

THE NEWSletter

The Newsy Little Paper That Supplements Other Media

Volume 31 Number 6 April 2022

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Eileen W. Mooney, editor/publisher



INSIDE: Consultant Recommends Districts Merge; Much More News

Candidates' Forum Is May 3; Elections are May 10

GREAT BARRINGTON VOTERS will decide Tuesday, **May 10**, who get seats on six town boards, plus the position of moderator.

Polls will be open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. at the State Road Fire Station and the Housatonic Community Center.

Deadline to register to vote in the election is **April 20** from 8:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. at the town clerk's office in the Town Hall.

Deadline to apply for an absentee ballot is **May 4** at 4 p.m. in the town clerk's office.

Candidates' Forum To Be May 3

The annual candidates' forum will be virtual, via Zoom, **May 3** at 6:30 p.m. with Ken Knox of West Stockbridge as forum moderator.

Forum sponsors are the Democratic and Republican town committees and THE NEWSletters. CTSB will record the forum to show before the elections.

Mr. Knox is assistant professor of mathematics at Bard College and associate dean of studies at Simon's Rock. Before moving to West Stockbridge from Egremont, he was on the Southern Berkshire Regional School Committee.

He has not been involved in 8-Town Regional School District Planning Board discussions regarding a proposed merger of the Berkshire Hills and Southern Berkshire regional school

districts, he said. More about the proposed merger is in this NEWSletter.

Free Rides To Polls for Seniors

Seniors can have free rides to and from the polls by calling the town's Claire Teague Senior Center at 528-1881 by **May 8**, center director Polly Mann Salenovich said.

Candidate Information in This Issue

Actually, unless someone mounts a write-in campaign, results are not in doubt. Four candidates were running for two seats as selectmen but one person did not return nomination papers and one did not have enough certified signatures on his papers to qualify for the ballot.

Three people sought two seats on the Board of Library Trustees but one candidate has dropped out.

More information, including candidates' profiles and statements, starts on page 7.

Annual Town Meeting Is June 6

Great Barrington's annual town meeting will be Monday, **June 6**, at 6:30 p.m. Monument Mountain Regional High School.

(Candidates continues on page 7)

Fire District Meets, Elects May 16

The Great Barrington Fire District's annual meeting and election will be **May 16** from 6 to 8 p.m. at 17 East St.,

Any registered voter living within the district, which provides water to Great Barrington, may participate.



If your face is red or green or blue on THE NEWSletter's printed version, please see page 2 about the status of your subscription.

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THE NEWSletter

About This Issue: This is the candidates' issue but it's mailed earlier than usual because I wanted to get you quickly information about the 8-Town Regional School District Planning Board. Its members are starting to consider a consulting team's recommended merger of Berkshire Hills and Southern Berkshire regional school districts and use of a new high school on the Monument Mountain Regional High School campus.

I didn't wait for a sample ballot to arrive and be printed. When I get a sample ballot, I'll email it to you. Don't have email? Just call me at 274-6100 and tell me to regular mail it to you.

Also, some of you might have a page 1 that says 13 people will be elected May 10. I counted someone who then withdrew. Only 12 people are on the election ballot. -EWM

READERS: Do you want the calendar to continue in THE NEWSletter since meeting agendas are emailed to you? The calendar will stop unless 12 of you say you want it to continue.

ALMOST ALL MEETINGS are virtual or hybrid because of Covid. That means you can attend from home while eating dinner or washing the dishes.

Virtual meetings are entirely by Zoom and/or telephone. Hybrid sessions have at least some committee members and perhaps an audience in person while others attend virtually.

Mason, Ramsdell Libraries' Hours

RAMSDELL LIBRARY on Main Street, Housatonic, moves curbside on Mondays, this month. Otherwise, hours continue to be cuts at both Mason and Ramsdell because of staff shortages and Covid concerns.

Mason Library is open Mondays through Fridays, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., with children and youth hours from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Saturdays are open 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Ramsdell is open Mondays 1 to 6 curbside and Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 1 to 6 p.m.; Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and Sundays, 1 to 4 p.m.

Website Lists Programs for Libraries

The website at gblibraries.org/events/list programs for all ages and has registration links.

'Library of Things' at Ramsdell

Ramsdell Library has a loaning Library of Things, including visual reality goggles, a sewing machine and a staple gun. Its phone number is 274-3738.

Books, CDs and DVDs can be ordered by calling Mason at 528-2403 or emailing masonramsdel@gmail.com or bark.cwmars.org.

Wifi is available on both libraries' lawns and Mason's parking lot.

The New York Times, Washington Post and NEWSletter can be read free online. Anyone with a library card can sign up for a Boston Public Library card.

Meeting agendas tell how to attend. THE NEWSletter sends agendas to its email list.

Records of some meetings are on Community Television for the Southern Berkshires, www.ctsbvtv.org. You can watch on your computer or on Spectrum cable channels 1301 (public), 1302 (education) and 1303 (government).

Other websites are town, www.townofgb.org, and Berkshire Hills Regional School District, www.bhrsd.org.

The town, its police and fire departments and BHRSD have Facebook pages.

April

-April 18, Patriots' Day observed, with town buildings, including libraries, closed.

-Parks Commission, April 19, 5:15 p.m.

-Finance Committee, April 19, 6:30 p.m.

Senior Center Offers Programs, Lunches

THE CLAIRE TEAGUE SENIOR CENTER at 917 South Main St. offers activities, lunches and help with iPhone, computers and driver license renewals.

Transportation Provided

The senior center provides transportation for elderly and disabled people who call the center at 528-1881 at least 48 hours in advance.

The center's website at greatbarringtonseniors.org shows activities and resources, including one for finances and legal help.

Staff is available Mondays through Fridays to answer calls, offer SHINE counseling and, with a suggested donation, ready-to-go meals. Big Y donations are available Mondays and Wednesdays.

THE NEWSletter sends "Grapevine," the center's monthly newsletter, to subscribers who have requested it.

What Boards Meet Soon

-Deadline to register to vote in May 10 town elections, April 20, 8:30 p.m., town clerk's office, Town Hall.

-Historic District Commission, April 21, 6:30 p.m.

-Selectboard, April 25, 6 p.m.

-Conservation Commission, April 27, 6:30 p.m.

-Planning Board, April 28, 6 p.m.

May

-Candidates' forum, sponsored by Democratic and Republican town committees and THE NEWSletter, May 3, 6:30 p.m.

-Virtual coffee with town manager, May 4, 11 a.m. to noon.

-Last day to request absentee ballot for annual town election, May 4, 4 p.m., town clerk's office, Town Hall.

-Health Board meeting, May 5, 6:30 p.m.

-TOWN ELECTIONS, May 10. Polls open 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., State Road Fire Station and Housatonic Community Center.

-Selectboard meeting,

May 11, 6 p.m.

-Library trustees meeting,

May 12, 5:30 p.m.

-Planning Board meeting, May

12, 6 p.m.



Recycling Center

FREE BULKY WASTE collection is April 16 at the recycling center on Stockbridge Road.

The center is open Fridays, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.; Saturdays, 7 a.m. to 3 p.m.; and Sundays, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

It is part of the town's Department of Public Works, available at 528-0867 and www.townofgb.org/public-works.

Great Barrington residents can get permits by calling the town clerk's office.

How To Be on NEWSletter Mailing List and Offer to Seniors

IF YOU GET THE PRINTED ISSUE and your face on page 1 is green, your subscription ends with the next issue or the one after that.

If your face is blue, it's time to renew.

Red face? Your free trial subscription or your paid subscription ended and you're about to come off the mailing list, including for emailed agendas, etc.

How To Subscribe

Twelve issues (one year) are \$35 for the print version within the 012 zip code or \$30 for the emailed one anywhere.

Cost to get the printed TN by bulk mail outside the 012 zip code is \$38. Cost to mail first class for a year (12 issues) is \$50.

You can also pay for as many issues as you want at \$3 an issue for the emailed

version or \$3.75 for the print version in the 012 zip code.

Checks go to THE NEWSletter at Post Office Box 567, Housatonic 01236.

ARE YOU A SENIOR WITH A TIGHT, FIXED INCOME? Then THE NEWSletter is \$10 for the emailed version, \$15 for the printed. That includes emails sent between issues.

Both the written and emailed versions include free emails — agendas, news updates, forwarded material — sent between issues. Your name and email address are kept confidential unless you're an elected or appointed public official.

You can forward all emails, including issues, to as many people as you want. (One person sends it to her bridge club, I

was told. That's fine!) Having THE NEWSletter send emails between issues is \$5 a year for each added name.

Available in Large Type

Cost to receive THE NEWSletter in large type is \$30 for 12 issues, plus the annual print subscription.

Available FREE Online

The website for Mason and Ramsdell libraries has a link for THE NEWSletter so you can read it free. The website is at www.gblibraries.org.

Questions? Please email me at the-newsltr@gmail.com.

And a suggestion: THE NEWSletter makes a great gift for new neighbors.

-Eileen W. Mooney

Consultants Recommend:

Merge 2 School Districts, Use New MMRHS

THE 8-TOWN REGIONAL DISTRICT SCHOOL PLANNING BOARD is meeting virtually to consider recommendations on how — and if — the Berkshire Hills and Southern Berkshire regional school districts should merge.

A research team headed by project manager Jake Eberwein recommends the two districts merge, continuing to use their elementary and middle schools but sending all grade 9-12 students to a new high school on the Monument Mountain Regional High School campus.

The recommendation is reproduced in this issue. The team's reports are on the 8-Town board's website at 8towns.org.

The 24 committee members — three from each town in the eight school districts — met April 5 to consider collaboration, one of the possible options.

They will meet **April 12** to consider merging all grades together and perhaps start to review the recommended version.

Other meetings are scheduled for **April 26** and **May 9**. All start at 5:30 p.m. and last about two hours. All are by Zoom and telephone.

The eight towns affected are Great Barrington, Stockbridge and West Stockbridge in Berkshire Hills and Alford, Egremont, Monterey, New Marlborough and Sheffield in Southern Berkshire.

Three Options Described

Mr. Eberwein's March 22 virtual presentation lasted about 90 minutes and was attended at one point by 125 people. He described the three options that were studied — merging grades 7-8 and 9-12; the one recommended, with only grades 9-12 merged; and collaboration.

"This is just the beginning," the 8-town board's chairman, Lucy Prashker of Alford, cautioned after Mr. Eberwein gave his recommendation.

Transportation times for high school students would not be more than one hour each way to or from school. Job loss would come through attrition, not layoffs, Mr. Eberwein said.

The schools would merge into a new high school at the former Monument Mountain Regional High School campus off Stockbridge Road in Great Barrington.

As THE NEWSletter reported in the last issue, Berkshire Hills has been accepted into the state School Building Authority's eligibility period for funding renovation or replacement of the high school.

Voters Asked To OK \$1.5 Million

Town-meeting voters in the district's three towns will be asked at this year's town

meetings to authorize the school district to borrow \$1.5 million for a feasibility and schematic design study for the school.

All three towns must agree for the vote to be binding, district superintendent Peter Dillon said.

Because the state had provided funds for proposals that failed in Great Barrington, most recently in 2014, the district must pay for the feasibility and design work, rather than using more state funds.

The budget being proposed for the fiscal year that starts July 1 will not be affected, Mr. Dillon said.

Dillon: Building New Is Faster, Easier

Building new will be faster and easier than renovating because students won't have to be relocated during the process, he explained.

Mr. Dillon said he "really hopes the merger happens." If it does, it apparently would be the first merger of two regional districts in the state.

CVTE To Be 'Major Component'

Career-vocational-technical education (CVTE) is intended as a major component, however many students and towns a new high school serves.

Mr. Dillon has said he wants more programs beyond those now offered.

At its March 30 meeting, the Berkshire Hills school committee unanimously (Sean Stephen of Stockbridge was absent) agreed to change the present position of CVTE director to be that of a Monument Mountain vice principal.

The position is intended to provide management and leadership to improve student learning and instruction, including operational, strategic and special project planning in applied learning.

Merger Could 'Meet CVTE Gap'

A merger "has the potential to meet the CVTE gap that has been identified ... as a critical need. This CVTE hub could also fill community workforce/training needs and

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PEOPLE CAN SIGN UP to receive specific information, such as meeting minutes and obituaries when I receive them, and Nick Diller's weather updates.

To get one, two or all of them, just email me. This is all part of your NEWSletter subscription. There's no added cost.

Below are organizations whose releases are now sent. Feel free to suggest more.

-1Berkshire, BEAT, Berkshire Community Land Trust, Chamber of Commerce, CHP, Clinton Church Restoration, Cultural District, District Attorney;

-Dewey Hall, Great Barrington Historical Society, Mel King Institute, minutes of town boards, RSYP, Claire Teague Senior Center, Train Campaign, Volunteers in Medicine.

Everyone gets information about town libraries and the Attorney General's Division of Open Government. That's because the libraries use town funds and serve all ages, and the D.O.G. oversees the Open Meeting Law, which helps ensure government transparency.

-EWM

serve other south county districts," Mr. Eberwein said in the consultant report.

School Could Get More State Aid

"The timing of the new high school project provides a unique opportunity for joint district (eight town) participation in the feasibility and design work, including the educational program plan design."

Potential To Bring Towns Together

(NEWS continues on page 4)

For Clean-Heat Comfort
JOHN B. HULL, INC.
 100 Main St. Great Barrington
 413-528-2800

READERS: To avoid the appearance of conflict of interest, I do not report on the Great Barrington Housing Authority or send its minutes as I am an elected member of its board. -EWM

Merger, New High School, More CVTE, from page 3

"This co-designing of a new high school has the potential to bring together the eight towns, providing broad stakeholder voice and engagement, in building trust, a common vision and a shared culture," the report notes.

"While Mt. Everett is a suitable high school facility, the impending MSBA BHRSD project affords a unique opportunity to 'right size' a high school for enrollment, educational programming, and CVTE shops for students in all eight towns."

It continues:

"Moreover, designs that promote contemporary content, skills, competencies and experiences can be planned into the facility."

More Central Site?

"Geography does matter, and a high school in Great Barrington has the advantage to centrally draw from all directions in south county (Farmington River, Richmond, Lee & Lenox). While there are ideas for a high school on the Fairgrounds (or other sites more centrally located to BHRSD and SBRSD), securing any new site could involve a number of additional steps and studies (site analysis, purchasing, transportation study) that would impact the project."

Who Pays?

If a new high school is built, "Berkshire Hills' member towns pay for most of the \$100 million cost (about 90%), Southern Berkshire's member towns pay for some of the \$100 million cost (about 10%), and students from both districts attend the school. A 54.52% MSBA reimbursement rate is

assumed, which includes a 6% incentive from the MSBA for regionalization of the 8 towns," the report states.

"New debt service for the new high school project was determined via a projected borrowing schedule using a 25-year term, 3.25% interest rate, and equal annual payments."

New debt service for the school is assessed based on each town's 2020 EQV. That stands for Equalized Valuation of all property in town.

Also:

"Southern Berkshire's non-debt capital is part of the operating costs assessed to the towns since, assuming a newly formed region, capital investments in the Southern Berkshire schools would be the responsibility of all member towns."

Separate CVTE Center?

Constructing a separate CVTE center for grades 9-12 "would require a significant amount of planning to determine the feasibility of an additional construction project (our assumption is that Monument would still be renovated), removes the CVTE program from close integration with the academic programming, would require careful attention to scheduling (week on/off, or split day), and may create some redundancies in staffing (administration, support staff, etc.) and operational costs leading to reduced efficiencies," the report states.

Proposed Merger Has Challenges

Several "significant challenges" are listed, including:

- "Impacts school identities with two high schools merged into one."

