



**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 20, 2024, 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, P. Betkoski, K. Brennan, S. Leeper, W. Giglio, K. Lembo, B. Catanzaro

Members Absent: J. Carroll

Others Present: N. Nau, J. Betkoski, A. Daigle, L. Daigle, L. Greene, J. Bilsky, J. Chadderton, E. Setaro-Posick, D. Ferretti, J. Piccirillo, J. Delonick, C. Brennan, Cody Brennan, B. DeGeorge, P. Monti, J. Rodorigo, J. Krenesky, S. Northrup

Other Virtual Via TEAMS: T. Carey, R. Pruzinsky, L. Fennell

- **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. G. Smith looks forward to hearing from everyone tonight.
- **Department 01: First Selectman** – IT, HR, Legal, Engineering, Consultants – G. Smith noted that all the consultants remain the same. He does not have any capital projects outside of road projects. The consultant budgets are flat.
- N. Nau noted that townwide we have several projects which are partially funded by grants, including the EVS Charging station at the commuter lot which is partially funded by DEEP and from Bonded funds and the Community Center, which is a DECD grant that we are waiting for a decision on. The Town will need to budget for our match to these grants. Architectural services for the Community Center are the Town's match. K. Brennan would like to review capital project balances for projects which are not moving forward. We will also be managing Beacon Valley Road East, which is a LOTCIP grant with some funds coming from Bonded projects.
- **Department 03: Town Hall** - E. Schwarz reviewed Town Hall budget lines, expecting to increase office supplies, solar generation costs, building and elevator maintenance for the Town Hall. Finance will be pricing all the electric, heat and water budget lines based on usage with projected pricing. For Capital projects at Town Hall, we have a quote for new flooring on the first floor and are awaiting quotes on replacement of 2 air handlers and the roof on the outdoor staircase. N. Nau is working on the quote for the IT Consultant, and we are working on IT projects each year, to move the Town forward with security and equipment. K. Brennan asked for feedback on the IT provider, Novus Insight, and overall, the Town staff is very happy with their service. The staff is not as comfortable with the help desk as the staff is less familiar with the Town. The technicians who come on-site are very responsive. G. Smith finds Novus very professional and knowledgeable.
- **Department 05: Town Clerk** – L. Greene requested 2 operating budget line item changes this year. He is moving funds from one line item to another. Reducing Lease-Purchase Copier and increasing the Map printer line, as it is now 5 years old and may need some other parts. The useful life on the Map Printer is 10 years. N. Nau asked the Town Clerk to consider a maintenance contract for the map printer and he will investigate that.

