



# Town of Great Barrington

## Town Manager's Office



[www.townofgbma.gov](http://www.townofgbma.gov)



(413) 528-1619



334 Main Street,  
Great Barrington, MA 01230



[lhartsgrove@townofgbma.gov](mailto:lhartsgrove@townofgbma.gov)

*Liz Hartsgrove*  
Town Manager

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*Chris Rembold*  
Assistant Town Manager

## Report to the Selectboard

To: *Great Barrington Selectboard*  
From: *Liz Hartsgrove, Town Manager*  
Date: *January 12, 2026*

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Below is the Town Manager's report for January 12, 2026.

### **1. INFRASTRUCTURE AND ASSETS**

- a) Residents are reminded that snow plow season is underway, and the Highway Division will continue to clear roads in accordance with the Town's established procedures to maintain safe travel for all. To help manage expectations and support efficient, coordinated operations, residents are encouraged to review the **Resident's Guide to Snow Operations** on the Town's Highway Division page, which outlines plowing priorities, driveway and mailbox guidance, parking restrictions during snow events, and how residents can assist in keeping roads clear and safe. Understanding these procedures enhances safety and helps the Town deliver reliable snow response services throughout the winter.

### **2. PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY**

- a) **Annual Dog License Renewals.** A friendly reminder that annual dog licenses are now due. All dogs six months of age or older are required to be licensed each year through the Town Clerk's Office. License fees are \$10 for spayed or neutered dogs and \$15 for unaltered dogs, and proof of a current rabies vaccination is required at the time of licensing. Licenses should be renewed by March 31 to avoid late fees. Residents may renew online through the Town's website, in person at Town Hall, by mail, or by using the drop box. Thank you for helping keep Town records up to date and supporting public health and safety.
- b) The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection's Drinking Water Program has confirmed that the Town Manager will be included on future correspondence issued to Public Water Systems in Great Barrington including Housatonic Water Works, alongside the Board of Health. This enhanced coordination supports the Select Board's Strategic Priorities Plan by strengthening municipal service delivery, regulatory oversight, and interdepartmental communication. Receiving timely notifications related to public health orders, enforcement actions, sanitary survey reports, system status changes, and permit decisions will improve

situational awareness and support proactive, coordinated responses that protect public health and safety.

- c) **HWW Reimbursement Program Update:** Since December 1, 2025, when reimbursement limits were increased and enhanced outreach efforts were launched, participation in the HWW reimbursement program has accelerated significantly. In just over six weeks, the Town has distributed \$41,870.15, nearly matching the total amount reimbursed during all of FY2025. During this period, the Town has received more than 40 online applications alone, reflecting both increased program awareness and continued community need. A shout-out needs to be made to Natalie Amendola and Lisa Richards in my office for guiding all of the residents with their reimbursement applications; as well as to Kathy Couch in the Town Clerk’s office for assisting with the outreach efforts of postcard mailings as well as distributing to the various Town Buildings. In addition, the Superintendent has confirmed distribution of program graphics will be included through parent e-newsletters within the regional school district.

Residents can learn more about eligibility requirements and how to apply by visiting the HWW Reimbursement Program page on the Town’s website.

[www.townofgbma.gov/371/Housatonic-Water-Works-Information-Resou](http://www.townofgbma.gov/371/Housatonic-Water-Works-Information-Resou)

	<b>FY2024</b>	<b>FY2025</b>	<b>FY2026</b>	
Total Cost Eligible	\$300	\$600	\$600	
# of households	89	106	31	
<b>Total \$ Reimbursed</b>	<b>\$26,039.89</b>	<b>\$42,552.48</b>	<b>\$54,685.28</b>	As of 1/12
			-\$12,814.13	As of 12/1
<i>Total distribute in last 6 weeks</i>			<b>\$41,870.15</b>	

### 3. HOUSING

- a) The Affordable Housing Trust will be attending the Select Board meeting on February 9 to provide an update on the **Prosperity Way Project**. This update will support the Select Board’s Strategic Priorities related to housing, transparency, and effective municipal service delivery by providing clarity on the project’s current status, oversight structure, contractual relationships, and next steps. The discussion is intended to ensure shared understanding, accountability, and continued coordination on this important affordable housing initiative.
- b) Great Barrington has been identified by the Commonwealth as meeting the eligibility criteria for designation as a **Seasonal Community** under the Affordable Homes Act, based on established housing and seasonal-use metrics. This potential designation aligns with the Select Board’s Strategic Priorities related to housing stability, workforce retention, and long-term community sustainability. Additional meetings will be scheduled to explore the designation in greater detail, including an introductory discussion planned for the January 26 Select Board meeting. In parallel,

