally appointed were unanimous.

Interim town manager is Chris Rembold. Selectboard chairman Steve Bannon said he is paid Mr. Pruhenski's salary of \$157,650, and is not being paid his salary as assistant town manager and director of planning and development, although he continues to perform those responsibilities. That salary was \$133,960.

* * *

ALSO DURING THE Jan. 27 meeting, the selectmen:

-Approved an affordable housing restriction from Marble Block Realty LLC for apartments at 268-274 Main St. At last year's town meeting, the property received a CPA grant of \$150,000 for housing.

-Agreed to apply to Berkshire Regional Planning Commission for 2025 District Local Technical Assistance for planning help related to re-use of the Simon's Rock campus.

-Discussed a proposed bylaw for maintenance of vacant commercial buildings;

-Saw a presentation by town community liaisons Jovana Pagano and Sylvana Proaño about their work. The presentation is also available from THE NEWSletter.

-Approved an entertainment license to W.E.B. Du Bois Legacy Committee for a Du Bois Legacy festival **Feb. 23** from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Mason Library. Dr. Du Bois was born Feb. 23, 1868, in Great Barrington.

-Approved several one-day beer and wine licenses for the Great Barrington Fish and Game Association.

The Jan. 27 and 13 meetings included executive sessions regarding negotiations to acquire Housatonic Water Works and the appeal of the Department of Public Utilities rate increase for the company, plus the lawsuit brought by local marijuana business.

During the Jan 13 meeting, Taft Farms Inc. at 119 Park North was granted a liquor license.

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HWW Says No Funds To Build Treatment Plant

AN ATTORNEY FOR HOUSATONIC WATER WORKS has notified the state Department of Public Utilities that it can't get a loan so it **can't build the scheduled manganese filtration plant.**

It can't get a loan because of perceived financial risks, Jesse S. Reyes of Womble Bod Dickinson LLP wrote the DPU. His letter is reproduced in this issue.

The Great Barrington Board of Health is primarily blamed because it has appealed a Superior Court preliminary injunction against its order that HWW retain a consultant and an independent testing lab chosen by the board, test more often and at more locations, provide an alternative supply of water and be subject to fines of \$1,000 a day for violations.

The board's order is available on its page on the town website, townofgb.org.

The order "would have placed the Company at risk of financial insolvency within a short period," the letter states, adding that HWW's lenders are waiting for the issue to be resolved.

In its rate decision, the DPU had approved a rate increase of 39.68% to take effect Aug. 1, 2025, for the capital project to install the manganese filtration system. That increase is the second of five scheduled.

DPU's decision, reproduced in Volume 33, Number 5 of THE NEWSletter, notes that the Department of Environmental Protection requires HWW to install the filtration system. THE NEWSletter already filed a Public Records request for DEP's response to notice that the system is being delayed.

In a separate action, Great Barrington and West Stockbridge are appealing DPU's rate hike, as THE NEWSletter has reported.

Filtration System's Purpose

The filtration system was intended to end periods of discoloration in water from HWW. In a Sept. 28, 2022 letter to Jim Mercer, HWW treasurer and, with his father, Fred, co-owner of the company, Deirdre Doherty, drinking water/municipal services chief of DEP's bureau of water resources, wrote in part that as the GreenSand Plus pilot sessions move ahead:

"... the matter of residual manganese within the Housatonic distribution system remains largely unaddressed."

She stated that "to protect customers and to limit impacts," steps should be taken, including "Frequent water quality testing for total coliform bacteria, turbidity, manganese and color."

'Consider Providing Alternate Water'

"Consideration should be given to providing alternate water to those most sensitive customers, including the elderly and children," Ms. Doherty stated.

An HWW notice about manganese is reproduced in this NEWSletter issue.

Jim Mercer estimated in an Aug. 1, 2022, note to customers that the filtration system would cost an estimated \$1.75 million to \$2 million.

Fred Mercer was notified in June 2024 that the federal Environmental Protection Agency and MassDEP had awarded \$350,000 for the project under the grant program for Emerging Contaminants for Small or Disadvantaged Communities.

EPA, DEP Question Proposed System

In an Oct. 4, 2022, administrative consent order regarding HWW disinfection by-product violations, Ms. Doherty of the DEP noted that the Environmental Protection Agency has not identified "Greensand Plus filtration as a best technology or treatment technique for achieving Disinfection Byproduct compliance, nor is it a MassDEP approved technology for DBP control."

(HWW continues on page 5)

Petitions To Have Town Buy HWW, GBFD for Total Cost of \$4.3 Million

SHARON GREGORY of Hollenbeck Avenue is circulating petitions asking voters to acquire Housatonic Water Works and the Great Barrington Fire District, which provides water to Great Barrington.

She needs 200 signatures to have a special town meeting on the requested warrant articles. Each article would require a favorable two-thirds vote at the town meeting.

Pay Up To \$2.3 Million for HWW

The petition calls for acquiring HWW "for an amount not to exceed \$2.3 million, exclusive of any debt, pending or incurred, to own and control the Housatonic Water Works system and all its facilities and property rights."

Acquiring the GBFD would be "for an amount not to exceed \$2 million."

The two water companies would be consolidated into a Great Barrington Water District, the petition explains.

The petitions call for a special town meeting "scheduled in advance of and separate from the May Annual Town Meeting."

At THE NEWSletter's deadline, each petition still needed signatures. As noted on page 3, the Selectboard is negotiating to buy HWW.

GBFD Doesn't Seek New Owner

Members of the Prudential Committee, which runs the Great Barrington Fire District, are not interested in a change, they said at their Jan. 21 meeting.

They seemed dismissive of the petitions that seek a special town meeting and to buy them out.

(NEWS cont. on page 5)

Attempt Already Made For Town To Buy HWW

This is not the first attempt to replace HWW. In March of 1991, David Cook gave the then-selectmen petitions with more than 200 signatures requesting that they help create a Housatonic Fire District.

But, according to an article in the former Berkshire Courier, the selectmen said:

"...while they were willing to place an item on the annual meeting warrant, they are not willing to support having the entire town assume the cost of purchasing the privately held water company or the cost of making mandated system improvements."

There's no indication the petition went before voters. However, in their report for 1992, selectmen chairman Richard Louison, David Smith Jr., Ed Morehouse, Herbert Wolff and Rachel Snyder wrote:

(NEWS continues on page 5)

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Bishop West Real Estate Inc. in Massachusetts, New York, Florida, Vermont, and Dunes Real Estate, South Carolina

HWW Not Building Treatment Plant, continued from page 4

Concerns About HAA5 Levels

That consent order also addressed concerns that HWW had exceeded HAA5 maximum contaminant level at certain periods.

MassDEP rejected HWW's long-term compliance option and:

"... finds that respondent's water system has demonstrated that it is susceptible to increases in HAA5 levels during severe weather events, and that basing future

HAA5 compliance on weather stability is not a viable long-range plan to prevent future violations."

DPU's rate increase approval said the first of the five possible increases was for a new chlorine intake intended to correct HAA5 problems.

That increase was to take effect Aug. 1, 2024, be for \$129,153 and mean an increase of 18% over the previous year.

The Selectboard page on the town website at townofgreatbarrington.org has information from the DEP about manganese, the appeal by Great Barrington and West Stockbridge of DPU's rate hike approval, and DPC Engineering's Powerpoint presentation on Oct. 28, 2024, of the "Evaluation of Anticipated Operating Costs for Housatonic Water Works and Possible Town Water Utility."

Petitions To Buy HWW, GBFD cont.

Chairman Walter "Buddy" Atwood asked rhetorically who would get the buyout money. They questioned the accuracy of the finances Ms. Gregory is using.

Jim Mercer attended the meeting but did not speak.

The Fire District last September bought for \$95,000 land on Christian Hill Road from Community Land Trust in the Southern Berkshires Inc. to use for a connection with Housatonic Water Works.

The Department of Environmental Protection has requested both water companies get an additional water source.

