

To our Washington neighbors:

December 2015

Last month our Town Hall was visited by both of our state legislators. Both have been great friends to the Town, especially in supporting us to get badly needed road and bridge repairs.

- Senator Ben Downing met with residents on November 16. Topics included the Summit Hill/CSX bridge, reducing the costs of both engineering and regulations for bridge and culvert replacement, the need to reverse the Berkshires' population drain, and the need to consolidate the county's schools.
- Representative Smitty Pignatelli was a surprise – and very welcome – visitor to our November 9 Select Board meeting. He asked us to join with all the other municipalities of his District in the Community Compact program created by the Governor and the Board voted to do so.
- A common theme from these meetings is the need for regionalization, a way to share costs and services in a way that preserves the character of the Town. Our participation in the Berkshire Public Health Alliance and Dan Parnell's work on common municipal accounting software each bring functional and fiscal benefits to the Town. We will continue to engage with our sister municipalities on the school committee, the Metropolitan Planning Organization, the Pipeline Working Group, and any other way we can to save the Town money while improving services and infrastructure.

At the Seven Town Advisory Meeting last week we were given an update on Cummington's request to leave the District after the closing of Berkshire Trails. Our voters may be asked to approve the request at our Annual Town Meeting Warrant next May. We were also updated on the County Education Task Force that is exploring ways to address declining school populations, rising costs and program reductions in all Berkshire schools. This is an important initiative in which Selectman Mike Case has taken a very active role.

Update on infrastructure:

- The voters passed the debt exclusion for funding high speed internet service by a 3 to 1 margin. Next step is for us to sign an operating agreement with WiredWest. We will keep up the pressure to see that our residents are connected as soon as possible.
- Thanks to Selectman Lennon for soliciting a second round of furniture donations from Williams College and to Jan Nelson for arranging an emergency phone at the Town Hall.
- There will be a public hearing on the Summit Hill/CSX bridge at 6 pm on Monday December 14 at the Town Hall. The project should be complete by summer.
- The saga over the Cross Place culvert continues; we still do not have an approved plan from the engineer we hired. They are now saying the project can be done over the winter. In any case we have stopped paying them; the only question is whether we will seek recovery of what was already paid.

Becket is exploring solar electric for all its residents and invited us to join. We'll keep you posted.

This year's Pumpkin Walk was truly memorable – and not just for the record crowd! Thanks to all the volunteers who made it happen.

Enjoy Christmas and the New Year. The Select Board will not meet on December 28 or January 4.

Jim Huebner
Select Board Chair

Shaun Lennon
Select Board Clerk

Mike Case
Select Board