

# THE NEWSletter

The Newsy Little Paper That Supplements Other Media

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## In This Issue



**Great Barrington's 264th Town Meeting** starts at 2 p.m. Saturday, **May 3**, at Monument Mountain Regional High School. More about the meeting begins on page 3.

**Town elections** are Monday, **May 13**, with polls open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. at the State Road Fire House for precincts A, C and D and the Housatonic Community Center for precinct B. Meet the candidates starting on page 5.

\* \* \*

**Selectboard votes 3-1 to readvertise for town manager, rejecting two finalists. More on page 8.**

\* \* \*

**Memorial Day parade in Housatonic** starts Monday, **May 26**, at 10 a.m. at Front and Depot Streets near the post office, then proceeds on Depot Street to Main Street to Pleasant Street with a dedication at the bridge and then on Front Street to St. Bridget's Cemetery for a memorial service. Veterans from Housatonic Veterans of War Post 8485, which is sponsoring the parade and service, and Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 8183 will participate, plus the Great Barrington selectmen and the Monument Mountain Regional High School band. After the service, a ceremony will be held at the Great Barrington Town Hall.

\* \* \*

**More News**, including report on special town meeting about buying Housatonic Water Works and Great Barrington Fire District; Attorney General's concerns about HWW; Board of Assessors' decisions so far in 2025 on requests for abatements.



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# Meetings, Elections & More Scheduled in May

MEETING AGENDAS are posted on the town's website at [townofgb.org](http://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 Attorney General's Division of Open Government.

## Watch Past Meetings Online

Recordings of many meetings are on Community Television for the Southern Berkshires at [ctsbvtv.org](http://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, town libraries and the Affordable

Housing Trust have their own websites, given on their town website pages.

The Berkshire Hills Regional School District's website is at [bhrrsd.org](http://bhrrsd.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.*

## May

Berkshire Hills Regional School Committee meets May 1 & 15, 6 p.m.

-ANNUAL TOWN MEETING IS SATURDAY, May 3, p.m., Monument Mountain Regional High School.

-Tree Committee meets May 7, 5 p.m.

-Berkshire Hills Regional School Committee's Monument Building Committee meets May 7, 5:30 p.m.

-Board of Health meets May 8, 6:30 p.m.

-Parks Commission meets May 12, 5:15 p.m.

-Planning Board meets May 8 & 22, 6 p.m.

-TOWN ELECTIONS ARE MAY 13, 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

-Selectboard meets May 14 & 19, 6 p.m.

-Historic District Commission meets May 15, 5:30 p.m.

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

-Conservation Commission meets May 28, 6:30 p.m.

MEMORIAL DAY IS MAY 26, town building closed. MEMORIAL DAY PARADE WILL START AT 10 A.M. NEAR HOUSATONIC POST OFFICE.



# Libraries, Senior Center, Bus Services, Recycling

THE TOWN'S TWO LIBRARIES' website at [gblibraries.org](http://gblibraries.org) lists programs for many interests and different ages at both libraries. 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 [masonramsdel@gmail.com](mailto:masonramsdel@gmail.com) or [bark.cwmars.org](http://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's knitting group meets Tuesdays from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m.

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 and applications such as SNAP, housing, fuel assistance. and more. Its phone number is 528-1881.

Its website lists lunch menus and is at [greatbarringtonseniors.org](http://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](http://socoride.org).

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

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

Berkshire Regional Transportation's website is at [Berkshirerta.com](http://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.

## How to Subscribe to THE NEWSletter

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## 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 \$40. Cost for first class for a year (12 issues) is \$55.

Cost to get 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

# Time To Decide Great Barrington's Actions in FY '26 Is Saturday, May 3, 2 p.m., Monument Mountain High

GREAT BARRINGTON'S 264th ANNUAL TOWN MEETING starts at **2 p.m. on Saturday, May 3, at Monument Mountain Regional High School.**

This is the first time anyone recalls meeting on Saturday. The intent is to get more attendance than the usual meeting on a Monday evening.

When you get to the high school and register to attend the meeting, you'll get a copy of the warrant. When the meeting starts, town moderator Michael Wise will begin by explaining procedures.

Here's a preview of the 29 articles on the warrant. The Selectboard and Finance Committee recommend approval of all financial articles. THE NEWSletter reported on the boards' discussion, and their recorded meetings are on CTSB.

**Article 1. Authorize Revolving Fund Limits:** Those fund and the amount are described in the warrant.

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

**Article 3. Appropriation of Funds for Conservation and for Cemetery Care:** This article seeks to use funds from those accounts.

**Article 4. FY 26 Operating Budget:** The warrant lists amounts for general government, public safety, Department of Public Works, Cultural/Recreation/Human Services and Miscellaneous. The total is \$16,692,744.

**Article 5. Capital Spending Authorization:** Items and the requested amounts are detailed. The total is \$13,079,100.

**Article 6. FY26 Wastewater Treatment Plant Budget:** The total is \$3,222,561. Sewer users pay it but town meeting must appropriate it.

**Article 7. Capital Authorization for Wastewater Enterprise Fund:** The total is \$1,150,000. Again, sewer users pay it but town meeting must appropriate it.

**Article 8. FY26 Regional School Assessment:** This is the town's assessment for the Berkshire Hills Regional School District. The amount is \$22,184,337 for the operating assessment and \$25,211 for the capital assessment.

**Article 9. FY26 Out of District Vocational Tuition and Transportation:** The amount is \$135,000. State law requires that a town pay this for students who reside in it.

**Article 10. Authorize Funding to Southern Berkshire Ambulance:** The ambulance service seeks \$304,909.11 from Great Barrington. It also seeks funds from other town it serves.

**Article 11. Authorize Funding To Unemployment Trust Fund:** The amount of \$20,000 is requested.

**Article 12. Authorize Funding to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund:** This is

## *Your Basic Right at Town Meeting*

WHAT'S MOST IMPORTANT for you to know at town meeting is also your basic right:

**If you don't understand something, you have the right to request an explanation.**

Great Barrington officials — including the moderator, the selectmen and members of other town boards — are usually patient about answering questions. But they're not doing you a favor by answering. They're fulfilling their obligation.

It's not your fault if you don't understand a warrant article. They're sometimes difficult to follow. Town officials some-

times forget that while they're accustomed to the vocabulary or procedure for financial or zoning matters, most people don't use those terms every day. But they're capable of explaining what's meant and you voters have the right to insist that they do.

You also have the right to ask what would happen if you don't agree to spending the requested money or to changing the zoning. The moderator may preside at town meeting but you the voters, are the ones who really are in charge.

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

— Eileen W. Mooney

from the Short Term Rental Special Revenue Fund and must be appropriated every year. This year's amount is \$71,747.

**Article 13. Authorize Funding for a Temporary Brookside Road Bridge and/or Related Emergency Facilities.** The requested amount is \$3 million "or any other sum."

**Article 14. Authorize Use of Free Cash to Reduce the Tax Levy.** No amount is listed but the Finance Committee and Selectboard recommend using \$256,723.

**Article 15. Authorization To Pay Prior Fiscal Years' Invoices:** The invoices are listed in the warrant.

**Article 16. Rescinding of Old Borrowing Authorizations:** The amounts are provided in the warrant.

This ends the financial articles.

**Article 17. Community Preservation Fund Reserves & Appropriations:** This includes the annual debt service for the Memorial Field project.

**Article 18. Community Preservation Projects:** Community Preservation Committee members will present these. They total \$905,800 in the categories of:

-Affordable Housing for Affordable Housing Trust Fund, \$375,000, and Marble Block Realty, \$150,000;

-Historic Resources for Unitarian Universalist Meeting of South Berkshire, \$54,000; Mason Library clamshell canopy, \$146,000; and Mason Library exterior sconces, \$49,000;

-Open Space and Recreation for Berkshire Natural Resources Council trail, \$24,800 and Town park equipment, \$107,000.

**Article 19. Accept Property Tax Exemptions.** The Selectboard recommends this; the exemptions are described in the article and in a memo reproduced in this NEWSletter.

(ARTICLES continues on page 4)

## For Clean-Heat Comfort

## JOHN B. HULL, INC.

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# May 3 Annual Town Meeting Warrant, continued

**Article 20. Tax Title Payment Agreements Bylaw:** This would authorize the town treasurer to enter into tax title payment agreements per Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 60, section 62A.

**Article 21. Accept General Law Regarding Abandoned Funds:** This would enable the town to dispose of abandoned funds, including unclaimed excess equity from tax title foreclosure properties.

**Article 22. Fee for Common Virtual Licenses.** This would enable the license fee for a common virtual license to increase from \$25 to \$100.

*The Planning Board recommends the following articles. The proposed changes are included in the warrant.*

**Article 23. Zoning — Residential Cluster Development:** This would delete

Planned Unit Residential Development and replace it with Residential Cluster Development.

**Article 24. Zoning — Campus Overlay District:** This would be a new bylaw intended to enable re-use of the Simon's Rock campus.

**Article 25. Zoning — Certain Requirements for Multi-Unit Dwellings:** This would amend the present bylaw, as shown in the article, in part by decreasing the amount of permeable open space from 50% to 25%.

**Article 26. Acquisition of Easements for Housatonic Rail Trail Extension:** This would enable the Selectboard to acquire land along Lake Mansfield Road and appropriate funds for such acquisition.

**Article 27. Acquisition and Transfer of Land and/or Easements at Fairgrounds:** This would enable the Selectboard to acquire land at the fairgrounds on South Main Street and determine payment.

**Article 28. Acquisition of Rights-of-Way for the Division Street Bridge:** This would authorize the board to acquire and pay for easements and other rights to provide a new bridge over the Housatonic River.

**Article 29. Discontinuance of Ramsdell Road:** This would enable the board to end part of Ramsdell Road as a public way.

There are no citizen's petitions so the next motion would be to adjourn the annual town meeting or, depending on the time, continue to another time.

## Fire District's Annual Meeting Is Monday, May 12

THE GREAT BARRINGTON FIRE DISTRICT WATER DEPARTMENT annual town election and meeting will be **Monday, May 12**, at 17 East St.

Polls open at 6 and close at 8 p.m.

The meeting begins at 7 p.m. Any Water Department customer may participate.

The warrant is being sent to district users and is posted on the website at [greatbarringtonwater.org](http://greatbarringtonwater.org).

A preview follows:

**Article 1.** Choose a moderator.

**Article 2.** Elect a member of the Prudential Committee and Board of Public Works for a three-year term. Polls will be open from 6 to 8 p.m.

The only candidate on the ballot is Walter "Buddy" Atwood III, who has been on the committee since 1998 and is now chairman.

