

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



BEACON FALLS BOARD OF SELECTMEN
Monthly Meeting
October 5, 2020
MINUTES
(Subject to Revision)

1. Call to Order / Pledge of Allegiance

Selectman Gerard Smith called the meeting to order at 7:01 P.M.

Members Present: Gerard Smith (GS), Mike Krenesky (MK), Chris Bielik (CB)

Others Present: 7 members of the public

2. Read & Approval Minutes from Previous Meetings

Minutes from BOS Monthly Meeting held on 9.14.2020

Minutes from BOS Special Meeting held on 9.29.2020

Motion made to approve the minutes as presented – MK/CB, all ayes

3. Comments from the Public

None

4. Resident Trooper/Police Report

Motion to approve Resident Trooper Report as presented – CB/MK, all ayes

5. Wastewater Treatment Plant Report

Motion to approve Wastewater Treatment Plant report as presented – MK/CB, all ayes

MK – Do we ever ask for a consolidated year to year report? I am not sure if there is a reason to do it or not. We do not see a running total. GS – I think it is a good thought and I will talk to Tom. CB – There may be some value to see an annual historic trend, like utility bills format.

6. Report of Public Works

Motion to approve Public Works report as presented – MK/CB, all ayes

GS – finished just about all the catch basins. MK – I was over on Stoddard and they look ready.

7. Report of the Fire Marshal

Motion to approve the report for the Fire Marshal as presented – MK/CB, all ayes

GS – they did do a review of town municipal buildings and I have Peter working on items to bring us into compliance. Minor items like batteries in lights etc. MK – did we get a report back from our EMD on his inventory in the lower level closet? GS – No, but I do not think he is done yet. I can follow up with him.

8. Report of the Finance Manager

Motion to approve and forward to BOF for discussion at monthly meeting – CB/MK, all ayes

GS - Report is now online. The pages printed are just the cover sheet.

9. Report of the Tax Collector

Motion to approve and forward to BOF for discussion at monthly meeting – CB/MK, all ayes
MK – recommended having report put online versus printing. GS – I will talk with her about consolidating information. CB – while I appreciate the detail, the first packet is about a dozen pages and all for the same property lien. GS – the only reason she did that was because this lien was for a trailer and it is the only tax lien we could not enforce. This was a long-standing issue.

10. Report of the Town Treasurer

Motion to approve both August and September reports and forward to BOF for discussion at monthly meeting – CB/MK, all ayes

CB – interest rates are not getting any better. 20% decrease from August to September.

11. Report of the Town Clerk

Motion to approve and forward to BOF for discussion at monthly meeting – MK/CB, all ayes

12. Report from Economic Development

No report provided.

13. Report of the Library

Motion to approve and forward to BOF for discussion at monthly meeting – CB/MK, all ayes GS – everyone seems to be happy with the Library and their performance.

14. Report of the Fire Department

No report provided this month.

15. Any other reports

a. Report of the Custodian

MK – we had a brief conversation about the brick and mortar on this building and I noticed Pete was with someone looking at the foundation. GS – I have not discussed it with him. He is doing a lot more outside grounds work. MK – every other day it looks like there is an issue in the ladies' room. I am not sure if we should call roto roter or not. That is something that we should do annually. Do we know if the town can participate in the sewer program that aquarian has? GS – I think it is only residential, but we can look into that program.

Motion to approve the report as presented – CB/MK, all ayes

Report of the Town Nurse – (Quarterly) - Motion to approve the report as presented – CB/MK, all ayes

GS – Sue assisted with the COVID-19 testing this past weekend. CB – Eva Newell helped coordinate that as well. Shout out to them both for being able to provide that service.

b. Report of the Animal Control Officer - Motion to approve the reports for July, August, and September – MK/CB, all ayes

GS - We did not have the State sheets previously, so we now have those, and the September detailed report attached. One question that I have is if he is citing people for all the roaming dogs. CB – the bear report on Rice Lane Ext. was in my backyard.

c. Community Media Center Building Committee – NONE

d. Park Trails Report

Motion to approve report as presented – CB/MK, all ayes

GS – Park Ranger Al has been good with patrolling and signs etc.

e. BOE Report - none

16. Reading of Correspondence & Payment of Invoices

a. Thank you letter from Park Ranger Al and his wife for flower arrangement.

b. Letter from Town of Beacon Falls Economic Development Commission (attached) on various approved items that they wanted reviewed by BOS. GS – I am glad they recommended an MOU with Naugatuck Valley Economic Development Commission. That is a resource to fill the loss of CERC. They have let us know they

are interested but I do not want to draft an MOU just yet. I am still meeting with other individuals. GS - please forward the second item to the Town Planner and the third item to Finance.