- "Financing for the new high school and existing school debt will need to be fairly managed and may be perceived as a drawback."

- "High school class sizes will increase (based on modeling parameters)."

- "Would require additional intra-district choice policies, which could impact transportation demands."

- "Southern Berkshire's debt for roof and boiler repairs to the Mount Everett building could become an obligation of the new district if the buildings are incorporated into the new district," the report states.

- "One of the largest long-term obligations of each group of towns will be the pensions and benefits of employees who retired or will soon retire from the district," it notes.

- "Bargaining agreements with employees would have to be re-negotiated into single contracts, with no individual receiving less salary than they would have gotten under their current contract," it states.

Enrollment Information

Twenty-eight percent of Berkshire Hills' students were nonresidents in 2021 while Southern Berkshire sent more funds to other districts than it received in choice revenues, the report notes.

Students who choose to attend a school bring about \$5,000 each from the state

while those in grades 7 to 12 whose districts paid tuition averaged about \$9,500 a year in Berkshire Hills. Thus, "town assessments have to provide a greater share to operate the schools," the report found.

"Both districts spent much more *per in-district pupil* (italics in report) than the state average, and their increase in spending per pupil over five years was greater than the state's, according to the report.

Enrollment in both districts has decreased in recent years, although Covid-caused disruptions may be partially responsible.

According to its Oct. 1, 2021, enrollment summary, Berkshire Hills enrolled a total of 834 district students in all grades. Of them, 321 were in high school.

Another 357 students in all grades tuitioned in or choiced in. Of them, 194 went to Monument Mountain.

Southern Berkshire enrolled a total of 632 students in all grades in February 2022. Of that, Mount Everett had 182 in grades 9-12.

Why Do The Districts Spend More?

According to the report:

"Some reasons for higher expenditure levels may include their small size; the cost of transportation for geographically large districts; the relative wealth of their member towns compared to municipalities across the Commonwealth; and local expectations about what schools will provide."

Who Helps Fund 8-Town Board?

The 8-Town Planning Board is financially supported by BERK, formerly Berkshire County Education Task Force; state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation; the two school districts; and the eight member towns.

BHRSC Left BCETF

The Berkshire Hills Regional School Committee voted in September 2017 to leave the then-Berkshire County Education Task Force.

Richard Dohoney made the motion and Bill Fields, both of Great Barrington, seconded.

Mr. Dohoney had been "outspoken about his opposition to the task force's vote endorsing a single Berkshire County school district by 2027," THE NEWSletter reported.

Steve Bannon, then and now school committee chairman, had voted for the one district at the task force meeting but said later "the geography bothered him" and he might prefer another approach.

Only One Vote Against One School

The only person at the task force meeting to vote against one school district was Michael Wise of Great Barrington.

Another choice at the task force meeting was one high school each for the southern, central and northern parts of the county.

At the 2017 school committee meeting, Mr. Dohoney said the district needs to focus on renovating Monument Mountain Regional High School. Mr. Fields agreed.

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Hearing on Statue at Mason; Housatonic School; More

A VIRTUAL PUBLIC HEARING will be held **April 21** on a proposed **W.E.B. Du Bois sculpture and plaza project** near the main entrance to Mason Library.

The proposal shows the statue of Dr. Du Bois seated on a bench where people can stop and sit with him.

The civil rights leader and writer was born in Great Barrington in 1868.

The **Historic District Commission** will hold the hearing at 6:30 p.m. THE NEWSletter will send information about how to attend closer to the date.

Julie Michaels, who is coordinating the sculpture project, said a certificate of appropriateness is sought from the commission.

Once that is received, a presentation can be made to the Selectboard, as the town owns the land. With permission to use it, a search for a sculptor can start, she explained.

The bronze sculpture and the rebuilt plaza will be donated to the town. All funds will be raised privately, Ms. Michaels has said.

WHEN THE COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMISSION this year recommended town funds to renovate **Memorial Park**, at least some members thought it was because Benchmark Development didn't do work it agreed to do.

Voters at the annual town meeting **June 6** will be asked to borrow \$250,000 to repair the ball field.

Benchmark had signed an agreement in exchange for the town granting a right-of-way through a side of the park to access farther into its land off Bridge Street.

Access Apparently Not Needed

But the reason is probably that Benchmark didn't need the access, town manager Mark Pruhenski told THE NEWSletter.

The agreement and Benchmark's special permit are reproduced in this issue.

Mr. Pruhenski said he met more than two years ago with the Parks Commission and two principals from Benchmark. Then he

Clean Up on April 23 In GB and Housatonic

Clean-up morning is April 23 from 8 a.m. to noon in Great Barrington and Housatonic.

Housatonic traditionally has a clean-up time. This will be the first, at least in several years, that residents are being called to help also in Great Barrington.

THE NEWSletter will email more details as they are available.

met with David Doneski of KP Law, town counsel, and drafted the agreement.

The mixed-use project — 22 condominiums and a new Berkshire Co-op building — and all conditions in the agreement were satisfied and a certificate of occupancy was issued, he told THE NEWSletter.

'Not Worth Cost and Effort'

A decision not to enforce the 2020 agreement was made in a "conversation between staff and our attorney and at the end of the conversation we decided it wasn't worth the cost and effort to pursue it," he said, adding:

"The agreement clearly states that the town would give Benchmark access to its rear lot for phase 2 construction through Memorial Field in exchange for the improvements to the town's park. Access was never needed, and I suspect that is why the developer decided not to follow-through on the agreement. End of story."

THE FORMER HOUSATONIC SCHOOL building has a new membrane covering its roof and a request for proposals is getting attention.

Several people have requested RFPs and toured the building, town manager Mark Pruhenski said.

Deadline for RFPs to be submitted has been extended to **June 10** at 2 p.m. so peo-

ple have more time to prepare their proposals.

RFPs will be available until May 20.

More information, including a brief film, is on the town website at <https://www.townofgb.org/home/pages/housatonic-school-rfp>

PAULA ELY has been named **superintendent of the town's wastewater treatment plant**.

Ms. Ely joined the department in 2004 and most recently was its chief treatment plant operator.

The Environmental Protection Agency's New England region named her Operator of the Year in 2018 for producing consistently clean wastewater discharge from the Bentley Street plant.

The facility received the regional EPA Operation and Maintenance Excellence Award in 2016.

Ms. Ely succeeds Bill Ingram, who retired after 36 years. He had been superintendent since 2018.

The superintendent's position is budgeted at \$90,835 for the next fiscal year.

The plant has seven employees and processes about 420 million gallons of wastewater each year.

The sewer department also manages 31 miles of sewer line and six pumping stations.

Don't Flush Wipes!

Ms. Ely reminds sewer users not to flush cleansing wipes down the toilet, regardless of what packaging says about "flushable."

A news report about the sewer plant is on the town website at www.townofgb.org.

TOM FERRIS has been named to the **Conservation Commission**. He was nominated by the commissioners and appointed by the Selectboard.

(NEWS continues on page 6)

SELECTMAN and electrician Eric Gabriel added lights the color of the Ukrainian flag to the former Housatonic School and turns them on at night to show solidarity with the Ukrainian people. Several people asked him to do this, he said. This faces the building from Route 183.



Eric Gabriel photo

STR and SJC; BHRSC News; New on Housing Trust

Mr. Ferris notes that he has hiked the Appalachian Trail, been a Nordic Ski patrolter, Boy Scout patrol leaders, and has spent several years as a volunteer environmental activist with Greenpeace.

He is now a trail maintenance volunteer and trail steward with Berkshire Natural Resources Council and a director of Great Barrington Land Conservancy, he wrote.

* * *

A PROPOSED PUBLIC HEARING scheduled for April 4 on a **short-term rental bylaw** was postponed with no new date.

The hearing was to hear people's views. The selectmen have been discussing a proposed bylaw but Selectboard chairman Steve Bannon said he was putting a complete freeze on STRs until the legal consequences are clarified.

At the board's March 30 meeting, someone who only provided a first name sent the selectmen and others, including THE NEWSletter, an email stating that Mr. Bannon, Leigh Davis and Ed Abrahams all reside near short-term rentals.

The email questioned whether all might be in conflict of interest if they acted on the proposed bylaw.

From the start of the discussions, Eric Gabriel has recused himself from all discussions on advice of the state Ethics Commission because he owns long-term rentals.

The Selectboard page on the town website has a link, Proposed Short Term Rental Bylaw Information Hub, with bylaw drafts, letters and other information.

The address is <https://www.townofgb.org/selectboard/pages/proposed-short-term-rental-bylaw-information-hub>.

Feelings on either side of the STR discussion have been increasingly strong, in meetings of both the selectmen and the Planning Board.

At the Planning Board meeting March 31, Malcolm Fick voted against a special permit to enable Is Real Team LLC of New York to create a rear lot in an R-2 zone at 183 Division St.

The house in the front lot is used as an STR.

Fick: More Negatives Than Benefits

Mr. Fick said the beneficial effects of STRs do not outweigh the negative ones. He does not want commercial enterprises in residential zones, he said.

During the discussion, he noted that his Maplewood Avenue neighborhood has three STRs.

Board member Jeremy Higa said second-home owners, some of whom have STRs, benefit the town's economy.

Also, he said, he is not sure STRs rise to the level of commercial use.

When the hearing opened March 10, a neighbor said the house on the front lot is listed on VRBO for \$931 a night.

Neighbors expressed concern that a new house on the rear lot might also be used as an STR, but the owner said March 31 that it would not.

SJC Sounds Like an STRs Opponent

Meanwhile, in a June 2021 decision, the Supreme Judicial Court sounds a bit like a STR opponent.

The decision is Alexander Styller vs. Zoning Board of Appeals of Lynnfield & Another. The SJC found that under Lynnfield's zoning bylaw, STRs are not permissible.

In the decision, the SJC noted:

"Referencing the State building code, see G. L. c. 140, § 22, and a dictionary definition, respectively, the Land Court judge reasoned that when the plaintiff's property was rented to four or more people, it was used as a 'lodging house,' and when it was rented to 'persons who travel for pleasure,' it was used as a 'tourist home.'

Further, and THE NEWSletter broke this into shorter paragraphs for easier reading:

"Use of zoning regulation to foster stability and permanence is compatible with long-term property rentals because long-term inhabitants have the opportunity to 'develop a sense of community and a shared commitment to the common good of that community' (citation omitted). Slice of Life, LLC, 652 Pa. at 232.

STR Bring 'Absence of Stability'

"Where short-term rentals are at issue, however, there is an 'absence of stability and permanence of the individuals residing in those districts, [and] the goal is necessarily subverted' (quotations and citation omitted). Id."

* * *

BERKSHIRE HILLS SCHOOLS may get **free comfort dogs** from Berkshire Comfort Dogs in Lee.

After hearing a presentation March 31 from Lee Kohlenberger, the committee voted unanimously to take the standard poodles as soon as people volunteer to care for them on weekends and school vacations.

Berkshire Comfort Dogs will provide all care but not dog food. It is doing this for about 25 other schools, Mr. Kohlenberger said.

A retired Pittsfield firefighter, he and his wife also own Berkshire Poodles and Berkshire Dogs Unleashed.

"I'm totally sold on it," superintendent Peter Dillon told the school committee.

The district already has about two therapy dogs.

'Awesome' Audited Accounts

Also during the meeting, an accountant from Melanson CPA told the committee the audited accounts were "awesome" with no issues.

The audit reports are on the district's website, [BHRSD.org](https://www.bhrsd.org), under "school committee packets."

BHRSC Policy Now Limits Speakers

The school committee has revised its policy so that anyone who wants to speak at a meeting must live in the district or have a student attending a district school.

After virtual meetings began, committee chairman Steve Bannon found speakers

sometimes had no obvious connection to this area.

"Any citizen, students, parent, staff or resident of Great Barrington, Stockbridge or West Stockbridge, wishing to speak shall raise their hand and wait to be recognized by the Chair," the revised policy specifies.

Once recognized, they must identify themselves and not speak longer than three minutes.

The complete policy is available from Mr. Dillon's office, **1-413-298-4017 ext. 719** or doreen.twiss@bhrsd.org.

The state's Open Meeting Law gives people the right to attend meetings but not the right to speak.

A town bylaw requires that all Great Barrington boards provide citizens' speak time on every agenda. The school district, however, is a separate entity.

* * *

THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST board has two new members.

Ananda Timpane is executive director of Railroad Street Youth Project.

Krysia Kurzyca, who is also on the Agricultural Commission, noted in her letter of intent that she has lived in town for the past 30 years "and have been observing the housing situation here drastically deteriorate, despite the town's efforts."

She continued:

"The pandemic made the town practically unaffordable for most working locals, not to mention people on fixed incomes. I, myself, as a disabled person who is able to afford an apartment with the help of a Section 8 voucher, lost any opportunity to move as most rents are now double my current rent, even after a recent \$200 increase."

"I would like to serve on this committee and contribute my time, passion, and experience for the betterment of the situation."

Unanimously nominating both were the other Affordable Housing Trust Fund board members — chairman Fred Clark, William Cooke, Garfield Reed and John Katz.

One vacancy remains.

* * *

THE ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS voted unanimously, with almost no discussion, to **uphold building inspector Ed May after a hearing April 5 on the airport.**

Holly Hamer, Marc Fasteau and Anne Fredericks and 17 other residents had appealed Mr. May's refusal:

-To determine that Berkshire Aviation Enterprises operates in violation of the town bylaw;

-To order its operations reduced to when "the use first became pre-existing nonconforming," which was in 1932 when zoning was adopted;

-To order that the airport's structures be restricted to those "lawfully existing (if any) at the time the airport use first became preexisting nonconforming"; and to take other action as necessary.

Thaddeus Heuer of Foley Hoag presented the appeal to the ZBA. David Doneski of KP Law represented the town.

Meet the Folks Who Want Your Votes, from page 1

This is perhaps only the third time in 261 years — two years ago might have been the first — that town elections come before the annual town meeting.

The Selectboard will decide before town meeting whether, because of Covid-caused spacing, the meeting will be in the parking lot as it was for the past two years or in Monument Mountain's auditorium, as it usually is.

If a second night is needed, town meeting will continue **June 9** at 6:30 p.m.

Candidates' Profiles, Statements

Following are profiles of the candidates,

Selectboard

Elect 2, 3-year terms

Selectmen are the only elected town officials who are paid. Each of the five selectmen now receives \$4,700. Selectmen may also participate in the town's health insurance plan.

Incumbent selectmen Steve Bannon and Leigh Davis seek re-election.

Two Others Took Out Papers

Tate Coleman of Taconic Avenue and a senior at Bard College of Simon's Rock, had taken out nomination papers but decided not to return them.

Instead, he will attend a UMass-Amherst dual-degree program that offers master's degrees in both regional planning and civil engineering. He also will have a research position in the school's transportation engineering department, he told THE NEWSletter.

Mr. Coleman is also chairman of the town's Regional Advisory Transportation Committee.

Oliver Brown, formerly the town's parking officer, returned his nomination papers but only 27 were certified of the 32 needed, town clerk Jennifer Messina said.

What Does the Selectboard Do?

The Town Charter states that the five-member Selectboard "shall set goals, develop long-range plans and adopt policy for the town."

It also, "through the town manager, exercises "general supervision over all matters affecting the town's interests or welfare"; "may create committees to perform duties specified by a resolution"; and "shall issue licenses and perform other quasi judicial functions as provided by the General Laws and the town of Great Barrington bylaws."

Also, it is responsible for and has general oversight over committees it appoints; shall appoint several committees, plus the town manager and town counsel; "may make investigations and authorize the town manager or other agents to investigate the affairs of the town and the conduct of any town department, office or agency, including any claims against the town."

It also "shall review the annual proposed budget" and make recommendations.