**Article 3.** Reports of officers or committees.

**Article 4.** Authorize the treasurer, with approval of the Prudential Committee, to borrow money during the fiscal year that begins July 1.

Kenneth Schumacher is the district's treasurer. Cynthia Ullrich is assistant treasurer and clerk.

**Article 5.** Approve funding 17 items for the Water Department, including salaries, operations, indebtedness, employment taxes, auditing records, insurance, water pumping costs, and reserve fund. Amounts are not provided in the article.

*The following articles 6, 7, 8, 9, 11 and 12 give an amount followed by "or any other sum."*

**Article 6.** Appropriate \$52,200 to the Berkshire County Retirement System.

**Article 7.** Appropriate \$159,000 for the employees' and retired employees' contributory group insurance.

**Article 8.** Appropriate \$100,000 to pay Other Post Employment Benefits."

**Article 9.** Appropriate \$770,000 for water exploration.

**Article 10.** Use \$240,190 of free cash to reduce the tax levy.

**Article 11.** Put \$15,000 in the Employees' Trust Fund.

**Article 12.** Put \$30,000 in the Stabilization Fund.

**Article 13.** Buy a utility body truck for \$120,000.

**Article 14.** Authorize the Prudential Committee to sell at public or private sale equipment "no longer useful to said District."

The warrant is signed by Prudential Committee members Mr. Atwood, Mr. Schumacher, Robert Hammer, William Brinker and William Foster and, as clerk, Ms. Ullrich.

### District To Seek Federal Funds

The district has filed a notice on its website that it intends to apply for federal funds from the Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Rural Utilities Service for its projects for ultraviolet disinfection at the Green River Pump Station and its interconnection with Housatonic Water Works.

Comments regarding this application should be submitted to the Great Barrington Fire District, the notice states.

District voters approved the projects at the May 15, 2023, annual meeting.

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### How To Reach Officials

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](mailto:Paul.Mark@masenate.gov)

His constituent services director, Casey Pease, is at [casey.pease@masenate.gov](mailto:casey.pease@masenate.gov).  
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STATE REP. LEIGH DAVIS has not scheduled office hours but is at 413-854-4623 or [leigh.davis@mahouse.gov](mailto:leigh.davis@mahouse.gov)

Her aide, Serena Keenan, is at [serena.keenan@mahouse.gov](mailto:serena.keenan@mahouse.gov)

Thanks for renewing your NEWSletter subscription!





## Town Elections Are Tuesday, May 13

# Meet The Candidates Who Want Your Vote

WHAT FOLLOWS IS INTENDED as an introduction to candidates on the ballot for town elections **Tuesday, May 13**. Most candidates don't need an introduction, though, as they're incumbents.

Polls will be open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. at the State Road Fire Station for precincts A, C and D and the Housatonic Community Center for precinct B.

All candidates are running unopposed.

One seat — for four years on the Great Barrington Housing Authority's Board of Commissioners — has no candidate and apparently will be determined by who has the most write-in votes.

The offices and candidates are presented in alphabetical order, with brief explanations of each office, generally taken from the town website.

### Additional Questions on Ballot

The ballot also asks voters to:

— Assess an additional \$90,000 in real estate and personal property taxes to buy a drone and electronic bicycle for the Police Department; two transit vehicles, technology a file server with applicable accessories and/or software, a mower, and construction mats for the Department of Public Works; and funding additional capital improvements and equipment for town parks.

—Exempt from provisions of Proposition 2-1/2 amounts required to pay for the bond issued to buy two police cruisers, 25 handheld radios and nine on-board apparatus radios (fire trucks and response vehicles) for the Fire Department; a large field mower, dump truck freightline, excavator, Ford F-350 pickup truck and utility van for the Department of Public Works; and to fund capital projects at the Courthouse, town libraries and any emergency repairs and/or improvements and architectural and engineering services for town facilities; and to fund expenses for capital improvement projects for town streets, bridges, culverts and related engineering costs.

—Exempt from Proposition 2-1/2 the amounts to be borrowed "for the bond issued in order to pay costs related to the construction and installation of a temporary bridge on Brookside Road over the Housatonic River, and/or for the construction of temporary emergency services facilities on or near Brookside Road, and for the payment of all other costs incidental and related thereto."

## Board of Health

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.

The three elected board members work with health agent Rebecca Jurczyk.

### Elect 1, 3-Year Term

**Mr. Lanoue was asked:**

*What do you think Great Barrington -- not just the Board of Health -- needs to do to protect the health of its residents?*

### Michael Lanoue



Mr. Lanoue, 44, resides at 59 Hurlburt Road. He seeks his fourth term on the Board of Health, of which he is chairman.

He has been on the Conservation Commission since 2020.

Mr. Lanoue graduated in 2004 from Gordon College with a degree in music.

He is a builder with David E. Lanoue Inc.

**Mr. Lanoue's answer:**

"The town of Great Barrington should focus on two areas in order to protect the health of its residents.

"The first would be to continue supporting the Board of Health as it seeks to address both new and longstanding issues. An example of this would be the way in which the town has and continues to financially support the board as it seeks to address the Housatonic Water Works issue.

"The second area the town should focus on are those issues which lie beyond the specific regulatory authority of the Board of Health but which impact the health and well being of its residents.

"This may include such actions as acquiring and running a water system, giving appropriate scrutiny to new and emergent technologies such as 5G cell towers, and supporting those organizations addressing chronic disease, substance abuse, and mental health."

## Board of Library Trustees

The six-member Board of Library Trustees is responsible for plans, policies and procedures of Mason Library in Great Barrington and Ramsdell Library in Housatonic.

### Elect 2, 3-Year Terms

Both candidates were asked:

*What would you like the library trustees to accomplish in the next three years and why?*

### Ruby Chang

Dr. Chang, 68, a pediatrician, resides at 253 Long Pond Road



and seeks her second term as a library trustee.

She has been on the Board of Health since 2019 and has lived in Great Barrington for the past 13 years.

Dr. Chang helped write the library board's for Five Year Strategic Plan, and applications for two Community Preservation Act grants and the Massachusetts Board of Library Trustee construction grant.

She is one of two trustees serving on the Ramsdell Building Committee.

Great Barrington Rotary Club named her its Citizen of the Year last year.

She said she plans to continue to support her knowledge by attending MBLC and Massachusetts Association of library Trustees programs.

**Dr. Chang's answer:**

She wrote that she plans "to continue her role in shepherding to completion the Ramsdell Renovation Project and support the Mason and Ramsdell Library in this era of widespread fund cutting."

### Lauren Clark

Ms. Clark, 67, lives at 180 North Plain Road. She seeks her fourth term on the board.

Ms. Clark attended Dean and Elizabeth Seton colleges. She owns Lauren Clark

Fine Art and co-owns

Childs+Clark Gallery, both at 684 Main St.

**Ms. Clark's answer:**

"I would like the library trustees to accomplish the steering of the Ramsdell Library renovations which will be starting during this time period. I believe making the Ramsdell updated and accessible to all will greatly benefit the residents of Housatonic and Great Barrington alike."

## Finance Committee

The Finance Committee serves as the financial advisory board, making recommendations to town meeting on the town budget and financial warrant articles. It also approves appropriations from the Reserve Fund.

### Elect 2, 3-Year Terms

Both candidates were asked:

*What changes do you think the Finance Committee could make to cut taxes and keep costs down?*

### Milena Cerna

Ms. Cerna, 70, resides at 90 Christian Hill Road and

(ELECTIONS cont. on page 6)



# Meet More Candidates for Election May 13

seeks her second term on the Finance Committee.

Ms. Cerna graduated from the Prague School of Economics in Prague, Czechoslovakia, with her bachelor and master degrees in economics and has a master's degree in finance from Columbia University's Graduate School of Business.

She worked for more than 25 years in banking and finance, first as a senior vice president with Citigroup, then as global market head at Bloomberg, and managing director at PlanEcon/Warburg Pincus.

She then was executive director of Yale University's School of Management and retired as associate dean of Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs.

She has been treasurer of several organizations in Massachusetts, Connecticut and New York, she wrote.

## Ms. Cerna's answer:

"We will be most likely faced with a very challenging financial environment for the next several years, with inflationary increases across the board.

"It will be therefore critical to stay vigilant and continue to eliminate any nonessential expenses from our town and school budgets, achieve cost savings and become more efficient by sharing resources with other towns and lobbying more aggressively at the state level to secure additional funding to properly maintain our aging infrastructure.

"In order to be able to actually cut our taxes, we will need to eliminate the \$6 million to \$7 million subsidy that our school district pays annually to towns who send their tuition-in and choice-in students to be educated in Great Barrington.

"By making these towns pay a fair share of the education expenses, Great Barrington taxpayers would see their tax bills reduce on average by 23% (in 2026 budget scenario)."

## Madonna Meagher

Ms. Meagher did not return her candidate's statement or answer the question. She seeks her third term on the board. When she first ran nine years ago, she wrote that she lives at 3 Alford Road and graduated from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst in 1978.

## Housing Authority

The Housing Authority was created by unanimous vote at Great Barrington's town meeting in May 1963.

The GBHA 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 eight family units; and one state Department of Developmental Services house.

The state Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities, formerly the Department of Housing and Community

Development, oversees and helps finance these units. No town funds are used.

Two seats are up for election this year but only one candidate is running. The town clerk's reports of who took out nomination papers listed the seats as a four-year term ending in 2029, for which no one took out papers, and one term ending in 2026, for which Maureen Meier returned nomination papers.

However, that 2026 term was apparently intended for five years, ending in 2030, and Ms. Meier will be on the ballot for it, town clerk Joshua Risen said.

## Elect 1, 4-Year Term

No candidate

## Elect 1, 5-Year Term

Ms. Meier was asked:

*Why do you want to be on the Great Barrington Housing Authority?*

## Maureen E. Meier



Ms. Meier, 64, lives at 11 George St.

She was appointed to the GBHA last year as the governor's appointee but resigned to care for an ailing family member. She was appointed again this year by the two remaining GBHA board members and the selectmen.

Ms. Meier graduated from Ithaca College in 1982 with a dual major in literature and history and then in 1984 from State University of New York-Albany with a master's degree in secondary education.

She wrote that she is a retired bookkeeper/office manager and hosts guests at her AirBnB.

## Ms. Meier's answer:

"I want to help. I have more time at this point in my life with my work slowing down and my children now grown up and moved away. I think I have a skill set I could put to good use on the board. I care about people, especially people who have limited options for housing, and I care about our town."

## Moderator

The moderator presides at town meetings and appoints "all committees authorized by Town Meeting within 21 days of said meeting," according to the Town Code.

