



Town of Great Barrington

Town Manager's Office



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Liz Hartsgrove
Town Manager

—
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Report to the Select Board

To: *Great Barrington Select Board*
From: *Liz Hartsgrove, Town Manager*
Date: *December 15, 2025*

Below is the Town Manager's report for December 15, 2025.

1. INFRASTRUCTURE AND ASSETS

- a) The Planning Board will be hosting a public meeting as part of the Open Space and Recreation Plan update on Saturday, January 10 at 10:30 AM at Mason Library. This meeting is an opportunity for residents to share feedback on local parks, trails, recreational facilities, and open space priorities, and to help guide future planning, improvements, and funding decisions. Community participation is encouraged to ensure the plan reflects the needs and values of Great Barrington. More information will be distributed through a Press Release and website posting.
- b) The informational public event held at Ramsdell on December 10 was well attended and generated strong community interest. Residents met with Perry Dean Rogers Architects to review concept design boards and share feedback, with particular interest focused on the future of the upstairs Great Room and clarification of the project timeline. As part of the ongoing engagement process, design boards inviting public input on how the new spaces should function—focusing on character, feeling, furnishings, and activities—will be displayed in Town buildings in the coming months. These boards will gather feedback on envisioned spaces including reading rooms, galleries, community areas, meeting and program rooms, children's and teen spaces, and the Great Hall. A companion survey aligned with these displays will also be launched to inform the next phase of design and planning. Stay tuned for more information.

2. PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY

- a) On New Year's Eve, the Town's Transit Department, the South County Connector, will offer free rides from 5:00 PM to 1:00 AM within its seven South County service communities. This initiative is made possible through the generous support of the Southern Berkshire Rural Health Network, with multiple on-demand drivers available throughout the evening. Residents are encouraged to take advantage of this service to celebrate safely and avoid drinking and driving. Additional information is available at www.socoride.org

- b) During a recent Parks & Recreation Commission meeting, Commissioners highlighted the unplowed section of Seekonk Cross Road as a valued passive recreation area that has been informally enjoyed by residents in recent years. The closed segment, located between Round Hill Road and Seekonk Road, provides opportunities for walking, hiking, wildlife observation, and cross-country skiing during the winter season, with limited parking available at each end. The Town continues to encourage safe and respectful use of this corridor while reminding the public that the road remains closed and unmaintained for vehicular travel throughout the winter months.
- c) Since the Select Board voted to increase the Housatonic Water Works Reimbursement Program to \$1,500 at the December 1st meeting, I am happy to report that with staff's ongoing effort to promote the increase, approximately 25 residents have applied for reimbursement since. Following the program's outreach plan, the Town will be mailing informational postcards in the coming weeks and deploying lawn signage and indoor informational posters in each Town Building to continue expanding awareness and encourage additional participation.

3. HOUSING

- a) The Town received recent correspondence raising questions regarding the status, timeline, and oversight of the Prosperity Way affordable housing project. In response, the Affordable Housing Trust has been invited to provide an update to the Select Board at its January 12 meeting. The update is intended to focus on the current status of the project, contractual and legal considerations, the role of Town Counsel, and the Trust's approach to oversight and accountability, with the goal of ensuring transparency and a shared understanding of this initiative moving forward. The Select Board will be kept informed regarding the Trust's availability and whether the January 12 update is confirmed or requires postponement to a future meeting.

4. SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT

- a) In alignment with the Select Board's priorities of proactive planning, intergovernmental coordination, and transparent communication, I have been actively engaging with MassDOT Rail to seek greater clarity on the long-standing storage activity on MassDOT rail property along Van Deusenville Road. MassDOT has confirmed that the materials in Great Barrington are associated with the broader Housatonic Railroad rehabilitation project between Sheffield and Pittsfield, with additional work between Pittsfield and Lee anticipated to resume in spring 2026. To support responsible planning and minimize impacts to the surrounding neighborhood, I have requested a projected or "soft" timeline, consistent with other MassDOT capital projects, so the Town can anticipate activities, coordinate resources, and keep residents informed. I will continue to advocate for timely updates and keep the Select Board apprised as additional information becomes available.
- b) Following concerns raised during Citizen Speak at a prior Select Board meeting regarding a potential cell tower lease on Van Deusenville Road, staff reviewed and after confirming zoning and permitting requirements, it was determined that the

parcel in question does not allow for a cell tower use under current zoning, even with a special permit; therefore a tower cannot be erected at that location. I appreciate the resident bringing this issue forward, allowing staff to promptly verify the facts, provide clarity, and ensure zoning regulations are being appropriately upheld. We will continue to respond to resident concerns and ensure land use decisions align with adopted bylaws and community standards.

5. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

No updates this week.

6. MUNICIPAL SERVICE DELIVERY

- a) Mason Library will host the 29th Annual Berkshire Library Legislative Breakfast on Friday, January 30, 2026, at 8:00 AM in the Main Reading Room. This annual public event brings together library supporters, staff, trustees, and legislators to celebrate the vital role libraries play in our communities, highlight statewide library initiatives and funding priorities, and engage directly with legislators on issues affecting library services. Attendees will have the opportunity to thank legislators for their continued support, share perspectives, and connect with colleagues from libraries and regional organizations across Berkshire County. RSVPs are requested by January 15, 2026; additional information and registration details are available by contacting Deena Caswell at dcaswell@cwmars.org or 413-229-7005.

Thank you.
