



Happy Thanksgiving!

November 2015



HAPPY



THANKS



GIVING



The COA will hold its first craft night on Thursday, November 12th with doors opening at 6:00 PM. Supplies will be provided for everyone to create their own Thanksgiving table center piece. Please sign up at the Town Hall, send an email to the COA at washingtoncoa@gmail.com or leave a message at 623-8878 ext. 1.

The Council on Aging Pot Luck Dinner

This month's dinner will be held on Friday, November 20th at the Town Hall with dinner beginning at 5:30 PM. It is a Thanksgiving themed dinner with roasted turkey, stuffing and gravy provided. So bring what you can and leave with some left overs. Hope to see you all there.

**CORY AND MASON ZINK WILL
ENRICH THE EVENING WITH
SOME FATHER AND SON
BLUEGRASS MUSIC.**



**A MATTER OF
BALANCE**
MANAGING CONCERNS ABOUT FALLS



Berkshire
Health Systems
www.berkshirehealthsystems.org

Many older adults experience concerns about falling and restrict their activities. A MATTER OF BALANCE is an award-winning program designed to manage falls and increase activity levels.

**FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED**

SESSION DATES:

November 17 & 18
November 23 & 24
December 1 & 2
December 8 & 9

Each session:

9-11 a.m.

Location:

Town of Washington COA
8 Summit Hill Road

Class size is limited.

Please call:

Berkshire Health Systems'
Care Coordination Team
413-445-9232



To our Washington neighbors:

November 2015

The results from the October 26 Special Town Meeting:

- The voters closely rejected an amendment to our by-laws regarding the registration of Town businesses. We will continue to find alternative ways to protect the character of the Town.
- The voters endorsed the restoration of the Eden Glen recreational area. Next steps will be to get hard cost estimates, install the gate and clean out the dam.
- The voters approved the Town's ongoing participation and financial support for the Pipeline Working Group sponsored by Berkshire Regional Planning to respond to the many issues raised by the proposed pipeline through the Berkshires.

We hope that everyone will turn out for the special election on Saturday November 14 between 12 to 4 in the afternoon at the Town Hall. The only question on the ballot is approval for a debt exclusion for the Town's share of the funding and construction of the high-speed internet system we are participating in through our membership in WiredWest, MA Broadband Institute (MBI) is requiring this even though no such requirement was made prior to last spring's Annual Town meeting when a record voter turnout overwhelmingly approved our participation in WiredWest. However, MBI is the conduit for the state's share of the funding and also has construction oversight. The good news is that, if the debt exclusion is passed, the Town keeps its place in line for the network. We will continue to lobby to be among the first towns on the new system.

Road and bridge updates:

- It is now too late in the year to bid the Cross Place bridge replacement. The only question is whether we will have anything from Holden – who was hired to engineer the project with the understanding it would be completed before now – that we can use in the spring. We are considering whether to take legal action against Holden.
- The contractor hired for Washington Mountain Road has said that the two major culverts will be replaced before winter; this may require a brief detour around the construction.
- The Select Board voted to endorse the salting of our roads in anticipation of a storm to minimize icing.

The electricity aggregation that the voters signed up for through Hampshire County Council of Governments will not happen in January as promised. The Board is looking into some other ideas for lowering the electric rate for everyone in Town.

We hope everyone got to the Pumpkin Walk!

Jim Huebner
Select Board Chair

Shaun Lennon
Select Board Clerk

Mike Case
Select Board

What is a Debt Exclusion?

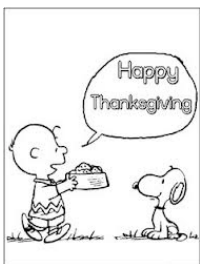
On Saturday, November 14, the people of the Town will go to the polls to vote on whether or not to approve a Debt Exclusion for the borrowing that was approved at the Annual Town Meeting to fund participation in the construction and start-up of a regional broadband network. A Debt Exclusion is a temporary exemption to the property tax limit imposed by Proposition 2½. It can be applied to a specific debt and lasts only for the life of that debt.

Proposition 2½ imposed a maximum property tax limit for each municipality in Massachusetts. Under that law no town may impose a total property tax burden (known as the tax levy) in excess of 2.5% of the town's assessed property value. That maximum is called the Levy Ceiling. It is adjusted each year for growth (or decline) in the town's assessed values. However, for most towns the actual property tax limit, referred to as the Levy Limit, is well below that. That is because the law limits the amount a town's tax levy can increase each year to 2.5% over the previous year's levy limit. The 2.5% increase limit has been imposed each year since the law became effective in 1982. In the current fiscal year, Washington's Levy Limit is set at 1.34% of the fair market value of the town's real and taxable personal property as set by the Department of Revenue.

However, that is still not the whole story. There are basically two ways that a town's Levy Limit may be increased: an override or a debt exclusion. Either requires approval of the town's electorate. An override vote permanently increases the town's Levy Limit and Levy Ceiling. Washington has never done that. A debt exclusion temporarily increases the town's annual Maximum Allowable Levy Limit by an amount not to exceed the specified debt and in effect only for the life of that debt. Washington has done that several times. Currently Washington's Maximum Allowable Levy Limit is 1.42% of the fair market property value due to debt exclusions for the Becket-Washington and Nessacus schools and the Town Garage. Washington's actual tax levy for this year is 1.37% of property tax value.

The vote on November 14 regards a debt exclusion for the town's share of the Wired West capital outlay to provide fiber optic internet, telephone, and TV service to all Washington residents who desire it. At the time of the annual town meeting the Washington Finance Committee and Select Board did not see an immediate need to impose a Proposition 2½ exclusion for our possible debt related to the Wired West project. However, since then a positive debt exclusion vote has become required by the Massachusetts Broadband Initiative (MBI) in order to be included in the project. Thus, nothing is expected to change if the majority vote is for the debt exclusion. If the debt exclusion is denied, Washington's participation in the Wired West project and access to MBI funding becomes questionable.

Prepared by Dick Spencer and Kent Lew
(Not an official Fin Comm statement)



Washington Tracks
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8 Summit Hill Rd.
Washington, MA 01223

www.washington-ma.com

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