Each candidate was asked to answer in 350 words or less:

What are some strengths and weaknesses you see in the role of the Great Barrington Selectboard? How do you see yourself building on these strengths and working to address weaknesses?

Steve Bannon

Mr. Bannon, 63, of 19 Fairview Terrace seeks his fifth term on the Selectboard. He was vice chairman from 2015 through 2018 and has been chairman since 2019.

He was appointed to the Berkshire Hills Regional School Committee in 1997 and re-elected since then. He has been committee chairman since 1999.

He has been on school committee subcommittees for contract negotiation, policy, and finance. He is past chairman of the superintendent search committee and a member of the Monument Mountain Regional High School building committee.

He was appointed in 2020 to the 8-Town Regional School District Planning Board.

In November, 2014, Mr. Bannon received the Lifetime Achievement Award of the Massachusetts Association of School Committees.

He has been chairman of School Center Inc. since 2017.

Mr. Bannon also is a member of the town's Great Barrington Parks and Recreation Commission and Cemetery Committee.

He is a member of the Karebear Executive Committee and has been a member of Great Barrington Rotary Club since 1983 and a board member since 2010.

He was elected to the Great Barrington Historical Society's board in 2015.

He was on the Berkshire County Educational Task Force from 2015 through 2017.

Mr. Bannon graduated in 1976 from Monument Mountain Regional High School and from Massachusetts College of Pharmacy-Hampden Campus in 1981.

His family owned and operated Bill's Pharmacy for more than 40 years before selling it to CVS in 2008.

He has been a pharmacist at Fairview Hospital since 2009.

Mr. Bannon's answers to the questions:

The Great Barrington Selectboard works within the Great Barrington Town Charter which includes the town manager form of government.

The Selectboard sets the strategic goals for the town. These goals include improving the drinking water situation in Housatonic, improving the stock of workforce and affordable housing, improving and maintaining the town infrastructure including bridges, roads and sidewalks, and the



problems associated with the ongoing pandemic.

It is the role of the Selectboard to work with town staff to achieve these goals. The strength of the Selectboard is realizing that they alone cannot solve many of the town's problems. They must work in conjunction with town staff, various boards and committees, elected officials and the citizens of the town.

The Selectboard is a thoughtful group that has strong leadership skills. We may not always agree but we work hard together on the many issues facing the town.

I have been fortunate enough to be a Selectboard member for 12 years. Having that history and background is essential to seeing multiple sides of issues.

The Selectboard and staff have improved the communications originating from the Town Hall. It is very important for citizens to be aware of what is happening in Great Barrington and to have easy access to information.

Lack of transparency and communication can be a downfall for any town. We must always remember we are the representatives of the residents of the Town of Great Barrington.

The frustrating part of being a Selectboard member is the number of issues over which we have no direct control. We need to always share those concerns and issues with the community openly when we are stymied by or working through legal situations.

These issues include but are not limited to the fairgrounds, the Housatonic Water situation, the lack of a laundromat in the town and the lack of affordable and workforce housing in Great Barrington and Housatonic.

In addition, we have a number of bridges that are temporarily closed. I realize how frustrating that is but in order to prevent the taxpayers from footing the entire bill, we must work through the state financing system.

While some might see these situations as weaknesses, I see strengths in that we can continue to work with other public and private groups and elected officials to attempt to successfully remediate and solve our problems.

Open dialogue and respect is key and with it, we can accomplish our goals.

Leigh Davis

Ms. Davis, 55, of 9 Sumner St., seeks her second term as a selectman.

She is the board's vice chairman.

She has been the Selectboard's representative on the Lake Mansfield Improvement Task Force since 2020 and on the Community Preservation Committee since 2019.

(ELECTIONS continue on page 8)

Meet The Folks Who Want Your Votes, from page 7

Ms. Davis is on the Selectboard-Planning Board Joint Housing Subcommittee and was on the town's former Economic Development Committee.

She was on the Finance Committee from 2014 to 2017.

She notes that she was raised in Washington, D.C., by a father who was the architect of the Martin Luther King Jr. National Holiday and a mother who worked with the Peace Corps' founding director, Sergeant Shriver.

She was a film editor in Los Angeles and a tenured professor at Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology in Ireland, where she taught editing and film history.

Ms. Davis was appointed this year to the Berkshire board of directors and the Berkshire Leadership Impact Council. She has been a director of Saint James Place since 2019.

She is a co-founder of The Blackshires and on its advisory circle.

She was on Volunteers in Medicine development committee from 2018 to 2020, a HospiceCare in the Blackshires patient volunteer from 2009 to 2013 and on the Muddy Brook School Council from 2009 to 2011.

She has volunteered with the People's Pantry since 2019.

Ms. Davis's answers to the questions

The Selectboard is the chief policy-making board of the Town of Great Barrington.

Our principal strength is our efforts to work cooperatively toward common goals as specific issues come to the board for deliberation. Sometimes we are at odds with one another due to the different hats we wear in the community or causes we champion.

Some may see members' varied roles as a source of weakness, but I see this as a source of strength as it highlights the high level of engagement and experience board members bring to their roles as elected representatives.

As an active community member who wears different hats in town ranging from development director at an affordable housing nonprofit to board director at a cultural nonprofit, I can attest to the balance and transparency required to fulfill my role as a member of a collective body with decision-making authority.

Regarding the role of the Great Barrington Selectboard, there are two issues that I feel can be improved.

The first is the present lack of a requirement for members of the Selectboard to publicly disclose an appearance of a conflict



of interest. Revising Selectboard Policies and Procedures to state that board members must notify the Selectboard of Disclosure of Appearance of Conflict of Interest filings will allow for increased board transparency and accountability.

The second opportunity for improvement is to clarify Selectboard Policies and Procedures around social media. By providing clear guidelines on the behavior of members online, the Selectboard can be proactive in setting a positive tone for the town rather than leaving themselves open to the possibility of members sowing discord and misinforming residents through social media.

As a symbol of town government, I believe a Selectboard member's behavior — both offline and online — reflects on our community as a whole.

Moderator

Elect 1, 1-year term

The town moderator presides at town meetings and appoints people to committees created by a town meeting vote.

Michael Wise

Mr. Wise, 74, a retired lawyer, resides at 173 Castle St.

He was first elected



moderator in 2016.

He is also a member of the Zoning Board of Appeal and was on the Finance Committee from 2014 to 2017, Cultural Council from 2010 to 2016, Tree Committee from 2010 to 2018, and Berkshire Hills Regional School District Regional Agreement Amendment Committee from 2015 to 2016.

Mr. Wise was co-chairman of the Master Plan Committee and on the town charter review committee, and, in 2013 and 2019, the town manager screening committees.

He has been on the Berkshire County Education Task Force since 2016.

He is also chairman of the Democratic Town Committee.

He attended New England Conservatory and graduated in 1968 from Michigan State University. He received his law degree in 1974 from Yale Law School.

Mr. Wise was asked, in 250 words or less, to answer the following questions:

Why do you want to serve in this position and why is it valuable to the town?

Mr. Wise's answers to the questions:

The job of town moderator is to run meetings, and thus it's an opportunity to serve the community by doing something I do pretty well.

I like to help people who want to put something before the meeting find ways to use the rules to do it effectively. A productive, successful town meeting vindicates our constitutional commitment to popular self-government.

The following candidates are not opposed on the election ballot. Each was asked to answer in 250 words or less the following questions:

Why do you want to serve on this board and why is it valuable to the town?

Candidates are listed in alphabetical order under the board to which they seek election.

Library Trustees

The six-member Board of Library Trustees is responsible for plans, policies and procedures of Mason Library in Great Barrington and Ramsdell Library in Housatonic.

Elect 1, Two-Year Term

Long-time trustee Kathy P. Plungis was re-elected last year but has announced that she will resign on May 10.

Carol McGlinchey

Ms. McGlinchey, 72, lives at 10 Beacon Hill, Housatonic.

She graduated magna cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa with a degree in sociology from the University of Connecticut in 1971.

She also received in 1970 a degree in French studies from the University of Rouen, France. In 1998, she was certified in Past Life Regression by the Omega Institute.

In 2005, Ms. McGlinchey received her certificate from the International Language Institute to teach ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages.)

She is retired as a teacher of ESOL at Berkshire Community College.

She has a private practice as a Past Life Regression therapist and spiritual counselor.

Ms. McGlinchey's answers to the questions:

Libraries are the heartbeat of a community. I cannot imagine life without this essential town resource. Ramsdell and Mason libraries serve the needs of a diverse population, from infants to seniors, through all stages of our lives.

I want to serve on the Board of Library Trustees to support the entire library staff and to preserve this valuable resource as it adapts to a technological world.

It's time for me to giveback. My daughter learned to read at the library over 30 years ago. Now, as a senior, I understand the need for large print books! Reading is my favorite hobby. The CW MARS system got me through the pandemic.

I will fiercely defend continued library funding and advocate for a living wage for all library staff.



THE NEWSletter is a great gift for neighbors and other friends!

(ELECTIONS continue on page 9)

Meet the Candidates Who Want Your Votes, cont.

Elect 2, 3-Year Terms

Jane Stanhope is not seeking re-election.

Lauren Clark



Ms. Clark, 64, lives at 180 North Plain Road.

She seeks her third term on the board.

Ms. Clark attended Dean and Elizabeth Seton colleges and owns Lauren Clark Fine Art at 684 Main St.

Ms. Clark's

answers to the questions:

I have had six years experience on the library board and it has been an interesting and fulfilling way to do service for our community. I would like to continue in this role and work to achieve the goals set before the board at this time.

Ruby Chang



Dr. Chang, 65, a pediatrician, resides at 1 Roger Road. She seeks her first term as a library trustee.

She grew up in Taiwan and New Hampshire and graduated in 1982 from the College of Medicine of National Taiwan University.

Before coming to Great Barrington, she was chief resident in the pediatric residency program at Baystate Medical Center and then a pediatrician with Fairview Pediatrics in Chicopee.

She has been a pediatrician at Macony Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, part of Berkshire Health System, since 2012.

She was appointed in 2019 to the Board of Health to fill a vacancy and then elected to a full term.

Dr. Chang's answers to the questions:

My service on the Board of Health is purely due to a sense of duty for the community. The library position is more personal.

I have experienced the benefits of entering a library since I was young. I would spend summers perusing every book in the small library in my town, Swanzee, N.H. It was my understanding of the world beyond my home.

As a pediatrician, I jumped onto the concept of introducing children to books at birth. There is a program started by another pediatrician called Reach Out and Read which I embraced in my office practice from the very beginning.

We give books at every check-up visit and read to the children during their visits.

I would like to make sure all children can enjoy the experience of handling books and letting their imagination soar.

I see the library as the center of our community — a place we all visit and meet others of all ages and backgrounds. A place where we are introduced to the delight of knowledge without pressure and following our individual interests. A place to share new knowledge, whether it is cooking or painting or writing.

More importantly, I would like to see the library as a place for new people to our community. Those who may speak another language or cannot read but can listen, or who cannot listen but can touch.

The library is a place where people can feel safe to let their mind reap new nourishment.

Planning Board

The five-member Planning Board's responsibilities include adopting subdivision rules and approving definitive plan reviews, drafting and submitting amendments to the town's zoning bylaws, and approving site plans.

It is also the special permit granting authority for assisted living residences and solar energy facilities.

Elect 2, 3-year terms

Jeremy Higa

Mr. Higa, 52, lives at 5 Rose Court East.

He seeks his third term on the board.

He attended the University of Hawaii and is assistant manager of Berkshire Food Co-op.

He has been the Planning Board's representative to the Community Preservation Committee since 2018.

Mr. Higa's answers to the questions:

To serve our community and model that service for my three boys.

Some of my passions in seeking re-election to the Planning Board are:

—Affordable homes for those who work in, for those who want to continue living in Great Barrington, or for those who are considering relocating to Great Barrington for work (housing's role in Economic Development).

—Home ownership as a transformative tool.

—Nonmotor connections (sidewalks, paths and multi-use ways).

Brandee Nelson

Ms. Nelson, 46, lives at 28 Barrington Place and is chairman of the Planning Board.

She has been on the Planning Board and the Lake Mansfield Improvement Task Force since 2014. She was on the former Energy Committee in 2011-2012.



She graduated from Whitehouse (Texas) High School and in 1997 from Montana Tech with a degree in environmental engineering.

She is a civil engineer with Tighe and Bond.

Ms. Nelson's answers to the questions:

Although the work of the Planning Board may seem mundane to the average citizen, I believe its work guides the town's development and has significant impact on the quality of life within the community.

I would like the opportunity to continue to serve the town. We are fortunate to have a Master Plan and zoning bylaws, documents approved by our town to guide development.

I enjoy the process of reviewing development applications against our code and guiding documents to help facilitate smart growth in the community.

However, there is still a need to create opportunities for economic development and housing within our community to provide the opportunity for people to both live and work in the community.

As a practicing professional in the land development field, I'd like to continue to serve on the Planning Board to bring my perspective that land-use planning and land development requires striking a balance between growth and preservation.

I'd also like to continue the work the Planning Board has been doing to remove conflicting sections from the zoning code and to reduce the barriers that have existed to maintain or improve private property.

For instance, prior to the zoning study conducted by the Planning Board, several multifamily houses in certain zones could not obtain building permits to make renovations to bring them up to code. That resulted in the building owners eliminating the multifamily use and the community's losing affordable housing.

The Planning Board proposed (and town meeting passed) zoning changes that provide a legal path for existing multifamily units to continue in use.

I'd also like to renew efforts to incorporate lighting standards in our Town Code so that overlighting of properties and the excess glare some lights create, especially since the switch to LEDs, does not create a nuisance or a hazard and we can continue to enjoy the night sky.

Finance Committee

The five-member Finance Committee reviews the proposed annual town budget and financial warrant articles, holds the public hearing on them, and recommends what actions town meeting voters should take on them.

It also reviews town operating budgets, financial audits and other financial matters or reports, and it is responsible for reviewing

(NEWS continues on page 10)

Meet the Candidates continued

and making recommendations regarding use of the town's operating budget reserve fund.

Elect 2, 3-year terms

Neither incumbents Tom Blauvelt nor Meredith O'Connor ran for re-election.

After the ballot deadline, Michelle Loubert announced she will resign May 10. Her seat will be filled by appointment after the town election.

Milena Cerna



Ms. Cerna, 67, resides at 90 Christian Hill Road and is retired.

She graduated in 1984 from the Prague School of Economics in Prague, Czechoslovakia, with her bachelor and master degrees in economics.

She has a master's degree in finance from Columbia University's Graduate School of Business.

Ms. Cerna worked for more than 25 years in banking and finance, first as a senior vice president with Citigroup and later as a global head at Bloomberg LC and a managing director at PlanEcon/Warburg Pincus.

She also was an executive director at Yale University and retired as an associate dean at Columbia University.

She was elected to the board of managers at Olmsted Condominium and has been its treasurer since 2016. She also was elected to the Blackwood Home Association, serving as president from 1995 to 2000 and treasurer from 2001 to 2008.

She was treasurer of the Chambers Street Coop from 1984 to 1989.

Ms. Cerna's answers to the questions:

I have extensive financial expertise, through both my formal training and my work experience.

Having worked in banking and finance in New York City for more than 25 years, I have acquired a very deep understanding of financial accounting, capital and operating budgets, financing strategies, and tax structures.

As a taxpayer, I also have a vested interest in our town, building and maintaining a healthy financial foundation while supporting diverse needs of our community.

I have been a frequent visitor to Great Barrington for many years, and a full-time resident for over three years.

The last two years were difficult for many of us but with the worst of the pandemic behind us, I believe now is a good time for all of us to resume our normal lives and re-engage.

