

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



**BEACON FALLS BOARD OF SELECTMEN
and BOARD OF FINANCE
Budget Workshop
May 4, 2021
MINUTES
(Subject to Revision)**

1. Call to Order / Pledge of Allegiance

First Selectman Smith called the workshop to order at 7:03 P.M.

Members Present: Gerard Smith (GS), Mike Krenesky (MK), Chris Bielik (CB), Jim Carroll (JC), Kyle Brennan (KB), Steve Leeper (SL), Tom Pratt (TP), Wendy Hopkinson (WH), Dalton Fennell (DF)

Others Present: Natasha Nau (NN), Erin Schwarz (ES) 1 Member of the public

Others Absent: none

Moment of silence observed for Charlie Edwards.

2. Budget – Discussion & Action - GS – What I want to discuss is under Non-Recurring Capital.

- Page 21 – under EMD – Generator for Rimmon Hill tower. I thought we discussed taking it out and using the portable generator while we get the approvals to move forward on a permanent structure. My suggestion is to anticipate that fee will come back next year, but for this budget, it comes out.
- Page 23 – the 2012 Dodge Ambulance Suspension repairs are blank because I do not think we should do the suspension, but I believe that we should do the other repairs needed that total around \$6,800. NN – it is under an operating expense highlighted in yellow. I asked the Chief to put something together regarding the new apparatus request. We understand that we need to get a vehicle replacement program in place. They ran some numbers and provided us a report for tonight. My proposal is and I think it will work and I confirmed with the Chief, if we do \$115,000 up from and fund it with an extra \$50,000 so that will set us up for \$165,000 as a recurring payment that will get us both trucks that we need. I also confirmed that these numbers do include payment and interest. It is a plan to get us on a plan for purchasing apparatus. NN – A separate issue is when the Chief talks about the Rescue Pumper. That is a different topic. I want to make sure they feel confident about their actual capital costs because the price of materials is skyrocketing. I am not sure what impact that is having on manufacturers. GS – many times they have apparatus demos that you can get at a discount on with

minimal miles. NN – are they coming fully loaded because we want to make sure that we have budgeted for equipment, if necessary. TP- they are transferring equipment. GS – from what I was told, they were turnkey numbers.

NN – after we drafted this, I thought about the Police section, just a proposal, we do have a healthy private duty balance, if you want to lessen the burden of the Non-Recurring Capital, we could move it and pay for the car port out of the private duty balance. ES – we have about \$65,000 in that account now, without putting anything in there from this year. TP – it would be healthy to do it that way. KB – my big question tonight is that we are planning on taking \$1.3m from Undesignated Fund Balance which is way more than we have ever spent so where does that leave us? Are we a candidate for anything else to be bonded?

GS – Main street has been a challenge from when we did the Street Scape, and we knew it would be a challenge for the Town when we took it over from the State. When I was in office 10 years ago, we discussed the sidewalks. Now, we have major issues on Main Street, and we need to address it eventually. I had the town engineer look at what we need to do to fix it and provide me some numbers. I thought about just doing the sidewalks but to do them properly we have to open the road. To fix from the top of Main Street all the way to the end, including the pavement it is about \$1.2 million and we need to worry about the aesthetics because it is Main Street. Do we break it up and do it in stages with a predetermined amount each fiscal year or if any of this would qualify under grants or bonding? TP – because it is such a large amount, we should look into seeing what grants we would be able to receive. NN – the plan I thought was to incorporate the curbing and the sidewalks. SL – we should take into consideration of underground piping and the proposed traffic light system by Public Works. DF – should we put something into a fund now, while we look for grant money. MK – right now looking at this, it is a bonding project in addition to any grant funding. KB – we want to make sure we do things well and if I think if we take on another project, we will have too many projects going. Where now, we have a year to think about the project and plan for it. We are very lucky that we have a sizeable surplus the last two years. ES – we have a \$22.6 million dollar budget and must keep at least \$2 million in our fund balance. We are still around \$1.6 million to spend. ES – that brings us down to \$1.73 million available in undesignated fund balance however, our ability to spend the current amount in this list is based on where we are today in this year's budget. We are ahead of where we need to be. NN – the projected surplus is at the bottom of the page. ES – we have had two very positive years in a row. GS – I have shared my thoughts and I would like to know what the other Selectmen and BOF members have, if any.

MK – I must admit, I am concerned about taking on another project. We do have many projects going right now. I like what Tom said about holding off and moving forward at the same time regarding Main Street. GS – I firmly believe we have the staff and personnel dedication to finish all these projects. The staff and professional staff we have taken pride in what we are trying to get done. NN – the only delays we will see with projects is in the State processes. They are not operating at a fast pace and that is not going to change.

TP – what happened with the police pistol holsters? NN – that line was changed with a confirmed number to reflect the cost of the pistol and the holder.

CB – there is no question that there is a list of Capital projects that need to be done in this Town and they are all viable projects. My concern is that we are expending 80-90% of our available rainy-day fund in one fiscal year into all these items. I know that in the past, there have been people on the BOF reluctant to spend even \$300-\$500K in capital projects. This is a huge amount than anything we have done in the past. The question is how much do we want to do all at once? Is everything on this list that vital? If we are changing in saying we have the money lets spend it all down, that is changing a lot of the mindset that we have used in the past to protect our fiscal position for the future. I am a little uncomfortable with this. Another topic is which projects I would remove from this budget.

CB - For the record, I noticed the Registrars have not been changed based on my suggestion at the last workshop and I think keeping the salary line item different for the down ticket elected officials is a virtual slap in the face to the Registrars saying that they are not valued salary wise. I disagree this approach. For a small amount of money, putting those salaries equivalent and then adding as an incentive to compensate them for the extra work, an hourly rate over and above their salary for certain actions.

