

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



**BEACON FALLS BOARD OF SELECTMEN & BOARD OF FINANCE
VIRTUAL Special Meeting & Budget Workshop
March 23, 2021
MINUTES
(Subject to Revision)**

1. **Call to Order / Pledge of Allegiance:** G. Smith called the BOS Special Meeting and Workshop to order, and T. Pratt called the BOF Special Meeting and Workshop to order at 7:00 PM. G. Smith led the assembled in the Pledge of Allegiance.

BOS Members Present: G. Smith, C. Bielik, M. Krenesky

BOF Members Present: T. Pratt, S. Leeper, K. Brennan, J. Carroll, W. Hopkinson

BOF Members Absent: D. Fennell

Public Present: Finance Manager N. Nau, J. Chadderton, J. Bilsky, L. Greene, T. Carey and 2 members of the public.

2. **Pent Road Court Renovations** –

Board of Selectmen: **G. Smith called for a motion to appropriate \$60,190.54 from Undesignated Fund Balance for Pent Road Court Renovations and move the appropriation to a Town Meeting. M. Krenesky made the motion. C. Bielik seconded the motion. All ayes.**

G. Smith called for a motion to appropriate \$142,039.46 from LOCIP Funds for a total appropriation of \$222,039.46 for Pent Road Court Renovations and move to a Town Meeting. M. Krenesky made the motion. C. Bielik seconded the motion.

Discussion point: C. Bielik asked about the remaining balance in the LOCIP Funds. G. Smith noted \$38,000 will be appropriated in 2022 for the next round. N. Nau added that there will be \$0 remaining in the LOCIP funds, until the next State round in 2022. **All ayes.**

Board of Finance: **T. Pratt called for a motion to appropriate \$60,190.54 from Undesignated Fund Balance for Pent Road Court Renovations and move the appropriation to a Town Meeting. S. Leeper made the motion. W. Hopkinson seconded the motion. All ayes.**

T. Pratt called for a motion to appropriate an additional \$142,039.46 from LOCIP Funds for a total appropriation of \$222,039.46 for Pent Road Court Renovations and move to a Town Meeting. S. Leeper made the motion. J. Carroll seconded the motion. All ayes.

3. Budget Workshop

- a. **Assessor** – The Assessor budget is relatively unchanged and there are no capital expenses except for revaluation, which will get underway next week. N. Nau noted that the revaluation is a \$100,000 capital project for FY2022. The revaluation is funded in capital and there is no operating budget increase related to the revaluation. T. Pratt asked about data storage capabilities and J. Chadderton noted that the server is moving from a physical server to the cloud. N. Nau added that the virtual server will have operating budget implications for the Assessor next year, and the Computer budget will need to be finalized. T. Pratt asked about the Grand List numbers for this year and J. Chadderton expects revenue to be on target. J. Carroll noted there are 19 homes to be completed in Chatfield Farms this year and asked if the prorated value of these homes will be included in revenue. N. Nau noted the prorations have been added to the Mill Rate page in the budget and are now over \$1.4M.
- b. **Tax Collector** – No new changes to the Tax Collector budget. She is not adding anything new since the last meeting. The Tax Office has moved to virtual server and they started their CCMC classes. The \$1600 Education budget which will cover certification costs for both tax employees. T. Pratt asked for Revenue forecasts and J. Bilsky noted that collections are going well. She recently sent out over 900 demand notices for the 2nd property tax installments, which can move to a Marshal after 30 days. She is using Tax Serv for motor vehicle collections. J. Bilsky is also looking into the State regulations regarding evictions and tax sales, so that she can take sterner action with past due properties. N. Nau asked about the eviction moratorium which is still in place until September. J. Bilsky noted that the tax auctions are allowed, but the evictions can not take place at this time. M. Krenesky asked about Park stickers to be mailed in tax bills and QDS can complete the mailing of the stickers. J. Bilsky noted it is something that QDS does, and they match the stickers to the marker plates, including leased vehicles. It would be more costly if we had an outside vendor produce the sticker. Pricing is forthcoming and then the cost would be in next year's budget.
- c. **Town Clerk** – L. Greene explained that he kept his budget the same, although there will be some changes regarding his position moving from elected to appointed. The revenue structure of the Town Clerk would change in January 2022 when the Town Clerk's payroll is no longer based on fees collected by his office. L. Greene noted that the fee revenue would now be directed to the Town, rather than to payroll, so payroll increases are offset by the fees coming in as revenue. G. Smith noted the position will be a full-time management position, posted and hired through the regular hiring process. There is no change to Conveyance and the incoming fee revenue should offset the salary increase for the Town Clerk. M. Krenesky asked about election expenses regarding absentee ballots. This year absentee ballot processing was offset with grant monies from the State. L. Greene noted that the State may be moving to "no excuse" absentee he expects a potential increase related to unfunded mandates on absentee ballots, but it is difficult to predict. G. Smith

agreed that we should anticipate this mandate and budget accordingly. C. Bielik asked how much grant money was received and spent on the last election. N. Nau stated that \$3,300 in State grants arrived, related to COVID election expenses. C. Bielik and T. Pratt agreed that it would be worthwhile to increase Election expenses by \$1,500 to cover absentee ballot processing, should it be needed.