## Elect 1, 1-Year Term

Mr. Wise was asked:

*What do you want to accomplish?*

## Michael Wise

Mr. Wise, 77, a retired lawyer, resides at 173 Castle St. He was first elected moderator in 2016.

He is chair of the Zoning Board of Appeal.

Since moving to Great Barrington full-time in 2010, he has served on the Finance Committee and was chairman from 2015 to 2017.



He has been on the Cultural Council, Tree Committee, Master Plan Committee of which he was co-chair, Charter Review Committee of which he was vice chair, two town manager screening committees, and the Berkshire Hills Regional School District's Regional Agreement Amendment Committee.

He is also chair of the Democratic Town Committee.

He attended New England Conservatory and graduated in 1968 from Michigan State University. He received his law degree in 1974 from Yale Law School.

## Mr. Wise's answer:

"I want to maintain Great Barrington's tradition of civil, productive town meetings."

## Planning Board

The Planning Board is responsible for adopting subdivision rules and approving definitive plan reviews, drafting and submitting to town meeting proposed amendments to the town's zoning bylaws, and approving site plans.

It is also the special permit granting authority for assisted living residences and solar energy facilities.

## Elect 2; ; 3-Year Terms

The candidates were asked:

*What changes do you think the Planning Board could make to further encourage more business and more housing in Great Barrington?*

## Jeremy Higa

Mr. Higa, 55, lives at Rose Court East. He seeks his fourth term on the Planning Board.

He attended the University of Hawaii and is customer service manager at the Berkshire Food Co-op.

He has been the Planning Board's representative to the Community Preservation Committee since 2018.

## Mr. Higa's answer:

Mr. Higa did not answer the question.

## Brandee Nelson

Ms. Nelson, 49, lives at 28 Barrington Place. She is chairman of the Planning Board.

She has been on both the Planning Board and the Lake Mansfield Improvement Task Force since 2014.

She was on the former Energy Committee from 2011 to 2012.

Ms. Nelson graduated from Whitehouse (Texas) High School and in 1997 from Montana Tech with a degree in environmental engineering.



(ELECTIONS continues on page 7)



# Planning Board cont.; Candidates for Selectmen, ZBA

She is a civil engineer with Tighe and Bond.

## Ms. Nelson's answer:

"For the past year, I have been championing an effort for the Planning Board to lead a Master Plan revision process that recognizes how much our town has evolved since the Master Plan was completed in 2013.

"Not only are we grappling with economic development and housing challenges, we also are living in a world with a high degree of uncertainty related to the economy and the climate. Updating our Master Plan will require funds, which are somewhat limited in this budget cycle so if we cannot proceed with the Master Plan update in the near term, I'd like to continue to champion this issue so that we have a good planning document in place to guide the growth of our community into the next decade.

"At the Planning Board, I would like to continue to promote a variety of land use and zoning policies that will promote economic development, such as the new redevelopment overlay on the Simon's Rock campus, and reduce zoning burden for housing development.

"I want us to continue to provide for the economic base in our community with appropriate use of commercial and industrial zoning, as well as to provide for future housing opportunities by focusing development where we have existing infrastructure such as sewer and water that can accommodate denser development."

## Selectboard

Selectmen are the only elected town officials who are paid. Each of the five selectmen receives \$4,900 and may 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."

Its long list of responsibilities is at [ecode360.com/13819957](http://ecode360.com/13819957)

## Elect 2, 3-Year Terms

Leigh Davis resigned from the board as she was elected state representative.

The candidates were asked to answer, in 500 words or less:

*What can Great Barrington do to encourage more housing and business -- not just restaurants -- in town, and how should it ensure that developers for housing and/or businesses who say they'll come here actually do?*

## Steve Bannon

Mr. Bannon, 66, of 19 Fairview Terrace seeks his sixth term on the Selectboard.

He has been the board's chairman since 2019 and was vice chairman from 2015 through 2018.

He also has been chairman of the Berkshire Hills Regional School Committee since



1999. He was first appointed to that committee in 1997 and has been re-elected since then. He has been on school committee subcommittees for contract negotiation, policy, and finance. He is past chairman of the superintendent search committee and is a current member of the Monument Mountain Regional High School building committee.

In 2014, Mr. Bannon received the Lifetime Achievement Award of the Massachusetts Association of School Committees.

He has been chairman of School Center Inc. since 2017.

Mr. Bannon also is a member of the town's Great Barrington Parks and Recreation Commission and Cemetery Committee.

He is a member of the citizens' committee considering re-use of the Bard College of Simon's Rock property off Alford Road, the Karebear Executive Committee, and Great Barrington Rotary Cub since 1983 and on its board since 2010.

He has been on the Great Barrington Historical Society's board in 2015.

Mr. Bannon graduated in 1976 from Monument Mountain Regional High School and from Massachusetts College of Pharmacy-Hampden Campus in 1981.

His family owned and operated Bill's Pharmacy for more than 40 years before selling it to CVS in 2008.

He has been a pharmacist at Fairview Hospital since 2009.

## Mr. Bannon's answer:

"The Town of Great Barrington needs to encourage housing and businesses to come to town. To accomplish this, it must be done in ways other than monetary contributions. It is unfair to the taxpayers to wholly subsidize these projects using tax dollars.

"When a developer wants to do a project, their first contact is with the staff of the Town Hall.

"Our staff needs to continue to be exceptional in welcoming people and helping them through what can often be a complicated process. Working through state and town laws and regulations can often be intimidating. If a developer or business owner feels the town is putting road blocks up or isn't being welcoming, they probably will find some other place to do business and we all lose.

"The town can partner with private entities to apply for grants or low interest loans. This encourages businesses to come to town with less of an initial financial burden. The Community Preservation Act is an example of town-controlled monies that have been used to support private entities, specifically affordable housing.

"Some citizens feel the town should be more involved in private sales. For instance, if a property is for sale, it may automatically

be thought that the town needs to assure that property is used for affordable or work force housing. Towns are not in the business of dictating the uses of properties. They can encourage affordable or workforce housing in certain locations by smart zoning.

"I believe our Planning Board does an excellent job of encouraging the appropriate use of properties.

"In a democratic society, there is no way to assure that someone who shows interest actually follows through, other than being welcoming and cooperating throughout the process. It is vital to have the right people and procedures in place to ensure a smooth process and I am confident that Great Barrington is in a good place to compete with neighboring towns to continue its sustainability and growth."

## Philip Orenstein



Mr. Orenstein, 62, lives at 4 Alford Road. He wrote that he is a finance professional.

He was elected last year to his third term on the Finance Committee, of which he is chairman.

He has been on the Great Barrington Housing Authority board since 2022 and was elected chairman earlier this year.

For a year ending last November, he was interim executive director of Community Development Corporation of South Berkshire, of which he had been a board member and treasurer since 2023.

He has an economics degree from George Washington University and a master's degree in finance from New York University.

## Mr. Orenstein's answer:

"Great Barrington is fortunate to be the economic hub of greater South Berkshire county and our town government will continue to play a critical role in supporting this vibrant economy.

"Given our budgetary constraints and critical pending municipal projects we must prioritize efforts to attract private capital for responsible commercial, nonprofit and residential developments that comply with our permitting and zoning regulations.

"This local support is particularly important when projects rely on state and federal financing with complex requirements. An excellent example of how this process can drive economic activity is the town's proactive role in attracting private investors for the former Housatonic School building. The process identified and communicated a specific opportunity that encouraged new investment in our town.

"Another piece of the town's role in economic development is the need to maintain and improve its physical infrastructure

**(ELECTIONS continues on page 8)**

## Selectman, cont.; Zoning Board

including roads, bridges, traffic management, public transportation and public parking.

"This also includes our targeted investments to support expansion of high-speed internet access.

"For projects requiring a special permit the town should continue to provide prompt and constructive feedback conducive to collaboration. Feedback from residents is a critical part of this process. And as a follow-up the town must continue to monitor compliance with existing special permits."

### Zoning Board Of Appeals

The ZBA has five members and two alternate members.

The ZBA may 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 By-Law and related zoning provisions of Massachusetts law; and act on applications for variances.

### Elect 1, 5-Year Term

**Ms. Brodeur was asked:**

*Why do you want to be on the ZBA?*

**J.B. Brodeur**



Ms. Brodeur, 75, lives at 2 Pine St. She has been an associate member of the ZBA for two years and a member of the Design Advisory Committee since 2023.

She received a degree in education in 1971 from Framingham State College and completed a program at the London College of Design in 1978.

Ms. Brodeur has taught at Boston Public Schools at Girls' High School in Roxbury, in Australia for the Victorian Consolidated Schools in Cohuna, Victoria, and adult education for the City of Cairns, Queensland.

She worked in clothing manufacture in Hong Kong and from 1997 to 2004 at Cypress Apparel in Sheffield.

**Ms. Brodeur's answer:**

"I've lived in Great Barrington for nearly 28 years and feel a deep sense of belonging and a desire to become more active in the town's workings. I have enjoyed my stint as an associate member and I am eager to engage fully with the current members, whom I respect a great deal."



## Selectmen Reject Both Finalists For Town Manager; To Start Over

ON A 3-1 VOTE, the selectmen agreed April 22 to reject both finalists for the position of town manager and re-advertise.

Finalists Angeline Lopes Ellison and Marc Strange may reapply if they want, Selectboard chairman Steve Bannon said after the vote.

Garfield Reed voted against the motion. When the discussion began, he said he favored Ms. Ellison.

It's important that she's a woman, she has experience and she was prepared, he said, noting that she referred to the town's Master Plan.

He was concerned that Mr. Strange did not plan to move to Great Barrington, he added.

Eric Gabriel said he did not want to feel rushed about deciding and felt the selectmen owe it to the town to have another round of candidates.

Ben Elliott agreed. So did Mr. Bannon, who added that sometimes good candidates aren't a good fit.

Great Barrington has challenges, the selectmen noted.

It's been "helped tremendously" by having Chris Rembold, who is serving as both interim town manager and director of planning and development, Mr. Bannon said.

### Could Hire Interim Manager

If Mr. Rembold can't continue to do this, we'll hire an interim manager, he said.

Bernard Lynch, head of search firm Community Paradigm, was at the meeting and said he will re-advertise. Advertising is done nationally, he said when resident Jennifer Clark asked.

The town might be competing with others in the area, he cautioned. He repeated that this is a difficult time to seek applicants.

Mr. Bannon said the board will decide whether to keep the town manager screening committee or readvertise for new members.

### Finalists Interviewed April 15

Ms. Ellison and Mr. Strange were interviewed separately April 15. Mr. Lynch was

present and only the selectmen could ask questions.

A recording of the interviews is on CTSSB at [/ctssb.org](https://www.ctssb.org) Watching, rather than reading about them, lets someone see their physical reactions to the questions.

