



# The Becket Athenaeum

Becket & Washington's Community Library

Long Term Plan - 2020 to 2025

Submitted by:

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## Acknowledgements

The Board of Trustees of the Becket Athenaeum (Trustees) extends sincere appreciation to members of the community of Becket and Washington who responded to the Long Term Plan survey. The Becket Athenaeum (Athenaeum) is the library that serves both communities. Community member input was crucial in shaping the future of the Athenaeum and services outlined in this plan. The Trustees would also like to thank the staff of the Athenaeum, and all of those who provided support to the Long Term Planning Committee.

## Approval

The Trustees approved and adopted this Long Term Plan at their meeting on September 18, 2019.

## Athenaeum Planning Committee

### STAFF

Jodi Shafiroff, Director

### TRUSTEES

Purr McEwen, Chair

Aaron Beatty, Vice Chair

Bob Gross, Treasurer

Katherine Hoak

Denise Johns

Allison Mikaniewicz

Jan Nelson

Cathy DeFoe

### TRUSTEES GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Bob Gross

Katherine Hoak

Denise Johns

## Planning Methodology

In 2014 the Athenaeum received a grant for training of the Trustees from the Berkshire Taconic Foundation. The grant allowed the Trustees to work with Gregg Davis, of *Impact Consults* to improve the Trustees understanding of their work. The training process led to a commitment by the Trustees to develop a new long term plan for the Athenaeum.

The prior long term plan for the Athenaeum was developed in 2007. The key items of focus in this earlier plan included building maintenance and energy efficiency, historical record preservation, community engagement and service, and fiscal management. The

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trustees and staff made excellent progress addressing these issues. This plan provided a good foundation for the next level of growth for the Becket Athenaeum.

The initial step was to develop a new Mission statement to reflect the current work of the Athenaeum. This Mission statement, which the Trustees developed in 2015, reflects the current understanding of the Athenaeum as an important community center for the towns of Becket and Washington.

The next step was to seek community input. In 2015 and into 2016 the Trustees worked to create and distribute a questionnaire designed to gather information from our patrons and community. With the volunteer help of a market research analyst, the questionnaire was designed to identify the community's impression of the Athenaeum and its services, to demonstrate the usage patterns of patrons, and to elicit ideas from the community about community needs and interests for new programs. The responses to this survey have helped the Trustees focus on the next steps in the strategic planning process.

In 2017 the Trustees and the executive director met for a more focused planning session. The meeting resulted in a list of issues, which were prioritized, to be addressed either in the immediate future, the next five years, or the next ten years. Working with this list and periodic input from the all of the Trustees, the Governance Committee (a regular subcommittee of the Board of Trustees) developed this strategic planning document.

## Community Description

### THE TOWN OF BECKET

The **Town of Becket** is an upland town that was first settled in 1740 and officially incorporated in 1765, having begun as Plantation Number 4. The town was originally laid out in 1735 along with three other towns along the wilderness trail that connected the lower Housatonic Valley with the Connecticut Valley and Boston. The intention was to develop the wilderness that bordered the trail and therefore to make the trail safer to travel. Sixty-three home lots were laid out in the first settlement effort, "in a compact and defensible form" as the documents of the time said. Population growth, though slow, has been steady in the rural community. In 1776, there were 414 residents; in 1900 there were 994 residents; in 2000 there were 1755 residents.

From its earliest days, Becket was involved in the woodland industries of lumber and quarries. As time went on, dairy production, basketry and silk also were products of the town. After a flood in the early twentieth century, most of the industries died out.

In more modern times, Becket has been beloved by fishermen and was known in the 1940's for having one of the five best trout streams in the Berkshires. The West Branch of the Westfield River, which forms part of the northern boundary of Becket, was known for the brooks, browns and rainbow trout stocked there.

Today Becket is mostly known as a resort town. More than half of the homes are second homes. The town's population increases dramatically in the summer months. In addition to the well-known Jacob's Pillow dance venue, there is an active artists' community. The town hosts several overnight camps and one-day camp.

The town of Becket has a total area of 47.8 square miles. Becket is located on the eastern border of Berkshire County, in the southern Berkshire Mountains, and is dotted with hills on the interior, and surrounded on two sides by Becket Mountain and Walling Mountain to the west, and Mount Gobble to the east. The Appalachian Trail passes through the western part of town, bypassing the town of Lee while heading from Tyringham to Washington over Becket Mountain.