In the near future, Great Barrington needs to address and make decisions about a number of important issues, many of which will have a significant financial impact on individual taxpayers, our whole community, and the long-term financial stability of our town.

I'd like to use my experience and expertise to assist in this process and to help arrive at decisions that are fiscally prudent, financially smart, and beneficial to all.

Madonna Meagher

Ms. Meagher, 66, did not return her candidate's questionnaire or answer the questions.

She was re-elected last year to the ZBA. When she ran for that board six years ago, she wrote that she lives at 3 Alford Road and graduated from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst in 1978.

She is assistant to the director of the Great Barrington Housing Authority.

Zoning Board of Appeals

The five-member board, with two alternate members, has public hearings and determines appeals by people unable to obtain a permit or enforcement action or from applicants for variances under the Zoning Bylaws' "grandfather" provisions.

Elect 1, 3-year term

Carolyn S. Ivory

Ms. Ivory, 79, of 54 Grove St., has been on the Zoning Board of Appeals since 1994.

She was on the Berkshire Hills Regional School Committee from 1985 to 1993.

She graduated in 1964 from San Jose (Calif.) State College with a degree in education.

She is retired.

Ms. Ivory's answers to the questions:

I have been a member of the Zoning Board since 1994 and wish to continue working on this board.

The town is fortunate to have a board that well represents our community and works hard to make decisions that will benefit our town.

Board of Health

The three-member Board of Health oversees the Health Department, which includes health agent Rebecca Jurczyk and inspector Ned Saviski.

The department is responsible for enforcing the state's Sanitary Code, including food, septic systems (Title V), housing standards for human habitation, public pools and spas, recreational camps for children, lodging, and private wells.

The department is also responsible for enforcing several state laws and certain town laws, plus regulations that the health board passes, such as those for keeping animals, nail salons and private sewer lines.

The Health Department also investigates public nuisance complaints, monitors communicable disease occurrences in town and public beaches for dangerous levels of E. Coli, organizes annual flu clinics, exercises

So Really, How Long Is a Term on ZBA?

In 2007, Zoning Board of Appeals members had five-year terms.

In 2008, that changed to three years, like most other boards.

But why?

With the help of town clerk Jennifer Messina, I checked the 2007 warrant. It says nothing about a change in terms.

Neither does the 2006 warrant.

And neither does the Town Code, which states, with my added underlining:

"The Zoning Board of Appeals shall consist of five members elected by the voters so that the five-year terms of members expire sequentially with one member elected at each Annual Town Election."

Anyone who can shed any light on this, please tell me or Ms. Messina. She and town manager Mark Pruhenski weren't in their present jobs back then and don't know how it happened. -EWM

the town's public health emergency plans and collaborates with regional public health officials and Berkshire Health Systems for a response to Covid-19 in Great Barrington.

Elect 1, 3-year term

Michael Lanoue

Mr. Lanoue, 41, resides at 59 Hurlburt Road. He seeks his fourth term on the Board of Health.

He is the board's chairman.

He has been on the Conservation Commission since 2020.

Mr. Lanoue graduated in 2004 from Gordon College with a degree in music.

He is a builder.

Mr. Lanoue's answers to the questions:

I have always felt called to serve my community and nearly nine years of service on the Board of Health has only increased that conviction.

While I was initially drawn to the board for its role in housing and infrastructure, I have developed a broader appreciation and interest in the board's role in such issues as herbicide regulation, marijuana cultivation, and infectious disease response.

As we move towards the end of the pandemic, the local Board of Health will continue to play an important role in the well being of our town. Reflecting on the past two years and all that we have learned I believe we must move forward to normal in an honest and open fashion as we learn to live with Covid-19.

I believe my past experience and years of service as a board member are an asset to the town in terms of not only shaping local policy but also of creating a space where all members of our community can speak and be heard.

I believe our public health system should be one that is participatory to the greatest extent possible, and I humbly ask the residents of Great Barrington for the opportunity to continue serving as a member of their Board of Health.

Readers on District Mergers, Short-Term Rentals

'Elephant in Room'

The same elephant sat unnoticed in two different rooms this week. Neither the Eight Town Regional School District Planning Board's report on the merger of the Berkshire Hills Regional School District with the Southern Berkshire Regional School District,

nor the Great Barrington Select Board's vote to recommend a \$1.5 million study of a new high school, address the political obstacles caused by district agreements that have the eight towns paying wildly different property tax rates to support their districts:

Great Barrington \$11.96 per thousand of assessed valuation for FY2022

Stockbridge	\$ 3.38
West Stockbridge	\$ 8.23
Alford	\$ 1.62
Egremont	\$ 3.80
Monterey	\$ 3.13
New Marlborough	\$ 5.21
Sheffield	\$11.07

This disparity, unless addressed effectively, is likely to doom a merger vote at future GB and Sheffield town meetings, and to reprise a defeat for a new (or highly renovated) high school at a future GB town meeting.

Jake Eberwein, the primary author of the Eight Town report, reached out to me last year for input, and I provided him a spreadsheet model (available to anyone upon request), showing how, if my recommendation for a unified tax rate were implemented, it would take 11 years for all taxpayers in the eight towns to reach parity in their educational tax rates, assuming an average annual increase of 5% in the school budgets.

As Peter Dillon, Berkshire Hill's superintendent, has correctly noted, the district's operating agreement was revised so that future capital projects would be allocated among its three towns using a unified rate, and that this would lower Great Barrington's share for a new high school to slightly more than 54%, a nearly 20% reduction.

I believe he was wrong, however, to say, "That in itself is a huge deal."

A major capital project would be funded with 30-year bonds, which greatly lessens its annual budget impact. In spite of the fact that the bonds for the fairly new Berkshire Hills middle and elementary schools are still being serviced, the BHRSD capital budget for FY2022 only represents 2.7% of the total assessment to the towns, with the operating budget accounting for the other 97.3%.

A "20% reduction", in other words, would only represent a negligible 0.5% lessening of the burden that has GB taxpayers paying 353.8% (3.5 times) the rate paid by Stockbridge taxpayers. Unless the oper-

ating budget is allocated using the same methodology as the capital budget (which adopted my model), the future of two commendable projects – the new high school and the merger of the two districts – is likely to come to an abrupt end in the town meetings of Great Barrington and Sheffield.

Chip Elitzer
Great Barrington, MA

STR: Bewilderment, Alarm

I am closely following the Great Barrington select board's conversations on short term rentals with bewilderment and some alarm.

The decisions that the board makes now – and that my fellow townspeople make at annual meeting – will determine whether or not I can afford to retire here. It's been a familiar refrain for years that none of our children can stay in this town due to the ever-rising costs of housing. I think as a retiree in the next few years, I may well be next.

This is me – a resident of the southern Berkshires since 1989, a homeowner in Great Barrington since 1999. I have lived here with my husband of 34 years for more than half my life. My husband and I rented for a full 10 years before we could manage a down payment on our first home. We both worked, our children were born here at Fairview Hospital, and they were educated in our area's public schools. We may not be locals according to everyone, but we feel like this is home.

During our 10 years renting, we never paid more than \$700 monthly. For a house. A whole house. Maybe not a house in a prime location or in mint condition, but a perfectly serviceable place to live for a small family. As everyone knows, that rental option no longer exists.

When we finally became homeowners in 1999, we paid \$130,000 for an in-town house in move-in condition. My neighbor, who purchased an almost identical house right next to us for nearly the same price at the same time, sold his property a year ago in a bidding war for the price of \$375,000. That is about what our house is worth now, so the realtors tell me. If we sell and leave town, it will not be a young family that purchases our home, unless that young family has inherited a nest egg or won the lottery. It's not even possible to buy land now in Great Barrington for our original purchase price of \$130,000.

Lucky, I guess, to have our home acquire that much value over these last 20 years. It's not the whole story though. As our property values increased, so did lots and lots of other things. Our real estate taxes. Our utilities. Our water and sewer bills. Our homeowners insurance.

In general, the cost of living, which has increased everywhere, but that is especially true here in our town. We buy local when we can, but the majority of businesses now cater to a clientele that has lots more dispos-

able income than we do. We have worked hard to pay off our mortgage and keep pace with these rising costs over these years while working and raising children. Thank goodness for thrift stores is about all I can say on that.

Retirement, though, is where it will get complicated. Right up until the point where people in this town began to talk about curtailing short-term rentals, we thought we had a plan. We recently bought a very small condo in town so that we could do AirBnB in our family home. We figured that if we could generate enough revenue from the home we own for the next decade or so, we could safely set aside enough money to ensure our ability to head back there full time in our final days.

As retirees, maybe we could do a little traveling, visit far-flung family members, and maintain a space here in town where family and friends could come visit us in turn. Then someday, when we are no longer able to climb the 43 stairs up to our new condo, maybe it could be sold to finance end-of-life care — a grim thought, but having lost parents recently, we are no strangers to just how high those costs can climb.

Since the most recent Selectboard meeting, I have had one phrase stuck in my craw. "If 90 days of short-term rental doesn't provide you with enough money, you're doing something wrong."

This board member tossed out a figure of \$31,000, and shook his head in disgust at the greed of some people when it comes to the dollar.

Let's talk about what happens to that theoretical \$31,000. It's a math problem. We pay income tax on it — that's fair as far as we're concerned. We also pay occupancy tax to the state, and we think that's fair too. It has been suggested that we might also be asked to pay a 3% short-term rental fee to the town. Actually, we're more than happy to do that.

We've always been sympathetic to the cause of affordable housing in this area. In fact, I was half-time executive director at Construct, Inc. in the late 1990's. I knew the problem well, and it's significantly worse since those days.

It would be wonderful if the town collected money from short-term rental fees that could help expand affordable housing options. Even though all of these fees come out of that \$31,000, sure — maybe there would still be enough room to make it work.

Except that there's more. There's the real estate tax, the utilities, and the maintenance on the property. And my insurance company tells me that if we rent for more than 45 days in a calendar year, we need a commercial policy, quoted for us at more than \$3,400 annually.

(LETTER continues on page 14)



Thanks for Your Opinions, Readers

THE NEWSletter asked you readers what you want to see in these reports and overwhelmingly, those who answered want more information. You're getting it and thanks for answering.—Eileen Mooney

Police Report for February

Police can be reached by calling **911** for an emergency or **528-0306**. The department's website is <https://greatbarringtonpolice.com> and its Facebook page is www.facebook.com/GBPDMA/

The police station is at **465 South Main St.**

TWENTY-SEVEN MOTOR-VEHICLE ACCIDENTS — including collisions — were reported in February.

They included three vehicles that hit deer on South Egremont Road, Stockbridge Road and Maple Avenue; and three-car crashes at Main Street and Dresser Avenue, on State Road; and on Railroad Street.

Two cars hit each other on Elm Street, State Road, School Street, and Main Street.

Three cars that were parking hit other vehicles twice on Main Street, with one driver leaving a note for the car that was hit.

A driver rear-ended a vehicle on Main Street and was arrested for driving without a license.

Another driver hit a vehicle at the Cove and left the scene, then went to the police station where he was given a Miranda warning before a "verbal interview in lobby. Left station after interview not happy with results," according to the police log.

Someone else was arrested for leaving the scene and property damage after hitting a vehicle in the Town Hall parking lot.

Another driver was arrested for leaving the scene, property damage, driving under the influence and unlicensed operation after hitting a car on Main Street.

Other hit-and-runs were reported on South Main Street,

A warrant was issued for assault and battery after a hit-and-run on Stockbridge Road.

A truck driver was charged with leaving the scene of personal injury and property damage and a marked-lanes violation after hitting a vehicle on Park Street.

After an accident on Railroad Street, someone was arrested for driving with a suspended license and no registration, leaving the scene of property damage and using a motor vehicle without authority.

A driver was freed after a vehicle went off Lake Mansfield Road, down an embankment and landed on its roof.

Crashes involving one car were reported on Division, High, Front and Park streets. Minor damage was reported to the side mirror of a vehicle on Main Street and malicious damage was reported to a car on Castle Lane.

Radar Used 41 Times

Radar was used a total of 41 times. That included 13 times on Stockbridge Road and five times each on Old Stockbridge and Stockbridge roads; seven times on Main

Street; four times, South Main; three each, Monterey and North Plain roads and East Street;

Also, twice each, Taconic Avenue and Division Street; and once each, Park Street, VanDeusenville and Monument Valley roads, and Monument Mountain Regional High School.

21 Vehicles Stopped

Twenty-one vehicles were stopped, resulting in 16 citations/warnings issued and one arrest for a lights violations and driving with a suspended registration.

Other Police Actions

A man was arrested for having knowingly attached plates to a motor vehicle.

Another man was charged with assault with a deadly weapon and unlicensed operation of a motor vehicle after threatening an employee at a local store with a metal bar.

A woman was sent to McGee Recovery Center in Pittsfield after disturbing the peace and resisting arrest.

A local man was charged with trespass at the Post Office and removed from there and other locations during the month, arrested as "highly intoxicated" and taken into protective custody.

Someone else was taken into protective custody and transported to McGee.

Someone reported that her husband Social Security number had been stolen and \$5,775 collected from his unemployment.

Someone else received a scam call, supposedly from National Grid.

Another person reported a credit card was used fraudulently.

A party that had earlier taken groceries from Big Y was approached and this time left without them, according to the police log.

Someone was arrested for drug distribution, disorderly conduct and vandalizing a jail cell.

Another person was charged with domestic assault and battery on a family and household member.

A lost child was rescued from woods behind Fairview Road.

Malicious damage was reported on a lawn and a mailbox was smashed.

A catalytic converter was reported taken from a local car dealer.

A woman was arrested on charges of harassment and violating a prevention order.

Someone reported being threatened by a friend's boyfriend.

A Vulture and Horses

Police moved a vulture along from Giggle Park behind Town Hall.

Fire Department February Report

The Fire Department is at **528-0788** or, in an emergency, **911**. Its website is www.townofgb.org/fire-department and its Facebook page is www.facebook.com/gbfiredpt/

Fire stations are on State Road, Great Barrington, and Front Street, Housatonic.

How To Get Burning Permit

Burning permits are available by calling 528-0788 or going online to www.bcburnpermits.com.

FIREFIGHTERS responded to a total of 78 calls during February, including four for motor vehicle crashes.

They rescued two injured hikers in separate incidents off Benedict Pond Road in Monterey.

Fire confined in an outside trash receptacle at 14 Cone Ave. was started by oil rags from floors being refinished, Fire Chief Charles Burger said.

Firefighters went to an unauthorized burning at 103 Seekonk Cross Road.

They helped EMS responders 47 times. Eleven calls were caused by malfunctioning alarms; two calls for downed power lines, one each on West Sheffield Road and Pothul Drive; one to remove smoke, one for a gas leak, and another to help someone locked out.

SBAS Report

Great Barrington police at **911** handle ambulance dispatch.

Southern Berkshire Ambulance Squad, based at Fairview Hospital, covers Great Barrington, Alford, Ashley Falls, Egremont, Monterey, Mount Washington, and Sheffield.

The squad goes primarily to Fairview Hospital but also to Berkshire Medical Center, Baystate and Albany Medical hospitals. Its website is sbvas.com

February's report will be in next month.

THE NEWSletter is a great gift for neighbors and other friends!



Recent Real Estate Transactions

The Southern Berkshire Registry of Deeds is in the Great Barrington Town Hall and open from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. weekdays. Documents are online at www.masslandrecords.com.

Following are recent transactions of \$35,000 or more in Great Barrington (including Housatonic), Egremont, Monterey, Alford & West Stockbridge. Stockbridge transactions will return in the next issue.

-Margot Ann Conte to Jeffrey Cohen, 0 Monument Valley Road, Great Barrington, \$90,000.

