



**Beacon Falls Board of Selectmen**  
**Beacon Falls Board of Finance**  
**10 Maple Avenue**  
**Beacon Falls, CT 06403**

**BEACON FALLS BOARD OF SELECTMAN**  
**BEACON FALLS BOARD OF FINANCE**  
**Joint Budget Workshop**  
**February 21, 2023 MINUTES (Subject to Revision)**

1. **Call to Order / Pledge of Allegiance:** First Selectman G. Smith called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM and led the assembled in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Members Present:** G. Smith, M. Krenesky, W. Hopkinson, K. Brennan, D. Fennell, S. Leeper, D. Fennell

**Members Absent:** P. Betkoski, J. Carroll

**Others Present:** N. Nau, A. Daigle, L. Daigle, L. Greene, J. Bilsky, J. Krenesky, J. Chadderton, 1 member of the public. E. Setaro (7:15 PM), D. Ferretti, T. Carey, J. Piccirillo, J. Smith, L. Rajvong, J. Baldwin (8:00 PM)

**Other Virtual Via TEAMS:** K. Stevens, R. Culbertson, J. Rodorigo, R. Pruzinsky

- **Introduction:** K. Brennan thanked everyone for appearing tonight as the BOS and BOF enter the budget process. He noted how important it is to have departments input and reiterated the format is a 5-minute overview of their requests with questions and answers from the board. He noted that based on the economy, he anticipates a tight budget for 2023-2024. G. Smith echoed what K. Brennan noted and looks forward to hearing from everyone tonight. The boards hope to pass this FY2024 budget in mid-May.
- **Department 01: First Selectman** – IT, HR, Legal, Engineering, Consultants – G. Smith noted that he expects that legal and engineering costs will remain constant. We are seeking the Town Planner Consultant budget from NVCOG for FY2024. The Human Resources budget will remain constant with no increase. He pursued the cost for HR on-site hours twice a month and that service is cost prohibitive. N. Nau noted that with IT, there will be \$5-\$7,000 built into the IT budget to replace 1 laptop and 8 desktops. Our IT budget should remain relatively flat with a decrease in special projects netted out by an inflationary increase for managed support.
- **Department 03: Town Hall** - E. Schwarz reviewed Town Hall budget lines, expecting to be able to keep postage, legal notices, office supplies and building maintenance constant. The Town can reduce the Alarm Monitoring line. Finance will be pricing all the electric, heat and water budget lines based on usage with projected pricing. N. Nau noted that the diesel, gas, and heating fuel bids through CRPC were opened today, and Finance will be evaluating them shortly and locking into those costs for next fiscal year when we feel appropriate and then calculate budgets accordingly.
- **Department 05: Town Clerk** – L. Greene requested 2 operating budget line item increases this year – his land records contract is up for renewal and the new annual cost will be \$24040 for the year. The Full-Time Assistant Town Clerk will be up for her certification this June, and he is recommending an additional \$1.00/hour for her position when she becomes certified. L. Greene has 1 capital project which will be new shelving for the vault and a vital records cabinet. The cost will be \$8400, and he plans to use the \$6000 Historic Preservation grant + \$2400 from his Town Clerk MERS/Historic Preservation lines so the project would not impact taxes or fund balance. With regard to Town Clerk revenue, L. Greene has noticed a slowdown in the housing market and sales in Chatfield Farms. He expects a reduction in conveyance this year and next year. W. Hopkinson asked for a prediction on conveyance revenue and L. Greene noted that it is difficult to predict but could be down by ½ or a third. L. Greene noted that his recording fees/MERS

and LOCIP lines would also be impacted and may slow. The other new variable which will impact the Town Clerk is the new extended voting program which the State is implementing.

