



May 2016



Annual Town Election Absentee Ballots

Absentee ballots for the 2016 Annual Town Election are available. To request an absentee ballot, please request an absentee ballot application from the Town or download the application from the Mass.gov website: http://www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/elepdf/absentee_ballot.pdf.

The absentee ballot will be mailed to you once the Town Clerk receives your completed absentee ballot application. The deadline to apply for an absentee ballot is Friday, May 20, 2016 at 12:00 PM.

Annual Town Election Candidates

The following candidates will be on the ballot at the 2016 Annual Town Election.

- Finance Committee (3 year term): Kent Lew
- Finance Committee (3 year term): David Weissbrod
- Planning Board (5 year term): Marilyn Wiley
- Select Board (3 year term): Patricia Drugmand and Shaun Lennon
- Tax Collector (3 year term): Sandra Cameron

The election will be held on Saturday, May 21, 2016 and the polls will be open from 12:00 PM to 4:00 PM.

Any questions, please contact the Town Clerk: 413-623-8878, 413-623-2185 or washingtontownclerk@yahoo.com.

SENIOR NEWS: Jump into your sneakers, wear loose, comfortable clothes and join us in Town Hall auditorium from 10:00 am to 11:00 am each Wednesday starting on May 4 for the first of 6 FREE classes designed to help us avoid falls and the injuries they can cause. Learn gentle stretches and therapeutic exercises to build the strength and flexibility we all need to stay safely on our feet. Our instructor is Lynn Proulx, O.T., Rehab Director, of Porchlight VNA in Lee. She has just finished teaching the 6 week "Move in Time" course in Windsor to rave reviews. Don't miss out on this chance to learn skills that could save you and your family from great pain and great expense! If you have any questions about the program, call me (Jan Nelson or Jodi Hostetter) at Town Hall 413-623-8878, ext. 1. Leave your name and phone number and we will call you back.

The Washington Cultural Council is generously supporting a program this spring (June) entitled "the Birds of Washington". The format will include an evening audio/ visual presentation at the town hall followed by a Saturday or Sunday(weather dependent) half day field trip to some of the most productive habitats around the town of Washington. Both events are free and open to anyone in town.

Please contact Ed Neumuth for details at 413-884-4961 or eneumuth@gmail.com

FY17 Budget Summary

The total to raise and appropriate in the Town's upcoming FY17 budget is \$1,529,577. This is a net increase in the town's budget of \$54,725 (3.71%) over FY16, slightly less than last year's increase over the previous.

One of the most significant factors affecting next year's budget is a large rise in our medical insurance obligations due to both an increase in premiums and the addition of another participant (previously only two of our three eligible employees had elected to participate). There are increases in non-medical insurance as well, due both to rising premiums and coverage of new equipment.

Our CBRSD school assessment went up by much less this time than the previous year, but still a net increase. More significantly, our Vocational Ed. Tuition is doubling due to a second student electing to pursue vocational education next year.

The Finance Committee has recommended a moderate cost-of-living-allowance increase to wages (2.5%) pretty much across the board. Most town employees have not received any increase in the past few years.

On the flip side of the equation, next year's Debt Service has decreased by about one-third, which is significant, because we will have paid off our notes for both the Town Garage and the Police Cruiser.

Throughout the rest of the budget, most departments show some net increases. Expenses last year for improvements to historical buildings and the town park are non-recurring. This year we will be setting aside a similar amount to replace the glass & plastic recycling bin, the bottom of which has deteriorated beyond repair.

The State's municipal aid and local revenue estimates are not expected to increase by very much. So most of the FY17 budget increase will fall to the Tax Levy.

The Finance Committee's current preliminary estimate for the tax rate is \$14.17, an increase of 3.22% over last year. However, FY17 will be a tri-annual recertification year for assessments. If the overall valuation of the town shifts substantially as a result, then the jump in the nominal tax rate might appear much larger (or smaller).

Still, assuming that the relative distribution among taxpayers stays more or less the same and that new growth is rather modest, the current expectation is that the Average Single Family Home tax bill will increase by about \$100–120.