Ms. Ellison said she planned to move to Great Barrington if hired. Mr. Strange said he would commute from his home in Longmeadow as it's about an hour away and he doesn't mind the drive.

Their resumes were sent to THE NEWSletter's email list but here's a brief summary.

### Angelina Lopez Ellison

Ms. Ellison was town administrator of Fairhaven from 2022 until she left last year. Before that, she was North Adams administrative officer and chief of staff from 2020 to 2022; town manager of Uxbridge from 2018 to 2020; and town administrator of Blandford from 2016 to 2018.

From 2008 to 2019, she was an independent consultant. She has been associate dean of students affairs at the University of Massachusetts in Boston.

She has a master certificate in local government leadership and management from Suffolk University, a master's degree in American studies from the University of Massachusetts-Boston, and a bachelor's degree in political science from Southeastern Massachusetts University.

She was in the Army National Guard.

### Marc Strange

Mr. Strange has been town administrator in Ludlow since 2022. From 2015 to 2022, he was planning and community development director in Agawam.

He was a Longmeadow selectman from 2019 to 2022.

He had a law office in Springfield from 2014 to 2015 and has worked for the state in the Department of Unemployment Assistance.

He received his law degree in 2004 from Western New England College School of Law and a bachelor's degree in marketing management from Syracuse University in 1998.

## AG Concerned About HWW's Water Quality

The state attorney general's office filed with the state Department of Public Utilities a response to the Stockbridge and Great Barrington motion that Housatonic Water Works be required to proceed with projects intended to improve water.

The response is in this NEWSletter.

As THE NEWSletter has reported, HWW sought to delay installing a manganese filtration system because of financial problems.

The AG's response includes the following statements, both on page 6:

"... the Settlement was designed specifically to allow after-the-fact scrutiny into the

Company's efforts to finance and construct the capital projects needed to bring adequate water quality to the Company's customers. The Company — not the ratepayers — bears the risk of cost disallowance should its efforts be found imprudent."

"Although the AGO opposes the Towns' motion for enforcement, the AGO is genuinely concerned about the delays surrounding the construction of the Manganese Filtration System and acknowledges the imperative need to provide HWW customers with significantly improved water quality."



# Voters Say 'No!' To Buying HWW; They Table Action on Fire District

VOTERS AT THE SPECIAL TOWN MEETING April 17 gave a definite "no" to acquiring Housatonic Water Works — at least, as proposed in the warrant article, for up to \$2.3 million — and tabled indefinitely the meeting's second article, acquiring the Great Barrington Fire District.

The vote on buying HWW was 140 to acquire it and 241 opposed.

The vote was advisory, not binding, so passage would have needed a majority, not two-thirds, vote, according to attorney David Doneski of town counsel KP Law.

Mr. Doneski was delayed in traffic and arrived at the meeting after the vote. However, he had sent an opinion to interim town manager Chris Rembold, who read it at the start of the special town meeting.

## Meeting Called by About 300 Voters

The warrant had two articles, prepared by Sharon Gregory of Great Barrington, and was called by citizens petitions. Each petition had about 100 more signatures than the needed 200.

Ms. Gregory showed a Powerpoint that included a visual showing that consultants, including lawyers and accountants, received about 15% of HWW's expenditures, with 40% going to salaries, including to owners Jim and Fred Mercer, and about 20% to pumping, purification and distribution.

## Agrees With Intent, Not Method

Second speaker was selectman Ben Elliott, who said he agrees with the articles' intent but not the method and claimed the town is on the way to acquiring HWW. The selectmen have had executive sessions and hired a lawyer to consider negotiations with HWW. They have provided no details.

HWW's owners might be better at manipulating the legal system than at operating a water system, Mr. Elliott stated. He sought to table the article but that motion failed.

## Two Other Selectmen Oppose Article

Selectman Eric Gabriel said HWW needs to be a public entity but asked voters to give the selectmen more time to negotiate with the Mercers. He had read a statement at the Selectboard's April 14 meeting explaining his opposition.

Board chairman Steve Bannon has also said he does not support the articles but he did not speak at the special town meeting.

Other speakers included Kate Van Olst, who noted that she and her young son had been featured in a Boston Globe article about the dirty water problems. She said she wanted to hear from Jim Mercer.

He was present but did not speak.

A motion was made but defeated to delete the article's reference to \$2.3 million.

At 6:58 p.m., on a show of cards, the motion to acquire HWW failed on a show of cards.

## Second Article Discussed

During discussion of the second article, to acquire Great Barrington Fire District, Donna

Jacobs congratulated Ms. Gregory for her work, and Ms. Gregory and others praised the fire district.

Walter Atwood III, chairman of the Prudential Committee, said passing the article could mean the district would "most likely see you in court." Ms. Jacobs said she was "saddened" to hear threat of a lawsuit and the public could respond by not paying taxes or water bills.

Others spoke and then Mr. Atwood moved to indefinitely postpone the article. That was done on a show of cards and the meeting adjourned at 7:11 p.m.

CTSB recorded the meeting, which can be viewed at [ctsbv.org/government-channel-1303/](http://ctsbv.org/government-channel-1303/)

## Mercers Favor Town Buying HWW

While neither HWW owners Jim Mercer nor his father, Fred, spoke, they favor the town's buying the water company.

Jim Mercer has issued statements, posted on the HWW website and sent to customers, of why the town should do this.

## GBFD Committee Opposes Purchase

The Prudential Committee, which runs the fire district between membership meetings, sent a letter to its customers explaining why it opposes a purchase.

At the Prudential Committee's April 8 meeting, Mr. Mercer gave members a proposed letter for voters stating that both water companies favor having the town acquire HWW — but not the fire district — and establish it as a standalone public water district.

Will Brinker questioned who would pay. When the train is on fire and heading for a cliff, changing engineers won't fix the problem, he commented.

Ken Schumacher and Mr. Atwood said in principle they agreed to the proposal. However, the committee voted unanimously to table action on the letter until its April 22 meeting, after the special town meeting.

## HWW Being Investigated by DEP?

Meanwhile, the Secretary of State's Public Records Division ordered the Department of Environmental Protection to provide documents THE NEWSletter had requested that were sent to and by HWW and DEP.

A DEP employee who works with the media wrote THE NEWSletter that this "may be interfering with potential enforcement" as "three documents are our communications with a party under investigation. The fourth is our communication with their representative, their attorney."

THE NEWSletter appealed again to the Public Records Division on the grounds that both parties have seen the documents so this wouldn't reveal anything. A Public Records lawyer has been assigned to the new appeal.

THE NEWSletter sent statements referred to in this article to its email list. Subscribers who want them should just write [the-newsltr@gmail.com](mailto:the-newsltr@gmail.com)

## Hello, Folks ...

# April 17 Meeting's Lesson for Officials

PEOPLE'S COMMENTS before, at and after the April 17 special town meeting strongly indicate that they want the town manager and selectmen to provide information about what they're doing in their closed-door sessions regarding Housatonic Water Works.

People tell me they are frustrated by the failure to be given information about what is happening during those executive sessions on possible negotiations with HWW. Is the town actually negotiating with HWW? Does the lawyer hired to work on negotiations always attend? Are more studies being done?

There seems no reason a report can't be given, if only something like "The board met for 27 minutes with the lawyer. He provided information to help us consider our negotiating options," and perhaps identify the kind of information, if not a specific document.

Or is "negotiations" being stretched to mean how a town-owned water committee would operate?

But the selectmen and the former and interim town managers have taken the approach that nothing at all should be disclosed except perhaps the meeting's length.

Transparency makes governments trusted. Trust encourages people to approve warrant articles that government proposes.

An example of what seems unnecessary withholding of information is the opinion attorney David Doneski sent to interim town manager Chris Rembold about the articles for the special town meeting, including whether the votes would be advisory or binding.

The opinion was sent by email April 14. When THE NEWSletter asked at the selectmen's meeting that evening whether the selectmen had the lawyer's opinion, board chairman Steve Bannon said they didn't and Mr. Rembold was silent.

But the opinion apparently had arrived — and even if it arrived after the meeting, there seems no reason why Mr. Bannon or Mr. Rembold couldn't make it known the next day.

One of these days, the Selectboard may ask voters to buy HWW. It might not get its desired result if voters still have questions.

Mr. Bannon also chairs the Berkshire Hills Regional School Committee. When voters defeated the two requests to renovate Monument Mountain Regional High School, the chief reason THE NEWSletter heard was that too many questions were unanswered.

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ON A QUITE DIFFERENT MATTER, this is the first issue of the 34th year of publication of THE NEWSletter.

Many thanks to copy editor Barbara Bailly and to the many board members and Town Hall people who promptly answer my sometimes frantic requests for information.

The May issue may be later than usual. Computer programs need updating and that might take a while.

-Eileen W. Mooney

# Fairgrounds Update, Selectboard's Actions, More

BACK IN December 2012, JANET AND Bart Elsbach bought the 57-acre fairgrounds on South Main Street to develop as a community resource.

Great Barrington Fair Ground Redevelopment Project was formed as a nonprofit, according to the website, [gbfg.org](http://gbfg.org).

Then the assessors determined that the property was commercial, not nonprofit, and had to pay taxes.

In 2023, town tax collector and treasurer Alicia Dulin placed a lien on the fairgrounds for unpaid real estate taxes.

Fair Ground Community Redevelopment appealed to the state Appellate Tax Board for an abatement, which was granted on two acres.

Ms. Dulin explained the result when THE NEWSletter asked:

"This caused me to have to disclaim the tax taking and start over. On April 1 of this year, I did a tax taking again and placed a lien on the fairgrounds. They now have six months from April 1 to come forward and pay the back taxes in full.

"If the back taxes are not paid in full by Oct. 1, I will then submit the foreclosure paperwork to the Land Court to begin the foreclosure process.

"Once this paperwork is filed in Land Court, it can take anywhere from two to five years for a foreclosure judgment in the case since Land Court is so backed up."

## More Information!

SUBSCRIBERS CAN SIGN UP to receive news releases for Southern Berkshire Regional and Lee schools, the state Inspector General's office and Berkshire Food Co-op.

Interested? Just let me know at [the-newsltr@gmail.com](mailto:the-newsltr@gmail.com). This is part of your NEWSletter subscription. There's no added cost.

You can sign up for everything. Once you're on a list, you can get off.

Also on the list are:

- 1Berkshire, BEAT, Berkshire Agricultural Ventures, Berkshire Black Economic Council, Berkshire Bounty, Berkshire Community Land Trust, Chamber of Commerce, CHP;

- W.E.B. Du Bois Freedom Center, Community Development Corp., Construct, Cultural District;

- District Attorney, Dewey Hall, Great Barrington Historical Society;

- RSYP, Schumacher Center for a New Economics, Claire Teague Senior Center, and Volunteers in Medicine.