- **Department 07: Tax Collector** – J. Bilsky noted that she has 2-line-item increases related to QDS increases for Computer Licenses & Support/QDS increase Computer Printing. She is also requesting an \$8000 Wage increase for her position as Tax Collector as she will be earning her CCMC certification. Regarding revenue numbers, she noted that prior collections, interest, etc. are budgeted where we should be. She noted that the tax collection rate in the FY2023 budget was increased to 98.9% which is valid. The vast number of properties in Beacon Falls are escrowed, and that assists with collections. She did note that taxes from Beacon Mill will be collected at 90% until their Assessment Appeal is settled in court.
- **Department 15: Assessor** – J. Chadderton is requesting increases for her budget lines which pertain to QDS Computer Licenses and Printing and she is also requesting a wage increase for her position, which is budgeted well below similar towns, per the CCM municipal salary survey.
- The Tax and Assessor's shared office has a Capital Project request to replace the staff countertop under the 2 windows and add an extension in the middle. The quote for the replacement of the counter is between \$4,000-\$5,000, as the workspace under the windows is not the proper width and is bowing and will give the employees at the window more space to work.
- **Departments 19&20: Finance Department** – N. Nau noted that the audit contract has expired, and she will be advertising the audit for bid shortly. FY2024 may also require a federal single audit. Finance is also finalizing the software subscription costs for their newer financial accounting modules. There are no increases anticipated for the procurement software.
- **Department 21: Economic Development Commission** – J. Betkoski noted that the EDC is requesting a \$25,000 budget to update the Beacon Falls biz website, to continue with EDC marketing and public outreach, and they are also looking at joining the Naugatuck Valley Development Group this year.
- **Department 29: Registrar of Voters** – J. Krenesky noted that the Registrars have several line item changes including adding a Town Meeting/Referendum line to the budget to pay workers for those events. They are also interested in adding a wage line for a clerk that would assist with filing and office work and be paid at a lower rate than the Deputy Registrars. She also noted that with the early voting bill passing, the bill that is currently at the State proposes a 14-day voting window. The Registrars do not have guidance yet on how this will be State funded and there are a lot of questions. The State hopes to finalize the language by March 31<sup>st</sup>. G. Smith asked how much each referendum costs; Finance answered that the Region 16 referendum was \$4200 last spring. A Town Meeting or referendum is in the \$3000 range. G. Smith also noted with early voting there is a lot which needs to be determined, with hours of availability/weekends, etc.
- **Department 57: Civil Defense/Emergency Management/Homeland Security** – Jeremy Rodorigo has put in a \$9,000 Capital request for a 3 band radio, as the EOC has some interoperability issues with multiple bands of radio. He is requesting to reduce his stipend in favor of equipment, and we are also reducing the Code Red subscription. When asked about the communications at Woodland, J. Rodorigo noted that Fire is working on getting the repeater at the high school reengineered so BHC will have full communications. N. Nau asked if there will be costs associated; J. Rodorigo anticipated only small service costs.
- **Safety Committee** – G. Smith and E. Schwarz noted that we hope to keep the \$6,000 townwide Safety budget flat. G. Smith is meeting with a HazCompliance specialist next week.
- **Department 69: Library** – E. Setaro is looking to increase the Library part time wage line to cover the increase in minimum wage. The library is increasing their computer line item due to increases in their Bibliomation software, a need for a new staff desktop and increase in Microsoft license. N. Nau noted that the desktop and Microsoft license cost will be moved from the Library budget to the Town Hall IT line. E. Setaro is also looking for increases in department supplies such as books, DVDs, etc., due to price increases in all of these items. The copier lease is expiring in January 2024, so they are estimating an increase in this lease. The library would like to install cabinets to house supplies and new countertops as a capital project. Currently supplies are sitting on bookshelves and the countertops are sagging. The multi-level countertops would improve workspace, increase space for oversize books and solve other issues.
- **Department 77: Minibus for Elderly** – K. Stevens asked for an increase in gas/maintenance to \$8500. The bus is getting a lot of use and therefore more gas is being purchased. It is also aging and requiring

more maintenance. She would like to get a quarterly full exterior cleaning detail of the bus and she would also like to add new lettering to the front of the bus. Overall, the 2015 bus is in good condition, but there is some humming and squeaks on the interior. Her tires are new, brakes at 50% and mileage at 34,000. K. Stevens is also requesting an increase in hours from 29 to 30 hours per week, as she spends more time driving each week and at the Senior Center. She does not foresee the need to join the Town's healthcare plan. A. Daigle noted that given the age of the bus, anything mechanical can go on this bus and there are some cosmetic things. Art would like to see a smaller vehicle for a single trip to the doctor's or rehab, when they are taking one or two people on the bus. A. Daigle also supports Kim 100% with everything she does for the seniors. For the trips she plans, the bus is filled to capacity.