I have been coordinating with local and state officials to encourage greater engagement by Great Barrington and other Southern Berkshire communities with the Seasonal Communities Advisory Council, recognizing shared regional challenges and opportunities outlined in the Council's 2025 Annual Report, which is available on the Town's newly created webpage.

[www.townofgbma.gov/608/Seasonal-Communities](http://www.townofgbma.gov/608/Seasonal-Communities)

#### **4. SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT**

- a) The Planning Board held an **Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP)** public forum on Saturday, January 10, with approximately 25 residents in attendance. Building on this engagement, the Planning Board is proceeding with drafting the OSRP goals and strategies. Community members are encouraged to stay involved as the process continues, with OSRP-focused discussions scheduled at the Planning Board's regular meetings on the fourth Thursday of each month: January 22, February 26, March 26, April 23, and May 28.

#### **5. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

No Update this week.

#### **6. MUNICIPAL SERVICE DELIVERY**

- a) **FY27 Budget Planning Update:** We continue to make strong progress according to the FY27 Budget Action Calendar. Department Heads met with the Town Manager in early December for preliminary budget reviews and have since submitted proposed position changes (January 7) and operating budgets (January 9) for my review, with capital requests and fee change proposals (January 15) now underway. I want to thank all Department Heads and staff for their thoughtful engagement with the updated budget process and for their openness in early discussions as we work to align departmental needs with the Town's strategic priorities. Residents seeking more information about the budget process and key milestones are encouraged to visit the FY27 Budget page on the Town's website at

[www.townofgbma.gov/592/FY2027-Budget](http://www.townofgbma.gov/592/FY2027-Budget)

- b) The Town was recently contacted by Randall Resch, who is advancing a nomination to honor George Bignal, a former Great Barrington resident who lost his life on Christmas Eve in 1929, for inclusion on the **Wall of the Fallen**, an honor recognizing tow operators who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to their profession. This nomination effort, originally initiated in 2021 and paused during the pandemic, has been reactivated and is now a priority for Fall 2026. As part of this effort, Mr. Resch is seeking to connect with any surviving descendants of Mr. Bignal's family to share information about the nomination and its significance. Community members with knowledge of or connections to the Bignal family are encouraged to reach out to me, and I will connect them with Mr. Resch directly.

- c) In December, Director of Public Transportation Tate Coleman was awarded a competitive scholarship from the Massachusetts Rural Transit Assistance Program, which fully covered all costs associated with his participation in the National Rural Transit Assistance Program / Transportation Research Board Conference in Austin, resulting in no expense to Great Barrington taxpayers. This recognition reflects Great Barrington's growing leadership and innovation in the rural transit field. While at the conference, Mr. Coleman presented and led a workshop on his research quantifying the quality-of-life benefits of rural transit, including a case study conducted in Great Barrington during 2023–2024. He also participated in sessions on emerging technologies, current research, and best practices, and engaged in peer exchange with transit professionals from across the country, further strengthening the Town's role as a leader in this industry.
- d) Over the past several weeks, the Town has received multiple public records requests regarding the distinction between unofficial meeting materials posted online for public convenience and the official public records associated with various public meetings. While posted agendas are regulated by the Open Meeting Law, packets made available on the Town website are not official public records and are provided to support accessibility and informed public participation. Decisions regarding the content of these unofficial packets rest with the Chair of the respective board or committee.

Consistent with the Select Board's Municipal Service Delivery strategic priority, particularly its focus on transparency, consistency, and customer-focused service delivery I request a future public meeting discussion with the Select Board regarding whether it wishes to establish shared expectations or policy guidance on how unofficial meeting materials are presented online to ensure a clear, consistent, and reliable experience for the public. Such guidance would support staff, boards, and committees, while providing the public with a clear, consistent, and reliable experience when accessing meeting information.

*Thank you.*

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