- c. GS read memo from the Library and Conservation Commission regarding the first annual Scarecrow Contest. They will be put up on the lawn of town hall and residents will be able to vote for their favorite. MK - Anything that we can do to involve the community is a great idea. Seymour has a scarecrow on just about every light post. GS - I am glad to hear that and I was talking to NVHD earlier today and I asked her about Halloween. They stated that there are no guidelines/restrictions. They are encouraging social distancing etc. and do not wear a mask over a mask. So, officially the town is not putting any restrictions on door to door trick or treating and I am glad we do not have too.
- d. Letter of Resignation from Steven Ruhl who has resigned from the Park & Recreation Commission and as Municipal Historian. **Motion made to accept this resignation with regret, MK/CB, all ayes**

17. Old Business

- a. **Town Sesquicentennial Celebration – Update;** GS – I spoke with Peter and we both agreed that before we know it this will be here, and we have to make this a priority. MK- technically it is an open meeting and the same 5 people have been involved. Lisa is working on brochure to use for local business and I have held off on calling a meeting so that she could finish that document. We may be able to meet by the end of the week. We have a tentative kick off for December and are still trying to put together an actual program. GS – I would like to sit in on the next meeting.
- b. **Wolfe Avenue House – Update** GS- we did not move the referendum. We closed it out because none of the bids were adequate to do the job.
- c. **Ordinance Committee –** GS – they are working diligently, and we are doing General Code which will help them make the changes for the ordinances.

18. New Business

- a. **Appointments & Reappointments –**
 - **Planning & Zoning –** Michael Rupsis expires on 11/8/2020, which is prior to our next meeting. **Motion made to reappoint Michael Rupsis to the Planning & Zoning Commission – MK/CB, all ayes**
 - **Park & Recreation –** one opening with no one to fill yet.
 - **Municipal Historian –** CB made a motion to appoint Selectman Krenesky as Municipal Historian, GS seconded, all ayes. MK abstained. No discussion
- b. **Tax Refunds –** GS – entertain a motion to approve refunds in the amount of \$641.76 CB/MK, all ayes.
- c. **Phase 3 Reopening –** GS – I called Jessica at the NVHD and she is going to send me guidelines regarding reopening more and the Senior Center. I asked her what our surrounding towns are doing, and she informed me most of them are still remote. NVHD stated numbers are on an uptick and they are predicting a further uptick. They are not trending enough to panic but they are being cautious about what they are doing. For this month, we should remain as we are, and I think we are in a good place. I do not feel that the public is terribly inconvenienced. There is talk because we are close public meetings, but we are open for town meetings and the short answer is that we must have meetings to move forward. To have a one-off meeting is easier to control then having every Board meeting open. Board meetings allow the public to listen, they can participate and submit comments before and after. The public is very much included and its easier because they can attend from the comfort of home. We will continue to revisit this as we get more information. MK – there are countries in Europe that are putting restrictions back in place because it is getting as bad as it was back in April, May, and June. GS – and things are opening back up. CB – people are going out to eat more and there is

more exposure. All the public health official stated a second wave in the fall. The same thing happened with the Spanish Flu pandemic. I think it is prudent to have us continue doing the things that are working for us. GS – sounds like we are all in agreement to stay status quo. I just heard that the Mayor of New York is looking into closing schools and a bunch of other things etc. I do not want to see us take a step forward to have to take a step back.