- **Department 79: Senior Center** – For the Senior Center budget, A. Daigle did not see the need to increase anything except for taking inflation into account so he added 6% to most of the line items, such as supplies, programs and maintenance. For capital projects, N. Nau noted there is an ARPA allocation coming from the State, which can be used for senior programs/activities and infrastructure. There is also an AARP grant due in March, and the patio is a potential project for that grant or an outdoor musical equipment area for engaging seniors outside. They are also looking at a privacy fence and clean up the back of the senior center. The LOCIP monies will be available in March to replace windows and flooring and repair the concrete steps.
- M. Krenesky asked about the Community Center: N. Nau explained that the Town has applied for a \$4M CIF grant for a community center on the Wolfe Avenue property which would house the senior center, community center, and library if approved. Best case this grant would be awarded in August, and it would be a 3-year lead time before a building was operational. Investments into the senior center would not be lost but repurposed for whatever the building will be used for next.
- **Department 53: Police** – J. Piccirillo noted that the police operating expense increases are inflationary related to contractual increases, vehicle fuel costs, building operations and supplies. The Police Department has put in for a new vehicle this year – Car 15 has reached its lifespan. The price is a state contract locked in with MHQ at \$62,000, which is an increase from \$55,000. The Police Dept would hope to repurpose that car 15 for road jobs as a private duty vehicle. J. Piccirillo also stated they are seeking a generator for the station. They currently have a portable generator, which must be manually set up for use and not all employees know how to do this. Automation is needed for a building that is operational 24/7/365. A residential generator at approximately \$13,500 would be wired with a transfer switch for the whole building to keep their radios charged and computers on is necessary. J. Piccirillo noted a capital project for the station lobby security upgrades; replacing hollow core doors with steel doors and replacing the lobby window which is 40 years old. The goal is to secure the lobby and make it more accessible to the public. J. Piccirillo noted that the carport project is still open, and they are looking to redesign the carport to cover more vehicles, so they are looking at proposals and design ideas.
- **Department 11: Land Use** – J. Baldwin provided performance statistics for his department, noting that in 2020 Building permits totaled \$171,000 or 32% above the budgeted amount. In 2021, revenue was \$185,000, which was also above the budgeted amount. Moving forward, he expects revenue in the \$180,000 range. Chatfield Farms is slowing down and there are less than 14 build-outs, however, there is an increase in solar panels throughout the town and a large amount of activity of residents moving from oil to propane. The State of CT has adopted 2022 code, with substantial changes to code. J. Baldwin is requesting a wage increase to \$46,800, which is a \$4300 increase. He is also requesting an increase for L. Daigle of \$3161. They are reducing the OT line item and reducing some expenses in the departmental expense line, as new code books have been purchased this fiscal year. They have asked for an increase in the mileage line to match the new federal mileage rates. Operationally, the Building Office has made the permit process easier and smoother, and L. Daigle has done a great job improving services. We are outperforming surrounding towns based on population. L. Daigle noted that regarding revenue projections, the town is gaining a lot of solar panel projects which are about ¼ of the revenue. Land Use Coordinator/Acting ZEO L. Rajvong noted that currently Planning & Zoning permit revenue is \$100-\$150 per month with \$25 per zoning compliance permit. It is her hope that the new proposed fee schedule can be implemented to increase permits to \$100 for 3-4 zoning compliance permits per month. L. Rajvong also noted there is new permitting related to the cottage food industry; and she hopes to update our regulations to allow sales at farmers markets; and UberEATS/Door Dash deliveries. L. Daigle noted that

the WEO is requesting an increase annual wage line of \$10,000. T. Pratt asked about the Building Office hours, which have expanded with Lisa in the office and J. Baldwin noted that their collection rate is 100%.