-John A. Evans & Elena Anastas-Evans to Jan Evans, 1031 Main St., Great Barrington, \$375,000.

-16SquawPeak LLC to Robert A. Cohen & Cynthia H. Cohen, 16 Squaw Peak Road, Great Barrington, \$850,000.

-Anthony J. Dapolito & Dana S. Dapolito to Juan Sanabria & Naomi Mersky, 12 Berkshire Heights Road, Great Barrington, \$649,000.

-Bharti H. Patel & Hasmukh D. Patel, trustees, Lantern House Nominee Trust, to Gbmami LLC, 256 Stockbridge Road, Great Barrington, \$976,000.

-Half Moon Camps Inc. to Kimama Re LLC, 18 & 32 Camp Half Moon roads, Monterey, \$1.5 million.

-Brendan Smith to Jeffrey Cohen, 17 Monument Valley Road, Great Barrington, \$50,000.

-Berkshire Community College Foundation Inc. to 343 Main Street LLC, 343 Main St., Great Barrington, \$1.45 million.

-Ellen Rosenthal to Susan M. Mathews, trustee, Susan M. Mathews 1995 Trust, 77 Castle St., Great Barrington, \$535,000.

-David L. Stanisz, trustee, Trust Established Under The Will of Gloria F. Stanisz, & estate of Stanley L. Stanisz to James Leonard III & Melissa Lynn Byrne, 384 Park St. North, Great Barrington, \$300,000.

-Anne E. Peck to Berkshire School Inc., 2 West View Road, Egremont, \$532,650.

-James E. Buckley III to 50 Prospect Lake LLC, 46 Prospect Lake Road, Egremont, \$400,000.

-Terrence A. Moore to Sean F. Taylor & Ronald David Gilbert, 1 Undermountain Road, Egremont, \$587,500.

-NBT Bank to Givati 18 LLC & Gentleman Farmer LLC, 445, 449 & 450 Monterey Road, Great Barrington, \$250,000.

-Richard Hawkey & Maryanne Hawkey to David Jadow, property on Baker Street, West Stockbridge, \$245,000.

-Donald J. Schneider Sr. & Sarah T. Schneider to Joseph Allan Schneider, 96 Mount Washington Road, Egremont, \$270,000.

-Powerhouse Square LLC to Irwin Chafetz, trust, Ellen Ryan Family Trust, unit 206, 34 Bridge St., Great Barrington, \$395,000.

-Alex M. Jiron to Jennifer B. Plotkin & Gordon S. Plotkin, 6 Oxbow Road, Egremont, \$920,000.

-Robert L. Watkins Jr. & Barbara L. Watkins to Christopher A. Meyer and Donna Meyer, 7 Butternut Lane, Great Barrington, \$902,000.

-Barbara H. Parker to John Makuc & Cynthia Makuc, property on Main Road, Monterey, \$175,000.

-William T. Condry Jr., trustee, Condry Realty Trust, to C&G Smart Move LLC, 9 Railroad St., Great Barrington, \$850,000.

-Robert A. Weiss & Lucinda Weiss, trustees, Weiss Family Revocable Trust, to Erica Lynn Mielke, unit 5, 360 Park St. North, Great Barrington, \$206,000.

-Jimmy J. Brown Jr. & Melissa A. Brown to Oliver Klein LLC, 10 Berkshire Heights Road, Great Barrington, \$535,000.

-Robin Baxendale Manning to Scott Iseyama & Allyn Scura, trustees, Scura-Iseyama Family Trust, 49 South St., Great Barrington, \$600,000.

-Catherine A. Wells to Haley R. Barbieri, Heather A. Barbieri & Kurt M. Barbieri, 257 North Plain Road, Great Barrington, \$150,000.

-Robert M. Balboni & estate of Robert A. Balboni to William S. Fleming & Ellen R. Davey-Fleming, 5 Cone Hill Road, West Stockbridge, \$592,000.

-Anthony Prisendorf, trustee, Chanticleer Nominee Trust, to Robert Beusman, 19 Elm St., Great Barrington, \$450,000.

-Elizabeth Vail Kollias & George Kollias to Wendy Sue Feldblum, 48 Russell St., Great Barrington, \$476,500.

-Anthony Aniello & Sheila Aniello to Drew Tressler & Kathy Garramone, 0 Hupi Road, Monterey, \$266,000.

-Bard College to Scott A. Sherk & Patricia A. Badt, 101 Lake Mansfield Road, Great Barrington, \$499,900.

-Juan Samuel Sanabria & Naomi Beth Mersky to Samuel Mortimer & Saga Krantz, 155 Hillsdale Road, Egremont, \$505,000.

-Megan Kitsock & Megan R. Alberg to Morgan Burns & Anne M. Alquist, unit 2, 360 Park St. North, Great Barrington, \$215,000.

Stockbridge

The Middle Berkshire Registry of Deeds is at 44 Bank Row, Pittsfield. It is open from 8:30 a.m. to 3:59 p.m. weekdays.

-Ira Cantor & Jean Cantor to Kevin M. Sheys & Sonia Arenaza, 1 Massasoit Road, Stockbridge, \$341,000.

-Howard J. Tytel & Sandra L. Tytel to Adam W. Howell & Kirsten Miley Howell, trustees, Howell Revocable Trust, 12 & 14 Stone Hill Road, Stockbridge, \$3.3 million.

-Toby A. Levine, trustee, Two Hill Road Nominee Realty Trust, to Barbara L. Cohen-Hobbs, trustee, Barbara L. Cohen-Hobbs Revocable Trust, 2 Hill Road, Stockbridge, \$991,500.

-John Paul Tracy & Mary Elizabeth Tracy Gamble, trustees, Margaret M. Tracy Revocable Trust, to Kevin C. Charlton, 49 Main St., Stockbridge, \$808,000.

-Thomas Race & Robin E. Race to Sarah A. Leaman, John G. Leaman & Kathleen H. Leaman, 4 Lukeman Lane, Stockbridge, \$550,000.

-Nilda C. Power to Jeffrey P. LaBonte & Theodore LaBonte, 31 Glendale Road, Stockbridge, \$117,200.

-Jon C. Irsfeld & Caroline A. Irsfeld to Michael C. Kammeyer & Elisa Garza Kammeyer, 1 & 4 South Hill Road,

Building Permits for February

Building Commissioner Ed May issues permits and inspects projects. He is also Great Barrington's zoning enforcement officer.

His Town Hall office is open weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. The telephone number is 528-3206. Mr. May's email is emay@townofgb.org.

Inspectors; What Needs Permit

Other inspectors are gas, Robert Gennari at 274-0267; plumbing, Robert Krupski, 229-8019; and electrical, Theodore Piontek, 274-6605.

Permits are needed for siding, roofs, signs, foundations, fences, and temporary structures; to demolish structures; and to install chimney linings, alarm systems;

Also, new windows, wood stoves, insulation, sprinkler systems, photovoltaics;

Also, tents, pools, hot tubs, spas, alarms, sprinklers, sheds, solar installations, and home occupations.

Building Permits in February

Twenty-seven building permits were issued in February with fees paid of

\$522,166 and estimated construction costs of \$3,419,891.

Following are permits during February with estimated building costs of \$35,000 or more and contractor if not the homeowner:

-Gary Frankel & John Sloman, renovate 152 Christian Hill Road including switching from electric heat to LP hot air and add powder room; estimated cost \$500,000; Wayne Wilkinson contractor.

-Robert Hartwell, renovate 54 Castle St., \$1.5 million, John O'Brien.

-Robert Beusman, alter commercial building at 19 Elm St. for new tenant, \$60,000.

-Reo Matsuzaki, add garage & new basement windows & renovate at 10 Lake View Road, \$609,000, Daniel Supranowicz.

-Central Berkshire Habitat for Humanity, renovate 40 Grove St. & redesign kitchen, \$210,000, Anthony Murad.



James T. Collingwood Sr.

James T. Collingwood Sr., 94, of Sheffield died March 2 at Fairview Hospital.

He graduated in 1945 from Deerfield Academy and had an associate in arts degree from the University of Massachusetts.

He was stationed on the Panama Canal with the Army.

Mr. Collingwood owned Collingwood Transportation. He retired in 2013.

He had served on several boards and committees for the Town of Sheffield.

He was a 67-year member of Old Parish Church.

Mr. Collingwood leaves three sons, James Jr. of Ashley Falls, Bruce of Pittsfield and Jeffrey of Ashley Falls; nine grandchildren; four great-grandchildren; and his brother, Robert.

His wife of 53 years, the former Betty Markham, died in 2005. He was also predeceased by his sister, Janet Koch, and brother, Frank.

Finnerty & Stevens Funeral Home handled arrangements.

Memorial donations are suggested to the Berkshire Humane Society, the Kiwanis Club of Sheffield or Old Parish Church through the funeral home.

Ronald Frambach

Ronald Frambach, 81, of Sheffield died March 19.

He had been a counselor at Kolburne, Eagleton, Brookside and DeSisto schools.

Mr. Frambach leaves his wife of 58 years, the former Avis "Bea" Hanlon; their daughters, Laura of Sheffield and Rebecca of Willow Creek, Calif.; and his brother Richard of Epsom, N.H.

He was predeceased by his parents and his older brother, Bob.

Finnerty and Stevens Funeral Home handled arrangements.

Dr. Paul Lippmann

Dr. Paul Lippmann, 87, of Stockbridge died March 14 at home.

He had studied psychology at City College and New York University, where he also was on the faculty. He completed post-graduate studies at William Alanson White Psychoanalytic Institute in New York City.

He was a fellow, training analyst, supervising analyst and president of the White Society at the institute.

Dr. Lippmann was also a fellow at the Austen Riggs Center in Stockbridge, where he later was a supervising analyst.

He was an associate professor of psychology at Columbia University and the University of Massachusetts in Amherst.

He also lectured at the California Dream Society on the use of dream interpretation in the psychotherapeutic environment.

Dr. Lippmann spent many years in private practice in New York and Stockbridge. He and Dr. Eugene Talbot cofounded a free mental-health services clinic in Stockbridge.

Dr. Lippmann also was a cofounder of the Western Massachusetts/Albany Association

Recent Obituaries

for Psychoanalytic Psychology and founded the Stockbridge Dream Society.

He wrote many academic papers and the book "Nocturnes (On Listening to Dreams)."

He had studied art in Paris and painted on themes of the Holocaust.

He and his wife, Dr. Frances Lippmann, helped found Hevreh of Southern Berkshire.

Dr. Lippmann leaves his wife of 63 years; their son John Lippmann and daughter Eve Jennings, both of Stockbridge; five grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

He was predeceased by his parents, Max and Florence Lipshitz, and his brother, Meyer.

Finnerty & Stevens handled arrangements.

Marion 'Skip' Smith

Marion "Skip" Smith, 97, formerly of Alford, died March 8 at her home in Great Barrington.

The former Marion DuPuy, she graduated in 1942 from the former Williams High School in Stockbridge. She then attended Merrill School of Business and was a secretary for the Nestle Co. until 1946.

After returning to the Berkshires, she was a bookkeeper for the former Steven's Grain Co., formerly at the top of Railroad Street in Great Barrington.

For more than 15 years, she played her accordion at local nursing homes and senior centers. She also was an organist at several local churches and played the piano.

Mrs. Smith leaves seven daughters, 13 grandchildren and 18 great-grandchildren.

She was predeceased by her husband, of 58 years, Russell, and by their two sons.

Birches-Roy Funeral Home handled arrangements.

Memorial donations are suggested to the Claire Teague Senior Center or HospiceCare of the Berkshires through the funeral home.

Patricia Ann Sullivan

Patricia Ann "Patty" Sullivan, 69, of Great Barrington died March 30 at Fairview Commons.

She graduated in 1971 from Monument Mountain Regional High School. She worked at K-Mart for a short time but left due to her illness.

Ms. Sullivan leaves her sister, Michele Shimon of Great Barrington, and her brothers, Patrick of New Marlborough, Timothy of Alexandria, Va., and Thomas of Pittsfield.

Finnerty-Stevens Funeral Home handled arrangements.

Memorial contributions are suggested to the Epilepsy Foundation or the activities department at Fairview Commons through the funeral home.

Olindo J. Zerbato

Olindo J. Zerbato, 96, of Housatonic died March 19 at Mount Carmel Care Center in Lenox.

He attended Lee schools.

Mr. Zerbato had played semi-pro baseball for Lee Sons of Italy and in the towns of Stockbridge and Great Barrington.

In 1942, he was signed to play for the New York Giants.

Mr. Zerbato worked for Lee Marble, Lee Lime, Smith Paper, Peter J. Switzer Paper and Kimberly Clark Paper from 1943 until he retired in 1986.

He was a shop steward for 25 years in the paper mills.

He had been vice president of Spine Credit Union.

He was predeceased in 2020 by his wife of 68 years, the former Helen Boldyga. He was also predeceased by his sister Beatrice Kelly and his brothers, Mario, Guido and Nello Zerbato.

Mr. Zerbato leaves his sister, Mary Marzotto of West Stockbridge.

Birches-Roy Funeral Home handled arrangements.

Memorial donations are suggested to Corpus Christi Church Saint Theresa of Calcutta Building Fund through the funeral home.

Letter from page 11

At this point, our \$31,000 has been whittled down by half. But then it gets dicey. A new roof? A new furnace or hot water heater? New appliances? A whole -house paint job when we can't safely climb ladders anymore?

We would really like to try to make this work. We are proud of our beautiful home, and we love to share it. We love travelers. We have always invited Appalachian Trail hikers and long-distance cyclists to stay with us - free of charge - just because we love their stories. The idea of doing short term rentals as a way to age in place in a town we love, doing something that we love - well, maybe it was just too good to be true.

We do get it. We get why this conversation is happening. It's definitely a very good idea to keep people from buying up multiple properties for the sole purpose of creating a short-term-rental empire in an area where housing opportunities are limited. But that's not what we do.

So keep it simple. People can own as many properties as they like. No one can stop people from buying property here. And who can blame them? It's a great town. But those buyers/owners - and we don't even have to care if they are residents or not - they just can't use multiple properties for short-term rentals. Only one. And my goodness, get rid of the 90-day limit. Or at the very least, double that number. Otherwise, we are in your crosshairs.

Maureen E. Meier
11 George St.



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs

Department of Environmental Protection

Western Regional Office • 436 Dwight Street, Springfield MA 01103 • 413-784-1100

Charles D. Baker
Governor

Karen E. Polito
Lieutenant Governor

Kathleen A. Theoharides
Secretary

Martin Suiberg
Commissioner

April 5, 2022

Mr. James Mercer, Treasurer
Housatonic Water Works
80 Maple Ave Ste 1
Great Barrington, MA 01230

Re: Great Barrington—DWP
Housatonic Water Works
PWS ID #1113003
Enforcement
000012548

Dear Public Water Supplier:

THIS IS AN IMPORTANT NOTICE. FAILURE TO TAKE ADEQUATE ACTION IN RESPONSE TO THIS NOTICE COULD RESULT IN SERIOUS LEGAL CONSEQUENCES. THIS NOTICE IS ISSUED PURSUANT TO M.G.L. c. 21A, § 16, 310 CMR 5.00 AND G.L. c. 111, §§ 159-160 AND 310 CMR 22.00.

MassDEP received your Compliance Schedule Approval (CSA) form for the Notice of Noncompliance (ENF#000012548) addressing Quarter 3 and Quarter violations of the Haloacetic Acid (HAA5) Maximum Contaminant Level and certain reporting and public notice violations.

