

The Berkshire Eagle

Selectmen decide to take 'Green' path

By Derek Gentile, Berkshire Eagle Staff

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GREAT BARRINGTON -- Mindful of the potential grant money and residential assistance programs available, four-fifths of the Selectmen on Monday night approved a suggestion put forth by Town Manager Kevin O'Donnell to "move forward" on a townwide designation as a "Green Community."

Selectman Walter F. Atwood III was the lone dissenter. Part of the plan was the passage of more stringent building codes at the next annual town meeting. Atwood was primarily aggravated with the probable increase in start-up costs for residents building new homes in town should the bylaw pass. He did not dispute that these energy-saving regulations would save money down the road. But that was not sufficient incentive, in his mind.

"It's outrageous," he said. "You're going to beat the taxpayers to death."

It was bad enough, said Atwood, that the present building codes resemble "Big Brother, ... looking over our shoulders, telling us how to build our houses."

Told that more energy-efficient homes would save money on energy costs, Atwood said, "Energy costs? To [heck] with energy costs. People can't afford to buy a house here."

According to a presentation by Lauren Gaherty, a planner with the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission and Nancy Nylen, associate director for the Center for Ecological Technology, becoming a "Green Community" would put the town in line for state funds and qualify it for both municipal and residential assistance

programs.

The principal hurdle, said Nylen, would be adopting the tougher building code that would require builders to implement more energy-saving elements in their work.

Presently, she said, Pittsfield, Lenox and Becket have earned this "Green Community" designation, with other towns following.

Selectwoman Alana Chernila told Nylen and Gaherty that her researches have indicated that the more stringent building code bylaw has been a tough sell in other communities.

She asked the two what strategy they would recommend for towns trying to pass the measure. Gaherty said public meetings before next year's May annual town meeting might help, adding that the two organizations would be willing to attend and question-and-answer session.

In other business, the Selectmen honored longtime Wire Inspector John Zanin. Having been in the post for 36 years, Zanin is one of the longest-tenured office-holders in town and county history, according to Eagle files. He is retiring at the end of this month.

O'Donnell said the town was presently looking for

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another inspector.

Selectman Chairman Sean Stanton shook Zanin's hand and thanked him for his service.

"I've enjoyed every minute of it," said Zanin. "And I appreciate being recognized, maybe more than you think. I've been in other jobs where I wasn't ever sure they knew I was there. So thank you for this."

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