

**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 8, 2022
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, P. Betkoski, M. Krenesky, T. Pratt, W. Hopkinson, K. Brennan, D. Fennell (7:15 PM), S. West (7:12 PM)

Members Absent: J. Carroll

Others Present: Finance Manager N. Nau, L. Greene, J. Weid, B. DeGeorge, J. Baldwin, L. Daigle, T. Carey, J. Betkoski, L. Greene, J. Chadderton, Tax Collector J. Bilsky, C. Brennan, Jeremy Rodorigo, E. Setaro, R. Culbertson, J. Piccirillo, S. Mis, K. Stevens, A. Daigle, R. Pruzinsky, D. Ferretti, and 3 members of the public.

2. **Department Presentations:**

G. Smith noted that the purpose of this workshop is to provide a 5-minute-high level overview of department budgets. He asked the presenters to keep their presentations to the 5 minutes and N. Nau will keep a timer running to keep the meeting on track. He thanked everyone for participating tonight and is looking forward to hearing what they have to present.

T. Pratt echoed his thanks for the participation this evening. We have received 1 Public Comment on the FY2023 Budget through the town website FY2023 Public Input form. The comment was regarding Parks and will be discussed in future workshops.

First Selectman: N. Nau noted that the Human Resource budget is increasing \$2900 from last year. G. Smith added that we have been keeping our HR firm very busy and utilizing them often. The IT budget will have 3-5% increase and we have been happy with Novus Insights as our IT provider. The Fire Department had a volunteer executing their IT needs, and they are now seeking professional help with Novus, so this will require an additional \$5k-\$6k for IT.

G. Smith expects considerable legal and engineering costs associated with the data center. He expects that the Data Center project will have separate legal costs. Haynes Group is also coming in with their project on the other side of Rte 42. For these projects the legal and engineering side can be costly, and the town is currently drafting this agreement with a separate legal firm that has experience in TIF financing and this specialized project work. These

projects represent sheer economic growth for the town, so the legal and engineering costs associated with them are a cost for expansion.

S. West joined the meeting at 7:12 PM. D. Fennell joined the meeting at 7:15 PM. T. Pratt called the Board of Finance to order at 7:15 PM, now that a quorum was present.

Town Hall – E. Schwarz expects routine increases to the Town Hall budget for utilities as costs are increasing for electricity, oil, fuel. There will also be routine increases for Legal Notices, as we are doing more advertising, supplies and maintenance items, with inflation in these areas. As we alarm more buildings in Town, the Alarm monitoring line continues to increase to cover maintenance and monitoring. G. Smith noted security at Town Hall has been a project that we will review. While the plan is to keep the budget lean this year, he has looked at getting a key fob system at Town Hall so that may or may not make it onto the Town Hall budget this year.

Town Clerk – L. Greene has made a couple of changes to the operating budget. Town Clerk Expenses were increased, and Election expenses were increased due to COVID. This year there was a normal absentee ballot election cycle, and therefore he is reducing those lines to put the budget back to pre-COVID levels. On the Capital side, he has an open codification project with General Code which will be moving forward. Tom Pratt was working with the ordinance revision commission and the recent ordinance changes will cost money for General Code to recodify. In addition to the \$2988 which remains from the original project, he is requesting an additional \$5,000 for ordinance revisions. M. Krensky noted that with the mid-term elections and State races and potential primaries, will he have enough money in this reduced operating budget. L. Greene believes the \$2,000 budget will cover his absentee ballots for both primary and election.

Safety Committee – The Fire Department submitted 2 Safety projects; AED replacement in all town buildings, along with the regular AED supplies that need to be replaced. J. Weid added that AEDs have a useful life of 10 years, and 14 years is the outside life of the AED. All 14 AEDs in town are past their 14-year life cycle. The project allows for all the units throughout the Town to be replaced and provides funds to keep up on the battery replacement. BHC employees can check the batteries monthly. The pads should be replaced every 2 years and the pad replacement would be part of the Safety operating budget.

The second Safety project is emergency lighting at BHC: The project brings the exit and emergency lighting up to building and fire code, as parts of BHC do not have emergency lighting. B. DeGeorge noted this is an upgrade to electrical wiring, as some exits do not have power running to them, for proper exit lighting.

Building - J. Baldwin has changes to 3 items in his budget. He has requested a salary increase for his position, as Building inspector, noting that the State is adopting new, additional code requirements which will need to be enforced. He is also requesting a wage increase for Lisa's role as Land Use Administrator. The Town has an MOU with Seymour for use of his vehicle, and he requested a \$300 increase for the mileage line. The State has not adopted the new code yet, but they expect to adopt the new code in October 2022. J. Baldwin also noted that revenue is outperforming the expected budget numbers for Building Permits.

