

To our fellow Washington residents:

December 2014

Our Tax Collector, Belinda Phillips, is stepping down after many years of outstanding service to the Town. The Select Board has appointed our Assistant Tax Collector, Sue McGrath, on an interim basis. If you or anyone you know in Town has an interest in (and some expertise with) the position of Tax Collector, please let us know soon. This is currently an elected position, but if we need to look outside Washington we will have to change it to appointed.

At the November 10 Special Town meeting our voters, after a lively discussion, decided to only include funding for the engineering of a new culvert on Cross Place Road and not Lower Sargent or Lower Valley. Since the Town has been notified that the culverts on Lower Valley and Lower Sargent Road are dangerous, the Board decided to close off both roads until such time as funding is available.

- One of the issues that weighed on the voters' thinking was the failure of the bridge on Middlefield Road. While it has only moderate impact on Washington residents it is vital for our neighbors in Middlefield and must be re-opened as soon as possible. The Board engaged Phil Clark to design a new structure. Phil has already secured a temporary bridge like the one on Cross Place and we will install it once DOT gives the go-ahead.

In another lively discussion at the STM, the voters opted not to take a stand on the proposed pipeline or fund the Town's participation in an ad hoc advocacy group of Berkshire communities that the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) has formed until after additional presentations:

- BEAT (Berkshire Environmental Action Team) and a group called NoFrackedGasInMass who are both opposed to the pipeline, will present at 7:15 on Monday December 8 at the Washington Town Hall. Lenox, Pittsfield, and Dalton, all of whom would be far more affected by the current route than Washington, have expressed opposition.
- BRPC will present at 7:15 on Monday December 15, followed by an STM at 7:45 in which the voters will decide whether to participate. There will also be an STM warrant item prepared by Dave Drugmand expressing opposition to the pipeline.
- The primary responsibility of the Select Board is making sure that our residents are impacted as little as possible and kept informed; our next consideration is to support our neighbors. But we caution everyone that if the pipeline goes forward the route will not be fixed for another year so we must stay engaged.

Wired West – the cooperative the Town belongs to along with 44 other communities – and the MA Broadband Institute (MBI) presented to a packed house of municipal officials on November 18 at the Becket Town Hall about the next steps to bring high speed internet to every member household. MBI will put \$40 million in state grant money towards a total cost of \$100-120 million.

A third item on the STM ballot will be a resolution to see if the Town will participate in a cooperative buying agreement for electric power; each household can choose to do so.

There will be no Select Board meeting either December 22 or December 29. Have a safe and enjoyable holiday season – and please come to the Town Hall for the December 8 presentation on the proposed pipeline and for the December 15 STM!

Jim Huebner  
Select Board Chair

Shaun Lennon  
Select Board Clerk

Mike Case  
Select Board