The district plans to borrow \$5 million for that connection and to install ultraviolet disinfection at the Green River Pump Station.

Prudential Committee Members

Besides Mr. Atwood, Prudential Committee members are treasurer Ken Schumacher, Robert Hammer, William Foster and William Brinker. They are elected during annual membership meetings in May, open to all district water users.

Its website: greatbarringtonwater.org

No Fluoride Used

Neither the Fire District nor HWW uses fluoride. According to a recent article in the Boston Globe, no water company in western Massachusetts does.

Mr. Mercer told THE NEWSletter that "We've never added fluoride... always thought it should be a personal choice."

Attempt Made from p. 4

"Water continued to play a significant role, especially for the customers of the Housatonic Water Works Company. Following a rate increase request for 900% and a settlement of about 188%, the Town moved forward to appeal the decision of the D.P.U. on behalf of the Housatonic Rate Payers Alliance. Town Counsel and Associate Town Counsel [Dennis Downing and Bart Gordon] are representing the Town and the case remains in litigation at the close of 1992."

The DPU decision on HWW's rate hike was apparently upheld as NEWSletter files don't indicate that the town won.

A Subjective Comment

Reminder To Town Officials: Don't Close a Door on Public

WHY IS Selectboard chairman Steve Bannon on a private committee to find a future use for the Simon's Rock campus — and not showing any interest in a public discussion of this?

He, Affordable Housing Trust member Peter Most, Planning Board member Pedro Pachano and who knows what other town officials have agreed to keep this a matter to be discussed behind closed doors, away from the public and with some names kept from public disclosure.

They chose this option rather than a committee appointed by the town manager or Selectboard.

A private discussion would be fine if they were only private residents (as are some on this undefined committee). But they are also public officials and they are discussing a matter that affects the public, perhaps considering agreements or finances that will involve the public — all out of the public eye.

Another Action Kept from Public

Mr. Bannon is also chairman of the Berkshire Hills Regional School Committee, which did not inform the public that it was inviting Richmond — and who knows what other towns — to join the district.

When THE NEWSletter asked Mr. Bannon why this was handled behind closed doors, he said it was because negotiations were involved.

Nonsense. As chairman of the Selectboard, Mr. Bannon announced the town was negotiating to buy the private Housatonic Water Works. Does he really think inviting another town to join a public school system isn't something the public should know?

Let's hope 2025 is the year in which public officials — whatever board they're on — remember that the public is supposed to be informed.

* * *

HERE'S ANOTHER MATTER on which, judging from emails I've received, the public wants information.

In 2023, I asked then-town manager Mark Pruhenski and Vijay and Chrystal Mahida, acting as 79 Bridge Street Realty LLC, what was happening with the special permit given in 2016 to the realty company to convert the former Searles School to an 88-guest hotel. No one replied.

In 2024, I asked Mr. Pruhenski and Selectboard chairman Bannon, who was on the board when the special permit was granted on May 3, 2016. No one replied.

The former gymnasium has been demolished but no building permit has been granted for work on the former school.

However, town bylaws state (and I boldfaced):

"10.4.8 Lapse. Special permits shall lapse if a substantial use thereof or construction thereunder has not begun, except for good cause, within 24 months following the filing of the special permit approval (plus such time required to pursue or await the determination of an appeal referred to in G.L. c. 40A, s. 17, from the grant thereof) with the Town Clerk."

I checked Jan. 28 with town clerk Josh Risen and that office hasn't received anything. The building department reports that it hasn't, either, except to demolish the gym.

So it looks as though there is another area of no information to the public about what might be happening with an empty building and an expired special permit.

Let's hope a majority of the town manager screening committee insists that finalists swear devotion to the concept of open meetings, public records and adherence to town bylaws.

-Eileen W. Mooney

News of Berkshire Hills Regional School District

District Reacting To Federal Deportation Moves

THE FEDERAL MOVE to deport illegal immigrants is causing many students to no longer feel safe in school, the student who represents Monument Mountain Regional High School on the Berkshire Hills Regional School Committee, said Jan. 30.

Eriel Dominquez made his comment during his report on what is happening at the high school.

Committee member Bill Fields of Great Barrington asked superintendent Peter Dillon whether any presentation about deportation moves had been made to students and school staff.

"In some small ways, yes," Mr. Dillon answered.

Staff has memos from the state attorney general's office about procedures if Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials come to a school, he explained.

He is waiting for a one-page version of that memo to provide to families, including students, he said.

Big Goal: Support Students, Families

"Our big goal is to be supportive to students and their families," Mr. Dillon stated.

He and other administrators have been in "constant dialogue with many of the non-profits doing this work" and trying to clarify some things," he added.

Sample Warrants Reviewed

When pressed by Sarah Mugridge during public comment at the end of the meeting, Mr. Dillon added that he has had feedback from the district's lawyer and sample warrants have been reviewed with the schools' front-office staff so they know what is and is not appropriate.

Also, he said, Massini Bus Co. has communicated with its employees that they are to support students and not disclose information about them. If such requests are made, parents are to be informed.

Mr. Fields praised the high school's guidance department for working with students on the matter. Eriel Dominquez, the

student representative, can be seen nodding agreement with that statement on the recording. He had earlier praised the guidance department for its work with students in his report.

Ms. Mugridge said she appreciated the ICE talk but wanted more information, including that people requesting information about students are told to wait while the superintendent reviews the request with legal counsel and that parents are immediately notified.

Erica Mielke and Kate Anderson also spoke about the need to clarify that students, including transgender ones, are kept safe.

(NEWSletter note: The school committee is not a town board so citizens' speak is not required on its agendas. However, public comments are heard at the end of meetings.)

Analysis of De-Leveling

Also during the meeting, Monument principal Christopher Barnes presented a "mid-year analysis of de-leveling and honors distinction patterns."

THE NEWSletter sent the slide presentation to its email list.

Mr. Fields said de-leveling "got rid of the caste system" that existed when he taught at the high school before retiring.

Committee member Sarah Bourla of West Stockbridge said she wants to hear more about this from teachers.

Budget To Be Presented

Although the agenda lists "Preliminary Draft FY26 Budget Presentation," no budget was presented. More information is on page 1 of this NEWSletter.

The budget will be presented at the committee's next meeting, **Feb. 13** at 6 p.m.

Berkshire Health Group has a 16% rate increase, which is "very unusual," business administrator Sharon Harrison told the finance subcommittee at its meeting earlier on Jan. 30. She is waiting for the final rate, she said.

She is "not very confident" about fiscal year 2027, she commented.

Zero increases for years with no insurance increase was probably a mistake, Mr. Bannon observed.

Mr. Dillon said the district has apparently lost some Rural Aid.

Mr. Dohoney requested that the subcommittee receive a five-year staffing plan.

* * *

The building committee planning a **new high school on the present campus** voted unanimously Jan. 22 to use the **construction delivery method** rather than a project manager.

A slide shown by Donna DiNisco of DiNisco Design is reproduced on this page. Her entire presentation is at Monument-buildingproject.org

Presidential Honor To MMRHS Teacher

Elsa Hernandez is one of 336 educators to receive a Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching.

Ms. Hernandez has taught biology, anatomy, physiology and introduction to healthcare in her nine years at Monument Mountain Regional High School.

Each award winner receives \$10,000 from the National Science Foundation.

Ms. Hernandez grew up in Palma, Spain, and has a doctorate in molecular oncology from the German Cancer Research Center at the University of Heidelberg in Germany.

She has presented at local, state, and national conferences on such topics as molecular diagnostic systems and educational reforms such as the positive impact of student-teacher alliances, according to a news release.

She began her career as a scientist and transitioned into education.

