

**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  
March 22, 2022 MINUTES (Subject to Revision)**

1. **Call to Order / Pledge of Allegiance:** First Selectman G. Smith called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM and led the assembled in the Pledge of Allegiance.
2. **Members Present:** G. Smith, P. Betkoski, M. Krenesky, W. Hopkinson, K. Brennan, D. Fennell, S. West, D. Fennell (7:05 PM)

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

**Others Present:** Finance Manager N. Nau, 1 member of the public

G. Smith proposed tabling the items where motions are required, approval of minutes and budget transfers - until the BOF has a quorum.

3. **Public Input:** No new public input webforms. No comments at this time.

D. Fennell entered the meeting. K. Brennan called the Board of Finance to order at 7:06 PM.

4. **Approval of Minutes:** M. Krenesky made a motion to approve the 3/8/2022 Budget Workshop minutes. G. Smith seconded the motion. All ayes. For the Board of Finance, W. Hopkinson made a motion to approve the 3/8/2022 Budget Workshop minutes. T. Pratt seconded the motion. All ayes.
5. **Budget Transfers:** There are 2 transfers proposed at tonight's meeting, and both will require a Town Meeting to finalize the transfers.
  - a. **Ambulance Payoff:** This is a transfer of up to \$129,000 from Undesignated Fund Balance to the Ambulance Lease line in the Non-Recurring Capital Projects Fund to pay off the balance of the Ambulance lease. N. Nau noted that REV Financial has updated the payoff figure and Finance is proposing a transfer of up to \$129,000. The payoff figure is valid for 30 days.
  - b. The second transfer is to resolve a deficit in the Bonded Projects Funds: \$24,699 transfer from Debt Service Fund to Bonded Projects Fund.
  - c. **MK made a motion to approve both transfers as presented and forward them to a Town Meeting. GS seconded the motion. All ayes. For the Board of Finance, DF made a motion to approve both transfers as presented and forward them to a Town Meeting and TP seconded the motion. All ayes.**
  - d. These transfers along with the previously approved Budget Transfers into the Sludge Processing line will be forwarded to a Town Meeting vote. GS noted that he is close to

finishing an MOU on the Data Center project and then the proposal will be ready for public presentation, and he hopes to set the Town Meeting at that time.

6. **Budget Discussion:**

- a. Expenditure: GS has 2 changes to make on the expense side: First Selectman's Office Manager position is returning to a non-exempt position so that line item will be budgeted based on an hourly rate. The Board & Commission Clerk line will then go back up to \$13,000 as the Office Manager will be paid for clerking meetings from that line. GS has also added a part time Land Use Administrator at 10 hours per week for \$20.00 per hour, so that budget would increase to \$10,400.
- b. GS went around the room to each board member to address their questions/concerns on the budget, starting with T. Pratt.
- c. TP asked about Legal costs which are doubled in this budget, presuming the increase is largely for the Data Center project. He questioned how much in legal fees are we investing in the Data Center and asked that we document the Data Center costs. GS noted that the project will take several years to complete and there will be a big return on the investment. The MOU currently being drafted will lead to an agreement which will require legal review. TP wants to document the project, so we know where the expenses came from and what they were used for. If legal fees being invested in this project total \$300,000 over time, is it worthwhile to create a line item for the Data Center? DF asked if we could track it in a side schedule. The Finance Office can keep a side schedule of Data Center costs including attorney and engineering fees. N. Nau noted the alternative is to name the Data Center as a Capital Project, taking those costs out of the operating budget and tracking expenses as Capital Project costs. If we are projecting costs over the next 2-3 years, we could track it from a project basis. TP wants the Town to have an effective way to track the project, as cleanly as possible. N. Nau will review the options and she confirmed that the legal fees are billed hourly.
- d. T. Pratt also wanted to look at the Vehicle Replacement Fund, which is being funded at \$285,000; \$185,000 for future year vehicle purchases set aside and then \$50,000 towards new Ambulance funding and \$50,000 for plow truck funding; both future purchases. The \$285,000 will come from Undesignated fund balance.
- e. T. Pratt also noted that the Town operating budget has an 11.3% increase, apart from the Region 16 increase; and he wants to be clear in explaining where the increases are coming from. There are significant increases in areas such as trash, fuel, cyberinsurance, sludge processing, debt service. The Boards agreed that we should clarify where there are sizable increases to the Town side of the budget. N. Nau will rethink the presentation of this information in a bulleted list. The narrative has some explanation of these items, but in paragraph form, so the Boards would like to see a concise list. N. Nau is also working on an unfunded mandates list, such as police dash cams and training, showing items which are necessary.
- f. N. Nau projected a page showing Fund Balance calculations for the larger funds: General Fund, Private Duty, Debt Service; demonstrating the fund balance amounts and how they will be used in the FY2023 budget. The town is using \$250,000 from the Debt Service Fund to offset the debt service increase for FY2023. This transfer in is on the revenue side.
- g. T. Pratt had a question concerning detention ponds; some which need to be maintained by the Town, while others landowners are responsible for maintaining. TP would like to see funds dedicated to the maintenance of the Town's detention ponds, so that a contractor can be hired if needed. GS noted that the ponds first need to be identified to determine who is responsible. With the land use admin position and the Town Planners, he wants to identify

the ponds first so that we can address them. Legally, we cannot pay a contractor to work on private property. The ponds have been a long-standing topic of conversation and while GS 100% agrees there is a need to fund something, we are not ready, so the request is premature.