### THE TOWN OF WASHINGTON

The **Town of Washington** was first settled in 1760 and was officially incorporated in 1777. The town was known by several different names, including Greenoch, Watsontown and Hartville, before being renamed in 1784 for President George Washington. The town has always been rural, with few small industries, known more for being along the stage road to Pittsfield originally, and along the rail line later. Folk singer Arlo Guthrie and his family live in Washington.

The Town of Washington lies within the Berkshire Hills, and its geography is dominated by October Mountain in the western part of town. The town has a total area of 38.8 square

miles. There are several small reservoirs and lakes throughout the town. Along the mountain, the Appalachian Trail crosses through town.

The towns of Becket and Washington are dispersed over a very large geographic area and comprise approximately 9 percent of the total area of Berkshire County.

## Demographics

### THE TOWN OF BECKET

According to the United States Census Bureau's American Fact Finder - 2017 American Community Survey, the population estimate for Becket is 1,852 people, with 796 households and 548 families residing in the town. In terms of population, Becket ranks fourteenth out of the 32 cities and towns in Berkshire County, and 292nd out of the 351 cities and towns in Massachusetts. The population density is 40 people per square mile. There are 1,721 housing units at an average density of 37 per square mile.

The racial makeup of the town is 94.4% White, 1.5% African American, 0% Native American, 0% Asian, 1.8% from other races, and 2.3% from two or more races. Hispanic or Latino of any race are 4.2% of the population. Of the 796 households, 20.9% have children under the age of 18 living with them, 54.4% are married couples living together and 31.2% are non-families. 26.4% of all households are made up of individuals living alone and .9% have someone living alone who is 65 years of age or older. The average household size is 2.31 and the average family size is 3.

In the town, the population is spread out with 17.2% under the age of 18, 3.9% from 18 to 24, 21.4% from 25 to 44, 38.1% from 45 to 64, and 19.4% who are 65 years of age or older. The median age is 50.9 years. For every 100 females, there are 97.9 males.

The median income for a household in the town is \$75,000. 6.9% of the population are below the poverty line, including 19.7% of those under age 18 and 4.2% of those age 65 or over.

### THE TOWN OF WASHINGTON

According to the United States Census Bureau's American Fact Finder - 2017 American Community Survey, the population estimate for Washington is 499 people, with 232 households and 160 families residing in the town. In terms of population, Washington ranks 28th out of the 32 cities and towns in Berkshire County, and 340<sup>th</sup> out of the 351 cities and towns in Massachusetts. The population density is 13 people per square mile. There are 280 housing units at an average density of 7.2 per square mile.

The racial makeup of the town is 96.8% White, 0% African American, 0% Native American, .8% Asian, 0% from other races, and 2.4% from two or more races. Hispanic or Latino of any race are 1% of the population. Of the 232 households, 19% have children under the age of 18 living with them, 55.6% are married couples living together, and 31% are non-families. 24.1% of all households are made up of individuals living alone and 9.5% have

someone living alone who is 65 years of age or older. The average household size is 2.37 and the average family size was 2.6.

In the town, the population is spread out with 15.8% under the age of 18, 3.2% from 18 to 24, 12.8% from 25 to 44, 42.8% from 45 to 64, and 25.4% who are 65 years of age or older. The median age is 55.1 years. For every 100 females, there are 110.5 males.

The median income for a household in the town is \$86,389. 2.8% of the population are below the poverty line, including 0% of those under age 18 and 3.2% of those age 65 or over.

It should be noted that the both the towns of Becket and Washington have a significant second home- owner population that causes the population in the summer months to increase dramatically. This is especially true for Becket. In general, second home- owners have a higher per capita and per household income. The towns benefit, as second home- owners pay taxes but do not extensively using the school system and town services.

## Education

Becket and Washington are two of the seven towns in the Central Berkshire Regional School District, the largest district (by land area) in the Commonwealth. Students in attend the Becket-Washington Elementary School in town for elementary school. Students in the district travel to Dalton to attend Nessacus Regional Middle School for sixth through eighth grades and Wahconah Regional High School for the high grades. There are no private schools in Becket or Washington, the nearest being in Lee and the Pittsfield area.