Construction Delivery Method | CM vs D/B/B

Construction Manager—Ch. 149A Pros

- A CM is typically hired during design and offers phasing estimating and constructability reviews. This is best utilized if they are hired early in design.
- Selection based on qualifications, experience, proposed team & pricing.
- Owner with advice from the OPM and Design team selects the CM.
- Contract is a Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP), with holds and allowances for unclear scope, to reduce change orders.
- Holds, allowances & contingencies in the CM GMP provide additional financial protection to the owner.
- Any cost savings are returned to the owner.
- Subcontractors are competitively bid with bid results provided to the owner.

Construction Manager—Ch. 149A Cons

- Preconstruction services for a CM will cost several hundred thousand dollars.
- The CM's team is presented during the RFP process. The CM contract requires approval of any substitutions. However changes to the team can occur.
- The CM GMP typically includes holds, allowances and contingencies that are not typically included in a DBB "lump sum" bid. This could result in additional costs of 4-8%.
- There are no longer additional reimbursement points from the MSBA for selecting the CM delivery method.
- Application must be submitted and approved by the Office of the Inspector General for this delivery method.

Design Bid Build — Ch. 149 Pros

- Construction Documents complete before builder is involved.
- Lower initial cost because there are no holds, allowances or contingencies in the price.
- Plans are bid as drawn and there is no interpretation of design intent by the bidder.
- Costs above the bid/contract value would be the GC's risk. However the GC may attempt to pursue these costs as change orders.
- Early site bid packages are available.

Design Bid Build — Ch. 149 Cons

- No opportunity for builder input on design, construction phasing, coordination, schedule or value engineering during the design phase.
- Lower initial cost but more likely to have change orders because there are no holds or allowances.
- Contract is based on "lump sum" competitive bid, awarded to the lowest responsible bidder.
- Savings on actual costs below the bid "lump sum" amount become contractor profit.
- Early bid packages are not available for concrete, steel or long lead items.
- Potentially smaller bid pool, the number of GC's that can bid a \$100+ Million project in western mass is limited. Many large CM will not bid DBB projects and prefer the CM delivery method.

Updates on Planning Board, Former Cook's Garage

WORK MAY BE PAUSING on the Master Plan before its reconsideration got underway. But it apparently will be replaced as a project by an update of the town's Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP).

Chris Rembold, interim town manager and director of planning and development, said the proposed town operating budget will have no funds for it.

However, he told the Planning Board Jan. 9, an updated OSRP is needed to get grants and state funding.

He suggested the Selectboard, Parks Commission, Tree Committee, Community Preservation Committee and others could be involved, with the Planning Board dedicating one hour at one of its two monthly meetings to the updating.

Members Jeremy Higa and Malcolm Fick were absent but chairman Brandee Nelson, Pedro Pachano, Jonathan Hankin and associate member Jackie Kain seemed agreeable.

Ms. Kain and board members have been reaching out to town boards and committees to ask what in the previous Master Plan has been accomplished and what needs to be done.

2 Bylaw Proposals To Have Hearings

Also during the Jan. 9 meeting, members agreed to start the process to put two bylaw changes on the town meeting warrant.

One is a proposed bylaw that would replace Planned Unit Resident Development and "keep homes reasonably small and affordable," Mr. Rembold observed. The other proposal involves open space requirements for multi-unit residential dwellings, drafted by Mr. Rembold.

The proposals will go to the Selectboard, which will send them back to the Planning Board to schedule the public hearing.

Rezone Simon's Rock?

Also discussed during the Jan. 9 meeting was whether to rezone Simon's Rock, which is closing its campus when this semester ends. Campus buildings were allowed as educational uses; with no school on the campus, some buildings, such as the athletic center, will be nonconforming.

Board chairman Brandee Nelson suggested the board could ask Simon's Rock officials if a zoning change would be a hindrance or a help.

She spoke with Peter Most of a private group considering re-use of the campus and he "said the group is not looking this far ahead," she reported.

Mr. Pachano, a group member, declined to identify other members when resident Claudia Shapiro asked him to do this.

People Can Afford Higher Rent?

During general board discussion, Mr. Pachano said a rent roster from the assessor shows that median rent for a one-bedroom apartment is \$1,250 and census data shows that people in town can afford 10% more than that.

Mr. Hankin called the information "bogus."

Mr. Pachano said rents are "extremely low" and "affordable to people who work in Town but they don't live here," according to the minutes.

* * *

THE HOUSATONIC IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE wants to meet with the Planning Board to discuss how to plan parking spaces at **426 Park St., the former Cook's Garage** now owned by the town.

The Selectboard is waiting for HIC to recommend how to handle the building's future, such as issuing a request for proposals for future uses or to sell it.

The committee seems agreed that it does not want the building torn down.

A recent design session by architects produced plans to keep the exterior but build new interior walls that could handle adding one or two stories to the building.

Funding sources want at least 20 apartments, Ashkahn Pajoohi, an adjunct instructor at New York University, advised during the design session.

Some architects suggested including a restaurant or other business with apartments.

Besides Mr. Pajoohi, other participants who volunteered for the Nov. 23 session were Heather Bensko of Therben; Kimberly Duval, Principal 41 Studios;

Also, Glenn Goble and Steve McAllister, Clark Green + BEK; Robert Harrison, Bradley Architects;

Also, Joseph James, Eponymous Practice Landscape Architecture; Joe Lesch and Sarah Lesch, Design Kit; and Alexandra Lee, Compass 360 design.

Looking Back at 2017 Town Meeting

OK, Safe Community; No, School Merger

DURING CITIZENS' SPEAK at the Jan. 13 Selectboard meeting, Charles Williamson asked what the town is paying as a "sanctuary town."

Selectboard chairman Steve Bannon replied "nothing." A subscriber was curious about the policy that led to this so it is reproduced in this issue.

It's also under "Proclamations" on the Selectboard's website page. The policy dates back to the 2017 annual town meeting when voters — by an almost unanimous vote — approved the article to make Great Barrington a "safe and inclusive community."

According to THE NEWSletter's coverage of the meeting, the 12 people speaking on the article included now-retired Police Chief William Walsh.

The department does not now enforce immigration law, he told voters. Fingerprints, taken when someone is arrested, are sent to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and courts decide whether to hold someone, he explained.

* * *

THAT MEETING HAD another warrant article of current interest. The final article, which failed, was a proposal by

Sharon Gregory that the school committee and Selectboard "form a delegation to discuss with other school districts and towns creating an **expanded regional high school**."

THE NEWSletter reported:

Bannon, Dillon Oppose Merger Talk

"Selectman Steve Bannon, who is also chairman of the BHRSC, and district superintendent Peter Dillon said the committee is unnecessary.

"The proposal 'will have other towns look at us from a position of weakness,'" Mr. Bannon said."

Attitudes Change on Adding Towns

Five years later — in the spring of 2022, the 8-Town Regional School District Merger Committee began considering combining the three-town Berkshire Hills and five-town Southern Berkshire regional school districts with all students attending a new high school to be built on the Monument Mountain Regional High School campus.

Voters said no to that.

More recently, the BHRSC has asked Richmond and perhaps other school systems if they would like to join its district.

Richmond said no to that. -EWM



402 Park Street

P.O. Box 547

Housatonic, MA 01236

housatonicrealestate.com

413.274.5065

Update on Design of a New Division Street Bridge

THE HIGHWAY DIVISION of the state’s Department of Transportation held a public hearing Jan. 15 on design of the proposed Division Street bridge.

The bridge was closed to vehicular traffic in 2019 and then removed with a temporary bridge installed in 2022.

The hearing was on the design of the new bridge, expected to be started in fall of 2026, with construction to take two years.

The new bridge will have two lanes with room for bicycles or pedestrians on each side.

The state will pay 80% of the expected \$11 million cost, with the federal government expected to provide the remaining 20%.

The public hearing took about 15 minutes. Five to 10 people attended, according to interim town manager Chris Rembold.

Where To See Recording

THE NEWSletter watched the recording, available at <https://www.mass.gov/event/great-barrington-bridge-replacement/division-street-over-housatonic-river-01-15-2025>

Comments may be sent to massdotprojectmanagement@dot.state.ma.us or to Carrie Lavaille, chief engineer, MassDot, 10 Park Plaza, Boston 02116, attention project management, project file 612183.