Assessor – J. Chadderton does not have any capital projects this year. For operating budget changes, she is requesting a wage increase for L. Daigle as her Clerk, as Lisa is completing her last assessor's course and she will be a certified assessor this Fall. With that accomplishment, she will have more responsibilities and deserves an increase in pay. J. Chadderton has increased her computer license and support line to include regular increases from QDS as well as a new QDS program for personal property, which is well worth it. June has been in touch with other assessors using the personal property module and based on their recommendations, it will be a worthwhile addition. There is also a requested increase in the Education budget for both June and Lisa to attend Assessor school.

BOF & Finance – E. Schwarz noted there is an increase to the audit line per contract and a decrease to actuarial costs. N. Nau spoke regarding Department 20 adding finance wage increases at 2.5%. Finance has increases to the Computer Licenses and Support for maintenance to the new Finance software modules: Dept POs, Accounts Receivable and Asset Trax. Finance will have a project for Asset tags for tagging all our assets to track maintenance and information on all assets. We are currently researching ways to tag all our assets town wide. Slate Pages is one provider and the benefit of using their tags, utilizes a QR code and phone, rather than a special scanner. Slate pages cost \$2000 to tag over 300 assets. The Finance Software provider, Harris would need to integrate Slate Pages to the Asset Trax module to fully integrate and there would be annual subscription charges. We have a balance of \$13,500 in our Financial Accounting software project, which would be used towards this project.

EDC – J. Betkoski noted that EDC is keeping their budget flat for this year. EDC is looking at hiring an EDC coordinator for the town and with the proposed projects which are coming up, J. Betkoski noted the Town needs someone to consult on these projects and to continue the revitalization of North Main Street. J. Betkoski thanked N. Nau for her work in obtaining the \$600,000 Connectivity Grant for lower Main Street. We need to do some work on Main Street. EDC is also working to update the Beacon Falls business website. J. Betkoski is excited about what is going on with Economic Development. We need to make the bank, BF Pizza and BF Market a priority. N. Nau added that the Connectivity grant was turned down last year and now we were happy to accept the grant this year. G. Smith added that he hopes to use the Connectivity grant for improvements for both North and South Main Street.

IWWC – L. Daigle noted there are capital projects for IWWC. The operating proposal shows an increase of \$1949 for the IWWC Enforcement Officer to work some additional hours this upcoming fiscal year. He currently is budgeted for 2 hours per week. IWWC has also added \$300 for Wetlands Markers to identify protective boundaries.

Conservation Commission – Conservation Commission has a meeting tonight, so they submitted some notes which N. Nau reviewed. They do not have any capital projects and they hope to complete more tree work, needed at Lantern Ridge to make it accessible to the public. They hope to fix the kiosk at Lantern Ridge as well. They made an Open Space inventory to allow the Town an acquisition plan to make a network of open space. For 2020, they did some outreach and community work.

P&Z – L. Daigle noted there are no operating changes to the P&Z budget. The Capital project is for the Plan of Conservation and Development and totals \$24,000 to assist with the preparation

and roll out of the POCD which is required every 10 years. L. Daigle looked back at what work was completed in 2003 and 2013 and last time the POCD cost \$19,950. P&Z added inflation to reach the \$24,000 budget. The Wetlands Enforcement Officer can work hours on this project and P&Z expects to use consultants, the Town Planner, the NVCOG and graphic designers can all be hired using this project money.

WPCA – No one was available to speak for WPCA.

Registrar of Voters – M. Krenesky relayed that the ROV operating budget has 2 changes. They are reducing the certification and workshop budget and increasing election expenses.