- h. MK asked about the HVA grant which pinpoints anywhere there is potential flooding and if it will apply to detention ponds. N. Nau noted that the intention of the grant is to evaluate fish passage, but it is a good question for the HVA meeting. Toby's Pond is also in a flood plain so that grant may apply to Toby's.
- i. TP asked about the total costs for the new Assistant Director of Public Works position. GS stated that the complete cost is \$120,000, including benefits. Finance confirmed that these costs have been added into the budget.
- j. KB asked about the 36% increase in Town Planner position and what the Town Planner does for the town. GS noted that the Town Planners are NVCOG employees, who do a lot of research for the Land Use department. They do save the Town on some legal fees, and engineering fees, as the planners attend the IWWC and Zoning meetings, in place of attorneys. N. Nau noted that having a planner gives the town a proactive approach to planning rather than a reactive approach. GS agreed they are the first step in getting on track, for Land Use, for EDC, for projects, and instead of reinventing the wheel they have the resources of the NVCOG at their disposal. They are here on site, in town every week.
- k. T. Pratt asked when a road has been paved and then dug up; how does the town ensure the road will be repaired? GS noted that we normally require that a bond be posted and then released when the road is repaired. The process should be monitored more closely, and he hopes an Assistant Public Works Director will make this process smoother, closing loopholes and loose ends.
- l. KB would like to discuss the additional hours being requested for the Deputy Fire Marshal. They put in an increase of 15-20 additional hours per week, including a 2<sup>nd</sup> deputy position. Currently the budget has just a 2.5% increase to the current positions. Does an additional 5-10 hours per week make sense? Discussion focused on expanding the hours of the Fire Marshal and if the 2 Fire Marshals have the bandwidth to take on more hours? If the Board increases the budget, should we leave it to the Fire Marshal to determine how best to divide the hours between the Deputy and a 2<sup>nd</sup> Deputy position, if needed. N. Nau put up information on the revenue for the Fire Marshal Inspections and they have billed only about 15 inspections this fiscal year. The BOS and BOF would like further explanation of the number of hours needed for the inspections, before making a decision and they would like the Fire Marshal to provide additional information.
- m. DF would like to hear more from the WWTP Superintendent on the dewatering process and what it would take to dewater the sludge to reduce the sludge transport costs. Once the digester project is complete, will that improve the dewatering process? DF would like more information to determine if this process can be a project for next fiscal year.
- n. GS asked if there are any more departments, other than Fire Marshal and WWTP, that the board would like to hear from. These 2 departments will be asked to present more information at the next workshop.
- o. On the revenue side, N. Nau pointed out that the State MV cap is still in legislation, so Finance has provided a calculation at the 29 mills for Motor Vehicles. Currently Finance has budgeted \$344,000 in revenue from the State related to this revenue cap.
- p. WH in crunching some numbers noted that the mill rate is a 15.7% deduction, while the property values are increasing 22.5%, so there is a tax increase for those whose value went

- up. She asked when we would have the assessment appeals and proration numbers. GS noted that the appeals are happening now, so we should have those numbers shortly.
- q. GS: Regarding revaluation, it is positive that everyone's property has more value. The revaluation company did a good job explaining the process to those whom they met with, and fewer residents are appearing before the BOAA.
  - r. Another expense item: GS also noted that the Assistant Road Foreman has resigned, so with the Assistant Public Works Director position, there is now no need for the Assistant Road Foreman. The budget can be changed to include 4 Highway Maintainers and no Assistant Road Foreman.
  - s. The Boards agreed that any projects which can take place this year should move forward. The Finance Office is looking at obtaining laptops for the Library, the Senior Center counter project, and some Public Works vehicle repairs which can take place this fiscal year.
  - t. Under Capital Projects: N. Nau would like to incorporate the Rescue ropes in the Fire Dept. Annual budget for regular replacement. She would like to see if BHC can replace the ropes (¼ at a time) so they can be cycled. KB noted that once the rope is 10 years old, it cannot be used in Life Safety situation. Ropes are kept in bags, and they are tagged and stored separately. The Boards agreed to keep the capital project to replace all the rope now, and then include a rope replacement line to get ahead of it for the next round. N. Nau would prefer a Fire Equipment replacement line, so we can address the cycle at the beginning of the life of the rope, rather than at the end of the rope.
  - u. WH asked about the library hours and GS noted that the increase in hours is from 30 hours per week to 35 hours per week to align the library full-time staff hours with the Town Hall. The library will mirror the Town Hall.
7. **Budget Workshop schedule and additional information from departments:** The boards discussed changes to the budget workshop schedule with KB suggesting the next meeting take place at the Regular Board of Finance meeting on 4/12/22. The 4/5/22 workshop will not take place. The hope is to move the entire budget schedule up by 3-4 weeks and present the budget to the public in late April/early May. The BOS & BOF agreed to keep the April 19, 2022, Budget Workshop on the schedule. N. Nau will put the first draft of the budget on the website on 4/5/22 as originally scheduled, to allow the public time to review the document before the Public Hearing.
  8. WH asked about the date for the Town Meeting on the Transfers and GS will work to finalize the MOU so that meeting can be scheduled ahead of the Public Hearing on the Budget.
  9. Capital Projects: N. Nau noted that she was able to work with the Sourcewell consortium vendor to receive final quotes on the generator projects. The Public Works generator is over budget at \$54,000, while the Fire Department generator is now underbudget by \$3-4,000. The generator availability will take up to 8 months. N. Nau suggested that transfers for these projects can take place using Contingency monies when we are ready to proceed.

**Next Budget discussion** will be April 12, 2022, during the Board of Finance Regular Meeting, in person at the Town Hall Assembly Room.

10. **Adjournment:** MK made a motion to adjourn the Board of Selectmen at 8:37 PM. GS seconded the motion. All ayes. WH made a motion to adjourn the Board of Finance at 8:37PM. DF seconded the motion. All ayes.

Respectfully Submitted,

Erin A. Schwarz

Finance Office