One person who already sent a comment is Michelle Loubert, who lives at 70 Division St., near the bridge. She feels truck weight caused the bridge problems.

DOT: Lack of Maintenance a Factor

In a July 26, 2022 letter, Francisca Heming, district highway director, disagreed that weight on the bridge was a factor.

“Rather,” she wrote, “it was lack of timely preventative maintenance and increased use of de-icing chemicals.”

Here’s Mrs. Loubert’s letter, slightly tightened for space reasons.

Concerns About Weight, Enforcement

“I was unable to attend the public hearing regarding the Division Street Bridge held January 15, 2025. ... However, I did view the recording of this meeting.

“I have the following concerns regarding the permanent bridge project. However, at this point in this public comment, I would like to state I also had concerns regarding the temporary bridge.

“These concerns involved safety at the bridge. I met with Great Barrington Selectboard member Garfield Reed at the bridge in December 2023. At this meeting, he agreed with some of my concerns. As a matter of fact, when exiting the parking lot located near the bridge, Mr. Reed hit the guardrail, damaging the front end of his truck.

“Why did this happen? The signage at the exit of the parking lot is inadequate. Mr. Reed turned right instead of left (as instructed in small signage at exit) and therefore, hit the guardrail.

“This was only one of my concerns regarding the temporary bridge. Since December 2023, I have requested that the Great Barrington Selectboard listen and/or address my concerns. They did not. I requested that the Selectboard place the issue on an agenda – they refused (this includes our now State Representative Leigh Davis). Mr. Reed remained silent during my public requests for discussion regarding the temporary bridge.

“Now we are discussing a permanent bridge at the location. My concerns revolve around:

“**Detour signage.** The detour signage for the temporary bridge was insufficient. This resulted in numerous vehicles (including tractor trailer trucks) moving down Division Street and then either backing all the way up to the Guthrie Church or attempting to turn around in our driveway.

“One Friday afternoon, 23 cars turned around in my driveway. This is not an exaggeration. This is a safety risk to my family. There are gardens at the end of our drive and one car almost struck me when it attempted to turn around and didn’t see me. This must be addressed – and a BETTER and SAFER – signage plan put into place.

“**Weight limits at the bridge.** The previous weight limit of the “old” bridge was 15T, 19T and 29T. Vehicles exceeding 29T routinely traveled over the bridge with no weight enforcement by authorities. The weight limit at the temporary bridge: 20T, 25T, 36T.

“I’ve witnessed vehicles that would exceed the 36T limit. For example, one afternoon, a U.S. Crane vehicle – with another crane on it – traveled down Division Street. The weight of this U.S. Crane vehicle would be approximately 43.5 tons (estimated for smallest crane flatbed). With another crane on the same vehicle, the U.S. Crane vehicle would have far exceeded 36T.

“Additionally, LOADED large dump trucks (approx. weight would be 36 tons), routinely go back and forth on the bridge (and, by the way, go over the bridge further up on Division Street with a 26-ton limit (the bridge going over the Williams River).

“Again, authorities DO NOTHING with regard to enforcement of vehicle weight limits. It is my opinion that this lack of enforcement has contributed to the poor condition of our bridges.

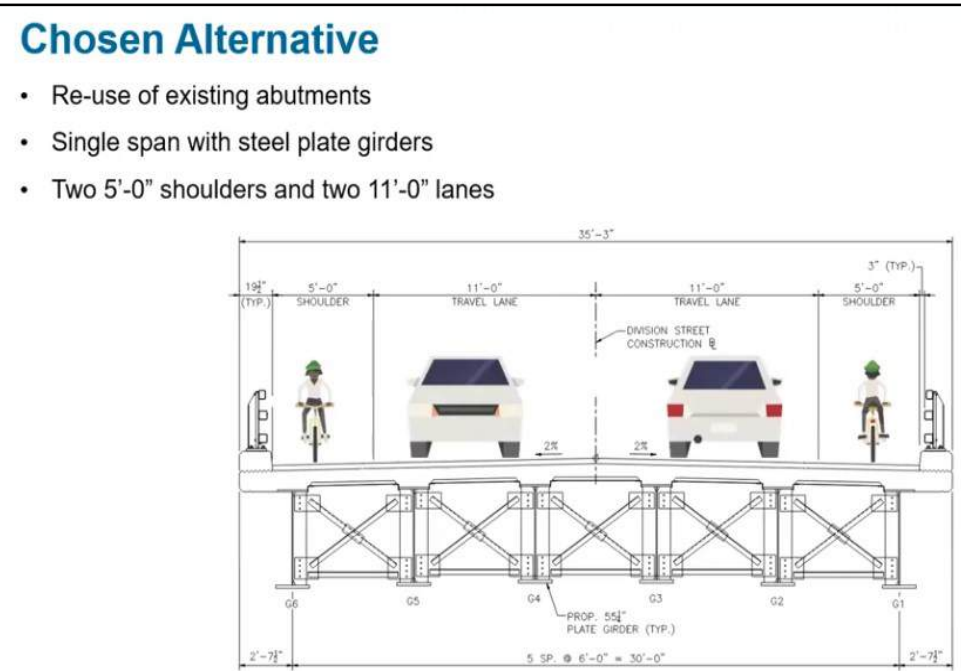
“Also, a loaded tractor trailer truck weighs approx. 40 tons. These trucks ROUTINELY travel over the bridge, exceeding the posted weight limit by 4 tons. Will there be adequate enforcement of weight limits at the permanent bridge? ...

“**Traffic Speed** Traffic speed on Division Street is excessive and often exceeds the posted limit (varies from 25 to 40 mph from Route 41 to Route 183 section). This has created an unsafe environment for the residents of Division Street and those who bicycle, run, and walk the neighborhood.

“Little is done by local authorities to mitigate traffic speed on Division Street. It is my concern that without proper speed enforcement, the permanent bridge will exacerbate an already extremely dangerous situation on Division Street.

“Currently at the temporary bridge, vehicles ROUTINELY ignore the traffic light at the bridge – “run” the red light. Again, no enforcement is in place.

“Thank you for taking the time to review my concerns.”



The above screenshot is from the recording of the Jan. 15 hearing the Department of Transportation held on the proposed design of a new Division Street bridge.

How To Reach State Senator Mark, Representative Leigh Davis

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. His email is Paul.Mark@masenate.gov

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

* * *

STATE REP. LEIGH DAVIS has not scheduled office hours but is at 413-854-4623 or leigh.davis@mahouse.gov

Her aide, Serena Keenan, is at sere-na.keenan@mahouse.gov.

Aide To Rep. Davis

Ms. Keenan graduated in 2023 from Smith College, where she majored in Russian, East European and Eurasian studies and had a minor in government.

She speaks Russian, Spanish and Japanese, according to her resume.

Before being named Ms. Davis' aide, she was a legal assistant at a law firm in Boston; worked in Olympia, Wash., for the state's attorney general; was a congressional intern for Sen. Ed Markey; a legislative intern for state Rep. Lindsay Sabadosa; and spent the summer of 2022 as a legislative intern for the office of Sen. Patty Murray.

Great Barrington Police Report for December



GREAT BARRINGTON POLICE can be reached by calling 911 for an emergency or 528-0306. Police handle ambulance dispatch.

The department's website is greatbarringtonpolice.com and its Facebook page is [facebook.com/GBPDMA/](https://www.facebook.com/GBPDMA/)

The station is at 465 South Main St.

Police officers wear cameras to help document investigations and incidents.

The department participates in the state Disability Indicator Program. Forms are at mass.gov/doc/disability-indicator-form.

The following is from the month's police report.

DECEMBER ENDED with a fatal truck crash near 140 Monument Valley Road.