- Capital project for Town Clerk – L. Greene has one project to renovate the office, new custom counters, paint, carpeting for \$18,000. The timing would be next year after the election, about a year from now. He expects that weekend work would be needed to be less disruptive. Town Clerk's LOCIP, Historical preservation funds have added up and he has the funds to cover this in Town Clerk funds. K. Brennan asked about the other Town Hall counter projects, at the Assessor and Library and asked about combining the work under one contractor for mobilization. M. Krenesky asked about design changes and L. Greene noted that there is a custom wide counter needed, but otherwise the work is standard. There are 2 servers and 2 monitors at each station.
- **Department 07: Tax Collector** – J. Bilsky noted that she has 2-line-item increases related to QDS: increases for Computer Licenses & Support and Computer Printing. She is requesting moving the PT Assistant Tax Collector to a full-time position. The Town is growing, and she is sending out 100 more tax bills, and more delinquent statements than she has in the past. They are always searching for delinquent taxpayers, and they make courtesy calls to businesses that have fallen behind. This is reflected in the personal property tax collections which are higher this year at 98.6%. Her office is consistent with collections, and in months other than July/January they send assessment bills, delinquent statements, researching out of town taxpayers, assist walk in clients. J. Bilsky would like to move her from 20 hours per week to 35 hours per week to better assist her in the office. K. Brennan asked would bringing an increase in hours to full time, does that lead to an increase in our tax collection rates. J. Bilsky advised that this would be her main objective: to increase collections. The Assistant Tax Collector works 35 hours per week for 3 months out of the year at present. The full-time position would have additional benefits which would also need to be budgeted under Benefits.
- **Department 15: Assessor** – J. Chadderton has one capital project which is Revaluation, as the State has moved up the Revaluation cycle to 2025. It is an update, but she is budgeting \$100,000 - \$50,000 for FY2025 and \$50,000 for FY2026. She is requesting increases for her budget lines, which pertain to QDS Computer Licenses and Printing, and her Office Supplies line due to higher costs of JD Power books. She is adding costs for GIS mapping which will include map updates and new flyover costs 2023. Her final request is to request that the Assistant Assessor work 35 hours per week in her office. Currently, she is a full-time employee who is split between 2 departments and giving her more hours in the Assessor's office will allow her to be fully trained to take over the position. M. Krenesky asked if updated maps will improve the imaging on the website and it will.
- **Conservation Commission**: J. Delonick noted that the commission is hoping to apply for the DEEP Recreational Trails grant, which will have a town match. The Commission has ambitious plans to link all the trails in town, beginning with linking a trail by Parcel/Acre 39 to Pent Road Recreation Park and the Naugatuck State Forest. In kind support (volunteer hours) are included in the Town's match to this grant at a rate of \$32.00/hour.
- **Departments 19&20: Finance Department** – The FY2023 Audit went very well and included a Federal Single Audit. N. Nau noted Finance is reducing our budget for the audit and actuarial services for FY2025 and increasing our line for Computer Software, as we add Asset Tags townwide and our CIP planning software.
- **Department 21: Economic Development Commission** – J. Betkoski noted that he wants to keep his \$25,000 for marketing consultant. It's time to look into what a consultant can do for the Town to enhance community engagement. He would like to hold a community event for businesses and enhance the commercial business webpage. EDC views Main Street as a priority and wants good things for the Town. G. Smith asked if J. Betkoski has researched the costs for the position and for community engagement. He would need \$1000-\$2000 for an event for businesses. G. Smith supports this but if \$25,000 covers the consultant, how much else is needed for marketing/engagement events? There is \$25,000 in the 2023-2024 budget which has not been utilized, which must be spent before June 30th. N. Nau noted that currently there is no one dedicated to implementing marketing/outreach, so qualifying someone is a priority and can the \$25,000 budget reach the pool of people who will qualify for this part-time position. The request was added to include another \$2500 in the budget for outreach.
- **Department 29: Registrar of Voters** – J. Krenesky noted that the Registrars have several line item changes. In November there will be 14 days of early voting, and here is the possibility of an August primary. The State has sent \$10,500 in Early Voting funds, which will be used for the April primary, and

they have requested a total of \$16,636 for new Early Voting requirements. There is a new Registrar that needs to be certified. The Registrar has requested a wage increase because their duties are increasing. They are planning an Early Voting plan in place at Town Hall where they can access the state system near the ROV office. They hope to move a fireproof cabinet into another locked storage room, so the voters would come into the ROV office to vote, and there is also same day registration over several days.