- **WPCA:** L. Rajvong noted that WPCA will continue with their budget as presented last year with no increases.
- **Department 59: Public Works/Parks** – R. Pruzinsky started with Capital plans which included: 1) Town Garage wall panel replacement which is a project they are revisiting from prior years; 2) Walking Track replacement – replacing the cracked track at Pent Road, trees growing around the track. \$108,000; 3) Streetsweeper - street sweeping in town costs \$22,000-\$24,000 annually and a used streetsweeper can be purchased for \$80,000. The costs would be made up in 3 years and then Public Works could sweep multiple times per year; 4) Parks Utility Vehicle for trail maintenance to complete work at Matthies and Toby's to cut and remove trees and used for clearing trails; and 5) The replacement of the 2001 International Plow Truck with a new Freightliner Plow Truck on the State contract. R. Pruzinsky noted that for the operating budget, all the requests are for increases in product costs and rates from providers. Highway equipment, street sweeping, snow removal materials (salt costs were up this year \$20/ton), tree removal (N. Nau note that this contract is up for renewal), guardrails, and vehicle maintenance parts are all seeing increases.
- **Department 71: Parks and Recreation** – D. Ferretti noted there is one capital request: they have a quote of \$12,500 to replace the swing set at Matthies Park. The old swing set was removed, and this is a potential Katharine Matthies Grant application. For their operating request, Parks & Rec is seeking an increase to the seasonal wage line by \$3,000 to hire 2 new counselors and meet the \$15.00 for minimum wage. N. Nau asked about the FY23 playground expansion project and whether they are getting a quote for a platform so smaller children can use the new piece. This piece should not be too expensive, and we should be able to purchase it in FY23. The YMCA budget is flat for next year.
- **Department 67: Wastewater Treatment Plant** – T. Carey noted that WWTP has put in a capital request for a new vehicle. They currently have a 2004 GMC which is beyond useful life. They can retrofit an existing utility body on a new vehicle. For the operating budget: T. Carey is requesting an increase to the Plant Operations line which was cut this year and he is lacking money in that line this year. He is also requesting \$3,000 for vehicle maintenance to fix up the old truck. The current capital projects with the Digester and Electrical Upgrades at the plant are among the largest and most challenging projects that we have going on. The digester project is progressing and T. Carey is working out with the installer and at present we don't foresee more change orders. N. Nau noted that the WWTP electrical upgrade will go overbudget and the final estimates are being developed for the base bid and bid-add-alternates, which have been cut back to stay closer to budget; we will be going out to bid sometime soon. The anticipation would be for any additional funds to come out of the sewer fund above the \$1M bonded funds. T. Carey noted that the retaining wall project can be placed on hold. The WWTP furnace is another capital item which is due for replacement as it is over 30 years old, but he has not put it in for FY24.
- **Department 44: Fire and EMS Services** – B. DeGeorge noted that the Fire Department has a couple of capital projects including battery powered fans for \$9,000 and fit-testing equipment which is \$17,000. N. Nau noted that the fit-testing equipment would be an AFG eligible project. The major capital project is the replacement of the ambulance, which has a \$345,000 price tag and 20-month lead time with a \$0 commitment purchase on the chassis. The 2<sup>nd</sup> ambulance is getting much busier. Discussion surrounded the trade-in value of the 2012 ambulance. For BHC's operating budget, B. DeGeorge noted that manufacturers and training companies are quoting a 10% increase on materials.
- **Department 45: Fire Marshal** – B. DeGeorge has a capital request of \$75,000 for a new Fire Marshal vehicle. Changes to the operating budget include breaking out vehicle fuel from other vehicle expenses for the Fire Marshal vehicle.

**Other:**

- L. Rajvong reported that Conservation Commission requests their annual \$1,000 for open space preservation.
- The \$5,000 open space maintenance line that they have used for tree work in the past will be used for a "Trail Day" event the first weekend of June. They hope to have Police presence, merchandise, and advertising, as well as trailhead work for Pent Road acreage. Lantern Ridge tree work is not needed at this time.

- M. Krenesky noted that with Rimmon Hill Schoolhouse, the town may gain control of the building before the end of this fiscal year if it wants to accept it. The costs to renovate are estimated to begin at \$75,000 but there is a question about building code requirements if the Town plans to open it for public visitation. The boards will need to budget for this project moving forward if they wish to pursue.
- L. Daigle asked how the boards will know if new items are added to the SharePoint Budget site. All BOS and BOF members have access to the site if the new additions are noted to Finance, they can be sure that the boards have the most updated information. T. Pratt thanked all the departments for completing their information in SharePoint, as it helps the BOS and BOF move forward.
- **Conclusion:** K. Brennan noted that over the next 2 months the boards will be putting together the budget and will be in touch via the Finance Office, with departments who will be asked back for additional discussion. The common thread in these uncertain economic times are inflationary increases with costs going up across the board and the BOS/BOF will do the best they can to make the FY24 fair to the taxpayers of Beacon Falls.
- G. Smith concluded with a thank you to all budget participants; in his role, he interacts with everyone in this room and is happy that all attendants spent the time to come out tonight to give me the information that the boards need, so they can speak to the public with the knowledge that you have provided.

**3. Adjournment: MK made a motion to adjourn the BOS workshop at 9:02 PM. GS seconded the motion. All ayes.**

**WH made a motion to adjourn the BOF portion of the workshop at 9:02 PM. SL seconded the motion. All ayes.**

Respectfully Submitted,

*Erin Schwarz*  
*Finance Administrative Assistant*