In a news release, which THE NEWSletter forwarded to its email list, Police Chief Paul Storti wrote that about 6 p.m. Dec. 27, a truck driven by Louis C. Muller, 62, of Great Barrington went off the road, struck an embankment and rolled over.

The police department, district attorney's investigative unit and state police accident reconstruction unit are investigating the crash.

More Than 35 Collisions Reported

Twenty-four two-car collisions were reported during December, plus 10 in which one vehicle hit something else.

Five drivers reported hitting deer on South Main Street, Hurlburt Road, Maple Avenue, South Egremont Road and Monument Valley Road.

Two vehicles hit guard rails, one hit a fire hydrant and one the Division Street bridge.

REMINDER: The ban on overnight parking on all town streets is in effect from 1 to 6 a.m. until March 31. Violators will be ticketed and cars will be towed.

Police stopped 33 vehicles, resulting in 32 citations/warnings being issued

Police stopped 33 vehicles, resulting in 30 citations/warnings being issued and two arrests.

Radar on 13 Public Ways

Police ran radar on 13 public ways. That included 10 times on Egremont Plain Road; seven times on Old Stockbridge Road; six times on Stockbridge Road;

Also, five times on East Street and State Road; four times, Taconic Avenue and Main Street; three times, Division and Park streets; twice on Monument Valley Road and South Main Street; and once each on Alford and North Plain roads.

Police unlocked 12 vehicles.

They helped a tractor trailer back up on George Street after the driver's global positioning system showed the wrong way.

Someone reported that oil was stolen from a container at a container at Marketplace kitchen table at 240 Stockbridge Road.

Someone else reported a debit card showed transactions that weren't made.

A plow was reported hitting a fence on East Street. A dog was reported hit on South Egremont Road and a possum on Monterey Road. A rapid fox reported at Berkshire Mountain Bakery on Route 183 was gone when police arrived.

A coyote reported stuck in a fence on Castle Hill Avenue was gone when police arrived.

People came to the station to meet comfort dog Archer.

A telephone number was reported taken from a Spectrum account and used for a Comcast purchase.

Arrests During December

THE NEWSletter identifies people who are arrested but not those who receive a summons.

-Clemente S. Sajquity-Ramirez, 39, of Egremont, court-issued warrant.

-Mateo Paex, 51, of Great Barrington; unlicensed operation of a motor vehicle;

-Nellie W. Fink, 65, of Sheffield, uninsured motor vehicle and registration not in possession.

-Sylvester Anthony Josephs, 59, of Pittsfield, caretaker abuse and neglect and assault and battery on person with intellectual disability.

-Richard Minacci, 61, homeless, protective custody and trespass.

-Kori Whitmire Blackwell, 30, Great Barrington, operating under the influence of liquor.

-Brandon Rivas, 18, Pittsfield, assault and battery.

-Heather Moresi, 40, Torrington, Conn., caretaker abuse and neglect and distributing obscene matter.

-Luis Romeo, 56, of Holyoke, possession of ammunition.

Fire Report

THE NEWSLETTER sent a preliminary report of December's Butternut Wildfire to its email list. Anyone who did not receive it but wants it should notify THE NEWSletter.

During December, the fire department responded to a total of 118 incidents. The State Road station responded to 95 calls and the Housatonic station to

Of that total, 77 were for rescue and emergency medical service. Twenty-six calls were considered false alarms.

Emotional Distress?

Text 988, the suicide and crisis lifeline. Free and confidential emotional support is available 24/7. Veterans can press 1; for Spanish, press 2. Chat and more information are at 988lifeline.org/chat.

Want to meet Archer, the police department's comfort dog? Just call the station at 528-0306 for an appointment.



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.

The Middle Berkshire Registry of Deeds at 44 Bank Row, Pittsfield, is open from 8:30 a.m. to 3:59 p.m. weekdays. Documents are online at masslandrecords.com/BerkMiddle/

-Caleb G. Roepe & Cindy Ashmore to Horse Haven LLC, property on Broderick Road, Monterey, \$40,000.

-Peter J. Most & Anne Zapoleon Most, trustees, Most Family Trust, to James Noble & Deborah Noble, 21 East Mountain Road, Great Barrington, \$215,000.

-George Ramirez to Berkshire Natural Resource Council Inc., 44 Blue Hill Road, Great Barrington, \$600,000.

-James P. Troiano, trustee, Peter Troiano 2001 Family Trust, to Evan C. Troiano, 390 North Plain Road, Great Barrington, \$420,000.

-Annie Okerstrom-Lang & Craig Okerstrom-Lang to Taconic Ryan LLC, unit 8, 80 Taconic Ave., Great Barrington, \$647,000.

-19 Gilmore Avenue LLC to Beth Leibowitz, 19 Gilmore Ave., Great Barrington, \$643,000.

-Mujahid Ishaq Sait to Melissa B. Major & Daniel J. David, 333 Long Pond Road, Great Barrington, \$1 million.

Recent Real Estate Transactions

-Emily J. Wagner to Jefferson D. Meighan & Marcia A. Konrad, 54 Castle Hill Ave., Great Barrington, \$516,250.

-Suzanne Arre to Melinda Baker, 3 Pothul Drive, Great Barrington, \$851,000.

-Berkshire Natural Resources Council to Great Barrington Affordable Housing Trust Fund, 0 Park St., Great Barrington, \$86,850.

-Christopher B. Stanton & Joanne Gallagher Stanton to James Sabia & Lisa Weiss Sabia, 64 Sheffield Road, Egremont, \$405,500.

-Brian James Beckwith & Amanda Marie Beckwith to Cody Ranolde & Hayley Ranolde, 138 Lake Buel Road, Great Barrington, \$75,000.

-John Murphy & estate of Jean Frances Murphy to Michael Aaronson & Rebecca Aaronson, 1 Forrest St., Great Barrington, \$340,000.

-Linda K. Baxter to Dock Road LLC, 19 Pleasant St., Great Barrington, \$774,000.

-Michael A. Kiriakedes & Barbara J. Kiriakedes to Licombo GB LLC, 154 Main St., Great Barrington, \$995,000.

-Susan E. Giddings to Steven S. Miller, lot 19, Long Pond Road, Great Barrington, \$100,000.

-Crisshill 73 LLC to Hao Chen & Jin Jin Song, 73 Christian Hill Road, Great Barrington, \$355,000.

-Philip J. Pryjma & Maureen M. Pryjma, trustees, Philip J. Pryjma Revocable Trust & Maureen M. Pryjma Revocable Trust, to Luke P. Pryjma & Britta Schellenberg, 301 Monument Valley Road, Great Barrington, \$110,000.

Stockbridge

The Middle Berkshire Registry of Deeds at 44 Bank Row, Pittsfield, is open from

8:30 a.m. to 3:59 p.m. weekdays. Documents are online at masslandrecords.com/BerkMiddle/

-Richard M. Lobo & Caren Lobo to William Richardson & Lea Richardson, 1 Laurel Lane, Stockbridge, \$1.221 million.

-CFAI Special Assets LLC to Robert Gagnon, 38A Glendale Road, Stockbridge, \$500,000.

-Stockbeech LLC to Amy Jamrog & Kimberly J. Cook, 1 Lakeview Drive, Stockbridge, \$1.9 million.

-Andrew M. Shalit to Glenna Blacwell, 3 North Church St., Stockbridge, \$470,000.

-Martha D. Rosen to Adele Fleet Bacow 2012 Irrevocable Trust, Adele Fleet Bacow, trustee, unit 15A, Meadow Villa, 19 Hawthorne Road, Stockbridge, \$810,000.

-Laura B. Flint Revocable Trust of 2010, Laura B. Flint trustee, to Shara E. Bailey, unit 1C, 23 Wallace Road, Stockbridge, \$236,000.

-Jane Miller Shea & Terrence C. Shea, trustees, Jane Miller Shea Revocable Trust & Terrence C. Shea Revocable Trust, to Fred G. Adler & Leslie Adler, 17 Main St., Stockbridge, \$1.21 million.