Feel free to suggest more. Some of those listed, such as the Chamber of Commerce, issue weekly releases; some issue them only once or twice a year.

## Community Gardens To Continue

Janet Elsbach told THE NEWSletter that "We look forward to another full and busy growing season with Multicultural BRIDGE, seeing the community beds in full bloom and full use, supplying hundreds of the most underserved members of our community with nourishing food and access to the land to grow it."

\* \* \*

A PUBLIC HEARING HAS BEEN CONTINUED TO **June 9** for the request from AM MGMT 2, LLC for a proposed 20-unit mixed-use project at 546 South Main St. to receive special permits to be in a water quality protection overlay district and waive requirements for the amount of commercial space.

The special permit is being continued until the board again has five members. It's been at four since December when Leigh Davis resigned after being elected state representative in November.

Special permits require four favorable votes.

Also at their April 14 meeting, the selectmen gave permits for:

- One-day entertainment license for the **Great Barrington Firefighters' Association Car Show** on Main Street from Cottage to Bridge streets, including Castle and Railroad streets, on **Aug. 7** from 4 to 9 p.m.. Rain date is Aug. 17.

- Entertainment license to **Berkshire Busk** for performances at various locations on Railroad Street, Main Street from Castle to Elm streets, at the Congregational Church and the Triplex on Fridays and Saturdays from **June 27 through Aug. 30** from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. Selectman Ben Elliott abstained from voting on this as he manages the Triplex.

- Entertainment license and one-day liquor license for **Berkshire International Film Festival** to use the Town Hall Park **May 29 and 31** from 5 to 7 p.m., including use of three Town Hall parking spaces from the evening of **May 28 through the morning of June 1**.

Also approved was the film festival's request to hang **banners along Main and Railroad streets** from April 21 through **June 9** and to temporarily lift **restrictions on parking time** in downtown from **May 29 to June 1**.

- American Legion Murphy Leary Post 298 to conduct its annual **poppy boot drive** on Main Street between Gas House Lane and the entrance to John B. Hull Oil on **May 17** from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Rain date is May 24.

The post was also given permission to conduct the Memorial Poppy fundraiser at various locations in Great Barrington and Housatonic throughout May.

## Schedule of Postage Fees Adopted

They also approved a schedule of postage fees requested by town clerk Joshua Risen.

## Abatements Granted So Far This Year

REPRODUCED ON THE NEXT page is the chart showing abatements granted or denied by the Board of Assessors so far in 2025.

The chart, which is public information, shows the tax before and after abatement and the property's owner and location.

The information is not on the assessors' website page but principal assessor Ross Vivori said anyone wanting to see it can request it.

Members of the Board of Assessors are Mr. Vivori, Tammy Touponce and Carol Strommer, who is also the office's administrative assistant.

He wrote that the clerk's office has not charged a fee for documents bought through the town website. A fee will help mitigate rising postage costs, he noted.

The fee is \$1 for one to four documents; \$2, 5-9; \$3, 10-14; \$4, 15-19; and \$5, 20-24, with a continuous addition of \$1 for greater quantities.

Transfer station stickers will be a flat \$1 fee.

## Ramsdell Building Committee

The selectmen have appointed Frederica Sigel of Round Hill Road to the Ramsdell Building Committee. The committee now has its seven members.

The committee is charged with obtaining a design for a renovated library building. It has a \$100,000 grant from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners for such work, plus voters at last year's annual town meeting approved \$150,000.

In her application for appointment, Ms. Sigel noted that she and her husband have owned a home in Great Barrington since 1992.

She was on the board of the New Rochelle (N.Y.) Public Library for 10 years, including two as president, and has been on the Landmarks and Land Use committee of her community board in New York City's Greenwich Village, she wrote.

Her experience includes being chief operating officer of Thomas Balsey Associates and U.S. operations leader of Atelier Ten, both in New York.

She has a degree in English literature and art history from the University of Michigan and a master's degree in English literature from Tufts University.

## Other Actions Taken April 14

Among other actions at that meeting, the selectmen approved without discussion a warrant for the May 3 annual town meeting and agreed to ask voters to discontinue part of Ramsdell Road. That is Article 29 — the last one — on the warrant.





# Police Report for March

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](http://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](http://mass.gov/doc/disability-indicator-form).

## March Police Report

*The following is from the month's police report. It does not include all police actions. Police respond when the fire department is called. Those c are reported in the Fire Report elsewhere on this page.*

Thirteen collisions involving two-vehicles were reported in March, and a driver and bicyclist collided. No injuries were reported. One person was arrested.

Someone reporting hitting a deer on Long Pond Road. A truck hit a fallen tree. A different truck hit a pole.

Police stopped 41 vehicles, resulting in 40 citations/warnings being issued.

## Radar Used on 13 Town Streets

Radar was run seven times on North Plain Road, six times on State Road, and four times on Stockbridge Road;

Also, three times each on Egremont Plain Road and Main Street; twice each on Old Stockbridge Road and East and South Main streets, and once each on Alford Road, Fountain Pond and Park, Front, and Division streets, according to the police log.

Police unlocked 14 vehicles.

## Community Policing Visits

Archer, the department's comfort dog, visited Muddy Brook Regional Elementary School three times, including for observance of Read Across America Day.

He also visited Undermountain Elementary School in Sheffield and Du Bois Regional Middle School.

The department's co-responder met with residents at the Claire Teague Senior Center.

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



Police went to Berkshire School in Sheffield for a class about constitutional law and the Fourth Amendment regarding people's right to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects.

Seven people were taken to hospitals for psychiatric evaluation.

## Other Police Reports

Someone reported to police that money was sent to a fraudulent Facebook marketplace post. Another person said someone called trying to get her to buy Amazon gift cards.

Federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement notified police March 19 that agents were in town.

## Raccoons and Loose Dogs

A raccoon was reported stuck in a Dumpster on Castle Hill Avenue. Two raccoons were reported in a house on Kirk Street, Housatonic.

A dog bit a caller's son.

Several loose dogs were reported.

## Arrests During March

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

-David John Armstrong, 56, of Sheffield, operating under the influence of liquor, marked lanes violation & negligent operation of a motor vehicle.

-Sarah D. Ashmore, 49, Rumford, Maine, fugitive from justice on court warrant.

-Brian J. Tranter Jr., 40, Great Barrington, assault & dangerous weapon, a knife.

-Lydia Ross, 68, Great Barrington, operating a motor vehicle with suspended registration.

-Carolyn Estes, 75, Great Barrington, disturbing the peace.

-Ian Tyrel Graham, 39, Great Barrington, court-issued warrant.

-Zachary Alexander Marshall, 36, Dalton, possession of class A drug.

-Jerzy Henryk Czeremcha, 58, Great Barrington, domestic assault & battery, disturbing the peace, strangulation or suffocation, assault to rape.

-Shanell D. Harden, 37, Great Barrington, assault & battery on a health care worker, protective custody.

**THE NEWSletter — a great gift!**

# Fire Report

GREAT BARRINGTON FIRE STATIONS are at 37 State Road. Great Barrington, and 172 Front St., Housatonic.

The State Road headquarters is open from 8 to 11:30 a.m. weekdays. Its telephone number is 528-0788.

Its website page is [townofgb.org/fire-department](http://townofgb.org/fire-department) and its Facebook page is at [www.facebook.com/gbfiredpt#](https://www.facebook.com/gbfiredpt#)

Firefighters responded to 134 incidents during March. The State Road station State responded to 132 calls and Housatonic's station to two.

Calls included a chimney fire on Pearl Street, a brush fire on Division Street, a grass fire on Seekonk Road and a small campfire left unattended on Alford Road.

None of the fires resulted in damage, Pamela Mulvey, the department's administrative assistant, told THE NEWSletter.

Other calls included rescuing lost hikers on the Thomas & Palmer Brook Reserve off State Road and helping the Egremont Fire Department rescue a hiker who was having difficulty breathing.

Firefighters assisted emergency medical crews 75 times, plus at three vehicle accidents.

They removed someone from a stalled elevator at Simon's Rock.

Twenty-two calls were for false alarms for release of hazardous materials or carbon monoxide or fire alarms activated because of malfunction or unintentionally.

# 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](http://www.gbhousing.org) for details.

AN UNPAID PUBLIC SERVICE AD

## Need a ride? Call the TriTown Connector!

The **TriTown Connector** is a *call-for-ride* service, serving Egremont, Great Barrington/Housatonic, and Stockbridge. Call **413-591-3826**.

Visit [www.tritown.org](http://www.tritown.org)

**TRITOWN  
CONNECTOR**

AN UNPAID PUBLIC SERVICE AD

## 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



*THE  
SOUTH-  
ERN Berk-  
shire Reg-  
istry of  
Deeds is in  
the Great  
Barrington  
Town Hall*

*and open from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. week-  
days. Documents are online at  
[www.masslandrecords.com](http://www.masslandrecords.com).*

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

-Dara M. Jenssen & George E. Bishop to  
Edwin A. Escobar & Mary I. Berrio, 49 Pine  
St., Great Barrington, \$630,000.

-KDD LLC to B&H Holding LLC, 5  
George St., Great Barrington, \$100,000.

-Thomas P. Murray & Holly J. Murray  
to Kenneth R. Landau & Stephanie Landau,  
15 Partridge Drive, Egremont, \$1.049 mil-  
lion.

-Diane Finger & Steven M. Bellovin to  
Alan S. Fox & Resa Mastel, 20 Burning  
Tree Road, Great Barrington, \$1.15 million.

-Timothy A. Parker & Sara L. Parker to  
Leah E. Vogel & Sylvia Lacy, trustees, Ni-  
non Chalet Lifetime Trust F/B/O Leah E.  
Vogel Under Article, 48 Quarry St., Great  
Barrington, \$715,000.

## Recent Real Estate Transactions

-Construct Inc. to Jason C. Morse &  
Heather E. Churchill, 34 Pleasant St., Great  
Barrington, \$580,000.

-Alan J. Dolber & Roslyn L. Dolber to  
David Lewis & Jansulu Nurpeisova, 142  
Main Road, Monterey, \$1,375,960.

-Edward B. O'Malley & Mary B.  
O'Malley to Nancy Menusan & Gennifer  
Herley, 17 Cone Ave., Great Barrington,  
\$425,000.

-Cloud Kingdom 2020 LLC to Lars W.J.  
Linden & Jennifer Gilbert Linden, 300 East  
Road, Alford, \$1.05 million.