T. Pratt asked about document storage at Town Hall and the need for an intern to manage records and digitize drawings, etc. L. Greene could use an intern to manage records and digitize maps. N. Nau added an intern line in the budget this year for summer help to be paid a stipend for a few weeks. T. Pratt is supportive of having interns support the Town Hall departments. L. Greene would like to clear the file cabinets from the vault in favor of shelving, and work on record retention disposals which are needed from all departments and then we can clear some space. Storage could be adequate if each department takes the time to dispose of the older records and an intern could help with this process.

M. Krenesky asked about digitizing all records. L. Greene needs to have many documents in readable form, so he has hard copies available for instances when they are not available online.

d. WPCA/Wastewater Treatment Plant – T. Carey does not have any changes to the operating budget that he presented, so there are minimal overall increases. He was originally proposing a Blower Panel Upgrade project and he has obtained some pricing on replacement of the panel for approximately \$44,000. However, in working with the Engineers for the plant, he does not want to move forward with the Blower panel at this time. If the equipment associated with the panel is due to be replaced before the control panel is obsolete, then he does not want to invest in the panel at present.

N. Nau asked if he foresees potential failures in the blower room and T. Carey has done replacements as needed. He is saving monies on sludge hauling by thickening the sludge. He would now ask for pumps for pumping this sludge.

The Digester roof project is moving forward this spring into summer and he is looking forward to getting that done.

C. Bielik asked about Nitrogen credits and T. Carey anticipates the budget will be the same, ammonia levels are decreasing, and rain is a factor with this budget line. T. Carey continues to try and keep the nitrogen credits down. The final Nitrogen number is unknown until the State provides their formula for all towns at the end of the fiscal year.

T. Pratt asked about the sludge processing and asked about the need for new pumps to make the plant more efficient. Work was done to the piping galley which allows T. Carey to use more than one tank. He is decanting the water from the tanks and this thickens the sludge and decreases the costs of hauling sludge. Pumps for thicker sludge would be a good investment. T. Carey will continue to look at the costs of new pumps and the funds remaining in his Equipment Replacement line.

T. Pratt asked about the alarm system and T. Carey will address this with Knapp Engineering, who takes care of the SCADA. He would like to have alarms on the blowers. The blowers cycle 24 hours per day and there is no alarm if the blowers fail to come back on. T. Carey will investigate the alarming as well.

N. Nau asked about revenue and the status of the Sewer Fund, and if the town should set parameters such as a minimum balance for the Fund. T. Carey had suggested dedicating the Leachate revenue to the Sewer Fund. It is currently General Fund

revenue, and not dedicated to the Sewer Fund. G. Smith stated in prior years long ago, the Sewer Fund was raided and used to offset taxes, and we have long abandoned this practice. If we set a minimum balance for the Sewer Fund what would happen if we had a catastrophic failure. N. Nau noted that the Town purchased a trash pump which is not being utilized and can be auctioned off. Can the revenue from the Sewer equipment auction be directed to the Sewer Fund? N. Nau is proposing ideas to balance the needs of the Sewer Fund and the General Fund.

T. Carey stated if the Town moves to a Sewer User Fee, then the Leachate revenue would need to be directed in the Sewer Fund. G. Smith noted that if the Town applies for a USDA Grant, then we would be required to institute a User Fee and to abide by strict statutory guidelines for the use of the Sewer Fund. T. Carey stated the Wastewater Plant employees are trying to keep budget as level as possible, and to make improvements as they can. T. Pratt thanked T. Carey and his staff for their tremendous hard work and dedication.

e. Hydrants: The hydrants budget have been adjusted accordingly. T. Pratt has had meetings with Aquarion and has made a lot of headway with them. Aquarion assured that all the hydrants in the Town meet the required standards. Aquarion shared software with the Fire Department which overlays the Fire software, showing the flow and mapping of hydrants, so that Fire can choose a hydrant with a stronger flow. CT Water's budget estimate shows actual costs, and the Aquarion estimate had a proposed cost which did not include fees and additions. Aquarion sent a complete breakdown for FY2022 with a projection which still seems low, so N. Nau increased the Town's budget accordingly. T. Pratt noted that are also seeing credits on the Aquarion breakdown for the first time.

T. Pratt noted there will be water improvements coming to town on Fairfield Place and we have made major steps with Aquarion. N. Nau thanked T. Pratt for his help with this issue and we are now on task with Aquarion and budgeting properly. G. Smith concurred that the meeting with Aquarion was very positive and the Aquarion resources provided to the Fire Department and Fire Marshal, namely the apps showing hydrant flows are valuable. The Fire Department left the meeting with an increased comfort level in our hydrants.

Thanks to everyone who participated in the workshop tonight.

4. Motion to Adjourn: C. Bielik made a motion to adjourn the BOS portion of the Workshop at 8:05 PM. M. Krenesky seconded the motion. All ayes.
S. Leeper made motion to adjourn the BOF at 8:05 PM. W. Hopkinson seconded the motion. All ayes.

Respectfully submitted,

Erin Schwarz

Finance Office