- **Department 57: Civil Defense/Emergency Management/Homeland Security** – Jeremy Rodorigo is not asking for any increases. Last year, he asked for his salary to be reduced, in favor of an equipment line. The Code Red service will remain the same with a slight increase. He has no Capital projects, and we continue to apply for the EMPG grant from the State each year to offset his costs. M. Krenesky asked Jeremy about the Civil Defense Storage closet at town hall which needs to be cleaned out.
- **Safety Committee** – The Safety Committee agreed to reduce their budget by \$2,000 to \$6,000 at their meeting last week.
- **Department 69: Library** – E. Setaro-Posick is looking to increase the library's part-time wage line to cover the increase in minimum wage. She is reducing her copier lease line and her computer line, while increasing her department supplies and programming line due to rising costs. She is very satisfied with Novus Insight's work with the library. The total increase from the library is \$1818. She has no capital projects currently. The programming increases from past years have increased the library's offerings.
- **Department 77: Minibus for the Elderly** – A. Daigle reported for K. Stevens that they have included an inflationary increase of 3% for gas/maintenance. He noted that Kim goes above and beyond for anyone who has ever utilized her. A. Daigle asked the boards to consider her request of moving from 29 hours per week to 31 hours per week to make her full time and give her benefits. He noted that the Senior Center has increased membership, and the Seniors love her, and she loves the Town. He included the attached letter as correspondence. N. Nau talked to Kim about where the minibus stands as it is a 2015 bus, and we want to ensure maintenance is kept up. The way the 2015 bus was designed, the step is high, and she would like to see a lower step, however the bus is not ready for replacement yet. This sparked a conversation about the efficiency of a smaller vehicle for single trips for medical appointments, so there is a request to consider a sedan or smaller used vehicle as a 2nd vehicle for small scale senior trips.
- **Department 79: Senior Center** – For the Senior Center budget, A. Daigle has requested a 3% increase for inflationary costs across the board. The Senior Center has had tremendous growth over the last couple of years. The Center is very active and are only limited by space. For capital with ARPA funding, he would like to see a bocce court and a patio in the back of the Senior Center for summer use. N. Nau noted that there are some ARPA COVID State funds for Senior Centers - \$23,145, which we can apply for an outdoor senior project, as this would meet COVID goals for facility improvement and senior health. We can explore if these funds can be used for vehicle acquisition.
- **Department 53: Police** – J. Piccirillo noted that the police operating expense increases are inflationary related to contractual increases, vehicle fuel costs, supplies. He is requesting an increase to the body and dash cam line so that the K9 cruiser, which was fully outfitted through in-kind donations, will need a new dash camera to make it fully road worthy. For Capital projects replacing vehicles on a 5-year cycle, the price is a state contract locked in with MHQ at \$67,000, which is an increase from \$63,000. J. Piccirillo noted their state accreditation requires that each officer have their own radio, so he is requesting 2 additional radios for \$10,800 at State contract pricing. This is an officer safety issue. He currently has 9 total radios and this ask will bring them to 11 radios. He wants to replace the sign for the front of the building which is a \$3,000 quote. The current sign is growing mold and looks terrible.
- K. Brennan asked what is happening with the old police car that is being replaced this year. J. Piccirillo would like the 2017 vehicle for road jobs, so it has a platform in the back for signs, cones, and becomes a dedicated traffic vehicle. Finally, he is working on budget numbers for FLOCK license plate reader camera system. Many towns are implementing these license plate readers, and he is working on AXON for a quote. They mount on the side of the road, are powered by a solar panel, and can identify stolen or wanted vehicles as they drive past. Neighboring towns are now implementing these cameras and they would interface. He is looking into a lease program which is \$3300 per camera per year all included, and they offer a 90-day trial period and a 2-year contract. This would be an addition to the operating budget if we pursue the cameras. To cover all the access points in Town, Jay would be thinking about 8 cameras, but he could begin with 2-4 as a starting point. The Police Private Duty funds the capital projects for the Police.

