

To our Washington neighbors:

April 2016

After nine years of dedicated service to the Town as our Highway Superintendent, Dave Fish is stepping down but will remain a valued member of our crew. Tom Johnson will fill in as Superintendent on a trial basis. Tom has served the Town well during his years on the highway crew and has both Dave and his own extensive supervisory experience to guide him.

The Department of Public Utilities (DPU) is holding a hearing on March 29, 2016 at BCC to address Tennessee Gas's request to enter upon properties whose owners have not granted it to conduct surveys in regards to their proposed pipeline. We expect DPU to grant access but with conditions imposed based on the comments and concerns of the landowners.

Some citizens have asked that we reconsider whether the existing abutments to the Middlefield Road bridge need to be reinforced or replaced. The Board will consider spending money on an engineering opinion, although this will just be additional cost if the abutments are not sound.

Baltazar Construction has started staging materials along Washington Mountain Road to support the reconstruction this summer. This includes the use of a half-acre on the Old Town Common for crushed stone to support the first phase of the work.

- The Board gave preliminary approval for use of the Common before consideration of it as a historical site was complete; Baltazar jumped the gun on preparing the site, but nevertheless the Board did give formal albeit belated approval, since the site preparation could not be undone and use of the site will shorten construction time by up to two weeks. The Common will be fully restored by the beginning of June and several of our citizens are looking into ways to further enhance the property.
- Baltazar has been responsive to our concerns about drainage as well as safety during the construction period; we expect a fully reconstructed road by early fall.

DOT is moving with its typical glacial speed to replace the Summit Hill bridge in the summer of 2017. We have demanded that they at least provide a detailed assessment of different detour routes and take another look at widening the replacement structure to two lanes.

Another month has passed and there has been very little movement towards getting the construction of the last mile of the fiber optic network done in Town. The Baker Administration is "studying" the issue and MBI – who holds the purse strings – seem paralyzed. Meanwhile Steve Nelson on his own initiative organized a meeting of all the Towns who support WiredWest's plan of a jointly-owned network at our Town Hall on March 22 to brainstorm ideas to expedite the project. Steve and other attendees carried our message to WiredWest's Board meeting at the Becket Town Hall on March 26.

- We are pleased to report that WiredWest's Board has suspended negotiations with MBI because of MBI's lack of responsiveness and failure to act according to its charter to bring broadband to Western Massachusetts. Further, member Select Boards will send a resolution to the Governor demanding that the broadband project go forward as soon as possible. A citizens' petition to the Governor will follow. Stay tuned!

Please mark your calendars for our Annual Town Meeting – Wednesday May 11 at 7 pm and our Annual Town elections on Saturday May 21. Your participation is the basis for good government – at all levels!

Jim Huebner
Select Board Chair

Shaun Lennon
Select Board Clerk

Mike Case
Select Board