TP – For the record, you were First Selectman for many years, and they asked for a raise you never gave it to them. Suddenly you want to give it to them. CB – that is not true in the past we raised salaries in the election cycle. TP – so basically, I can remember a \$3,000 raise and that is all I remember. In fairness to our BOF, we have reviewed documentation of salaries around here and our Registrars are about 70% higher than Towns around us. We did spend time on it, and we have reviewed history and the salaries around us. SL – we all came to the decision to pay them the base and the extra for the primary and elections. JC – I agree, we did give the BOF a survey of what other towns pay and we were in a high spot so I did not feel we needed to change the salary and we will give more for primaries and elections. WH – I agree. I thought by giving them the extra stipend, that was our way to show appreciation for the work that they have done. They do work hard. CB – my impression of it is that it will show the opposite to them and will come across as a smack in the face, in my perspective. KB – I understand the concern, but I agree with our decision process. TP – we the Board, stand by our decision. TP – Lets take one item, a \$450,000 item at Public Works. Under the previous administration, it was a known issue. Back then it was a \$100,000 project. This was now dumped on the current administration. CB - it was not just previous administrations; it was previous administrations and the BOF. CB – I am not questioning the value of the individual projects. TP – I know you are questioning the BOF members, and I can attest that this BOF is very concerned about representing the taxpayers and the town and we have made some tough decisions. We are spending more than we want to spend but we need to move the town forward. I think the projects in the budget, need to be done and they are a value. DF – I agree, and I have no doubt that with Gerry at the current helm, we will get it done. SL – I agree, there is a lot of projects going on, but I know that you need to spend that money at the Garage to pass that new permit evaluation. That money will be well spent to get that area taken care of. GS – there are a lot of projects, but if you're communicating and staying in touch, you can manage them all. It is about

having the right team, and things get done. CB – you are missing the point; my concern is spending 3-4 times more than we have ever spent on capital projects.

NN – I understand the hesitance; however, the only other suggestion would be to pull out the Transfer Station if you felt more comfortable bonding that total. TP – my concern is we have less than 2 years to get that up and running and that is too close to the expiration of the State permit. We did not want to spend \$450,000 but we have too. KB – my initial concern is that we are going to draw the excess down, is it going to be too low? Do we feel comfortable spending all we have to spend in one shot? We know that all these need to get done. Does the whole \$450,000 have to be spent this year or can it be split up? JC – I agree and, what is the reaction to the taxpayers when they see the budget and that we are taking \$1.3 million out of fund balance? TP – I can say that based on what the taxes are there is positive feedback from the residents over the past 2 years of things being done and improved. JC - Bringing it down to the minimum, if we have another unforeseen disaster, can we handle it? GS -when disaster hits, we can go into our fund balance, but we could weather the storm. I have a lot of confidence and it is good now, the future looks better and the longer we wait everything is just getting more expensive. MK – I do not think we can sit here and wait more on these projects. We have been afraid to spend money and now we must fix the items and infrastructure that are going bad. We have put things off for far too long and we must risk this and spend what we need to and be selective about what we do.

TP – lets talk about the Gators, we are talking about \$22,000 and that is a high price. We have relied on Town employees for this quote and when it comes to purchase, I hope the right people are purchasing and we spend our money wisely. I believe this is about \$3,000-\$4,000 above average cost. TP – page 26, the \$100,000 for Cold Storage which would be fenced in, secured. GS – this also takes a lot of stuff from the Town Garage that is outside now, brings it inside and opens ground space there. TP - Page 28 - \$30,000 building parks and security. Were we trying to get some of those projects done before the current fiscal year end? Is this accurate if we are going to spend funds this year? GS – yes, this fiscal year's funds will get us started. ES – the quote that came in was \$46,000. TP – the last item, the Streetscape, we can take out the post rehab for the base sleeve. GS – what is the alternative? TP – keep painting it. SL- what was the cost for paint? ES - \$1,150. **SL – I make a motion we take the streetscape light base rehab out, KB second, all ayes.**

NN – I wanted to make a good news mention – we were notified that we were notified that after review of our Worker's Compensation, we increased our percentage reduction and received another \$5,000 refunded to us based on our good behavior.

NN - revenue questions – we glazed over this but wanted to get the feel on this, do we want to keep the LEATCHE fund in the General Fund or the Sewer Fund? It equates to about \$40,000. TP – I know Tom indicated he would like to see that money come over.

NN – we feel confident with the conveyance number and it is basically the real estate market right now and everything else is pretty good. We do not have final numbers from the State yet, so just to confirm we are all ok with using the numbers from the State Appropriation and Finance Committee which are more Conservative numbers. GS – how

did we come up with the number for the Town Clerk fees. ES – I based that on about 50% of his current fees that he takes in. We will not see this revenue until after January when the employment changes.

TP – the BOS will be acting on the BHC EMS funds and next week there should be a check coming so that is more revenue coming.

WH – what would be the pros and cons with taking the Garage project to bond? TP – my perspective is the timing and the unknown of what the State is going to do. KB – we have unspent capital line items in various ways, do we know how much is sitting there and can any go to these projects? GS – that is something we are always looking at and reviewing throughout the year.

TP – I just want to thank the Board of Finance and Board of Selectmen and our employees.

GS – I echo that.

3. Vote to approve budget –

TP – Motion to approve budget as presented to public hearing, JC/SL, all ayes.

4. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn BOS at 8:37 P.M. CB/MK, all ayes.

Motion to adjourn BOF at 8:37 P.M. WH/KB, all ayes.

Respectfully submitted,

Kerry McAndrew
First Selectman's Office Administrator/Clerk