The nearest community college is Berkshire Community College in Pittsfield. The nearest state college is Westfield State University in Westfield, and the nearest state university is the University of Massachusetts Amherst. The nearest private college is Bard College at Simon's Rock in Great Barrington, with other private colleges in Springfield.

## Athenaeum Information

### HISTORY

In 1888 a small group of Becket residents created the nonprofit corporation of Becket Athenaeum, Inc. to “maintain a library, reading room and to promote education, temperance, morality and good citizenship and the general welfare.” Over the ensuing 130 years the library prospered and grew. It had several locations over the years and finally, in 1964, settled into its current location in what was originally the First Congregational Church of North Becket which is part of what is now the North Becket National Historic District. The current Board of Trustees has worked to maintain this historic building and to provide significant capital improvements to create a more comfortable, energy efficient space for Becket and Washington community members of all ages. Funding from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Community Preservation Act (CPA), the towns of Becket and Washington and grants, particularly from the donor directed New York Community Trust, has supported a multi-year, capital improvement plan to modernize, restore, and repair the interior and exterior of the building while maintaining its historical integrity.

### GOVERNANCE

The Athenaeum is organized as a 501(C3), non-profit organization with a Board of Trustees responsible for oversight of funds and policies of the Athenaeum, hiring and evaluating the Athenaeum Director, and overseeing the general management of the library. According to the By-Laws of the Athenaeum, the number of trustees can be no less than two (2) and no more than fifteen (15). Currently, the Board of Trustees has nine (9) members. Subsequent to such first term of one year or less, each trustee may be re-elected to a term of three (3) years or less. All trustees may be re-elected until they shall have served a cumulative term of twelve years.

### MISSION STATEMENT

The Becket Athenaeum’s Mission is:

- 1) To inspire lifelong learning.
- 2) To foster relaxation and enjoyment through our collection and programs.
- 3) To cultivate a spirit of community.

### SUPPORT & COLLABORATIONS

#### Operations Support

The Becket Athenaeum is fortunate to receive support from several sources.

- 1) The Towns of Becket and Washington provide financial support for approximately 50% of our operations budget. On an as needed basis, both towns have written warrants to support capital renovations.



- 2) The Becket Athenaeum has both endowment and investment accounts with Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation from which we receive annual distributions towards operational budget.
- 3) The Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) provides annual operational funds based upon the Becket Athenaeum meeting MBLC requirements for certification.
- 4) The Becket Athenaeum does 2 semi-annual fundraising appeals, as well as a book sale and silent auction, proceeds which go towards the annual operational budget.

### Programming Support

- 1) The Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation and several private foundations provide financial support for library programs and services.
- 2) The Cultural Councils in the towns of Becket and Washington provide financial support.

### Collaboration

- 1) The Athenaeum is fortunate to have many residents who volunteer their time in support of various activities.
- 2) The Becket Athenaeum collaborates with Berkshire Outdoor Center with our children's programming and summer camp sponsorship.
- 3) Becket Athenaeum is one of the founding members of the Becket Washington Community Partnership (BWCP). The mission of the BWCP is to promote the local economies of Becket and Washington and foster a joint community spirit through the strong collaboration of local organizations and community members. The BWCP consists of the following organizations:
  - The Becket Athenaeum
  - The Becket Washington PTO
  - The Becket Police Association
  - The Becket Fireman's Association
  - The Mullen House
  - The Becket Congregational Church
  - The Becket Arts Center
  - The Becket Cultural Council
  - The Washington Cultural Council
  - The Becket YMCA Camp

## Description of Existing Services

The Athenaeum is more than a library. It is a living, breathing, center of community involvement and engagement, predicated on the notion that when a community's needs are revealed, particularly in small, rural areas, it is the responsibility of institutions like libraries to harness the community's existing strengths and create a space and a haven to meet the revealed needs. All of the library programs and services are offered free of charge and have been carefully researched, developed and implemented based on the real, documented needs of the community.