Fire & EMS – B. DeGeorge noted that the Fire Department has major capital projects which require a longer discussion. There is a project for the replacement of Engine 5 with a Brush unit. Engine 5 would be traded in and would produce revenue to offset the purchase. There is a project for a Mezzanine for the Firehouse. There is a section of the Firehouse which is not useful for storage and this renovation would allow them to move gear off the floor. They have resubmitted their projects for Paratech struts and kits. N. Nau has applied for an AFG Grant for these items, but we will not know if the grant has been approved until summer, so the project may still need to be funded. They submitted a project for the replacement of BH7 which is the older Ambulance. The ambulance build is 18 months out and BHC put it in this year's budget due to the lead time, as it would be arriving 18 months from now. They are requesting a Ford Transit van for traffic control, as traffic control items are stored everywhere and would secure all the assets in one area. They resubmitted the project for Spreaders, rams and cutters which were also part of the AFG grant application. If the AFG Grant does not get approved, this spreader, rams and cutters would be a priority. They have a project for rope replacement for rope rescues. As with Firehoses, there is also a life cycle to replace ropes and the project put them on the proper cycle. For Operating budget changes: B. DeGeorge is requesting an increase for Fire Admin Asst – small increase for her. The Software & IT line would increase reflecting the costs for Novus insights to take over IT maintenance for the Fire Dept. There is an increase to EMS Supplies due to increasing medical supply costs. The Fire Department is also submitting a project for an architect for \$5,000 to design plans for another bay on one side of the Firehouse. The addition to the Firehouse would eventually be an AFG Grant linked with cancer prevention, which N. Nau explained is a growing priority for Firehouses, to vent BHC from exhaust fumes and to keep gear in a separate space from vehicle emissions.

Fire Marshal – B. DeGeorge noted that they are requesting increases to operating budget in Wages which would increase to allow more time for inspections for the Deputy Fire Marshal as they are lacking hours to get the projects done. Beacon Mill Village and Beacon Valley Condos would be locations where larger inspections would occur. They are making progress with the office and adding time to add a Second Deputy Fire Marshal or to take on special projects. They have also added expenses for vehicle increases; J. Weid noted that the Vehicle expense line is currently for mileage reimbursement for the Deputy Fire Marshal and once a Fire Marshal vehicle is added, the line would also be for gas and vehicle maintenance. For Capital projects, they have increased their budget for the Fire Marshal vehicle which was approved last year. The increase in the cost of trucks and radios and upgrades needed increase the cost of the vehicle to \$52,000 total for the Fire Marshal vehicle. N. Nau is currently working on applying for a Fire Prevention and Safety Grant for fire extinguisher safety equipment program.

EMD – No capital or operating proposed for the EMD. There will be a 5% increase for the Code Red system. Jeremy Rodorigo later added that he is not requesting any new lines or submitting any projects.

Tax Department – J. Bilsky noted that she does not have any capital projects. She has a 5% increase for Computer Programs from QDS. She is reducing the education line for next year, as she is halfway through her certification classes and her Assistant is not pursuing them. She is asking for increase for Jen Peters to work additional hours when the Tax Collector is out on leave. Currently, the budget allows the Assistant to work full time during heavy tax months: July & January, but J. Bilsky would like additional coverage when she is not in the office.

Police – Trooper Ryan Culbertson and Officer J. Piccirillo – For operating increases, R. Culbertson noted that they have increased Building Ops and Maintenance for increases in utilities and there are wage increases for the FT Officer/PT Officers/and the Police Clerk. The Resident Trooper budget is forthcoming from the State and Trooper Culbertson will provide that figure as soon as it is available. The PT wage increase mirrors the FT increase which is contracted. R. Culbertson noted that the Training line is increasing significantly with new mandates in training due to the Police Accountability bill, required mental health screening and drug screening as well as mandated use of force training. He added that Training as part of Officer Piccirillo's new position as Corporal will result in increased costs this year. The Police Department has hired two new part time officers and training is required to get them through the hiring process. For Capital Projects, Officer Piccirillo noted that with the new police accountability bill, there are state mandates for use of body and in car camera systems. The current body cameras are already outdated and there are no cameras in the cruisers. He has been researching vendors and they prefer Axon for price, training, usage and updating of equipment. The cameras are priced over a 5-year term with one system which covers everything: installation, maintenance, cloud storage. The cameras will then become part of the operating budget with annual costs, which lead to continued replacement of the technology.

Animal Control – No one available from Animal Control. The Police Department is seeking clarification as to whether the Animal control officer will also need a dash cam.

Public Works - Tabled until later in the meeting, due to technical issues.

Community Health – S. Mis noted that she has no capital projects, and her operating budget is adequate as it is.

Wastewater - Tabled until later in the meeting, due to technical issues.

Library – E. Setaro has submitted operating budgets with several scenarios. For PT Wages, she is increasing the budget to meet the new State minimum wages requirements, as her part-timers earn minimum wage. She has submitted a request for the Full-time librarians to work 35 hours work week and the request reflects wages to move to 35 hours from 30 hours. The library also needs to replace 6 patron laptops this year, so she has requested this increase which is over \$5,000 in her computer line, but this would be a one-year increase. The Program Librarian has submitted a letter requesting an increase to the Programs line. With make and take programs, increases costs of presenters, she is well through her Programs line this year and has requested an increase for next year.