-John J. Martin Jr., trustee, Lippmann Family Revocable Trust, to Chauncey Collins & Elizabeth Collins, 2 Cherry St., Stockbridge, \$1.2 million.

-Ariel Hyatt, trustee, S. Gordon Hyatt Revocable Trust, to Scott Malish & Emily Dindial, 82 East Main Street, Stockbridge, \$1.35 million.

-HLP Realty Holdings LLC to Susan Blair Hawkins Roelke, trustee, Susan Blair Hawkins Roelke Revocable Trust, & Brian Keith Roelke, trustee, Brian Keith Roelke Revocable Trust, 35 Church St., Stockbridge, \$1.275 million.

-Alan Marsh, trustee, Alan Marsh Revocable Trust, & Judi Glaser Marsh, trustee, Judi Glaser Marsh Revocable Trust, to Gail Zauder, 22 Yale Hill Road, \$1.86 million.

Building Permits of \$70,000 Or More

Great Barrington is part of a four-town building department with Lee, Lenox and Stockbridge. Building commissioner is Matthew Kollmer and building inspector is Rian Dowd. Their offices in the Town Hall are open weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to noon or by appointment.

The building inspector issues permits and inspects projects and is Great Barrington's zoning enforcement officer.

The telephone number is 528-3206.

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; new windows, wood stoves, insulation, sprinkler system, photovoltaics; tents, hot tubs;

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

Following are recent permits for projects valued at \$75,000 or more, with the owner's name, estimated value & the applicant if not the owner:

-Bradley & Lisa Danyluk, reconfigure 24 Lake Ave., estimated cost \$80,000, Chester Johnston applicant, estimated cost \$80,000.

-SASC Properties, prepare 7 Fern Hill Road for new layout, Anthony Cunagin, \$100,000.

-Cafua Realty Trust LLC, remodel Dunkin restaurant at 494 Main St., Greg Nolan, \$101,000.

-Rachel Elizabeth Badt Sherk, remodel kitchen & bathroom, & install new exterior door with landing & deck at 37 Prospect St., Donald Wendling, \$135,000.

-10 Haley Road LLC, remodel 10 Haley Road, Mark Amstead, \$240,500.

-Asher Goldman-Israelow, remodel kitchen, bathroom & mudroom at 34 Castle Hill Ave., Joseph Roth, \$344,235.

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 unfortunately lacks the space to include all details and all survivors.

THE NEWSletter emails obituaries when it receives them to subscribers who request them. However, Finnerty & Stevens no longer provides obituaries. Therefore, its obituaries are not sent to subscribers but are taken from its website for use in these pages.

Thomas P. Atwood

Thomas P. Atwood, 86, of Great Barrington died Jan. 21 at Fairview Hospital.

He graduated from the former Searles High School in 1956 and from Pittsfield Vocational Auto Mechanics.

Mr. Atwood was a shift supervisor at Sheffield Plastics from 1960 to 1986 and a maintenance worker at the Eisner Camp since 1995.

He was a member of the former Hope Fire Co. from 1966 to 1987, retiring as a lieutenant. He was instrumental in rebuilding the 1854 Button Pumper in 1976.

Mr. Atwood leaves his wife of 44 years, the former Marlene Seward; his son, Matthew Atwood of Ballston Spa, N.Y.; his daughters, Patricia Miller of Ormond Beach, Fla., and Christine LaPorta of Ballston Spa; his stepsons, Thomas Torrico and James Torrico, both of Mount Washington, and Donald Torrico of New Marlborough; his brother, Richard B. Atwood of Housatonic; his sisters, Teresa Bannon of Great Barrington and Mary Ryan of Hanson; seven grandchildren; eight step-grandchildren; four great-grandchildren; and seven step-great-grandchildren.

He was predeceased by his sister, Elizabeth Boddie.

Birches-Roy Funeral Home handled arrangements.

Memorial donations are suggested to the Saint Peter's Church Restoration Fund through the funeral home.

Judith Corbett

Judith "Judy" Lee Corbett, 80, of Great Barrington died Jan. 18 at Berkshire Medical Center.

The former Judith Morandi, she graduated from Mount Everett Regional High School in 1961 and then received an associate degree from Berkshire Community College.

She had two daughters with her former husband, Paul Corbett of Palm Harbor, Fla.

She worked in sales and management for Verizon Communications for more than 40 years, retiring in 2017, having received many awards.

Mrs. Corbett leaves her daughters, Kelly Corbett of Saint Petersburg, Fla., and Kristen Corbett of Great Barrington, and her sister, Bonnie Perotti of East Canaan, Conn.

She was predeceased by her parents, Medeo and Lena Morandi, and her sisters, Ida Leonard and Mary Ann Warner.

Finnerty & Stevens Funeral Home handled arrangements.

Obituaries

Memorial donations are suggested to Elder Services of Berkshire County through the funeral home.

Paulette D. Graber

Paulette D. Graber, 76, of Sheffield died Dec. 27 at Geer Village in Canaan, Conn.

She graduated in 1967 from Maine-Endwell Senior High School in Endwell, N.Y., and married Ren Graber in 1969.

She retired from the Southern Berkshire Regional School District in 2016 after 35 years.

Mrs. Graber leaves her daughter, Heather P. Graber of Sheffield.

Birches-Roy Funeral Home handled arrangements.

Memorial donations are suggested to Sheffield Library through the funeral home.

Marilyn P. Granger

Marilyn P. Granger, 84, of Egremont and Venice, Fla., died Jan. 15 at Albany Medical Center.

The former Marilyn Peck, she graduated from Mount Everett Regional School in 1958. She worked at Wheeler & Taylor and the former Berkshire Courier before focusing on raising her children.

She was a founding member of the Down County Squares square dancing club and she and her husband, Henry, were founding members of the Southern Berkshire Sno-dusters snowmobile club.

Mrs. Granger leaves three children, Karen Butler, Kevin Granger and Kelly Belair, all of Egremont; six grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren; and her brothers, Leland W. Peck of St. Petersburg, Fla. and Gregory E. Peck of Egremont.

She was predeceased by her husband of 62 years, Henry D. Granger, and her parents, George L. and Elizabeth Peck.

A graveside service and celebration of life will be held later. Finnerty & Stevens Funeral Home is handling arrangements.

Memorial donations are suggested to Egremont Fire Department or Southern Berkshire Volunteer Ambulance Squad through the funeral home.

Maureen Hickey

Maureen Jane Johnson Hickey, 86, a longtime resident of Great Barrington and Naples, Fla., died Jan. 8 while under hospice care in Lee.

She grew up in Goshen, Ind., and graduated in 1960 from Marymount College in Tarrytown, N.Y., then studied at Royal Holloway College in Surrey, England.

Maureen met her husband, Paul Joseph Hickey, in Boston when she was a social worker for the Catholic Charities Bureau.

They raised their four children in Wayland while Mr. Hickey worked for Hillenbrand Industries, then moved to his hometown of Great Barrington in 1979.

Mrs. Hickey had a master's degree in humanities from Simmons College in Boston and a doctorate in museum education from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. She specialized in American artists of the Hudson River School.

She was director of education at the Berkshire Museum for more than 10 years. In the 1990s, she founded Berkshire Art Gallery and continued to curate, lecture, lead art-themed travel tours and consult as an art historian.

She and her husband traveled to many countries, including China, Russia, Egypt and Tanzania.

Mrs. Hickey leaves three siblings, William Patrick Johnson, Philip Charles Johnson and Margaret Anne Shirley; four children, William of Boston, Elisabeth of Washington, D.C., Margaret of South Egremont, and John of Crested Butte, Colo.; and nine grandchildren.

She was predeceased by her husband of 61 years in 2024.

Birches-Roy Funeral Home handled arrangements.

Memorial donations are suggested to the education department of the Berkshire Museum, 39 South St., Pittsfield, Mass. 02101.