-Amanda C. Hembree, Marla Durso &  
Tony Leone to Amanda C. Hembree, 22  
Smith Road, West Stockbridge, \$307,231.

-William F. Cooke & Deborah A. Phil-  
lips, trustees, William F. Cooke Revocable  
Trust & Deborah A. Phillips Revocable  
Trust, to Martin B. Alber & Anne Johnston,  
4 Highland Drive, Great Barrington,  
\$830,000.

-Black Bear Holdings LLC to James  
Crosswell, Victoria Crosswell, Rebecca  
Santos & Gregory Santos, 1 Prospect Lake  
Road, Egremont, \$1.02million.

-Berkshire Pleasure LLC to Alexa  
Englander & Rose Franz, unit 3C, 281 Main  
St., Great Barrington, \$852,000.

-GJO LLC to Rocky/Addy LLC, 11  
Roger Road, Great Barrington, \$50,000.

-Maria E. Walker to Blake McDonald &  
Keith Asher, trustees, Blake McDonald  
Trust, 24 Main St., Egremont, \$775,000.

-Ilene Browner & estate of Florence  
Browner to G. Felda Hardymon & Frederick  
A. Tilton III, trustees, Harymon 2012 Revo-  
cable Family Trust, 90 Creamery Road,  
Egremont, \$530,000.

### 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. Doc-  
uments are online at [masslandrecords.com/  
BerkMiddle/](http://masslandrecords.com/BerkMiddle/)*

-Charlotte L. Gaspard Trust & Swann  
Real Estate Trust to Stockbridge-Munsee  
Community, property on Fenn Farm Road,  
Cherry Hill Road & Sky Farm Road, Stock-  
bridge, \$2.5 million.

-Lucas S. Swann, Kalina Swann, estate  
of Nicholas Swann, Lucas Swann & Kalina  
Swann, trustees, to Charlotte L. Gaspard,  
property on Cherry Hill Road, Monument  
Mountain Road & Sky Farm Road, Stock-  
bridge, \$307,500.

-Audrey Shulman & Jane Goldenberg to  
David Allan Archer Jr. & Mikeaela Dawn  
Mintz, 5 Wheatley Drive, \$1.3 million.

-Next Acre South LLC to Mark Nemery  
& Joshua Nemery, 6 Bean Hill Road, Stock-  
bridge, \$150,000.

## Building Permits of \$70,000 Or More

GREAT BARRINGTON IS PART of a  
four-town building department with Lee,  
Lenox and Stockbridge. Building commis-  
sioner is Matthew Kollmer, building in-  
spector is Rian Dowd and administrative  
assistant is Kara Hovland.

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 Barring-  
ton's zoning enforcement officer.

The telephone number is 528-3206.

### Inspectors; What Needs Permit

Other inspectors are gas, Robert Gen-  
nari at 274-0267; plumbing, Robert  
Krupski, 229-8019; and electrical, Theo-  
dore 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 occupa-  
tions.

*Following are recent permits for pro-  
jects valued at \$70,000 or more, with the  
owner's name, estimated value & the appli-  
cant if not the owner:*

-Butternut Basin Inc., new ski lift at  
380 State Road, estimated value  
\$3,625,000.

-SASC Properties, move interior stair  
cases & add bathroom at 7 Fern Hill Road,  
Anthony Cunagin, \$345,000.

-Camp Institute of Living Judaism,  
replace signing & install new windows at  
Tsofim Beit Am building at 53 Brookside  
Road, Benjamin Rivest, \$144,238.

-Peter A. Sweet Jr., install building at  
49 Seekonk Road, \$82,000.

-Great Barrington Real Estate, HVAC  
work at 300 Stockbridge Road, Todd Du-  
val, \$75,000.

-Joan Griswold, build four-bedroom  
home at 275 Division St., Timothy Martin  
contractor, estimated value \$312,000.

-Jamie T. Sotis, remove lead paint,  
replace exterior doors, replace 19 windows  
at 301 State Road, Alex Komlev, \$71,300.

-Nellda Clark, replace siding at 48 Kal-  
liste Hill, Adam Quenneville, \$88,000.

-Stephen & Kristina Kiesel, install 48  
panels of rooftop solar array & remove 16  
existing panels at 14 Kalliste Hill, Joshua  
Borozny, \$80,360.

-Zaharias & Christine Giannaris, new  
office, heating & cooling system, kitchen &  
acoustical in commercial building at 67  
State Road, Ralph Lombardi, \$185,000.



402 Park Street

P.O. Box 547

Housatonic, MA 01236

[housatonicrealestate.com](http://housatonicrealestate.com)

413.274.5065

**HAVING A TAG SALE? You need a  
permit from the town clerk's office.  
Town code lets Great Barrington and  
Housatonic residents have two tag sales  
a year, with each permit good for up to  
two consecutive days. If you don't own  
your property, you need a letter from  
the owner stating it's OK. The fee is \$5.**

**THE NEWSletter unfortunately lacks the space to include all details and all survivors.**

**It emails obituaries when it receives them to subscribers who requested them.**

## Richard H. Burdsall

Richard Howard Burdsall, 90, of South Egremont died March 27 at his home.

He was predeceased in 2018 by his wife of 63 years, Priscilla Rogers-Burdsall.

Mr. Burdsall leaves four children, Richard, Thomas, Sarah and Stuart; 12 grandchildren; and six great-grandchildren.

Finnerty & Stevens Funeral Home handled arrangements.

Memorial donations are suggested through the funeral home for the benefit of a charity to be named later.

## LuAnn Dombrowski

LuAnn Dombrowski, 71, of Mill River died March 28.

She attended Taconic Hills Regional High School in Philmont, N.Y. before moving to Rockaway, N.Y., with her husband.

After moving to the Berkshires, she worked at Berkshire County Arc, where she and her companion, John Goudy, would dress up as Mickey and Minnie santas.

Besides Mr. Goudy of Mill River, her companion of 35 years, Mrs. Dombrowski leaves his daughter, Alicia Ryan of Sheffield, Christopher Dombrowski of Pittsfield, Heather Dombrowski of Sheffield, and Alison Firch of Rio Linda, Calif.; her sisters, Letty Malin of Craryville, N.Y., and Lori Brauski of Punxsutawney, Pa.; and four grandchildren.

Finnerty & Stevens Funeral Home handled arrangements.

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

## Margaret Gillett

Margaret Alice Hastedt Gillett, 94, of Housatonic died at home March 29.

She worked at Ried Cleaners for 40 years and left to run the swimming pool business she and her husband, William, owned.

Mrs. Gillett leaves her children, Barbara Bailly of Maine, William of Utah and Jeanne Bachetti of Sheffield; 10 grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren; three great-great-grandchildren; and her sister, June Hastedt.

She was predeceased by her husband, William; her daughter, Sharon; a great-great-grandson; her brothers Fred, William, Albert, Arthur and Raymond Hastedt; and her sisters, Anna Kindick, Alice Hess, Edna Finkle and Dorothy Badurski.

Finnerty & Stevens Funeral Home handled arrangements.

Memorial donations are suggested to Hospice in the Berkshires.

## John B Hull III

John B Hull III, 92, of Great Barrington died April 7 at Fairview Hospital.

He graduated from Berkshire School in Sheffield and attended Colgate University for two years, when he left to enter the Army in 1954.

He served 16 months in Korea and was honorably discharged after serving active duty

# Obituaries

for two years. He then spent six years in the Army Reserves.

After leaving the Army, he went to work at John B. Hull Jr. Coal and Oil Business, which he eventually owned and operated for many years.

Mr. Hull served two different terms as trustee of Fairview Hospital, was a member of Hope Fire Department for 15 years and served on the Great Barrington Planning Board.

From 1962 to 1998, he was a director of the former Mahaiwe Bank and its successor, First Agricultural Bank.

He was a trustee of Berkshire School for 11 years and a board member and president of Construct.

In the 1990s, he organized eight investors to buy the remains of Taconic Lumber Co and convert it into public parking, the Triplex Movie Theater and businesses such as an art gallery and a bakery.

He also was a past president of Wyantuck Country Club and, for 35 years, chairman of its tournament committee. He scored three home-in-ones during his golfing career.

Mr. Hull was predeceased in 2012 by his wife of 55 years, Sally Jane Arnold Hull. He was also predeceased by his son John B. Hull IV and sister, Joan Kelly.

He leaves his children, Forrest A. Hull Sr., Hannah Lee Hull, Bruce C. Hull and Roger W. Hull; eight grandchildren; and his sister, Elee Hull.

Birches-Roy Funeral Home handled arrangements.

Memorial donations are suggested to Fairview Hospital, First Congregational Church in Great Barrington or Berkshire School.

## Barbara VanDeusen Kot

Barbara Elizabeth Ann VanDeusen Kot, 87, of Great Barrington died April 9 at Fairview Commons.

She attended the former Williams High School in Stockbridge while also working part-time for the former W.T. Grant Co. from 1954 to 1956.

She then worked for 42 years in food service at Fairview Hospital. For the last 15, from 1958 to 2000, she was food service supervisor.

Mrs. Kot leaves her husband of 58 years, John Kot; her daughter, Lynn Rene Reynolds; a granddaughter; four great-granddaughters; and two great-granddaughters.

She was predeceased by her brother, Donald J. VanDeusen, and her sisters, Jo-Ann Shepard and Carol S. Stalker.

Birches-Roy Funeral Home handled arrangements.

Memorial donations are suggested to the Alzheimer's Association through the funeral home.

## Marc Edward Lavalette

Marc Edward Lavalette, 54, of Great Barrington died April 2.

Mr. Lavalette leaves his parents, Peggy Lavalette and James Lavalette; his stepmother, Deb; and his brother, Billy Lavalette.

Finnerty & Stevens Funeral Home handled arrangements.

Memorial donations are suggested to the Berkshire Humane Society.

## John Lucey

John Richard Lucey, 86, of Great Barrington died April 15.

After attending the former Searles High School, he worked at the former First National. He also worked at Decker's Auto in Sheffield and Dolby's Florist in Great Barrington.

When he was 18, he joined the Army Reserves.

Mr. Lucey worked at the American Institute for Economic Research for nine years before going to the Lakeville Journal, where he was on the camera and layout team during the era of letterpress printing.

He then went to Kwik Print, where he worked for 28 years before retiring.

During retirement, he delivered prescriptions for the former Bill's Pharmacy for 10 years. When that business was sold, he worked for Lenox Village Pharmacy. His final retirement was at age 80.

For more than 65 years, Mr. Lucey was a volunteer for youth athletics. He was a Little League coach for 25 years, including five years as league president. He coached Babe Ruth and a high school boys' baseball team that won the Berkshire County Championship.

