

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



**BEACON FALLS BOARD OF FINANCE
Regular Monthly Meeting & Budget Workshop
April 11, 2023, MINUTES
(Subject to Revision)**

1. **Call to Order / Pledge of Allegiance:** J. Carroll called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM and led the assembled in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Members Present: T. Pratt, S. Leeper, J. Carroll, W. Hopkinson, D. Fennell (7:04 PM)

Members Absent: K. Brennan

2. **Public Present:** First Selectman G. Smith, Selectman M. Krenesky, Selectman P. Betkoski, Finance Manager N. Nau and 1 member of the public.
3. **Comments from the Public:** None.
4. **Approval of Minutes:** TP made a motion to approve the 3/21/2023 Special Meeting minutes, as presented. SL seconded the motion. WH abstained. JC, TP, SL and DF voted aye.
5. **Correspondence:** None.
6. **Reporting:**
 - a. Tax Collector Report – No comments or concerns.
 - b. Treasurers Report – No comments or concerns.
 - c. Town Clerk Report – No comments.
 - d. Region 16 Report – No questions or concerns.
 - e. Ambulance Report – No questions or concerns.
7. **First Selectman's Report:** First Selectman G. Smith advised:
 - a. **Budget Transfers:** The BOS approved budget transfers as presented. For Public Works, there is a transfer into street sweeping because the cost of this service increased and there is a transfer from snow removal materials to pavement maintenance. The salt shed is well stocked and salt costs should be trending down, therefore there is money left in that line. The plan is to complete an overlay on Rimmon Hill Road from the town line to Jane Street with the pavement maintenance and some Non-Recurring Capital funds we have set aside for roadwork. There are also transfers for the Police Generator project to move forward this year.
 - b. **Beacon Valley Road (LOTICIP):** We are waiting for an easement on Beacon Valley Road. There is a construction meeting for the Beacon Valley Bridge projects next week and that project will begin in the next couple of weeks.
 - c. Rte. 42 **Coventry, Patricia, and Dolly** are almost completed. Paving is being completed and B&W should be done by the end of the week. The 3 roads came out well. B&W is also way ahead of schedule as the end of that project was scheduled for October 2023, but they were able to get that done earlier.
 - d. Dayton shut down the **Burton Road** project so that Eversource could move the poles and work will resume next week. They officially have until November to finish the project. The Construction portion of the job was scheduled from April 15 – October 15. Because they worked through the winter, they should be finished in June 2023.
 - e. **WWTP** – The digester project is underway and McVac is vacuuming out the tank. The electrical project is being finalized by the engineer.

- f. Capital Projects: John Deere tractor has been delivered and the Fire Dept picked up the UTVs today.
- g. Upcoming Projects: Church Street STEAP – We cannot start Church Street until Burton Road is online. There is a lot of lifting for Church Street with sewer work and utilities. There will be a sidewalk coming around Church Street, but the curve will remain the same.
- h. Avenues/Feldspar: Aquarion is working on these roads and the Town will also be completing some work while the roads are open.

8. **Finance Manager's Report:**

- a. AssetTrax: The PO for the asset stickers will be going in shortly. The new AEDs came in and we are using those as a pilot for the Asset tags.
- b. We have been adding credit cards to most of the departments, so we are going to suggest a \$500 credit card for the Town Clerk as a Finance Police revision next month.
- c. There will also be a new policy for EMS Revenue and that language will be ready next month.
- d. Contracts: NJR Construction was awarded the Beacon Valley Bridge contract. A meeting is being scheduled for next week. Bridge work should start as early as the week after next.
- e. EE&A/Revenue: Located in the 4/11/23 version of the budget.
- f. Lines to Monitor – There are a decent amount of lines trending overbudget. A spending freeze memo was blasted out to the departments, which is discouraging discretionary spending. We are keeping the budget tight, so we monitor our surplus.
- g. Capital Projects:
 - Digester tank cleaning is still happening, but the cover will be placed after the tank is cleaned.
 - Fire Dept – A PO for the AFG grant equipment is going in soon.
 - The Tanker and Engine are going to be delayed by at least 6 months.
 - POCD is underway. SLR is gathering data.
 - The Volvo Loader project is moving forward.
 - DPW and Fire Generators – waiting to see if we are on target for August.
- h. Beacon Valley Road LOTCIP: We are awaiting the drainage easement and tree removal and then Beacon Valley Road will go to DOT.
- i. ARPA Funds are winding down and the balance of funds may be spent on the Avenues. Aquarion is doing work on Feldspar and while they are opening the roads, we had cameras on the sewers and there was a collapse on Avenue E, so we will be replacing that sewer piping. Projects on these old roads seem to grow as problems are located.
- j. Grants: N. Nau is completing the renewal of the town's SAM registration which allows application for federal grants.
 - EV Grant – We have applied for the State DEEP grant, and there is no word yet on these EV Charging stations. N. Nau will be applying for a new EV grant opportunity as well.
 - SS4A -This is the \$4M Main Street project through the NVCOG which was declined, but it has been resubmitted through DeLauro's office.
 - CIF Grant for Community Center was declined this round. 2 Community Centers were funded, so we need to bolster our goals and resubmit for June 30th.
 - WCAAA – We asked for an increase for the WCAAA bus riders grant due to increased use of the bus, we requested to double our \$5300 award next year.
 - License Plate Reader – The Police Department are seeking 8 license plate readers, which will be mounted in cars or stationary locations. This is a Homeland Security Grant application which N. Nau will be completing.