You are correct in that the three cited reporting and public notice violations in NON 00012548 were associated with the third quarter 2021 Haloacetic Acid MCL violation. MassDEP records will reflect that determination. Housatonic Water Works is a repeat violator, violating the HAA5 MCL for multiple quarters in a 12-month period. Also, an additional violation is the failure to prepare and submit an Operational Evaluation Level Report associated with the third quarter HAA5 results by the deadline cited in the Massachusetts Drinking Water Regulations 310 CMR 22.00. This violation and the Quarter 1, 2022 HAA MCL violation will be addressed in a separate enforcement document.

Housatonic Water Works
ENF#00012548

April 5, 2022
p.2

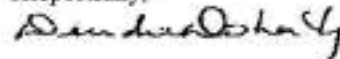
MassDEP rejects Housatonic Water Works Option 2 response to this Notice of Noncompliance. MassDEP requires a corrective action plan. MassDEP rejects the Housatonic Water Works position that anticipating better water quality in the future is a corrective action plan for these HAA MCLs. MassDEP does acknowledge that reducing chlorine while maintaining sufficient levels for primary and secondary disinfection is one immediate response action that is appropriate.

MassDEP directs Housatonic Water Works to specifically directs Housatonic Water Works to:

1. **By May 20, 2022**, submit to MassDEP a report by a Massachusetts Registered Professional Engineer with expertise in Drinking Water compliance documenting the causes of the MCL violation and his or her recommendations for preventing future MCL violations in the water distribution system. The report shall include an alternatives analysis including a feasibility evaluation, effectiveness determination, cost estimate, and implementation schedule. Housatonic Water Works shall implement the recommended actions set forth in the report as approved by MassDEP in accordance with a schedule approved by MassDEP.
2. **By April 15, 2022**, identify and describe all immediate actions taken to reduce the levels of HAA5 in the distribution system at Housatonic Water Works.
3. Repeat the **public notice** and certification every three months as long as the HAA MCL violations persist(s) in accordance with 310 CMR 22.16.
4. Include in its next Consumer Confidence Report (CCR) the following information: an explanation of each monitoring and/or reporting violation in accordance with 310 CMR 22.16A(6)(a); and/or the information on each MCL, treatment technique or MRDL violation required by 310 CMR 22.16A(4)(k).
5. Collect and analyze the required Disinfection Byproducts samples at the MassDEP-required locations to return to compliance with the Disinfection Byproduct monitoring and reporting requirements and submit to MassDEP two (2) copies of the monitoring results by mail or upload via eDEP by the deadlines identified in 310 CMR 22.00.

If you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact me at (413) 755-2148 or Douglas Paine at 413-755-2281 or douglas.paine@mass.gov.

Respectfully,



Deirdre Doherty
Drinking Water/Municipal Services Chief
Western Regional Office

Enclosures

cc: Boston DWP

BOH

MassDEP-WERO: J. Gibbs, D. Paine, H. Pokharel

Bk: 02482 Pg: 239

**TOWN OF GREAT BARRINGTON
MASSACHUSETTS**

NOTICE OF DECISION ON SPECIAL PERMIT

(To be mailed forthwith to the petitioner, abutters and owners of land within 300 feet of the property line, the Inspector of Buildings, the planning boards of the town and of every abutting municipality, and to every person present at the hearing who requested the notice be sent to him and who stated the address to which such notice was to be sent, as provided in Section 15, Chapter 40A as amended.)

Applicant: Benchmark Development
PO Box 1823
Lenox, MA 01240

Date: 3 / 1 / 2017
Case No.: 863-16

Premises Affected: 34-42 Bridge Street
Great Barrington, MA 01230

Special Permit Application
Referring to the above application case number, to permit:

the construction of a new mixed-use development in the Village Center Overlay District, work in Zone II of the Water Quality Protection Overlay District, and a loading space waiver, at 34-42 Bridge Street

After a public hearing opened on January 9, 2017 the Great Barrington Selectboard, at its meeting on February 27, 2017, **VOTED TO GRANT** the special permit in accordance with the plans submitted with the special permit application in accordance with Sections 6.1, 9.2, 9.6 and 10.4 of the Great Barrington Zoning Bylaw, with the following conditions:

1. A building permit shall not be issued for any phase of the development until the Developer executes a License Agreement with the Selectboard in order to enter into and perform work on Memorial Field and to connect into the Town's storm drain system. At a minimum, the agreement shall require:
 - d) The review and approval of Memorial Field improvement plans by the Parks Commission and DPW Superintendent prior to demolition or construction activities taking place on Town property. Such approvals need not occur all at once but may be segmented as each component occurs.
 - e) The Developer to post a bond of \$1 million payable to Town in the event the Town would have to repair any damage to Town property and infrastructure (including but not necessarily limited to Bridge Street itself, the sanitary sewer system, the storm drainage system, and Memorial Field); and,
 - f) The Developer shall indemnify and hold the Town harmless from any claims.
2. A building permit shall not be issued for any phase of the development until the Developer posts \$7,500 into an escrow account to pay for a consulting engineer of the Town's choosing who will review and approve developer's construction plans as they relate to work in or on Town property and infrastructure, and who will provide construction phase coordination and observation for the Town.
3. A building permit shall not be issued for any phase of the development until the Developer receives a driveway access permit from the Selectboard for the Memorial Field work.
4. Developer shall convene weekly project meetings to coordinate design and construction of

Bk: 02462 Pg: 238

- taking place on Town property. Such approvals need not occur all at once but may be segmented as each component occurs.
- b) The Developer to post a bond of \$1 million payable to Town in the event the Town would have to repair any damage to Town property and infrastructure (including but not necessarily limited to Bridge Street itself, the sanitary sewer system, the storm drainage system, and Memorial Field); and,
 - c) The Developer shall indemnify and hold the Town harmless from any claims.
2. A building permit shall not be issued for any phase of the development until the Developer posts \$7,500 into an escrow account to pay for a consulting engineer of the Town's choosing who will review and approve developer's construction plans as they relate to work in or on Town property and infrastructure, and who will provide construction phase coordination and observation for the Town.
 3. A building permit shall not be issued for any phase of the development until the Developer receives a driveway access permit from the Selectboard for the Memorial Field work.
 4. Developer shall convene weekly project meetings to coordinate design and construction of improvements to Bridge Street and Memorial Field work.
 5. Prior to removal of existing equipment at Memorial Field, Developer shall certify its ability to install ballfield backstop fencing (temporary or permanent) and dugouts, acceptable to the Parks Commission. Such ability includes any required building permits and the replacement equipment on-hand.
 6. A certificate of occupancy for Building 1 shall not be granted until the Developer executes an Operations and Maintenance agreement with the Town in order to provide for the winter maintenance of the Memorial Field access road, retaining wall, and parking area, and periodic maintenance of the stormwater system.
 7. A certificate of occupancy for Building 1 shall not be granted until the Developer installs a public sidewalk along the north side of Building 1.

SECOND: Mr. Bailly

VOTE: Mr. Abrahams – yes Mr. Bailly – yes Mr. Cooke – yes
 Mr. Bannon – yes Mr. Stanton – yes

The motion carried 5 in favor, 0 opposed**The Special Permit was granted.**

The selectmen in February 2017 were chairman Sean Stanton, Steve Bannon, Ed Abrahams, Dan Bailly and Bill Cooke. Town manager was Jennifer Tabakin.

More information is in this NEWSletter issue.

The entire special-permit packet, with minutes of the hearing, is in the Southern Berkshire Registry of Deeds in Book 02462, Page 231. The Registry is in the Great Barrington Town Hall or at <https://www.masslandrecords.com/BerkSouth>.

**Agreement
By and Between
Town of Great Barrington
And
Benchmark Development**

COPY

THIS AGREEMENT is made as of this 14th day of February 2020 by and between the Town of Great Barrington and Benchmark Development.

WHEREAS, Benchmark is developing "Powerhouse Square" at 34-42 Bridge Street, Great Barrington, as per Special Permit #863-16, granted by the Great Barrington Selectboard at its meeting of February 27, 2017, and filed with the Town Clerk on March 1, 2017;

WHEREAS, Benchmark is nearing the completion of Phase 1 of the permitted project, and seeks to begin closings on residential units under contract;

WHEREAS, Benchmark seeks to define certain obligations to the Town so that Benchmark can receive formal certification from the Town that portions of Phase 1 can be certified as completed per the Special Permit;

WHEREAS, Benchmark seeks to preserve its right to access Phase 2 of its project via the access road in Memorial Field as per the Special Permit;

WHEREAS, the Town requires assurance from Benchmark that certain components of the permitted project which are weather dependent and incomplete will be completed in a timely fashion as per the Special Permit;

WHEREAS, the Town requires assurance from Benchmark that improvements to Memorial Field required as a condition of the Special Permit related to Phase II will be completed in a timely fashion;

NOW, THEREFORE, THE TOWN AND BENCHMARK HERETO DO AGREE AS FOLLOWS:

1. Benchmark will make the parking lots serving Building 1 fully functional, though not necessarily paved, before requesting a Certificate of Occupancy for the upper three floors of Building 1.
2. Benchmark will complete the following items of Special Permit #863-16 not later than June 30, 2020:
 - a. Paving and related details for the south portion of the parking lot.
 - b. Crosswalk stripes, including across Bridge Street at the area of the entrance drive to Powerhouse Square.
 - c. Loading dock top cap and guard rail on the south boundary of Building 1.
 - d. Painting of the bare concrete south-facing building wall.
 - e. Retaining rail or fence on the top of the easterly retaining wall.
 - f. Landscaping as per plan.
3. Benchmark will complete not later than December 1, 2020, the portion of the Memorial Field improvements, outlined in recent conversations with the Parks Commission, specifically installing a

Agreement: Town of Great Barrington and Benchmark Development

new backstop, dugouts, and baseline fence areas. Benchmark must receive approval from the Parks Commission, or its designee, of the location and specifications of the equipment. This work shall be subject to the conditions imposed by Condition 5 of the Special Permit.

4. Benchmark will continue to provide weekly progress reports to the Town until all components of Building 1 receive Final Certificate of Occupancy.
5. Upon execution of this Agreement, the Town Manager shall notify the Building Inspector that, upon completion of item 1 above, the project is in sufficient compliance with the Special Permit for a Final Certificate of Occupancy for the upper three floors of Building 1 to be issued.
6. It is further agreed that Benchmark shall not be granted Final Certificate of Occupancy for the lowest floor of Building 1 until all of the above items are completed to the satisfaction of the Town.
7. In the event Benchmark fails to comply with this Agreement, it may be subject to zoning enforcement in accordance with applicable law.
8. This agreement may be amended in writing by the signatories hereto.

IN WITNESS thereof, the TOWN and BENCHMARK have executed this agreement as of the date above written.

TOWN:

By:



Mark Pruhenski
Town Manager

COPY

BENCHMARK:

By:



Michael Carotenuto
President

Preferred Model, Recommendations

Introduction

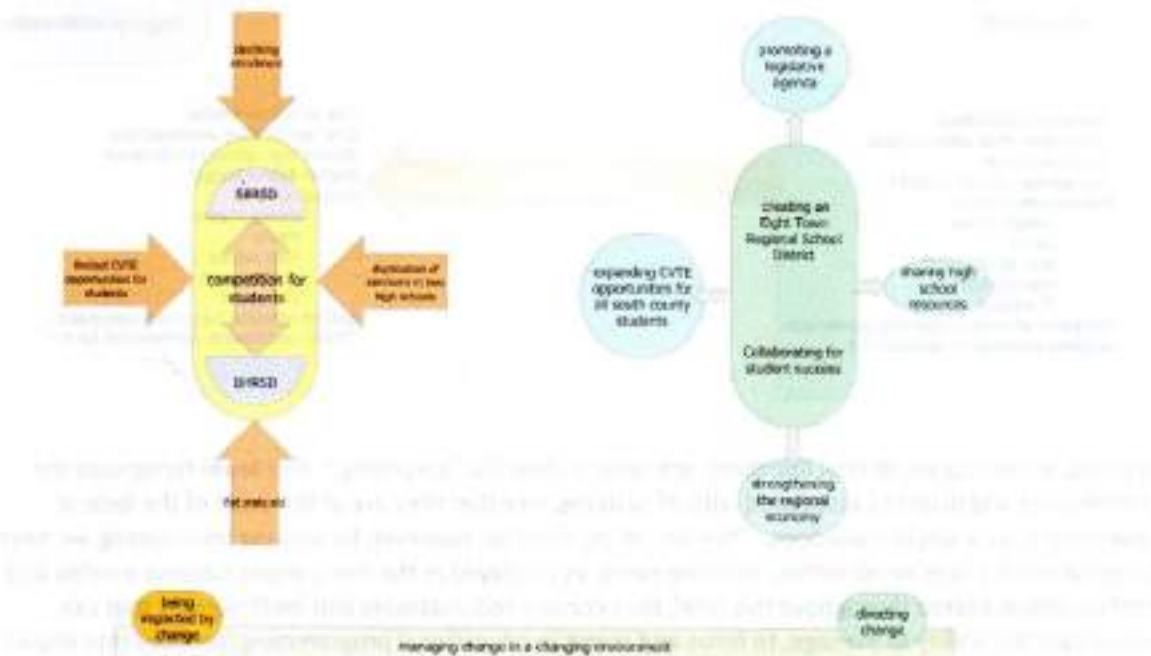
The aim of this research process and brief was to evaluate the three models with associated research team-generated scenarios. Additionally, the work plan outlined that the research team would "hone in on a preferred model in order to better understand the value proposition, implications and challenges." In this section we will describe our preferred Model/Scenario (s).

The act of regionalization, as was offered by a state official, is one of deciding whether to educate children together or separately. The main question we seek to answer, thus, is:

Can the two school districts (8 towns) better function together or separately?

We believe that the answer to that question is a resounding YES. Whether through full regionalization or expanded shared services (collaboration) there is great benefit of working together in addressing the challenges of shrinking enrollment and strained resources in ensuring that academic programs and student services are continued and, possibly, enhanced. The strength of the local school districts in providing breadth of curriculum and academic/enrichment opportunities, equitable access, and positive outcomes for students are foundational to community development. The decision to live, to work, to relocate, to set up a business...is highly associated with the quality (both real and perceived) of the schools. It's critical then that schools are efficiently operated in order to maximize resources available for direct student services and/or to manage the fiscal liability to the towns.

Our team recognizes that change has occurred and will continue to occur. Jack Canfield once offered, "Change is inevitable in life. You can either resist it and potentially get run over by it, or you can choose to cooperate with it, adapt to it, and learn how to benefit from it. When you embrace change you will begin to see it as an opportunity for growth."