In 1976, he founded the first local girls' basketball team, which became the Golden Knights.

He often told parents that "It is not the game that I am teaching out there; it is life."

He also worked with the town Parks Department.

Mr. Lucey leaves his wife of 65 years, Anne Marie Pompei Lucey; his children, Theresa Rumph, Robert Lucey, Mark Lucey and Heather Twing; his brother, William Lucey; 12 grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren.

He was predeceased by his son, Michael, and his parents, Grace and Robert Lucey.

Finnerty & Stevens Funeral Home handled arrangements.

Memorial donations are suggested to Saint Peter's Catholic Church or Housatonic Youth Basketball through the funeral home.

## Alice A. Olender

Alice A. Olender, 97, of Great Barrington died April 14 at Fairview Commons.

She attended the former Searles High School and then worked in the weave shop at the former Monument Mills, in the housekeeping department at Willowood Nursing Home and as a garment inspector for the former Ried Cleaners.

Mrs. Olender leaves her daughters, Barbara Benham of Housatonic and Patricia Olender of Omaha, Neb.; three grandchildren; and seven great-grandchildren.

Her husband of 36 years, Stanley J. "Toby" Olender, died in 1983. She was also predeceased by her brothers, Joseph, John, Henry, Thomas, Franky and Steven Badurski, and her sisters, Regina Dacey, Mary Boris and Helen Badurski.

Birches-Roy Funeral Home handled arrangements.

Memorial donations are suggested to the Claire Teague Senior Center through the funeral home.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**TITLE:** Various Tax Exemptions to Consider for the Annual Town Meeting Warrant

**BACKGROUND:** There are several property tax exemptions for seniors and veterans available under Massachusetts law, and which require Town Meeting acceptance. Each exemption is set forth as a clause within MGL Chapter 59, section 5. Clauses 41, 41B, 41C or 41C½ provide exemptions to seniors who meet specific ownership, residency, income and asset requirements. Seniors 70 or older may, alternatively, qualify for exemption under Clauses 17, 17C, 17C½ or 17D, which provide a reduced benefit, but have less strict eligibility requirements.

In FY23, 50 exemptions were granted totaling were \$70,114. In FY24, 48 exemptions were granted totaling \$64,242. Some exemptions are at least partially reimbursed by the State, helping the Town recoup about half of the forgone tax revenue.

The Town has previously accepted and already offers a variety of clauses for veterans, as well as for seniors: 41C (a \$1,000 exemption) and 41A (tax deferral – income must be less than \$40,000, deferred at interest rate of 5%). Changes to the terms of 41A require Town Meeting approval.

Other exemptions, or options to modify those exemptions, that are possible upon Town Meeting acceptance. It is difficult to estimate how many additional people will qualify for the various exemptions. Anyone getting the 41C already will get 41D, and any that do not qualify could now qualify for 17D. Staff estimates less than 20 additional exemptions would be granted if the Town accepts 17D.

17D: a \$175 exemption, senior surviving spouse and minor children. This is a low cost exemption to the Town, and we do not anticipate it to cost more than \$4,000 annually.

41D: a \$1,000 exemption for seniors that allows the exemption to increase by the cost of living each year. This is a lost cost exemption to the Town.

41C½: 5% of the average assessed valuation of residential property in the Town, which may be increased by local option up to 20% of the average assessed valuation of residential property. This could get very expensive for the Town.

“HERO” act, related to disabled veterans:

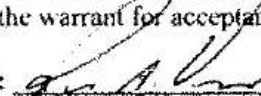
22I: allows exemptions already offered under 22, 22A, 22B, 22C, 22E and 22F to increase by the cost of living each year. This is recommended.

22J: doubles the minimum exemption, for example from \$400 to \$800, or from \$1,000 to \$2,000. The impacts are less well known and has the potential to have a higher cost impact on the Town.

Another new exemption, not related to the senior and veteran clauses above, is the Affordable Housing Property Tax Exemption for the portion of a property offered as year-round affordable rental housing. This is a new provision of state law. It was recommended by the Affordable Housing Trust Fund and referred to the Selectboard for review. Staff has reviewed this and we are as yet unable to predict its fiscal impacts and our ability to implement. Only one other town, Egremont, has accepted it and it is not yet in effect. Provincetown has had a version of it for several years. Until staff can review this further, staff recommend not moving forward on it this year.

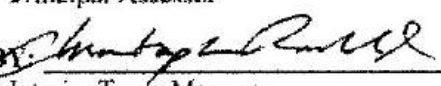
**RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends the Selectboard vote to place the 17D, 41D, and 22I exemptions on the warrant for acceptance at the upcoming Annual town Meeting.

WRITTEN BY:

  
Principal Assessor

4/10/25  
date

APPROVED BY:

  
Interim Town Manager

4/10/25  
date

STEPHEN BANNON  
CHAIR

GARFIELD C. REED  
ERIC GABRIEL  
BENJAMIN ELLIOTT



Town Hall, 334 Main Street  
Great Barrington, MA 01230

Telephone: (413) 528-1619, x2  
Fax: (413) 528-2290  
[www.townofgb.org](http://www.townofgb.org)

## TOWN OF GREAT BARRINGTON MASSACHUSETTS

### SELECTBOARD

#### STATEMENT ON GREAT BARRINGTON FIRE DISTRICT CONNECTION TO HOUSATONIC WATER WORKS SYSTEM

April 3, 2025

At the March 24 Selectboard meeting, Interim Town Manager Chris Rembold gave a brief update on the efforts of the Selectboard regarding the Town's possible acquisition of the Housatonic Water Works Company and the 2024 order of the Department of Public Utilities regarding the rate increase request of Housatonic Water Works. That order approved a settlement agreement between the company and the office of the Attorney General. The agreement contains several proposed capital improvements and related cost factors. One of the proposed improvements is the interconnection of the Great Barrington Fire District water system to the Housatonic Water Works system.

Under the terms of the settlement agreement, and the DPU order, the interconnection project is subject to approval of the three towns who intervened in the rate case, Great Barrington, Stockbridge and West Stockbridge. Through Town Counsel and Interim Town Manager Rembold, the Selectboard has informed Housatonic Water Works of approval of the interconnection project. Stockbridge and West Stockbridge have also given their approval.

Although this project will involve a related water rate increase, it is the smallest of any of the increases included in the DPU order, a 7.33% increase over the rate for the preceding year. More important, the project will enhance public safety and fire protection by improving overall resources and water supply capacity for general water distribution and emergency purposes.

The Selectboard believes that the interconnection of the two systems will benefit Housatonic Water Works customers and Great Barrington Fire District customers. It will be an enhancement of the public water supply infrastructure serving the Town.

I want to point out that approval of the interconnection project shows that the Selectboard and the Town of Great Barrington are willing to work cooperatively with Housatonic Water Works Company when there is a reasonable and fair approach to issues and mutual benefit to all parties. What the Selectboard is not willing to do is agree to company proposals and positions that are not reasonable and fair for the community. The Selectboard will continue to advocate for rate relief for all customers of Housatonic Water Works, and for reasonable and practical solutions to the water supply needs and concerns of Great Barrington.

*For the Great Barrington Selectboard,  
Stephen Bannon, Chair*

**COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS  
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC UTILITIES**

**Petition of Housatonic Water Works  
Company for Approval of a General  
Increase in Rates**

**D.P.U. 23-65**

**THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OPPOSITION TO  
TO STOCKBRIDGE AND GREAT BARRINGTON'S MOTION TO ENFORCE**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

On June 23, 2023, Housatonic Water Works Company ("HWW" or "Company") filed a petition with the Department of Public Utilities ("Department") for approval of a general increase in rates. Thereafter, HWW and the Office of the Attorney General ("AGO") entered settlement discussions, resulting in the filing of a Joint Motion for Approval of Settlement Agreement,<sup>1</sup> which was subsequently approved by the Department.<sup>2</sup>

On January 24, 2025, the Company filed a Notice of Delay of Settlement Phase 2 Implementation,<sup>3</sup> in response to which the Town of Stockbridge filed a motion to enforce the settlement on February 5, 2025.<sup>4</sup> Following the Town of Great Barrington's joining of

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<sup>1</sup> Joint Motion for Approval of Settlement Agreement (Apr. 26, 2024). The filing included the Settlement Agreement and four schedules.

<sup>2</sup> Order (Jul. 31, 2024). On August 20, 2024, the Towns of Great Barrington and West Stockbridge filed a petition for appeal of the Department's order with the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court—No. SJ-2024-0312 (the matter is pending).

<sup>3</sup> Notice of Delay (Jan. 24, 2025). HWW claims that its capital investment project to install a manganese filtration system (i.e., Phase 2) has been delayed due to financial risks that were unforeseen at time of the Settlement Agreement. Notice, at 1.

<sup>4</sup> Stockbridge Motion for Enforcement (Feb. 5, 2024).



Stockbridge's motion on February 14, 2025,<sup>5</sup> the Department requested that the parties file a response to the motion. The AGO hereby files this opposition to the Towns of Great Barrington and Stockbridge's (together "Towns") motion for enforcement.

## II. BACKGROUND

The Towns seek, among other things, to have the Department suspend the Phase 1 rate increase that took effect on August 1, 2024 "unless or until the Company shows compliance with the Department's July 31 Order," and to have the Settlement Agreement enforced with respects to the construction of the Manganese Filtration System (i.e., Phase 2).<sup>6</sup>

By way of background, the "Phase 1 rate increase includes costs related to the capital project needed to address the level of HAA5 in the distribution system," which was "placed in service in October 2023 and has resulted in HAA5 levels in compliance with federal and state guidelines."<sup>7</sup> In addition, the Phase 1 rate increase was intended to put HWW "in a position to obtain financing to support several large projects in its capital improvement plan that are needed to address water quality and system condition issues identified in its sanitary surveys."<sup>8</sup>

The Settlement Agreement also contemplates the installation of a filtration system to address elevated levels of manganese ("Manganese Filtration System"), which are causing recurrent incidents of discolored water. The Phase 2 increase was to take effect after the completion of the Manganese Filtration System and the Department's review of associated costs

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<sup>5</sup> Great Barrington Notice of Joinder (Feb.14, 2025). Notably, Great Barrington is both appealing the Department's Order and seeking to enforce the Department's Order.

<sup>6</sup> Stockbridge Response to HWW's Notice of Delay (Feb. 5, 2025)

<sup>7</sup> Order, at 12–13.