Dorothy Hotchkiss

Dorothy Skorput Hotchkiss, 93, of Great Barrington died Jan. 1.

The former Dorothy Skorput, she graduated from the former Williams High School in Stockbridge in 1950.

She and her husband, Robert Hotchkiss, resided in Troy, N.Y. She worked in the billing department at St. Peter's Hospital in Albany, N.Y., until Mr. Hotchkiss died in 1989, when she moved to Great Barrington and resided with her sister, Frances Toolin.

They managed Fairview Hospital's gift shop and were active in the Homeowners Association on Cornwall Drive, where they resided.

Besides her husband of 34 years, Mrs. Hotchkiss was predeceased by her eight siblings, including Mrs. Toolin.

Birches-Roy Funeral Home handled arrangements.

Memorial donations are suggested to the Great Barrington Fire Department through the funeral home.

Judith A. Timm

Judith A. Timm, 86, of Sheffield died Nov. 17 at Berkshire Medical Center.

She and her husband, Ronald H. Timm, moved to Sheffield in 1981 and opened Centuryhurst Antiques and Bed & Breakfast.

Mrs. Timm leaves her son, Roderick K. Timm; three grandchildren; and a great-grandson.

Mr. Timm died in 2021. She was also predeceased by two sons, Kenneth R. Timm and Wayne G. Timm.

Birches-Roy Funeral Home handled arrangements.

The Great Barrington Finance Committee prepared the following document.

**User Guide to the Taxpayers Receipt Box
in Feb/May 2025 Great Barrington Real Estate Tax Bill**

TAXPAYER'S RECEIPT	
Bill Date	Bill No.
ACTUAL REAL ESTATE TAX	
TOTAL TAX + SP. ASSESS. DUE	
PRELIMINARY TAX:	
ABATEMENT/EXEMPTION:	
GB FIRE DISTRICT TAX	
CPA TAX	
PAYMENTS MADE:	
INTEREST DUE:	
TOTAL BALANCE OVERDUE:	
AMOUNT DUE 2/1/2025:	
AMOUNT DUE 5/1/2025:	
TOTAL DUE 2/1/2025:	

Prepared by the Finance Committee

Please note that this User Guide is intended to help taxpayers understand their tax bill. The formal authority for these matters resides with the Town and the Great Barrington Fire District.

NOTE: Any questions regarding Assessed Value should be directed to the Assessor's Office.

We are currently in Fiscal 2025 (July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025)

Quarter 1 – (payment due Aug 5*, 2024). Quarter 2 – (payment due Nov 1, 2024)

Quarter 3 – (payment due Feb 1, 2025). Quarter 4 – (payment due May 1, 2025)

* delayed from Aug 1

Lines Under "TAXPAYER'S RECEIPT" on the middle right hand side of the Bill		
1	Actual Real Estate Tax	This amount is the sum of up to 3 separate taxes (amounts as of as of 1/1/24): 1. Great Barrington FY 2025 property tax is \$13.79 per \$1,000 or 1.379% of assessed value (change = -.10) 2. ONLY For water customers of the Great Barrington Fire District, a tax of \$1.59 per \$1,000 or 0.159% of assessed value. Customers of Housatonic Water Works do not pay this tax. 3. The Community Preservation act surtax which is 3% of the property tax after discounting the first \$100,000 of assessed value.
2	Total Tax + Sp. assess	This line would include any special tax assessments due – there are none at this time.
3	Preliminary Tax	This amount billed for the first 2 quarters is an estimate equal to the actual real estate tax from the prior year divided by 2 (for Q1 and Q2, combined).
4	Abatement/Exemption	Please contact the Assessor's Office with any questions regarding assessment. https://www.townofgb.org/assessor
5	GB Fire District Tax	The Great Barrington Fire District (GBFD) is a government entity that sets its own tax rate and operates independently from the Town. It provides water distribution services to a majority of the Town (water for the remaining customers is provided by Housatonic Water Works and billed separately). * GBFD customers pay two separate bills – Part A is a usage fee billed separately by GBFD and Part B is a tax calculated as a percentage of assessed property value (see row 1 above). This Part B tax is included in the town's property tax bill for administrative efficiency. * The GBFD tax rates for the last few years are listed below. Note that the FY 25 rate increase was approved at the GBFD Tax Classification meeting in fall 2024 and is intended for specific capital improvement projects (the minutes for this meeting along with other information are available at https://www.greatbarringtonwater.org). Note that the full amount of the FY25 GBFD increase are allocated to the 3 rd and 4 th quarter bills – making the percentage increase look larger than it actually is on a full year basis. GBFD Tax rate. (per \$1,000 of assessed value) → FY 2025: \$1.50 FY'24: \$1.59. FY'23: \$1.01 FY'22: \$1.03 FY'21: \$0.73
6	CPA Tax	The Community Preservation Act (CPA) is a statewide program that was adopted by GB in 2012. As described further in the Town website, proceeds of this surtax are supplemented by funds from the state and used for a variety of community projects. https://www.townofgb.org/community-preservation-committee . The surtax amount is fixed at 3% of the property tax amount after discounting the first \$100,000 of assessed value. As a result, the surtax amount changes with assessed valuations. → Calculation of the CPA tax is (\$13.79/\$1000) x (Assessed value - \$100,000) x .03 (3% rate).
7	Payments Made	Row 3 less any unpaid amounts
8	Interest Due	
9	Total Balance Overdue	
10	Amount Due 2/1/2025	The sum of Row 1 less Row 3 divided by 2
11	Amount Due 5/1/2025	The sum of Row 1 less Row 3 divided by 2
12	Total Due 2/1/2025	Row 10 repeated

Sean A. Stanton, Chair
Stephen C. Bannon
Daniel Bruce Bailly
Edward D. Abrahams
William F. Cooke



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TOWN OF GREAT BARRINGTON MASSACHUSETTS

SELECTBOARD

Trust Policy Great Barrington, Massachusetts

WELCOMING AND SAFE COMMUNITIES ARE POSSIBLE IF WE ARE INCLUSIVE AND IF WE TRUST

Values Statement

Considering that we the people of Great Barrington acknowledge the value for our Town of our diverse population as an integral part of our labor and cultural force and that we recognize the need to provide a safe community for all residents and to keep our families together regardless of their immigration status.

Considering that the Great Barrington Police Department has stated in previous resolutions and through their positive community policing and accreditation efforts their commitment to build and maintain positive relations within the community in which inclusivity and protection to all of our residents goes hand in hand with their mission of guaranteeing public safety and security for our community.

Considering that in our system we are all accountable under the rule of law, including the government, its officials and agents as well as the individuals and private entities that are part of our community and, in order to guarantee a sense of safety and accountability the laws should be clear, just, publicized, applied evenly and enforced in a way that reflects the community served.

We as residents of Great Barrington hereby publicly designate the Town of Great Barrington as a safe, inclusive and welcoming community, with its commitment to the following principles, policies and procedures to be followed uniformly throughout our Town:

Great Barrington Trust Policy Principles

1. Great Barrington will continue to ensure civil liberties of all and enforce protection from discrimination for all residents regardless of their race, skin color, national or ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, mental or physical disability, immigration status, religious, political or social affiliations, professed beliefs, homed or homeless status and any other demographic characteristics.
2. Great Barrington police will equally enforce the laws, promote safety and serve the Great Barrington community without consideration of individuals' immigration status or other demographic characteristics.

3. Great Barrington will not participate in enforcement of federal immigration law or aid in the detention, transfer or deportation of residents for civil immigration purposes.
4. Great Barrington police and any other Town agencies will not profile groups, i.e. not contact, detain, or arrest based only on demographic characteristics, including immigration status.
5. Great Barrington will not use Town funds or resources to assist in federal immigration detention and arrest processes, except in criminal cases.
6. Great Barrington will follow public record laws and will not, except as required by law, collect, keep or distribute information about any individual or group based on demographic characteristics, including immigration status for any other purpose.
7. Great Barrington will provide training to Town employees regarding these policies and practices in alignment with accreditation requirements and serving the purpose of our Trust Policy.