- 9. **Finance Policy Manual:** No changes presented at this time. N. Nau expects to present changes next month.

10. Old Business:

- a. Master Fee Schedule – This is beginning to move forward to the attorney. The project is no longer on hold and

11. New Business:

a. Budget Transfers: The following budget transfer were presented:



TOWN OF BEACON FALLS

FY23

For 4/10 & 4/11/23 Meetings

04/06/2023

FY23 TRANSFERS

#	TRANSFER FROM:			TRANSFER TO:			Explanation
	Amount	Line	Description	Line	Description	Amount	
1	\$ (4,000.00)	10.90.83.1170	Contingency	10.90.44.1122	Fire - Heating Fuel	\$ 4,000.00	Propane costs at Station 2, higher fuel costs
2	\$ (4,000.00)	10.90.13.1235	Wage Salary Adjustments	10.90.11.1024	WEO Wages	\$ 4,000.00	WEO working more hours.
3	\$ (1,500.00)	10.90.03.1495	Town Hall Education	10.90.57.1656	Safety	\$ 1,500.00	Hearing Testing - OSHA Required
4	\$ (2,000.00)	10.90.83.1170	Contingency	10.90.57.1656	Safety	\$ 2,000.00	SDS Books - Hazcompliance
5	\$ (14,146.00)	12.90.53.1005	Police Carport Project	12.90.53.1006	Police Generator Project	\$ 14,146.00	Movement to new project
6	\$ (1,854.00)	10.90.53.1010	Resident Trooper	12.90.53.1006	Police Generator Project	\$ 1,854.00	Balance of Generator Project
7	\$ (8,000.00)	10.90.59.1720	Mandated Storm Drains	10.90.59.1670	Street Sweeping	\$ 8,000.00	Increases costs
8	\$ (19,999.00)	10.90.59.1685	Snow Removal Materials	10.90.59.1782	Pavement Maintenance	\$ 19,999.00	Less salt needs this year due to mild winter; For Rimmson Hill Overlay
TOTAL	\$ (55,499.00)					\$ 55,499.00	

TP made a motion to approve the transfers totaling \$54,999, as presented. DF seconded the motion. All ayes.

11. Budget Discussion with BOS: The Board of Selectman convened for the Budget Workshop discussion working from a 4/11/23 budget draft.

N. Nau noted that we are waiting for BOAA appeals adjustments and the prorations on the Grand list figures.

Revenue – Beginning with discussion on revenue lines, the Boards discussed reducing revenue lines for Prior Year Tax Collection/Interest and offsetting changes with increases to Supplemental MV Revenue. Discussion continued about trends in Building Permit revenue and Conveyance revenue from the Town Clerk, given the slowing housing market. G. Smith noted that when the housing market cools, the building market heats up. The STIF account interest rates have been very favorable, so interest can be increased. The Board concluded with the following changes:

- Supplemental MV – Increase by \$20,000 to \$220,000
- Prior Taxes – Reduce by \$20,000 to \$230,000
- Leave Interest alone.
- Building Permits – Reduce to \$175,000
- Conveyance – Reduce to \$100,000
- Town Clerk Recording Fees – Reduce to \$40,000
- Interest – Increase to \$70,000

G. Smith noted that we need to realistic with these numbers, while presenting favorable numbers to the public. Volume is declining with the revenue lines which were discussed.