<sup>8</sup> Explanatory Statement, at 2.

and financing arrangements.<sup>9</sup> The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (“MassDEP”) has required HWW to install the Manganese Filtration System.<sup>10</sup> MassDEP has “primary” responsibility for enforcing water quality and safety, which the Department relied upon, in part, in approving the Settlement.<sup>11</sup>

On August 22, 2024, the Great Barrington Board of Health (“Board”) ordered HWW to provide bottled water to its customers until further order of the Board.<sup>12</sup> The Board required distribution of a supply of water equal to or greater than 1.5 gallons per day, per inhabitant in each such household, a requirement HWW describes as creating “a revenue shortfall of greater than \$40,000 per month.”<sup>13</sup> This shortfall would come on top of the Company’s \$82,609 annual revenue deficiency allowed by the Phase 1 increase, compounding the Company’s losses.<sup>14</sup>

HWW sued to enjoin the Board’s Order in Berkshire Superior Court.<sup>15</sup> The Superior Court recognized that the Board’s Order had the potential to upset the timing of the Manganese Filtration System, as ordered by MassDEP, and would frustrate the MassDEP water regulations’ stated purpose of providing a statewide and uniform regulatory process.<sup>16</sup> The court found that, together, the Department and MassDEP have exclusive jurisdiction in the regulation of water quality and that the Board is preempted from issuing its Order.<sup>17</sup> The court also found that the Board’s Order

<sup>9</sup> Settlement Agreement, §§ 1.2.2, 1.2.3, 1.2.5.1.

<sup>10</sup> *Id.* § 1.2.1.

<sup>11</sup> Order, at 10–11, 35–36.

<sup>12</sup> Notice of Delay, at 1.

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*

<sup>14</sup> Settlement Agreement, § 1.3.2.

<sup>15</sup> Notice of Delay, at 2.

<sup>16</sup> *Housatonic Water Works Co. v. Town of Great Barrington et al.*, 2476CV00150, Order on Plaintiff’s Motion for Preliminary Injunction, at 6–7 (Berkshire Sup. Ct., Oct. 21, 2024).

<sup>17</sup> *Id.* at 7.

would create irreparable harm, accepting, for the purposes of the motion, the Company's assertion that the Order "may result in financial insolvency" that would disrupt the installation of the Manganese Filtration System.<sup>18</sup> The court issued a preliminary injunction against the enforcement of the Board's Order on October 21, 2024.<sup>19</sup> Subsequently, on November 20, 2024, Great Barrington filed an appeal of the Superior Court's decision.<sup>20</sup>

On January 24, 2025, the Company filed its notice with the Department stating that its capital investment project to install the Manganese Filtration System has been delayed because "[t]he Company's lenders have declined to finance the Company's capital projects until the Board of Health's order is definitively invalidated or rescinded."<sup>21</sup> HWW maintains that the effective date of Phase 2 will need to be delayed until mid-2026, "[a]ssuming the matter is resolved in the Company's favor in early 2025."<sup>22</sup>

### III. ARGUMENT

The AGO requests that the Department deny the Towns' motion for enforcement. First, regarding the Phase 1 rate increase, there is no legal basis to suspend or otherwise claw back the funds collected pursuant to this increase. The increase was tied to costs associated with a capital project to address HAA5 levels in the water, placed in service in 2023, and to put the Company in

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<sup>18</sup> *Id.*

<sup>19</sup> *Id.* at 8.

<sup>20</sup> Notice of Delay, at 2. This appeal is in addition to the Town of Great Barrington and Town of West Stockbridge's pending appeal to the Supreme Judicial Court of the Department's initial approval of the Settlement. *See Town of Great Barrington and Town of West Stockbridge v. Department of Public Utilities*, SJ-2024-0312 (filed Aug. 29, 2024).

<sup>21</sup> Notice of Delay, at 1.

<sup>22</sup> *Id.* at 2–3.

a better position to attract financing for the remaining capital projects.<sup>23</sup> In fact, the Department found that the Settlement (including the Phase 1 rate increase) “is consistent with Department precedent, is in the public interest, and will result in just and reasonable rates.”<sup>24</sup> The Towns’ request—to suspend the Phase 1 rate increase—should be appropriately pursued through either another rate case<sup>25</sup> or through the ongoing appeal to the Supreme Judicial Court of the Department’s Order by Great Barrington and West Stockbridge. If that appeal is successful, the case would be remanded to the Department for further investigation and findings.

The other issue presented by the Towns concerns the timely construction of the MassDEP-mandated Manganese Filtration System, which is necessary to bring adequate water quality to the Company’s customers. The Settlement was designed to allow the Company to secure the financing necessary to begin construction of the Manganese Filtration System,<sup>26</sup> but the Settlement did not anticipate or factor in the costs associated with the Board’s Order (which came *after* the Settlement was approved). The Board’s Order appears to have impaired the Company’s ability to secure funds for construction, an impairment that is likely to remain until the Board’s Order is definitively invalidated or rescinded. Granting the Towns’ motion for enforcement would do nothing to alter this current predicament or to secure the clean water the ratepayers of HWW deserve.

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<sup>23</sup> Explanatory Statement, at 2.

<sup>24</sup> Order, at 27.

<sup>25</sup> As a general rule, the Department may not order retroactive adjustments of a company’s base distribution rates. See D.P.U. 18-15-F, Order, at 40-41 (Feb. 15, 2019) (citing *Boston Edison Co. v. Department of Public Utilities*, 375 Mass. 1, 6 (1978); *Lowell Gas Co. v. Attorney General*, 377 Mass. 37, 44-45 (1979); *Fryer v. Department of Public Utilities*, 374 Mass. 685, 689-690 (1978)).

<sup>26</sup> HWW secured a \$350,000 grant for the Manganese Filtration System from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency after the Department’s Order. See, e.g., Shaw Israel Izikson, “Housatonic Water Works receives \$350,000 grant from MassDEP and EPA,” THE BERKSHIRE EDGE, (July 22, 2024) <https://theberkshireedge.com/housatonic-water-works-receives-350000-grant-from-massdep-and-epa/>.



While the Towns question the Company's pursuit of funding and call for the Department to investigate, the appropriate venue for such an investigation is in the Department's prudence review of the completed capital project.<sup>27</sup> To open an inquiry into the Company's prospective capital project management would likely violate the Department's prior determination that "it is inappropriate for the Department to substitute its own judgment for the judgment of the management of a utility."<sup>28</sup> Rather, the Settlement was designed specifically to allow after-the-fact scrutiny into the Company's efforts to finance and construct the capital projects needed to bring adequate water quality to the Company's customers.<sup>29</sup> The Company—not the ratepayers—bears the risk of cost disallowance should its efforts be found imprudent.<sup>30</sup>

Although the AGO opposes the Towns' motion for enforcement, the AGO is genuinely concerned about the delays surrounding the construction of the Manganese Filtration System and acknowledges the imperative need to provide HWW customers with significantly improved water quality. The AGO entered into the Settlement Agreement with the understanding that the most expeditious way to secure clean drinking water for Housatonic was—and remains—for the Company to obtain financing and begin construction on the Manganese Filtration System as

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<sup>27</sup> See Settlement Agreement, §§ 1.2.2, 1.2.3. The AGO's position here should not be construed as denying the legitimacy of questioning the Company's efforts to pursue outside funding. Such questions are legitimate but should be reserved for the prudence review of completed capital projects. It is, however, unreasonable to assume that the entirety of the Manganese Filtration System could be funded through outside grants.

<sup>28</sup> *Electric Sector Modernization Plans*, D.P.U. 24-10 through D.P.U. 24-12, Order, at 80 (Aug. 29, 2024) (citing *Attorney General v. Department of Public Utilities*, 390 Mass. 208, 228 (1983)).

<sup>29</sup> Order, at 28

<sup>30</sup> Order, at 30–31 ("The Department's approval of the Settlement is based on our expectation that the Company will aggressively seek to minimize its capital project costs through grants and the use of low-cost financing programs. . . . Failure to do so may be considered as evidence of imprudence in a future Department review.").

quickly as practical. This understanding is embodied in the implementation timelines incorporated into the Settlement,<sup>31</sup> timelines which the Company has not met. Notwithstanding any role the Board's Order has played in this delay, it is not lost on the AGO that the year-long construction timeline described for the Manganese Filtration System, in the Company's Notice of Delay, does not align with the roughly six-month construction timeline agreed to in the Settlement Agreement.<sup>32</sup> Accordingly, the AGO will thoroughly investigate the delay during the prudence review for the project and associated Phase 2 rate increase and, where appropriate, argue for the Department to deny or reduce the requested cost recovery in response to any failings by HWW.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

For the reasons detailed above, the AGO respectfully requests that the Department deny the Towns' Motion for Enforcement.

Respectfully submitted,

ANDREA JOY CAMPBELL  
ATTORNEY GENERAL

/s/ Joseph W. Rogers

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<sup>31</sup> See Settlement Agreement §§ 1.2.5.1, 1.3.2.

<sup>32</sup> Compare Notice of Delay, at 2 ("Assuming the matter is resolved in the Company's favor in early 2025... the Company... hopes to commence the project and place it in service in the first half of 2026") with Settlement Agreement, §§ 1.1.10 (Settlement effective date of Aug. 1, 2024), 1.2.5.1 ("The project is currently expected to be in service in the fourth quarter of 2024.").

## Arbor Day Proclamation, 2025

### Town of Great Barrington, Massachusetts

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Whereas, Arbor Day celebrates the role of trees in our lives and promotes tree planting and care. It was initiated in 1872 by J. Sterling Morton of Nebraska City who said "Other holidays focus upon the past; Arbor Day focuses on the future." Arbor Day is now celebrated throughout the nation and the world.

Whereas, trees are important, we couldn't live without them: they clean the air and produce the oxygen we breathe. They provide habitat for wildlife and help to keep the climate in balance.

They give us paper, wood for our homes, fuel for our fires and countless other wood products.

Whereas, trees increase property values, and enhance the beauty and vitality of our community.

Whereas, planting trees is an act of kindness and optimism. The celebration of Arbor Day represents a priceless opportunity for all of you to take positive actions and make your world a better place.

Therefore, we, the members of the Selectboard of the Town of Great Barrington, Massachusetts, do hereby proclaim April 25th, 2025 to be known as ARBOR DAY in Great Barrington, and we urge all citizens to celebrate Arbor Day planting and caring for trees, and to support efforts in our Town to protect our trees.

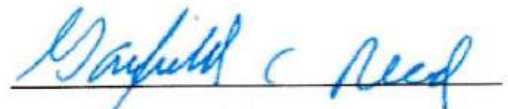
IN WITNESS THEREOF, We have hereunto set our hands this 24th day of March, 2025.



Stephen C. Bannon



Eric Gabriel



Garfield C. Reed



Ben Elliott

Members of the Great Barrington Selectboard