### GENERAL SERVICES AND PATRON USAGE

- 9500+ Book collection, interlibrary loan access, 20 magazine and newspaper subscriptions.
- Athenaeum's total circulation of all materials (books, DVDs, audio, magazines, e-materials, etc.) was 6,764 in FY19.
- Wide range of DVDs, music CDs, and books on CD.
- Free or reduced-price passes to area museums, historic venues and cultural attractions.
- Acoustic guitar and electric keyboard available to check out.
- Periodic Newsletter distributed electronically.
- Serves as a Point of Interconnection (POI) on the MassBroadband 123 network, giving the Athenaeum and its patrons the very best internet service currently available.
- Features iPads, e-Readers, iMacs and more available for patron use.
- Houses eight (8) state-of-the-art computers and specialty software programs
- Offers staff-assisted access to a fax machine and printer/copier. A small fee of 15¢ per side is charged for printing. There is no fee to send faxes though donations are gladly accepted.
- Participates in MassCat, a small library network, making our entire catalogue available online for patrons to search and place holds.
- Hosts a Small Business Lab with professional web design and graphic design software and diverse multimedia resources, for local entrepreneurs.
- Engaged in a long-term archive organization and digitization process to preserve important historic documents and artifacts related to the history of Becket.
- Free WIFI and computers available.
- Increased usable space in the library for patrons and staff through grant-funded addition of loft and other capital improvements.

### ADULT PROGRAMS

- Hosts a Monthly Book Club that meets at 1:30pm on the first Tuesday of every month to discuss a selected book over tea/coffee.
- Coordinates a lecture series.

## CHILDREN PROGRAMS

### ACE ACADEMIC COLLABORATION and ENRICHMENT

- Provides homework assistance and enrichment resources for up to 15 students, grades 2-8, each school year.
- Pairs students with dedicated volunteers for homework help, mentoring and one-on-one guidance.
- Offers enrichment activities on a number of topics to inspire learning and academic exploration.
- Gives students a nutritious snack and lots of encouragement in a safe, supervised environment.

### FRIDAY ENRICHMENT PROGRAM

- expansion of the ACE program.
- Uses technology and creativity to help up to 10 students annually in grades 4-8 identify and pursue their dreams.
- Adapts to meet the needs of the students year to year.
- Offers wide-ranging support from trained professionals, including internships and career guidance.

### KID'S CLUB

- In partnership with the Dalton CRA, developed an after-school program that is an alternative to the ACE & FE Programs, is recreational in focus and serves up to 15 students.

### INTERNSHIPS

- The Athenaeum offers paid internships each school year to high school age students for a total of 12 hours weekly through the 36-week school calendar. These internships teach the basics of library operation while also allowing the high school students to work in the after-school tutoring program as teen mentors. Our internship program also caters to individual interests or career goals of the individual intern.

### STORY CRAFT

- Provides a weekly story time for preschool and young elementary school students, exposing children and families to local resources (Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, yoga, quilting, anthropology, music and much more).

### COMMUNITY

- Coordinates an active volunteer program with over 100 volunteers donating more than 7,000 hours over the past two years, along with material donations to support fundraising.
- Developed a long standing partnership with the Becket Chimney Corners YMCA; they provide a discounted rate for summer day camp and the Athenaeum secured grant funding for the balance of the cost in order to send 25 students enrolled in the Homework Helpers and High Hopes programs to day camp for free for two weeks.
- Founding member of the Becket Washington Community Partnership (BWCP), which was established to coordinate joint community efforts between the two towns. The mission of the BWCP is to promote the local economies of Becket and Washington and

foster a strong community spirit through collaboration.

## SWOT Results

<p><b>STRENGTHS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong Board</li> <li>• Financial support of towns</li> <li>• Excellent Staff</li> <li>• Good collection</li> <li>• Good physical plant</li> <li>• Dedicated volunteers</li> <li>• Good Town reputation</li> <li>• Connected to other organizations</li> <li>• Good financial structure in place</li> <li>• Grant writing</li> </ul>	<p><b>WEAKNESSES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dependence on primary donor for after school programs</li> <li>• Water/septic system</li> <li>• Physical constraint of building</li> <li>• Board education, recruitment</li> <li>• limited benefits for employees</li> </ul>
<p><b>OPPORTUNITIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased fundraising revenue</li> <li>• Become more of a community presence</li> <li>• Programming to serve more people</li> <li>• Improve communication processes</li> <li>• Improve fundraising skills</li> <li>• Leadership role in spreading and sharing technology</li> <li>• Take leadership role in working with neighborhood libraries</li> <li>• Standardization of practices and procedures.</li> </ul>	<p><b>THREATS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of primary funding for after school program</li> <li>• Massive septic/well repair</li> <li>• Closing of elementary school</li> <li>• Loss of or damage to building</li> </ul>