Expenditures: The Boards discussed the following line items and made changes as noted below:

- IT – Increase IT by another \$1,000 to \$90,000. BHC is now being supported fully by Novus and these funds will allow data to be backed up properly.
- Education – This line has not been fully utilized in recent years. Reduce to \$4,000.
- Electricity lines were discussed and not changed. The Town is locked in with electric rates for the next 8 months. JC noted that rates should be coming down in July, so negotiations in the Fall should be favorable.
- Open Space Maintenance – This \$5,000 line for Conservation Commission maintenance was reduced to \$1,000.
- Employee Benefits – It should be noted that Medical Insurance plans, employee percentages, etc. are still being negotiated.
- EDC Development – TP suggested that until a plan is in place for an ECD consultant, these funds could move to a Capital Project, so they do not impact taxes this year. In the future this would be an operating item, so others were not in favor of moving a potential operating expense to capital. GS noted there are challenges with obtaining a qualified EDC consultant or commercial real estate agent for \$25,000. A regional set up does not favor Beacon Falls over other towns. No action taken with this line.
- Registrar of Voters – Their salaries will remain flat at \$27,500.
- Early Voting – Based on the latest information from the State on requirements, this line was increased to \$8,000.
- Legal Fees & Engineering – GS is encouraging these lines to stay where they are.
- Human Resources – PB asked about the worth of Human Resources and GS noted that they are very valuable to the Town for hiring and all personnel issues. They recently took on administering the Service Award program for the Fire Dept.
- Fire Dept – Air Bottles & Air Packs – The Fire Chief was asked how many of these does BHC have and has not produced this information. Questions arose as to how many bottles and air packs we need? It is life saving and necessary equipment, but are we overstocked? What is the inventory and with a 10-year life span what is the replacement schedule? The air bottle replacement line will remain flat at \$6,500. The air pack replacement line was also kept flat at \$22,500.
- Fire Marshal – Continuing Ed monies have not been spent in the past. The Fire Marshal needs 90 hours of CE every 3 years. Budget was not changed.
- Police Uniforms – TP asked about the increase in the uniform line give past trends. New hires are expensive to outfit. GS has a goal of having every shift full so we have always at least 1 officer on call, which may require more hiring next year. In FY2025, GS will be petitioning for a 4th full time officer. Budget was not changed.
- Animal Control Contract – Supplies and Mileage lines for the Animal Control officer were moved into the Animal Control Contract line.
- Veterans Funeral Line – Eliminate \$200 as this line has gone unused.
- Municipal Historian – Eliminate \$250 per MK, as this line has gone unused.
- Trash & Recycling – DF asked about the 20% increase to this line. An RFP for these services will be issued and statewide costs have been increasing drastically. GS noted that there is a need to educate the public about clean recycling, which may allow the town to receive a rebate in the recycling market. Budget was unchanged.
- YMCA Budget – TP requested that the Town remove the \$15k from the budget, as the relationship over the past 2 years has not brought the programming to the Town that was expected. Lack of coordination between Parks & Recreation, Library, etc. GS agreed. \$15,000 YMCA contract was removed from the budget.
- Independence Day Celebration – This budget is now \$20,000 for a celebration which has been scaled back in recent years. The board considered reducing the cost of the fireworks celebration. No action was taken to this budget line.
- N. Nau noted that the Region 16 Budget has increased by \$320,000.

Capital projects – N. Nau ran through the capital projects, noting changes:

- She is confirming with the Fire Chief that the price quoted for Replacement of BH7 Ambulance is an HGAC contract price.
- Pent Road Walking Track- Public Works received a quote for replacing the walking track with crushed stone and that cost was about \$80,000 which is higher than expected and does not reflect significant savings over paving. The budget reflects replacing the asphalt/repaving at a cost of \$110,000. After discussion, the project was left in the budget.

WH noted that while the track is a good investment for the town to maintain our assets, it is a “nice to have” item and if more cuts are needed, the path and fireworks would be among the first to go.

DF asked about the use of Fund Balance to balance this year's budget. GS is not in favor of using Fund Balance. The minimum undesignated fund balance percentage is 12%.

N. Nau made changes to the budget in real time, so that the board could see the impact of their changes.

BOS – MK made a motion move the 4/12/23 Budget draft for publication to the public and to Board of Finance for presentation at a Public Hearing. PB seconded the motion. All ayes.

BOF – WH made a motion move the 4/12/23 Budget draft for publication to the public and for presentation at a Public Hearing. TP seconded the motion. All ayes.

The boards discussed potential dates for the upcoming **Public Hearing on the FY2024 Municipal Budget**. They settled on **Thursday, April 27th**. At 7:00 PM at the Senior Center.

The Boards will meet immediately following the Public Hearing to make further changes and set the Town Meeting for the Budget Vote. The tentative proposed date for the vote would be Thursday, May 11th.

12. Adjournment: W. Hopkinson made a motion to adjourn at 9:50 PM. S. Leeper seconded the motion. All ayes.

Respectfully Submitted,

Erin A. Schwarz

Finance Office