Kent Lew
Finance Committee chair

The Parks Commission will be hosting the ANNUAL PARK CLEAN UP DAY on **May 14, 2016 from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM**. Some folks have already signed up to repair the whirlwind generator top gear, repair electrical service to the gazebo, lay new gravel on the bike path, rototilling, re-pave front parking area, repair and paint basketball court cracks and lay new court lines. Many more volunteers are needed to:

- Clean and paint picnic tables, paint bathroom doors, stain benches, paint sign
- Minor repairs to picnic tables, gazebo roof, stone wall and sign
- Re-stain deck, steps and railings of the gazebo
- Sand, prime and paint whirlwind generator
- Rake, de-weed, prune, apply mulch, pick up debris
- Repair baseball dugout trim, stain, infield maintenance
- Apply latex deck paint to bridge and boardwalk, power blow off stone path

It is unfortunate that community participation in this gathering has dropped off dramatically in recent years leaving much to be done. Let us return to the time when residents enjoyed gathering together to give back to the community. If you would like more information please contact Ed Bond at 446-3138 or Dave Drugmand at 623-6651.

Don't forget – Town Park Clean-up May 14 from 9 to 4. Everyone more than welcome!

Washington works because of the number and quality of our citizens who volunteer to serve on our various boards and committees. Anyone interested in serving on the Chapel Commission, Conservation Commission, Council on Aging, Cultural Council, Historical Commission, Parks Commission or any other Town function or activity please let Jodi or the Select Board know.

This summer Central Berkshire plans to form a building committee to apply for state construction funding for Wahconah. Anyone wishing to volunteer please let Jodi or the Select Board know.

Flu season has come with a vengeance for all too many town residents. The strains of greatest concern are crossovers from birds. Anyone observing sick, dying or dead birds should report the incident to the MFW (MA Division of Fisheries and Wildlife) at 508-389-6300 and/or the US Department of Agriculture at 413-253-2403. Residents who keep chickens should also take precautions to isolate their flocks from wild species.

Thanks to Carol Lew, Ed Bond and Ed Neumath for volunteering to work with Baltazar on the restoration of the Old Common and surroundings after its use as a staging area is complete. Baltazar has met with the group and is cooperating fully. The reconstruction of Washington Mountain Road is a large project and, however smoothly things go, residents should expect some glitches:

- At least one mailbox was knocked over. Baltazar was quite responsive to fixing it, but there are a number of mailboxes that the contractor will be moving as part of the work as well. Baltazar is working with the Becket PO to avoid any interruption in mail delivery.
- The DOT engineers in charge of the project met with a number of residents on April 13 and agreed to make improvements to what had been planned for drainage along the road.
- We have an ongoing dialog with the contractor regarding the steps they are taking to assure the safety of the Town's citizens. Please let the Board know of any specific concerns or incidents.

The Board authorized funds to determine if the existing abutments to the Middlefield Road bridge can support sufficient weight to be used for a replacement span. If so, the cost will be significantly lower than if we need new abutments. If we need new abutments the project may be delayed.

The Board sent a letter to the Governor demanding that the funds already allocated by the Broadband Act of 2008 – eight years ago - for the construction of a broadband connection for all of our citizens be released immediately, either through MBI to WiredWest or directly to WiredWest. The Town's future economic viability depends on this project.

The replacement of the Frost Road/Eden Glen culvert is on track for completion this year. We are working to incorporate the restoration of the dam and recreational area into the project to get some economy of scale. Although the voters overwhelmingly supported the dam restoration, no funding has been appropriated; there will be an item on this year's Annual Town Meeting Warrant.

We hope to see all of you at our Annual Town Meeting on Wednesday May 11 at 7 pm and we hope all of you turn out to vote in our Annual Town elections on Saturday May 21 at the Town Hall between 12 and 4. Your participation is what makes government work for you.

Jim Huebner
Select Board Chair

Shaun Lennon
Select Board Clerk

Mike Case
Select Board

How you can support WiredWest and the broadband project

At Annual Town Meeting last year, voters in Washington authorized borrowing our share of funding to build a regional fiber-optic broadband network to deliver high-speed internet service to our town. Work should have begun by now, but the Massachusetts Broadband Institute delayed the project. And the Baker Administration put it on "pause" while it reviews it.

Call it a delay, call it a pause, it's gone on for far too long. So WiredWest is taking action to get the project moving again. We've drafted a resolution for Select Boards to send to the Governor. Our Washington Selectmen passed their version of the resolution as well as a letter which was sent to the Governor, Administration officials, Senator Downing and Representative Pignatelli.

Now it's your turn. A similar resolution will appear on the Annual Town Meeting warrant so that people in Washington can speak out directly. Please attend the meeting on Wednesday, May 11 at 7 pm in Town Hall. It's important to reaffirm the commitment to broadband we made a year ago.

We're all frustrated by the state's failure to move the project forward. We need them to hear your voice, to let them know that we won't back down until the broadband network is up and running.

Steve Nelson, Washington Delegate to WiredWest
413-623-2221, steve@wiredwest.net



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