## Goals & Objectives FY2019 - FY2023

<u>Category</u>	<u>Goal</u>	<u>Goal Priority</u>	<u>Objectives</u>	<u>Objectives Priority</u>	<u>Action Steps</u>	<u>Timeframe</u>
Organizational Structures	Strong Functioning Board	High	Full functioning Board with both Becket & Washington well represented.	High	1. Board members have all the skills needed by the Board  A) Identify the skills needed for the Board to function fully . B) Identify and recruit residents of Becket or Washington who have the skills the Board is missing .	Ongoing
					2. New Board members integrated into Board activities  A) New member orientation review process reviewed and updated biannually. B) New member orientation complete within two months of coming on to the Board. C) Board training provided annually.	Ongoing

<u>Category</u>	<u>Goal</u>	<u>Goal Priority</u>	<u>Objectives</u>	<u>Objectives Priority</u>	<u>Action Steps</u>	<u>Timeframe</u>		
			Ongoing survey of all residents, every other year, to assess Becket and Washington residents' and summer visitors' understanding of the functions of the library including collection, content, programs, services and resource library hours. Use the MBLC as a resource to engage community members such as Becket and Washington Town Administration, YMCA Becket Outdoor Center and Law Enforcement in focus groups to determine gaps in community support that could be filled by the library.	High	1. Engage help of a market research analyst to help design questionnaire.	Resurvey in 2019 and every two years thereafter. Survey should be ready in June and have mid-September as deadline.		
						2. Re-evaluate process for distributing questionnaire, for example, in the Towns of Becket and Washington mailings.		
							3. At least biannually, use questionnaire to gather input to assess programs and opportunities.	
							4. Work with MBLC to hold focus groups with community partners.	2019

<u>Category</u>	<u>Goal</u>	<u>Goal Priority</u>	<u>Objectives</u>	<u>Objectives Priority</u>	<u>Action Steps</u>	<u>Timeframe</u>
			Well maintained central calendar for the public with library events.	Medium	1. Currently maintained by library staff.	Ongoing
	Well established system of metrics to measure success	Medium	Data collection that supports good customer relationships, strong organizational infrastructure, quality programs and increased patronage and circulation.	Medium	1. Identify needed, useful metrics for evaluating the success of the Athenaeum's programs and services, such as short and long term impacts of After School Program, attendance at adult programming workshops.	2020
2. Assess data needed for metrics including data currently collected and data needing collection.						
3. Review metrics at least annually.						
	Strong centralized database for patrons and donors useful for Athenaeum's needs	High		Low	New software program selected and in use.	Completed
	How to Manual development	Medium	Maintain Board manual with descriptions of all the Board's recurring activities.	Medium		Currently underway, complete by September 2020

<u>Category</u>	<u>Goal</u>	<u>Goal Priority</u>	<u>Objectives</u>	<u>Objectives Priority</u>	<u>Action Steps</u>	<u>Timeframe</u>
Hours & Staffing	Expanded hours of operations	Low	Open 5-7 days a week depending on need of community.	Low	1. Assess community needs and desires, referring to last year's survey and 2019 survey.	Complete 2020
					2. If more hours desired, assess requirements for manpower and funding.	
			24/7 online access exists, but patron training needs to be developed and implemented.	Medium	1. Patron training of on-line access system needs to be developed, implemented and offered on a regular basis.	Complete 2019
	Enhanced staff benefits	High	Offer full benefits package - retirement, health plans, disability, paid time off, etc. to increase retention and recruitment possibilities.	High	1. Board and Executive Director investigate state and non-profit opportunities for acquiring benefits for athenaeum employees.	Complete by 2023
				2. Board evaluates ability to finance benefits.		
				3. Board develops and implements ongoing strategies for funding benefits.		



<u>Category</u>	<u>Goal</u>	<u>Goal Priority</u>	<u>Objectives</u>	<u>Objectives Priority</u>	<u>Action Steps</u>	<u>Timeframe</u>
	Enhanced Staffing	Low	Assess feasibility of adding professional grant/outreach skill and/or role to existing staff.	Low	1. Determine interest in grant writing/outreach function of current staff.	Completed 2023
					2. Research education or training required to allow staff to handle this function.	
			Director's Assistant position developed. Can be filled based on the needs of director and budget.	Complete	1. Completed 2018.	
Community Impact	An important community meeting place	Medium	Function as a preferred community meeting space with an emphasis on adult learning and support.	Medium	1. Board brainstorms possible uses and potential users and reaches out to community groups for ideas for programming.	Ongoing
					2. Identify additional equipment or staffing needs required.	
					3. Review existing procedures and policies for usage.	
					4. Continue to offer adult programming on a regular basis.	
					5. Use next community input survey as an opportunity to gather information about unserved needs.	