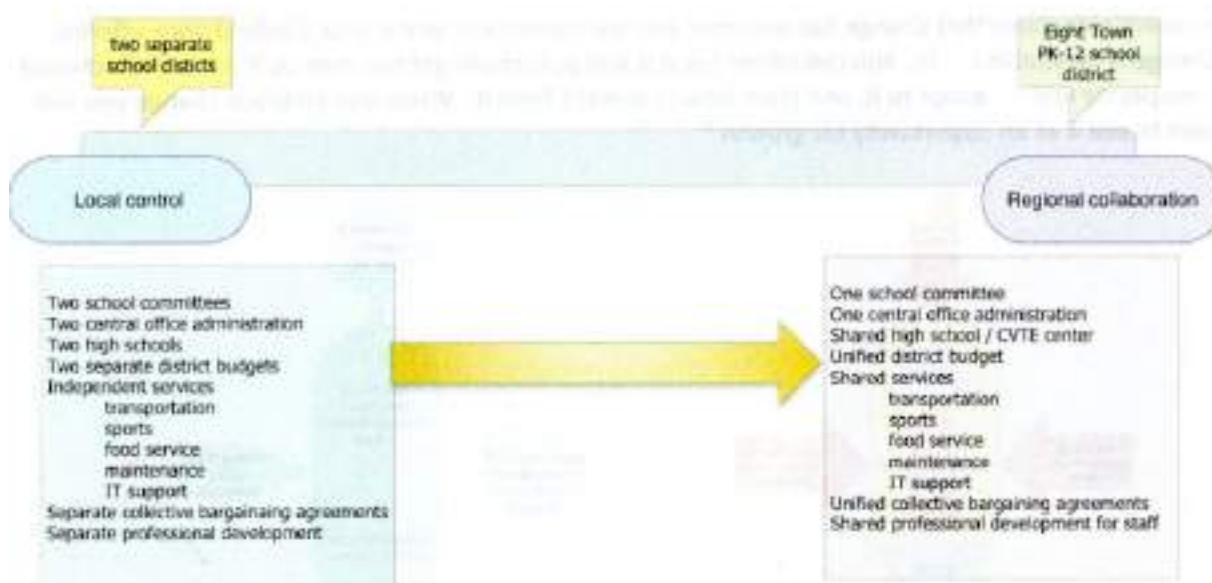


change can be described, as displayed above, as a set of competing choices and value propositions against which action is taken - or not. On one side, being impacted **by change** may lead to ongoing constraints and challenges, while **directing change** may entail uncertainties, risk, compromise and discomfort - difficult to accept even when presented with compelling benefits and advantages.

We believe that the RSDPB and the 8 towns are in a position to manage this change, recognizing that:

- Enrollment is and is likely to continue to decline
- There will (likely) be no new state revenue (Chapter 70), thus additional fiscal liability will be placed at the local level
- Competition between students exists, will persist, and could accelerate
- Educational opportunities for students are static, and lacking (such as CVTE)
- There are administrative, operational, and governing redundancies at the district and school level
- A high school building project in Great Barrington is imminent

We recognize the tensions inherent in this process, the history of attempted efforts to regionalize and collaborate are documented in our historical review, and there are many. We see regionalization as a set of tensions that exist in communities. Some of these are practical, others regulatory, still others social/cultural. However, the idea of moving together will influence organizational structures and, in turn, how education is delivered at the highest quality level. To some degree, as displayed below, this is a question of both efficient use of resources and control on a local versus regional scale.



systems, within organizational literature, are often defined as “surprising.” Our team recognizes the complexities and nuances associated with all systems, whether they are at the scale of the federal government, or a single classroom. They do, often, surprise. However, by slowly unwrapping we begin to reveal what is contained within. In some cases, as displayed in the many organizational models and configurations shared throughout this brief, they contain redundancies and inefficiencies that can complicate the ability to manage, to focus and invest in educational programming/services that impact

students, to support staff and ensure a strong professional culture, and to set and evaluate progress towards organizational goals. We believe by working together, these can be addressed.

Finally, as we head into the preferred models we share a short quote from Donella Meadows, "Everything we think about the world is a model – while our models have a strong congruence with the world, they fall short of representing the world fully." We recognize that these recommendations can be considered, embraced, modified, or out-right rejected. The final decision belongs to the community, not our consulting team.

Using our best judgment, our experiences, and what we have learned - it is with this degree of acknowledged humility that we present our preferred recommendation (s).

Preferred Recommendation 1.

The Research Team recommends Model A, Scenario 2 for the RSDPB:

Form a single K-12 region that merges the high schools, 9-12 in a newly constructed building on the Great Barrington campus.

Advantages.

While we have articulated a set of descriptions, value propositions, and criteria for this Model/Scenario earlier in this brief, there are five important justifications to highlight:

1. **Alignment and coherence - administratively, operationally, and educationally, across the 8 towns.** By consolidating central office, administrative, operations, and governance structures across the 8 towns we can:
 - Build alignment of central office functions that would create efficiencies related to operational functions such as central administrative staff, business office, facilities management, food service, and special education - for example.
 - Generate savings that can be reinvested in enhanced role types such as grant writing, human resource, diversity and equity leadership.
 - Align teaching and learning systems including high quality curriculum, data systems, and assessments.
 - Align systems and structures such as calendar, IT, and collective bargaining agreements to create opportunities for fluid exchanges and collaboration across schools.
 - Facilitate shared specialization staffing in areas such as special education, SEL counseling, English language learners, curriculum, and alternative education.
 - Create potential for expanded teaching-and-learning supports such as instructional coaches and interventionists.

2. **Expanded programming for high school (grades 9-12) students³.** The opportunity to partner on the construction of a state-of-the art high school facility offers a unique opportunity to shape a vision and design a facility that:
 - Delivers much needed Career Vocational Technical Education (Chapter 74) that is significantly lacking in south county.
 - Supports students in a variety of pathways through and beyond high school, recognizing that many go directly to work or fail to successfully earn a college degree.
 - Encourages contemporary educational practices that foster skills, competencies, dispositions, and experiences needed to thrive in a rapidly evolving world.
 - Offers a robust set of electives, building off the unique strengths of both high schools and ensuring all 700+ students have access to this breadth of opportunity. Is a community resource for the community, serving as a dynamic educational and training center.
 - Leverages up to 6% in additional state funds towards school construction.

3. **Savings generated can be reinvested in educational programs/services and to mitigate against fiscal liability to the towns.** By centralizing administrative functions and managing cohort/class size, savings in the range of \$1.5 to 2.1 million will be generated. These can be used to invest in:
 - Expanded out-of-school time experiences (summer, vacations, after-school).
 - Expanded early childhood programming (Early K).
 - Additional enrichment programming (arts, STEM, pre-vocational).
 - Additional Advanced Placement and early college/dual enrollment courses.
 - Student support in the areas of mental and social-emotional health.
 - Alternative education programs for at-risk students.
 - Specialized special education programs that meet the wide range of disability and need.
 - Limiting the fiscal liability to the towns.
 - Specialized roles such as diversity/equity/inclusion, family outreach and engagement, etc.

4. **Elementary schools will remain as is, within a single K-12 district.** We recognize that maintaining the elementary schools has been emphasized as important to the eight towns, particularly SBRSD. In doing so we:
 - Ensure students attend K-8 in their home schools, as affiliated with town identity and culture.
 - Avoid the political challenges that are often associated with school closures.

³ One of the more promising regionalization efforts has been the Six Town Regionalization Planning Board (Gill-Montague and Pioneer Valley). They recently presented some [initial findings](#) including recommendations that "high schools that have fewer than 300 students face significant educational challenges due to economies of scale, and financial constraints due to Chapter 70 funding." They add,

"secondary schools need to have at least 350 to 400 students to support rigorous educational offerings such as electives, arts, extracurricular activities, sports and clubs. Because low enrollment does not reach adequate economies of scale, it creates significant course scheduling challenges by limiting what classes and co/extracurriculars (athletic teams, clubs, etc.) can be offered and scheduled," the release explains. "Therefore, just improving a school's financial situation ... will not adequately address many of the academic challenges caused by the lack of the economies of scale."

- Ensure full coordination of elementary and middle school programs ensuring alignment of teaching and learning, curriculum, progress monitoring, enrichment opportunities, intervention services, professional development, etc.
 - Maintain existing (quite small) class size ratios that are important to the district in grades K-8.
 - Limit changes to transportation/transit times for students K-8.
 - Ensure community partners can better partner and integrate equitably with all schools and students through a centralized entry and engagement process.
5. **Ability to build a vision and collective culture as an 8 town community.** A key challenge in any regionalization process are the perceived (actual or real) differences in identity, culture, and power structures. This model allows for:
- A collective process (the design and construction of a high school) that can unify the 8 towns through the formation of a shared vision, educational program, and set of skills/competencies/experiences for 700+, 8 town, grade 9-12 students.
 - A process conducted in partnership with community members, businesses, students, workforce/economic development specialists, and educators to identify CVTE programs (10 are offered as starting points based on interest, history, and workforce needs) for the new high school.
 - The development of an expanded 8 town professional culture that ensures recruiting and orientation, professional development and training, networking by role type, content area, and grade span, and common planning/team time.
 - Integration of innovative community approaches to whole-child/family development, such as collaborative care, to ensure a community invested approach to student development.

Our team has *intentionally* avoided overly detailed and specific recommendations related to educational and programmatic investments with just one exception, the addition of CVTE teachers to ensure that 6-8 programs can be supported in the new high school. Otherwise, we believe that the decisions to invest in specific educational enhancements, such as those listed here and those included previously on a summarized opportunities grid, **must be made by the community**. Whether to invest in expanding early childhood, Diversity/Equity/Inclusion, social-emotional learning, or a new curriculum needs to be made by the stakeholders in the community. We emphasize that not everything listed as possible is possible. Decisions and priorities must be set, and these should be set through an educational visioning process that will occur through the regionalization work.

Drawbacks:

There are, of course, drawbacks to this recommendation including:

- Regionalization is hard, and combining two K-12 regions will be ground-breaking work that will require a high degree of coordination across 8 towns.
- To realize savings, class size balancing will result in slightly larger classes, modeled at 20 and 22.
- This will change governance and require that a fair representative model is developed and accepted.
- By combining high schools, some co-curricular activities (namely sports) may limit access. However, we also anticipate the possible expansion of sports (for example lacrosse) and ownership of teams by the district rather than through cooperative agreements.
- A fair assessment plan across the 8 towns will be needed.

- Financing for the new high school and existing school debt will need to be fairly managed and may be perceived as a drawback.
- Current high school staff (9-12) from SBRSD would be located to the new high school, which could present issues related to staff who are in grades 7-12.
- This modeling maintains all seven facilities, limiting potential operational savings.

Advocacy:

We recognize the significance of this project for the region, but also for the Commonwealth. Regionalization has been a challenging issue that has been difficult to realize. A number of reports, [Fiscal Conditions of Rural Districts](#), [2017 State Auditor Report](#), and [Special Commission Report](#), all reinforced by the Rural Commission, outline key elements of policy/regulatory changes needed to support and incentivize the regionalization process. We believe the work of our Team and the RSDPB, if a decision to regionalize is made, can set the stage to make **bold asks** that relate to areas such as:

- Reformulating regional bonus aid (or adding a one-time incentive to encourage this super-regionalization process)
- Increasing minimum state aid and/or ensuring or increasing sparsity aid
- Guarantee regional transportation aid for new super-region, at 100%
- Provide resources for the regional transition process (during which the existing and new school districts overlap)
- Guaranteed ongoing planning grants, including providing resources to support regional planning studies, including additional funds and technical assistance
- Working with the MSBA and DESE pertaining to recapturing grant monies and offsetting existing capital debt to incentivize this ambitious effort
- Addresses existing regulatory (additional) barriers towards regionalization
- Considering alternative taxation methodologies, such as a single tax rate across a RSD⁴

We believe that if the RSDPB chooses a regionalization process moving forward, the Berkshire delegation and groups such as MASS and MASC can play a key role in supporting this advocacy platform forward. The board should accept nothing less than a number of incentives from the state to tackle this incredibly difficult and complex task. This groundbreaking work sets a precedent for future efforts across the Commonwealth and should be recognized as such.

Importance of the building project

Many regionalization processes fail for a variety of reasons, one being that the benefits found are not compelling enough to drive communities to act. However, there have been some successes when districts are more alike than dissimilar, and when they are able to rally around a common vision, namely the construction of a facility. Regionalization efforts with building projects have included: Ayer-Shirley, Berkeley-Somerset, Harwich-Chatham.

When our team launched this process, we did not recognize the level of importance that the impending Monument Mountain renovation process held. We do now and offer some related thoughts:

⁴ There are a number of alternative fiscal options that have been shared, including one from Chip Elitzer that includes a single property school tax rate across a region. Chip was gracious to meet with our team and share his methodology, which we do not reject or endorse but offer as an additional resource. A brief overview can be found at <https://theberkshireedge.com/the-case-for-regional-school-district-tax-reform/>

An impressive amount of work has gone into the Monument renovation/construction project since 2008, please refer to the [facilities report](#) for a full timeline. The effort gained early approval by the MSBA, but failed twice at town voting, almost a decade ago. Since that time, a regional agreement and updated educational plan have positioned the project for potential success at the town vote. However, after three rejections by the MSBA, the project was invited into the Eligibility phase and will likely be able to access capital in/around 2024-25. Among highlighted elements in the most recent application (SOI) were the current regionalization conversations and an increased emphasis on CVTE education. We believe the Monument project (we will refer to it as the new high school) will have a critical impact on this project in that:

- a. It provides an opportunity for a capital campaign that will result in the construction of a state-of-the-art high school that could effectively serve the students and the community as a contemporary educational facility.
- b. The new high school project has the potential to meet the CVTE gap that has been identified in former regionalization studies and has been identified among stakeholders (and our research team) as a critical need. This CVTE hub could also fill community workforce/training needs and serve other south county districts.
- c. If a decision to combine high schools (into a single new high school) is made through the formation of a new region, the project stands to potentially receive a significant incentive (up to 6%). Moreover, increasing the enrollment to include all eight towns (through certification) will lead to a right-sized building footprint that results in an expanded design that reflects optimal academic, vocational, and co-curricular opportunities.
- d. The timing of the new high school project provides a unique opportunity for joint district (eight town) participation in the feasibility and design work, including the educational program plan design. This co-designing of a new high school has the potential to bring together the eight towns, providing broad stakeholder voice and engagement, in building trust, a common vision and a shared culture.
- e. An eight town commitment creates a compelling case to the state/MSBA for approval of an investment that could land significant state funds (between 50-60%) as offset to the local taxpayers in building a flagship education facility that could become a point-of-pride for the eight town/south Berkshire region.
- f. If there is no commitment to a shared high school, there may be some (although we would argue limited) opportunity to integrate Mt. Everett students in the future. However, the building would not be right-sized, programming would be compressed based on the certified enrollment figures at the time of construction, and both choice and tuition could be limited. Recognizing choice seats are available, it may be that the already unbalanced choice patterns of students from SBRSD selecting BHRSD becomes further lopsided, compounding enrollment decline at Mt. Everett. This also limits the opportunity to build a shared, eight town vision and potential combined region (including representation through governance).

Moreover, for those students from Mt. Everett who seek access to CVTE programs, seats may be limited. If available and accepted, tuition liability to the 5 SBRSD towns will be at

the state rate, about \$18,000 per student. If just 20 students choose this option and are accepted, liability to the towns could approach \$360,000 in tuition payments.

Fiscal Analysis, Preferred Model

Expenses and Savings

As part of the fiscal analysis, estimated savings under a potential region of Berkshire Hills Regional School District and Southern Berkshire Regional School District were identified and calculated.

With a combined central office and district, certain positions, like those associated with the School Committee, the Superintendent's Office, and districtwide operations, should not be duplicated. With one less high school in operation and consolidation of high school resources, staffing levels at the high school level can be reduced to gain additional efficiencies. With elimination of duplicative positions and a combined district, certain remaining staff that take on additional responsibilities because of their expanded role in the new district see a negotiated increase in compensation. Strong investment in CVTE programming is also included.

Estimated staffing impact and savings for this scenario are presented as a range, with the low end of the range showing savings based on 20 students per classroom and an average teachers' salary of \$50,000 and the high end of the range showing savings based on 22 students per classroom and an average teachers' salary of \$70,000.