Great Barrington Trust Policy Protocols

1. No Town participation in U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) holds, arrests, detentions, or raids, or use of town resources to facilitate said activities, except in cases where ICE demonstrates a criminal warrant signed by a judge and based on probable cause.
2. No responding to ICE requests seeking information outside of a criminal warrant, or providing access to local records and databases.
3. Any individual subject to an immigration hold, administrative warrant, notification request, or contact with ICE, where Great Barrington law enforcement acquiesces to the ICE request, shall be provided with a copy of the ICE request and any other documentation pertaining to their case that is presented to the law enforcement agency.
4. In furtherance of the US Victims of Trafficking and Violence Prevention Act, Town of Great Barrington law enforcement shall consider and sign a U Visa certification request if an individual is:
 - a. The victim of a qualifying crime, and
 - b. Has been, is being, or will likely be helpful in the investigation/prosecution of that crime.
5. Make reports publicly available of ICE activity in Town including but not limited to holds, reimbursements, and removals.
6. Develop a formal process for addressing violation of Trust Policy Commitments at Selectboard meetings and in collaboration with a proposed Residents' or Human Rights Commission to be established at a later time.

More about the policy's adoption is in this issue of THE NEWSletter.

**COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC UTILITIES**

Housatonic Water Works Company	}	D.P.U. 23-65
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NOTICE OF DELAY OF SETTLEMENT PHASE 2 IMPLEMENTATION

The Settlement Agreement approved by the Department of Public Utilities (“Department”) on July 31, 2024¹ approved a schedule for implementing rates in five phases to recover costs of major capital projects that Housatonic Water Works Company (“Company”) contemplated would be placed in service over several years through 2028. At the time of the execution of the Settlement Agreement, the manganese filtration project that was planned to address water discoloration, which has been the primary source of customer complaints about service quality, was expected to be in service by the end of 2024. This project has been delayed because the Company’s lenders have declined to finance the project due to financial risks that arose subsequent to the Department’s approval of the Settlement Agreement.

On August 22, 2024, the Board of Health of the Town of Great Barrington issued an order, as modified by a Board of Health order served on September 17, 2024, directing the Company, among other things, to retain a consultant selected by the Board of Health to test the water supplied by the Company for a period and within intervals to be determined by the consultant, and to distribute on a daily basis an indeterminate quantity of bottled water equal to or greater than 1.5 gallons per day to all customers until the Board of Health orders otherwise, which would have left the Company with a revenue shortfall greater than \$40,000 per month on

¹ The Town of Great Barrington and the Town of West Stockbridge appealed the July 31, 2024 Department Order to the Supreme Judicial Court. SJC Docket SJ-2024-0312.

average. On October 21, 2024, the Berkshire Superior Court granted a preliminary injunction against the Board of Health in favor of the Company, holding that the Board of Health is preempted from issuing the order because the Commonwealth gave exclusive power to the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection to oversee the distribution of safe water, and because the clear language of Chapters 164 and 165 “demonstrates a legislative intent for DPU to occupy the field at the state level in the regulation of water quality.”² Despite the Department’s exclusive jurisdiction over the regulation of water quality, the Town of Great Barrington and its Board of Health have opted to prolong this litigation by appealing the Superior Court ruling on November 20, 2024.

As the Town of Great Barrington’s representatives are aware through the Company’s pleadings, the Board of Health’s order would have placed the Company at risk of financial insolvency within a short period. The Company’s lenders have declined to finance the Company’s capital projects until the Board of Health’s order is definitively invalidated or rescinded. While the Company has received a grant to cover a portion of the manganese removal project, the majority of the financing is conventional, and the Company’s long-time lender is awaiting the resolution of this issue before issuing financing. Assuming the matter is resolved in the Company’s favor in early 2025, the Company will petition the Department for approval of the financing as soon as its lenders provide indicative terms and hopes to commence the project and place it in service in the first half of 2026.

This will delay the implementation of the rate increases provided by the Settlement Agreement. The Phase Effective Date for Phase 2 was to have been August 1, 2025. Section 1.2.1 of the Settlement Agreement provides that “if the commissioning date for any project is


² *Housatonic Water Works Company v. Town of Great Barrington et al.*, Memorandum and Decision and Order on Plaintiff’s Motion for Preliminary Injunction (Berkshire Super. Civ. No. 24-0150, Oct. 21, 2024).

delayed beyond the otherwise applicable Phase Effective Date, the Phase Effective Date shall be on the first day of the month following the date that the project is in service.” The Department’s Order approving the Settlement Agreement modifies this term by ordering that “the Company shall submit its compliance filings to the Department at least four months before the applicable phase effective date to afford sufficient time for review and deliberation before the rates take effect.” D.P.U. 23-65, at 29. Because the Company needs time to fully validate its compliance filing and to meet with the Attorney General and the Towns of Great Barrington, Stockbridge, and West Stockbridge before filing,³ the Phase Effective Date would need to be delayed to *at least* four months after the commissioning date of the project, likely in mid-2026.

Respectfully submitted,

**HOUSATONIC WATER WORKS
COMPANY**

By its Attorneys,



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Dated: January 24, 2025

³ See D.P.U. 23-65, at 29 n.9.

The page below was reproduced from the Selectboard's page on the town website.



Housatonic Water Works has Important Information about Manganese in Your Drinking Water

-- Translate it or speak with someone who understands it --

What happened?

Water samples collected on July 24, 2024 show confirmed manganese levels of 0.74 milligrams per liter (mg/L), which is in excess of the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) advisory level. While manganese is necessary for proper nutrition, an excess could adversely affect health.

What should I do until this issue has been resolved?

- **Infant formula should be prepared with bottled water** or made with water from an alternate source with manganese levels below 0.3 mg/L.
- **Use bottled water for infants less than 1 year of age** or water from a source with a manganese level below 0.3 mg/L. Bottled water should only be used if it has been tested. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health requires companies licensed to sell or distribute bottled water or carbonated non-alcoholic beverages to test their water. See <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/water-quality-standards-for-bottled-water-in-massachusetts#list-of-bottlers->
- **As a precaution, the general population may choose to limit intake of this water** by consuming water from other sources with manganese concentrations less than 1 mg/L or less than the lifetime advisory limit of 0.3 mg/L until concentrations have been lowered. This action will prevent taking in more manganese than they need.
- **If you have health related concerns about manganese**, contact your health care provider.
- **For more information on manganese** see the MassDEP Manganese Consumer FAQ: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/manganese-in-drinking-water-typical-questions-and-answers-for-consumers-0/download>

What does this mean?

Drinking water may naturally have manganese which is necessary for proper nutrition, but an excess could adversely affect health. **MassDEP advises that people drink water with manganese levels less than 0.3 mg/L over a lifetime, and also advises that people limit their consumption of water with levels over 1 mg/L, primarily to decrease the possibility of adverse neurological effects. Infants up to 1 year of age should not be given water with manganese over 0.3 mg/L, nor should formula for infants be made with that water for more than a total of 10 days throughout the year.** *The general population water concentration exposure limits of 0.3 and 1 mg/L have been set based upon typical daily dietary manganese intake levels not known to be associated with adverse health effects. This does not imply that intakes above these levels will necessarily cause health problems. Individual requirements for, as well as adverse effects from manganese can be highly variable.*

What is being done?

We will continue to monitor for manganese, work to lower the manganese concentrations and work with the MassDEP to keep you informed of all current information on this issue

If you have questions for our water department, contact James J. Mercer at 413.528.1780 or at housatonicwater@gmail.com.

Please share this information with all the other people who drink this water, especially those who may not have received this notice directly (for example, people in apartments, nursing homes, schools, and businesses).

This advisory is being sent to you by Housatonic Water Works Company.
PWS ID# 1113003 Date distributed: October 11, 2024.