

BERKLEY S.A.V.E. MEETING OF 09/18/2025

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: James Medeiros(JM), Member, Nancy Thompson(NT), Member, Kate Simons(KS), Clerk, Chris Sullivan(CS), Chair, Ashleigh Haslam [AH], Member

TOPIC		ACTION
Call to Order & Objectives	Meeting called to order at 5:37pm.	
Approval of Prior Minutes		AH Motion NT Second All Approved
Understanding the Current State – Comparable Data	We continued our discussion on Comparable Data, focusing on how other towns generate revenue and assess success or taxpayer satisfaction. Additional factors were introduced, such as regionalization (e.g., D-R) and the impact of vacant homes that contribute to tax revenue without drawing on local services (e.g., Westport). The group agreed to further investigate per-person tax burden, median home prices, and median income levels—data that more directly reflects how municipal finances affect individual taxpayers. We also examined Proposition 2½ in greater detail, looking at which towns have recently pursued overrides and which have gone the longest without one (with Easton noted as having the longest recent stretch). Prop 2½ serves to protect taxpayers while also compelling towns to engage in difficult but necessary conversations about raising taxes.	
Understanding the Current State – What Other Data Do We Need	We explored an open-ended question: What additional data is needed to fully understand the town’s current financial state? One focus was the impact of vocational schools on overall education spending. The town funds K–8, SBRHS, BP, and BA, covering both operating and some debt/capital costs. Per-pupil spending varies widely—BP is over \$24,000, SBRHS is about \$19,000, and Berkley K–8 is under \$16,000 (among the lowest in the Commonwealth, pending DESE verification). While per-capita education spending is high, per-pupil spending at the local K–8 level is comparatively low. This is influenced by town demographics, where children make up a larger share of the total population, and by enrollment fluctuations at vocational schools, which create added volatility. As a task force, our most direct lever for change lies within K–8 education. The group also agreed that one of our most important success factors will be ensuring taxpayers and voters clearly understand the current state. Greater awareness will drive stronger engagement with potential solutions, making our communication strategy a critical part of this work.	
Communication Strategy – Next Steps	Our first Public Communication will be issued on Facebook this evening [CS & AH to set up FB Page for \$AVE]. We agreed that the existing town website is the best place to house information, though it will not generate traffic on its own. We will need to drive people there through other channels. Member Nan Thompson has drafted a brief statement about our work to be included in the next COA Newsletter, scheduled for the November issue. We also have one community volunteer interested in developing an interactive budget tool. To make this successful, we will need to establish clear guardrails and a vision, while also leveraging any education materials already available through DOR.	

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	Finally, there is a tentative plan to set up an outreach table at the upcoming election. While we cannot advocate, we can use this opportunity to raise awareness about the task force and our goal of educating residents.	
Looking Ahead	To date, the task force has focused on defining the problem, assessing the current state, analyzing data, and beginning to explore root causes. The next step will be to more clearly identify the gap between the current and desired state, and to generate a robust list of potential solutions. In this context, the desired state will be expressed both as a dollar amount and as an ideal vision for how local government and services should look and function. We agreed that it is important to look beyond the most obvious options—such as an override, attracting more businesses, regionalization, or cutting costs/services. As a group, we will work to cast a wider net and consider a broad range of possible solutions.	
Parking Lot / Future Topics	• SRPEDD Economic Development Survey – help us understand potential strategies and local appetite for Economic Development • Schedule ‘Interviews’ with Each Department Head – Agenda/Questions/Intent to be developed. In general, the intent is not to scrutinize individual spending requests but to understand broader issues and opportunities. We also need to understand whether there are limits to service cuts or reductions. These interviews need to yield a desired future state by department and some identification of the gap/needs to get there. • Capital Improvement Plan • Survey – can we gauge “taxpayer satisfaction”	
Public Input		
Next Steps & Action Assignments	• CS & AH Set up FB Page & Issue First Communication • Continue to Review Comparable Data • Establish Talking Points for Election Tent/Table • CS Reach Out to Volunteer & Discuss Next Steps for Interactive Budget Tool • Brush Off Department Surveys, Include Information About Gap/Success Measures	
Adjourn	Adjourn at 7:03	AH Motion NT Second All Approved