FISCAL AND STAFFING IMPACT				
Model A				
Scenario 2				
	Low end of range		High end of range	
	20 per class \$50K avg salary		22 per class \$70K avg salary	
Other expenses	\$/FTE	%	\$/FTE	%
Central office/admin	(\$452,531)		(\$452,531)	
Districtwide	(\$525,258)		(\$525,258)	
HS/7th-8th	(\$525,935)		(\$1,092,935)	
Total savings	(\$1,503,725)	-3.4%	(\$2,070,725)	-4.7%
Staffing (FTE)	-14.8	-3.7%	-16.8	-4.2%

If BHRSD and SBRSD were to fully regionalize, combine high schools, and keep all other schools in operation as they are today, due to duplicative central office/administrative, districtwide, teaching, and other positions, the districts can anticipate an estimated reduction in staff from current staffing levels ranging from 14.8 FTE (or 3.7%) to 16.8 FTE (or 4.2%), resulting in estimated savings of the districts' combined expenses ranging from \$1,503,725 (or 3.4%) to \$2,070,725 (or 4.7%).

Assessments

Assessment Projections for the recommended option include:

- Estimated savings compiled for the low end of the range, with 20 students per classroom and a \$50,000 average teachers' salary, and the high end of the range, with 22 students per classroom and a \$70,000 average teachers' salary.
- Operating expenses above the combined minimum local contributions assessed using FY2022 foundation enrollment.
- Projected new debt for the high school project, including MSBA reimbursement, with Berkshire Hills towns paying for about 90% of the debt and Southern Berkshire towns paying for about 10% of the debt.
- New debt assessed using 2020 EQV.
- Existing debt currently assessed to Southern Berkshire towns remains as part of their capital assessment. Existing debt currently assessed to Berkshire Hills towns does not remain as part of their capital assessment since it would not be on the books if/when a new region is formed.
- Existing non-debt capital assessed to Southern Berkshire towns is part of operating expenses.
- Crediting the difference of \$1,005,000 in actual school choice expenses to Southern Berkshire towns' projected assessments, and correspondingly making it a liability applied to Berkshire Hills towns' projected assessments. These adjustments are reflected in the operating assessments.

Operating Assessments

		Scenario 2					
		Low End of Range			High End of Range		
		20 per class, \$50k avg. salary			22 per class, \$70k avg. salary		
Operating	Current	New	Difference	%	New	Difference	%
Great Barrington	\$17,064,184	\$16,360,011	\$ (704,173)	-4.1%	\$16,114,250	\$ (949,934)	-5.6%
Stockbridge	\$ 2,856,577	\$ 2,790,819	\$ (65,758)	-2.3%	\$ 2,748,398	\$ (108,179)	-3.8%
West Stockbridge	\$ 3,170,825	\$ 2,972,441	\$ (198,384)	-6.3%	\$ 2,930,020	\$ (240,805)	-7.6%
Alford	\$ 440,951	\$ 422,062	\$ (18,888)	-4.3%	\$ 414,847	\$ (26,104)	-5.9%
Egremont	\$ 1,617,010	\$ 1,604,079	\$ (12,931)	-0.8%	\$ 1,574,873	\$ (42,137)	-2.6%
Monterey	\$ 1,566,366	\$ 1,534,150	\$ (32,217)	-2.1%	\$ 1,506,662	\$ (59,705)	-3.8%
New Marlborough	\$ 2,812,384	\$ 2,577,020	\$ (235,364)	-8.4%	\$ 2,533,726	\$ (278,658)	-9.9%
Sheffield	\$ 7,087,015	\$ 7,209,492	\$ 122,477	1.7%	\$ 7,080,298	\$ (6,717)	-0.1%
Totals	\$36,615,311	\$35,470,073	\$ (1,145,238)	-3.1%	\$34,903,073	\$ (1,712,238)	-4.7%

Projected operating assessments show that, even with the school choice adjustment, each of the Berkshire Hills towns' assessments would decrease, mainly due to the estimated savings determined, and each of the Southern Berkshire towns' assessments would decrease, except for Sheffield's. Sheffield's increase is due in part to the shift from the district's current assessment methodology based on minimum local contribution to one based on FY2022 foundation enrollment.

Capital Assessments

		Scenario 2					
		Low End of Range			High End of Range		
		20 per class, \$50k avg. salary			22 per class, \$70k avg. salary		
Capital	Current	New	Difference	%	New	Difference	%
Great Barrington	\$ 503,160	\$ 1,297,493	\$ 794,333	157.9%	\$ 1,297,493	\$ 794,333	157.9%
Stockbridge	\$ 83,986	\$ 783,392	\$ 699,406	832.8%	\$ 783,392	\$ 699,406	832.8%
West Stockbridge	\$ 90,796	\$ 367,215	\$ 276,419	304.4%	\$ 367,215	\$ 276,419	304.4%
Alford	\$ 23,456	\$ 37,459	\$ 14,003	59.7%	\$ 37,459	\$ 14,003	59.7%
Egremont	\$ 88,556	\$ 86,945	\$ (1,612)	-1.8%	\$ 86,945	\$ (1,612)	-1.8%
Monterey	\$ 85,363	\$ 92,556	\$ 7,193	8.4%	\$ 92,556	\$ 7,193	8.4%
New Marlborough	\$ 153,007	\$ 129,261	\$ (23,747)	-15.5%	\$ 129,261	\$ (23,747)	-15.5%
Sheffield	\$ 373,667	\$ 254,330	\$ (119,337)	-31.9%	\$ 254,330	\$ (119,337)	-31.9%
Totals	\$ 1,401,992	\$ 3,048,650	\$ 1,646,658	117.5%	\$ 3,048,650	\$ 1,646,658	117.5%

Projected capital assessments, which include projected debt for the new high school, show that, each of the Berkshire Hills towns' assessments would increase significantly, due to the burden of funding most of the high school project, and some of the Southern Berkshire towns' assessments would increase and some would decrease, due to the burden of funding some of the high school project and the shift from the district's current assessment methodology based on minimum local contribution to one based on EQV.

Total Assessments

		Scenario 2					
		Low End of Range			High End of Range		
		20 per class, \$50k avg. salary			22 per class, \$70k avg. salary		
Total	Current	New	Difference	%	New	Difference	%
Great Barrington	\$ 17,567,344	\$ 17,657,504	\$ 90,160	0.5%	\$ 17,411,743	\$ (155,601)	-0.9%
Stockbridge	\$ 2,940,563	\$ 3,574,211	\$ 633,648	21.5%	\$ 3,531,790	\$ (8,823)	-0.3%
West Stockbridge	\$ 3,261,621	\$ 3,339,656	\$ 78,035	2.4%	\$ 3,297,235	\$ (35,614)	-1.1%
Alford	\$ 464,407	\$ 459,521	\$ (4,886)	-1.1%	\$ 452,306	\$ (12,101)	-2.6%
Egremont	\$ 1,705,566	\$ 1,691,024	\$ (14,542)	-0.9%	\$ 1,661,818	\$ (43,748)	-2.6%
Monterey	\$ 1,651,729	\$ 1,626,705	\$ (25,024)	-1.5%	\$ 1,599,217	\$ (52,512)	-3.2%
New Marlborough	\$ 2,965,391	\$ 2,706,280	\$ (259,111)	-8.7%	\$ 2,662,987	\$ (302,404)	-10.2%
Sheffield	\$ 7,460,682	\$ 7,463,822	\$ 3,140	0.0%	\$ 7,334,628	\$ (126,054)	-1.7%
Totals	\$ 38,017,303	\$ 38,518,723	\$ 501,420	1.3%	\$ 37,951,723	\$ (56,580)	-0.2%

Projected total assessments are the total of the operating assessments calculated and the capital assessments calculated. Projections show that each of the Berkshire Hills towns' assessments would increase with the low end of the range of estimated savings, with only Stockbridge's increasing significantly. Stockbridge's assessment is shown to increase significantly because of the shift from the current assessment methodology based on residential enrollment to the recently negotiated capital assessment shares based on EQV. Projections show that Great Barrington's assessment would decrease with the high end of the range of estimated savings. Projections show that each of the Southern Berkshire towns' assessments would decrease with the low end of the range of estimated savings except

for Sheffield's, but that each of the Southern Berkshire towns' assessments would decrease with the high of the range of estimated savings.

Considerations

There are many ways that communities can refine and adjust assessment methodologies. We have illustrated one set of assumptions/parameters. For example, projected assessments based solely on FY2022 foundation enrollment for operating costs and on 2020 EQV for capital costs showed that some of the Southern Berkshire towns' assessments would increase under Model A, Scenario 2, as shown in the following table:

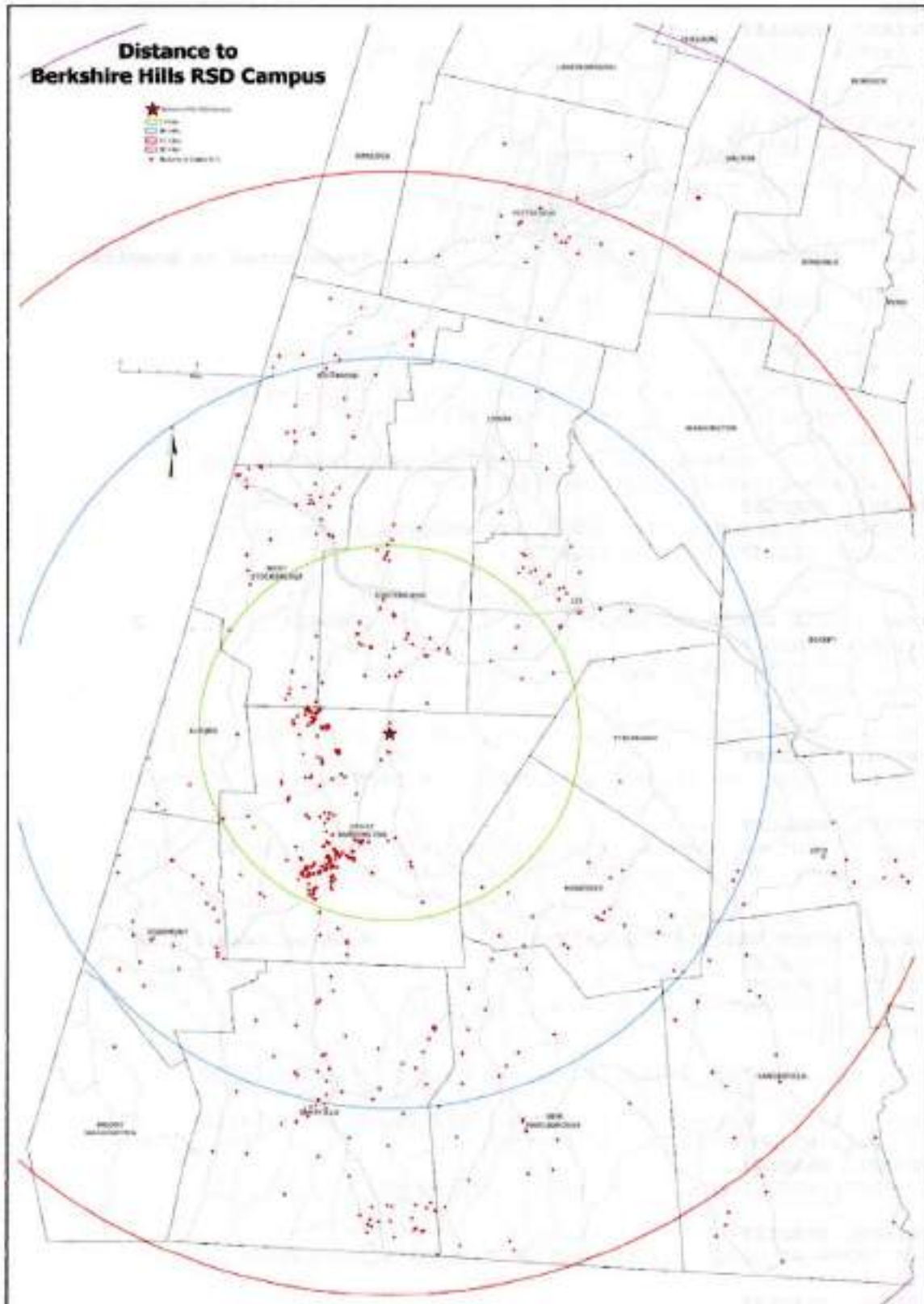
Draft		Scenario 2					
		Low End of Range			High End of Range		
		20 per class, \$50k avg. salary			22 per class, \$70k avg. salary		
Town	Current	New	Difference	%	New	Difference	%
Great Barrington	\$ 17,567,344	\$ 16,910,415	\$ (656,929)	-3.7%	\$ 16,664,654	\$ (902,690)	-5.1%
Stockbridge	\$ 2,940,563	\$ 3,445,256	\$ 504,693	17.2%	\$ 3,402,835	\$ 462,272	15.7%
West Stockbridge	\$ 3,261,621	\$ 3,210,701	\$ (50,921)	-1.6%	\$ 3,168,280	\$ (93,342)	-2.9%
Alford	\$ 464,407	\$ 490,197	\$ 25,790	5.6%	\$ 482,982	\$ 18,575	4.0%
Egremont	\$ 1,705,566	\$ 1,815,188	\$ 109,622	6.4%	\$ 1,785,982	\$ 80,416	4.7%
Monterey	\$ 1,651,729	\$ 1,743,566	\$ 91,837	5.6%	\$ 1,716,078	\$ 64,349	3.9%
New Marlborough	\$ 2,965,391	\$ 2,890,335	\$ (75,056)	-2.5%	\$ 2,847,042	\$ (118,349)	-4.0%
Sheffield	\$ 7,460,682	\$ 8,013,066	\$ 552,384	7.4%	\$ 7,883,872	\$ 423,190	5.7%
Totals	\$ 38,017,303	\$ 38,518,723	\$ 501,420	1.3%	\$ 37,951,723	\$ (66,580)	-0.2%

However, when we apply the school choice tuition adjustment mentioned in the assumptions, the projected assessments change as follows:

Draft		Scenario 2					
		Low End of Range			High End of Range		
		20 per class, \$50k avg. salary			22 per class, \$70k avg. salary		
Town	Current	New	Difference	%	New	Difference	%
Great Barrington	\$ 17,567,344	\$ 17,657,504	\$ 90,160	0.5%	\$ 17,411,743	\$ (155,601)	-0.9%
Stockbridge	\$ 2,940,563	\$ 3,574,211	\$ 633,648	21.5%	\$ 3,531,790	\$ 591,227	20.1%
West Stockbridge	\$ 3,261,621	\$ 3,339,656	\$ 78,035	2.4%	\$ 3,297,235	\$ 35,614	1.1%
Alford	\$ 464,407	\$ 459,521	\$ (4,886)	-1.1%	\$ 452,306	\$ (12,101)	-2.6%
Egremont	\$ 1,705,566	\$ 1,691,024	\$ (14,542)	-0.9%	\$ 1,661,818	\$ (43,748)	-2.6%
Monterey	\$ 1,651,729	\$ 1,626,705	\$ (25,024)	-1.5%	\$ 1,599,217	\$ (52,512)	-3.2%
New Marlborough	\$ 2,965,391	\$ 2,706,280	\$ (259,111)	-8.7%	\$ 2,662,987	\$ (302,404)	-10.2%
Sheffield	\$ 7,460,682	\$ 7,463,822	\$ 3,140	0.0%	\$ 7,334,628	\$ (126,054)	-1.7%
Totals	\$ 38,017,303	\$ 38,518,723	\$ 501,420	1.3%	\$ 37,951,723	\$ (66,580)	-0.2%

The purpose of illustrating the differences between the methodologies used to compile these adjusted assessments is to show that member towns can work together to determine an assessment methodology that ensures Southern Berkshire towns' assessments are held harmless or are reduced, in a fair approach that leads to potential success in an regionalization, regional agreement process.

Map B. Distance from BHRSD Campus, 5 Mile Increments



The map above is reproduced from a different section of the report that recommends a merger of the Berkshire Hills and Southern Berkshire regional school districts. The report and several supplements are at 8towns.org, website of the 8-Town Regional School District Planning Board.