- **Department 11: Land Use** – L. Daigle reported that they are increasing Misc. Expenses. She has implemented Monday.com, which is inexpensive project management software, and she would like to add seats to this software. Land Use is adding funds for supplies for the map printer, which they are using more. They also hope to add a layer to the GIS Mapping, updating a Wetlands layer. She also put in funds for a mapping layer showing status of the detention basins and retention ponds in town, so this is a new line item. The Building Department is thinking of implementing a \$10.00 admin fee for permit issuance, which is a revenue offset. For capital projects, Land Use is seeking permitting software in future budget years. The Building Admin is testing this software in Seymour and Beacon Fall would look forward to implementing it in future years, if it is successful.
- **WPCA:** To be discussed by WWTP. WPCA does not have any budget lines.
- **Department 59: Public Works/Parks** – R. Pruzinsky via TEAMS noted for his operating budget he is requesting increases to Highway and Parks Equipment, Snow Removal (which was cut last year) and salt is \$100/ton, to Vehicle Maintenance (which was cut last year and is currently overbudget), Tree work which has increased to about \$3000 per day with Police coverage. Catch Basin cleaning has an increase on their State bid pricing. There is an increase in material costs for Court Maintenance. They are also putting in a request for the 7th Maintainer.
- For Capital projects: Public Works is looking for a 48-inch tractor for plowing town sidewalks, new siding and a new roof for the Town Garage. The insulation is falling off and ceiling tiles are coming down. They are seeking to reroof the salt shed which is leaking. They have a 2006 F-350 which is due for replacement. They are seeking a replacement for their 1984 asphalt roller, replacement of the Matthies Park Garage doors, which are no longer weather tight in heavy rains. They would like to repave the Town Garage parking lot. K. Brennan noted that Public Works will be returning for dedicated time at a future workshop and noted the Boards will get into detail at that time. G. Smith asked about asnow raider sidewalk machine, and they have looked at different options which work better for different storms/snow. There is a LOCIP project in place for the Town Hall siding for \$61,000 and this project is now \$85,000.
- **Department 71: Parks and Recreation** – P Monti noted that Parks & Recreation is requesting operating increases totaling \$6800 this year. Increases for seasonal wages for summer camp director/assistant director and counselors who make minimum wage. They are looking for an increase for the Independence Day celebration and for Summer Concerts as the bands have higher costs. G. Smith asked if they would expand the program for the fireworks celebration and costs are increasing and the Board would like to draw in some vendors and add some activities. They are putting in no capital projects this year. P. Monti would like to take a step back and implement a thoughtful, phased approach identifying priorities for Matthies Park/Toby's Pond and Park improvements. N. Nau would like to review Parks CIP with the Commission.
- **Department 44: Fire and EMS Services** – B. DeGeorge has requested several operating line increases; annual equipment service costs are increasing; vehicle maintenance increases and cleaning of gear is now required at added costs. Air bottles, hose replacement and Airpack costs increase each year. B. DeGeorge added wage lines for the Assistant Fire Chief and is requesting a pay per call stipend for BHC volunteers at \$5-\$10 per call. Cody Brennan noted that there are 250-300 calls per year at \$7.50 per call. The pay per call would be a retention tool for keeping members, as it costs more to train new fire members and there is more turnover.
- For Capital projects: Cody Brennan explained the Fire Department is seeking a replacement for the Chief's Vehicle which has a 5–7-year life cycle. They are seeking additional 3 Air Packs which are circa 2011 and past their life expectancy and there are 3 currently out of service. Every seat on each vehicle has an Airpack. They are seeking Battery Operated Fans for Engine 1 and Engine 3, which run off batteries. They are seeking Energy Improvements Apparatus Floor electric work and improvements to the building insulation. The Mask Fit Test Machine is no longer an AFG Grant priority, so every year they contract out annual mask fitting (\$30-\$35 per firefighter). The machine would no longer be grant eligible. They are seeking Hose Replacement replacing additional large diameter hoses 3 inch and 5 inch which are prior to 1987 and need to be placed out of service. They are looking at 1200 feet of a 5-inch supply line.
- RIT Pack: This request would be supported by the AFG Grant application. It is a \$10,000 grant with a 5% match and a high priority item for AFG.

SCBA Masks –The new NFPA standards have new standards with the new air packs. They are seeking 25 masks to meet the standards older masks are not compliant. Cody noted that OSHA is updating their standard; and they are releasing a document which will become law, adopting new NFPA/OSHA standards which will result in costs. The Fire Department will be coming back for future workshops.