- d. **Board of Assessment Appeals** – GS we had an incident after the last BOAA meeting. A resident came to Town Hall the next afternoon to file a complaint. She attended the BOAA meeting as directed and then the Chair inappropriately showed up at her house later that night (after 10:00PM) with an alcoholic beverage in his hand and made her feel very uncomfortable at her home. I do have the police report here for those who would like a copy, it is a public document. There was no denying of what happened. The next morning, the Chair was in Town Hall prior to it opening, in the Tax Office, just sitting there. Our Tax Collector shows up and he just sat there and stared at her. He did not say hello or introduce himself. She asked who he was, and he identified himself and said he was there for the Assessors. The building was closed and there was no need for him to be in the building let alone in the Assessor's office. That was a separate complaint filed with Human Resources. He is an elected official, so we do not have many options. The Board of Selectmen are responsible for keeping our residents and employees feeling safe, especially with our elected officials. Like it or not, he is part of our administration and I would like a motion to draft a letter to the Chairman of the BOAA asking him to respectfully step off the Commission considering the behavior that has been experienced over the last 30 days. MK/GS – CB for discussion, is the Chairman of BOAA one of the people listening tonight? Clerk – yes. CB – this is a difficult situation, as the First Selectmen rightly points out, as an elected official of the town, the ability of the BOS to take administrative action is negligible. GS – we are just asking for the individual to do the right thing. CB – if we believe his behavior is so egregious that we feel he should be removed from the position, there is a process for that, where he would be have the right to represent himself or retain an attorney and it would have to go through the Superior Court system. I have spoken with the Resident State Trooper and the Chairman. A point of concern was if there would be charges filed against the Chairman for any incidences that occurred. The Resident Trooper stated no violations of Statutes occurred, so no charges filed. Had that been the case then our position of the Board of Selectmen and our actions would be extremely clear. I do not think the Chairman was aware of the ramifications of his actions. He has served for about 17 years now and this is the first time something like this has occurred. I am not going to make an excuse for what he did. Knocking on someone's door at 10 at night was not appropriate but I think we need to look at the intent. My understanding of the situation is, and our investigating officer and Resident Trooper did not find any malicious intent. I have a personally relationship with the Chairman and my initial thought was that I should rescues myself from this discussion, but I do not think that is the right thing to do. I need to make sure that my feelings are expressed and then everyone can do with what they want to with that. This is just my perspective. GS – I will not get into the detail of the report. CB – I think that would be helpful. GS – the report states that he showed up at her door at 10:15pm with a drink in his hand. I am not understanding what an elected official from the BOAA is doing showing up at 10:15pm, with a drink in his hand at a woman's house he never met before that night. Also, it is my understanding that the DTC of which the Chairman is a member, has started the process of removing him from that committee. When I spoke with the attorney about this conversation, he stated that there is a process but to avoid the process it was suggested that we as the Board of Selectmen ask for the resignation. MK – I

appreciate your points CB, but I am greatly concerned because of the way this transpired. Intent, no intent, we do not know how many drinks he had prior or the condition he was in when he got there. We all agree this was inappropriate. This offense is a violation of trust and ethics of an elected office and while the overall process to remove someone could be lengthy, maybe we should put forward a complaint to our Ethics Board. There are multiple ways we can walk through this. We have a responsibility as the leaders of this community to take a stand and not accept this behavior. GS – one last thing, this resident fled her home! Just because someone has been on a board and done something for 17 years it does not excuse the highly inappropriate nature of what happened. CB – our Ethics Board that meets is a very narrow and specifically tailored to the State General Statutes and scope of responsibility is anything that has do to with using your office for monetary compensation. Ethics Board is not appropriate venue for this issue. **GS – moved the motion to draft a letter to the Chairman of the BOAA asking him to respectfully step off the Commission considering the behavior that has been experienced over the last 30 days MK/GS, CB, nay.**

e. Letter opener for Clerk's Office – Motion made to add to the agenda under New Business number 18e – CB/MK, all ayes

GS – there is a large amount of mail coming in and still to come. The Town Clerk showed me a video on how the machine works and it could save a lot of time and manpower that is spent opening letters etc. GS reviewed ways to purchase the machine. GS recommended taking the money for the purchase from Contingency. **Motion made to approve the purchase of the letter opening in the amount of \$1,400 as a transfer from Contingency to the Town Clerks expense and add it to the current budget transfers. This would change the total of the Transfer's to \$29,339 – CB/MK for discussion – I did do some research on this myself after speaking with the Town Clerk. I just want to make sure this is the right machine for the volume that we have in Beacon Falls. Yes, we have a one-time influx of mail now, and during tax time, this will be helpful. I know there is an urgency, but we need to confirm it is available to be purchased. GS – Town Clerk can do all the research on machines and then once this purchase is approved by the BOF he will be able to order it - all ayes**

19. Budget Transfer Requests – GS – 5 budget transfers. GS provided brief description of the transfers. 1. Phone for EMD, 2. Phones for Public Works, 3. Novus server and printer project, 4. Loaner ambulance 5. Tree work from Hurricane Isaias. **Motion to approve transfers in the amount of \$27,939 and forward to the BOF for their review & approval - CB/MK, all ayes**

20. Executive Session – none

21. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 8:12 P.M. CB/MK, all ayes

Respectfully submitted,

Kerry McAndrew
First Selectman's Office Administrator/Clerk