Parks & Recreation – D. Ferretti noted that for the Parks & Recreation operating budget they have increased seasonal wages for summer camp staff due to the minimum wage increase. They are also increasing stock fish due to increased prices for stocking Matthies Pond. Concert costs are increasing so they have increased that line. They also plan to increase the budget for summer camp supplies out of the Special Activities Fund.

D. Ferretti continued with Parks Capital projects; They have requested a new shed for equipment storage at Pent Road for \$9000. The second project is for Pent Road playscape extension to expand the playscape by adding a glider and slide. The playscape expansion will require more ground material. They have resubmitted the project to update the Master plan from TPA group for Matthies Park.

Minibus – K. Stevens has increased her operating budget line to increase the Wages for the Driver. She is also requesting an increase to Gas and Maintenance; to get the bus fully detailed and replace all the decals which are peeling and faded. Because she is driving more, there are more frequent oil changes, and fuel costs have increased.

Senior Services – Art Daigle noted that the Senior Center has submitted operating increases for heating oil, Senior Center supplies increased to \$225 and activities to \$1500 due to increasing enrollment and membership. He has also increased the Building Maintenance line to replace the countertops and the sink in the kitchen. The Senior Center Director and Asst Director positions are being reconfigured with the Director as a stipend position. For Capital Projects, the Senior Center would like to replace the concrete at the rear walkway and railings and submitted a masonry project for \$24,000. They have requested replacement of the windows and the floors at the senior center. The windows are original, single pane and there will be cost efficiency with new double pane windows. For future capital projects, the Seniors would like to have a carport to cover the mini van and allow for sheltered outdoor programs. Also in the future, they would like to expand the footprint and put an addition on the Senior Center. M. Krenesky noted that the Town was just informed of AARP grants which may be available for something like this.

WWTP – T. Carey noted that he has requested a 10% increase in Plant Operations. Sludge Processing is the biggest problem at the plant and this fiscal year the line is depleted. He has also requested an increase in Toxicity testing, which is necessary and increasing. He has not put in any capital projects this year, but the WWTP will need a vehicle for the following fiscal year. N. Nau noted that there is a lot of capital improvements moving forward at the plant, which are coming from Bonded funds and the SWWT fund. The digester replacement project and electrical upgrades are underway at the plant.

Public Works – R. Pruzinsky noted that the only operating budget request is for an additional Highway Maintainer position. Public Works recently underwent an evaluation, and the conclusion was that an additional maintainer is needed. Under Capital projects: R. Pruzinsky submitted a \$61,500 project for the Public Works Garage to replace rotted steel wall panels and paint the building. There are requests for a Bobcat UV34 utility vehicle for \$19,000 and a John Deere Utility Tractor for \$47,505 to replace the 2002 Tractor. He added there is a lot of equipment that is cited for replacement, which has not been replaced. The final project is for the 2012 Volvo Loader, for repairs and repainting the loader which is 10 years old.

N. Nau asked about smaller equipment which could not be accommodated in the operating budget but did not reach the capital amount of \$5,000, such as a new line painter. R. Pruzinsky noted that it can be rented for less cost. T. Pratt asked R. Pruzinsky about the 2001 International Plow Truck which is the oldest plow truck in the fleet. R. Pruzinsky thought that it would be replaced when the last lease was paid off. He noted that if we wait until the lease is paid off, we are on borrowed time with the 2001 Truck. T. Pratt asked R. Pruzinsky to get a price on the new plow truck, sooner rather than later.

First Selectman G. Smith noted that the next steps in the process will be in person workshops with the BOS and BOF. He thanked everyone for the time they spent sharing their budgets with us. All the requests will go into the next workshop, as the BOS and BOF begin their review and we will follow up in person with departments as needed. His priority is to submit a fiscally responsible budget for the town. Thank you all for showing up and dealing with the challenges of the technology.

T. Pratt added that BOS and BOF need to think about the taxpayers and get the most of the resources we have. The challenge for the BOS & BOF is that we are looking at the entire town and recognizing every need. G. Smith noted that is not practical to approve all the requests, but we recognize that the requests are important, if you have brought them forward here tonight.

3. Adjournment: P. Betkoski made a motion to adjourn the Board of Selectmen at 9:15 PM. M. Krenesky seconded the motion. All ayes.

K. Brennan made a motion to adjourn the Board of Finance at 9:15 PM. D. Fennell seconded the motion. All ayes.

Respectfully Submitted,

Erin A. Schwarz

Finance Office