<u>Category</u>	<u>Goal</u>	<u>Goal Priority</u>	<u>Objectives</u>	<u>Objectives Priority</u>	<u>Action Steps</u>	<u>Timeframe</u>
	Determine if additional collaborations are desirable	Medium			1. Brainstorm possible additional collaborations.	Ongoing
	Enhance the feeling that everyone loves the library	High	Continue to develop children's programs that promote reading.	High	1. Make the library a destination.	Ongoing
			Support adult programming that helps everyone to feel the love!	High	2. Develop a library slogan or tagline.	
Programs and Services	Enhance adult programming	High	At least one, well attended, adult program per month covering a variety of topics.	High	1. Invite outside individuals and organizations to focus group to develop new ideas for programming.	
					2. Assess budgetary and staffing needs.	
					3. Develop financing if needed.	
					4. Initiate and implement identified programs.	2020
			Contract Elder Services of Berkshire County about need for increased services.	High	1. Investigate delivering selections from the library.	
					2. Providing support for on-line services so seniors may take advantage of electronic services.	
		3. Investigate partnering with Elder Services to increase usage.				

<u>Category</u>	<u>Goal</u>	<u>Goal Priority</u>	<u>Objectives</u>	<u>Objectives Priority</u>	<u>Action Steps</u>	<u>Timeframe</u>
	Enhance Afterschool Children's Programming	High	Afterschool programming available in community five days per week.	High	1. Completed in 2017 with Dalton CRA collaboration.	
			Continued strong collaboration with CRA for BW afterschool program.	High	1. Quarterly meetings scheduled between after school coordinator, Dalton CRA and Becket Washington School Principal.	
			Assess the impact of transportation issues on children's ability to attend.	Medium	1. Assess the need for transportation.	2020
	Enhanced Children's services	Medium	Develop new programs and services for children (i.e., Kid's Cooking Classes, movie nights for families, Storytime for preschoolers, help for dyslexic kids).	Medium	1. Brainstorm ideas and assess demand.	
						2. Brainstorm solutions and funding mechanism. More tutors will be required for increased student attendance.
Enhanced Technology programs and services	Low	Technology training on site for staff & patrons.	Low	1. Assess technology training needs.		

			10mbs available on site	High	1. High speed internet is needed for 10mgs.	
			Assistance with self-publishing	Low		

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Marketing	Promote awareness of library's programs and services	High	Increased participation in print and social media outlets	High	1. Regular participation in Becket Newsletter and Washington Tracks, and Country Journal.	Ongoing
					2. Increased use of Website, Facebook and Instagram. Investigate use of other social media platforms, such as Pinterest, Twitter.	
			Maintain and improve website	High	1. Brainstorm additional functions of website.	
Facility	Exterior Facility	High	Evaluate and replace septic system if needed	High	1. Evaluated, options considered and plan of action selected.	2019
			New roof	Low	1. Monitor condition.	2023 to 2028
	Great interior space	Medium	Quiet reading/conference room availabilities	High	1. Glass wall on balcony. 2. Identify cost and source of funding.	2019
			Beautifully refinished floors with nice rugs	Medium	1. Floors have been redone. Large rug with value should be evaluated.	2019
			Comfortable yet attractive furniture	High	1. Replace couch and possibly other furniture.	2019

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Financials and Fundraising Programs	More fundraising programs	High	Develop grant funded programs to support afterschool, adult and senior programming	High	1. Fundraising responsibility	Ongoing
			Annual fundraising gala such as a Murder Mystery Dinner	Low	1. Fundraising responsibility	2020
			Significantly grow the endowment , investment funds and bequest program.	High	1. Consult with BTCF	Ongoing
	Increasing trend in donations	High	Increase in number of donors and donations	High	1. Investigate donor targets by obtaining copies of assessor lists from Becket and Washington.	Ongoing

## Community-Wide Survey

In 2015, in order to better meet the needs of patrons and the community, the Athenaeum surveyed patrons and community members asking for input on usage, opinion of services, staff, role in community, awareness of services/programs, ideas for improvement and future programming. As an incentive to participate in the survey, completers' names were entered into a drawing to win a \$100 gift certificate at a local grocery store.