Department 45: Fire Marshal – B. DeGeorge has inputted an increase to the Fire Marshal stipend to \$40,000. He has requested a 5% increase for the Deputy Fire Marshal and Admin support. They have also requested a Fire Marshal vehicle as a capital project, and a vehicle which can separate their gear/tools in the back is necessary.

Department 67 Wastewater Treatment Plant: T. Carey is requesting increases to his Supplies & maintenance line, which is a \$5,672 increases the line to \$15,000 and he is seeking Plant Operations increase of \$5000. T. Carey noted that the plant will continue to save what they can in Sludge processing and Nitrogen credits. This fiscal year, he plans to transfer what he can from these lines of Equipment Maintenance. He has no new capital projects for this year, as the \$1.5M in Electrical upgrades and generator work is getting underway. The first mixer is working well, and he is working with SLR to put together another task order to put another mixer in the north tank.

Rimmon Hill Schoolhouse – M. Krenesky noted that the Town now owns that land that the schoolhouse is on, and he is interested in saving this old history of Beacon Falls by utilizing a SPHO grant from the State. He would be looking for \$50,000 to match that grant, and he is working with a restoration company. They require a condition assessment first and he is working on that. The Town needs to decide if they wish to save the building and how it would be used.

Conclusion: K. Brennan noted that Town Nurse is retiring in July. G. Smith added this is a Union position which he intends to fully fund, and we will see how the position evolves.

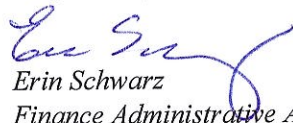
K. Brennan noted that over the next 2 months, the boards will be putting together the budget, and the Finance Office will be in touch with departments for additional discussion. March 5th will be the next Budget Workshop and the Boards decided to ask Police and Public Works back to this meeting.

G. Smith concluded with a thank you to all budget participants.

3. Adjournment: M. Krenesky made a motion to adjourn the BOS workshop at 9:25 PM. P. Betkoski seconded the motion. All ayes.

S. Leeper made a motion to adjourn the BOF portion of the workshop at 9:25 PM. K. Lembo seconded the motion. All ayes.

Respectfully Submitted,



Erin Schwarz

Finance Administrative Assistant

Recommendation for Employee Benefits for Kim Stevens

Dear Board of Finance,

I am writing to urge you to consider extending full-time employee benefits to Kim Stevens, our dedicated Minibus Driver and Assistant Senior Center Director. Kim's unwavering commitment and exceptional service have been instrumental in the Senior Center's remarkable success and growth over the past three years.

Kim consistently goes above and beyond to enrich the lives of our senior citizens. Her dedication extends far beyond driving them to appointments and shopping trips. She actively assists them with groceries, medical calls, and any other needs that arise, ensuring their well-being and fostering a sense of community. **Her kindness and empathy are evident in every interaction, leaving a lasting positive impact on everyone she encounters.**

Kim's contributions extend beyond transportation. She plays a vital role in creating a warm and welcoming environment for our seniors. Her thoughtful gestures, like preparing home-cooked meals for our weekly lunches and bingo dinners, add a special touch that further enhances their experience.

Providing Kim with full-time employee benefits, including health insurance and retirement contributions, is not only well-deserved but also crucial for retaining her invaluable talent. **In today's competitive job market, particularly for skilled bus drivers and senior care professionals, offering comprehensive benefits is essential to attract and retain top talent.** Losing Kim would be a significant loss to our center and the seniors we serve.

Kim not only possesses the necessary licenses for driving the minibus but also carries a heart of gold. Her dedication, compassion, and genuine care for our seniors are truly irreplaceable. I urge you to recognize her exceptional contributions by extending the benefits she rightfully deserves.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Art Daigle
Senior Center Director
Town of Beacon Falls