

To our fellow Washington residents:

December 2013 – January 2014

Dr. William Cameron, Superintendent of Schools for the Central Berkshire Regional School answered questions from citizens on vocational education, technology, state mandates and other topics at the 11/4 Select Board meeting. Dr. Cameron will be retiring at the end of this school year and he will be missed. Under his leadership the highest educational standards were upheld while the District's budget increased less than 1% per year. The District's Business Administrator, Melissa Falkowski, was also in attendance.

Our Town Accountant, Dan Parnell continues to explore ways for us to avoid the enormous cost of what has become the standard accounting software used by most towns in the Commonwealth – a purchase price of over \$16,000 plus more than \$3,000 per year in maintenance fees. If we do need to go that route we may be able to buy the software through Hampshire County Council of Governments at a discount. A much better alternative may be through the Community Innovation Challenge Grant to develop municipal accounting software. We applied for this grant last year without success, but it has been revived and revised for this year. Washington could become the development site for software already being used in Hanover MA.

Updates of ongoing projects:

- DOT continues to move forward with the complete rehabilitation of Washington Mountain Road. They are on schedule to solicit bids this year and we expect that construction will start in the spring. The only question remaining is whether the two major culverts – one near Bucksteep and one near the Old School House – will be replaced in coordination with the over all repaving, since separate approvals are needed.
- We are still waiting to hear from FEMA/MEMA regarding our grant request for flood control of Depot Brook and widening Frost Road.
- Similarly we have not yet heard whether the MassWorks grant request for repaving Blotz Road has been approved.
- Phil Clark will be meeting with Westfield Wild & Scenic to determine what help we can expect from them for a permanent bridge over Depot Brook on Cross Place Road.
- We have not had any response from the contractor who chip-sealed our roads last fall to our letter insisting that they remedy the problem and reimburse the Town for the sanding that was done to try to minimize the problem. We will have Jeremia Pollard, the Town's attorney, contact them unless they respond soon.
- Our proposal to further restricting vehicle weight on Blotz Road, while still an open issue, will probably not be resolved with Dalton and Hinsdale until next spring.
- Similarly the transfer of five acres from Pittsfield for a new Town cemetery is unlikely to happen until well into 2014.

Our new school bus should be in service at the beginning of December. As in previous years the operational costs are shared on a proportional basis with Becket which greatly reduces the expense to the Town.

There will be no Select Board meeting on the 23rd or 30th of December. We will resume regular meetings on January 6th, so the next Select Board letter will be in the February *Tracks*. We wish everyone a joyous Holiday Season and a healthy, safe and prosperous 2014.

Jim Huebner
Select Board Chair

Shaun Lennon
Select Board Clerk

Mike Case
Select Board