## Survey Results

### Objective

- Determine awareness, usage and desired programs by current users of the Athenaeum.

### Methodology

- Surveys were distributed at the Athenaeum to people using the facility. This was done from late summer until early fall.
- 65 surveys were received, of which 62 were completed and used for analysis. (Table 1)
- The data has been, for the most part, examined in total. Where appropriate it was looked at according to the categories of Seniors, Male and Female Adults 18-64 years of age, and families with children.

### Findings

#### User Profile (Table 2)

- 92% of the people used the Athenaeum in the past 12 months. 8% said they had not.
- The large majority (84%) were Seniors, followed by Male and Female Adults (48%) and Families (32%).
- On average, total users visited 8.7 times. Almost one-half (47%) were very heavy past 12 month users (average 13 visits). Seniors visited 7.9 times, Adults 9.7 times and families 9.3 times.
- Three-quarters of the users were either full-time residents of Becket and Washington. The large majority were from Becket (82%) versus Washington (15%). However, Washington's population (2010 census) is proportionately higher versus Becket's (23% vs. 77%).
- About 8 in ten used another library—mainly Pittsfield. Reasons cited were the other libraries were closer to home or work.



### Opinion of the Athenaeum

- Everyone was positive about the facility—63% rated it Excellent, 36% Very Good. (Table 3)
- Overall, reasons for positive ratings centered on the “staff’s performance and friendliness”. Other positives were the welcoming environment and variety of offerings. Some slight differences among the 3 analytic groups were that Families were more likely to mention “child supportiveness” more than Adults or Seniors. The positive staff mentions were cited more by Seniors and Adults than Families. And, “community feel” was mentioned by Adults and Families but not by Seniors. (Table 4)
- Satisfaction with the hours was not as positive. 56% were extremely or very satisfied but 38% were somewhat satisfied or very dissatisfied. Reasons for dissatisfaction were sparse since “somewhat” satisfied responders were not asked the question. (Table 3)

### Awareness and Use of Athenaeum Services/Programs

- People were most aware of the traditional library services offered by the Athenaeum, e.g. borrowing books/DVDs from the shelves or elsewhere and use of computers/WIFI. Awareness of internships, YMCA camp, early childhood program and joint programming with BAC was low. (Table 5)
- Use was centered on shelf borrowing of books or DVDs and museum passes. The services deemed most important reflected usage patterns. (Table 5)
- Conversion of people from being aware of programs to becoming users is very low for: historical archives; using website for borrowing; and book group. Conversion for child/youth focused programs is also low. (Table 5)
- On an open-ended basis, most people did not mention anything they wanted at the Athenaeum. The few comments were book or DVD-related. (Table 6)

### **Athenaeum's Role in the Community**

- Perceptions of the Athenaeums' current offerings were aligned with what services consumers desired. The main roles were; traditional library; community center; and a resource/tech center. (Table 7)
- Regarding the proposed programs, none were particularly popular. The highest ranked ones ranged from 21% to 39%: adult information programs; movie night; workshops; Senior citizen programs and winter lectures. (Table 8)

### **Recommendations**

- The Athenaeum has a very positive image to build upon. The atmosphere that has been engendered by the staff is integral to how it is perceived. Any future programming should not compromise this open, friendly, community environment.
- The majority of users are Seniors but Adults and Families frequent the Athenaeum more often. More Senior programming might be introduced to increase use among this group.
- To increase use, offerings might include special times for teaching people more about how they can use the historical archives and the Athenaeum's website. An effort might be considered to entice more people with evening or weekend book group sessions. And, raising awareness of youth/child programming through advertisements on the school website, camp website and church bulletins are outreach possibilities.
- Since close to one-third of users currently feel and want the Athenaeum to serve as a community center and one-out-of-five want it to be available as a tech center, these are areas which can be built upon in the future.
- The largest group of users of the Athenaeum is from Becket, mainly full-time residents, but Washington users outpace their relative proportion to Becket residents. More outreach to the Washington community might increase their use.