



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

**Joint Budget Workshop
April 2, 2024, MINUTES (Subject to Revision)**

1. Call to Order / Pledge to the Flag: G. Smith called the BOS workshop to order at 7:05 PM. K. Brennan called the BOF workshop to order and G. Smith led the assembly in the pledge.

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

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes – **S. Leeper made a motion to approve the 3/19/24 Budget Workshop minutes. W. Giglio seconded the motion. All ayes. M. Kerensky made a motion to approve the 3/19/24 Workshop minutes as presented. P. Betkoski seconded the motion. All ayes.**
3. Public Input – Webform submissions – No new submissions received. G. Smith noted that he spoke with the company that completed the PFAS study for Carrington Pond and he expects a synopsis from them, but the water is clean. The company will be doing a study every year and the report is forthcoming. The PFAS levels are common and found in many areas. I
4. Executive Session: Staffing proposals – Personnel – G. Smith noted that he plans to speak in generalities during the budget discussion regarding position changes and salaries and does not see a need for an Executive Session at this time. Budget lines which impact personnel and wages can be addressed openly.
5. Open Budget Discussion: Operating Budget: Revenue & Expenditures:
 - a. N. Nau reviewed the first pages of the Budget draft, along with the draft of the Budget narrative. The narrative contains photos which highlight accomplishments, the First Selectman's letter, a snapshot of the budget process and timeline. This is followed by an org chart of the town, fund listing, department listing, performance metrics which connect dollars to department goals. There is a list of grants and capital projects, fund balance information, a page on the Town's credit rating and charts and graphs which are a visual representation of the budget figures.
 - b. The Budget draft begins with a mill rate page which features the latest information on the Grand List. BOAA appeals and prorations will be added to the Grand List before the budget is finalized. The Finance Office met with First Selectman Smith and his proposed budget are the numbers currently driving the mill rate on this page.
 - c. The Boards reviewed the Revenue and Expenditure lines of the budget in detail, discussing the following items:
Revenue:
 - d. M. Kerensky noted that the state is proposing legislation to eliminate the motor vehicle rate. The change will take place over 5 years if the proposal moves forward.
 - e. Finance asked the Boards to review the Ambulance reimbursement and Fire Marshal inspections line. The Boards agreed to remove the \$5,000 Ambulance reimbursement line, in favor of putting all EMS revenue into the Vehicle Replacement Fund.



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- f. Fire Marshal revenue is set at \$3,000 and we hope to increase this revenue next year. G. Smith met with the Assistant Fire Marshal about the billing tasks and Finance will be taking over the billing from the Fire Marshal. We hope to include plan reviews in billing moving forward.
- g. The Boards looked at Interest projections and determined Interest can increase to \$350,000.
- h. N. Nau explained that there will be transfers from the Debt Service fund to assist in keeping debt level and Capital Project expenses will be transferred from Fund balance.

Expenditures:

- i. N. Nau recently amended the IT budget which includes a 4% increase for the consulting services, added security services and funds for 8-10 computers which need to be replaced in 2025. We are trying to stay on a regular replacement schedule for hardware and hold 1 desktop and 1 laptop in inventory for emergency replacements. We have added cybersecurity Inke service and KnowB4 training. B. Catanzaro asked if we lease or own our IT. The Town purchases our computers at approximately \$800 each and leases only about 5 desktop printers. The volume of replacements each year may not guarantee any savings with leasing.
- j. Wages – Asst Tax Collector – PT to FT. The Town Hall Union came to the First Selectman with this request and G. Smith does support changing the position to Full Time, as the department is key to revenue. The change from PT to FT staffs the department fully and allows them to pursue this outstanding revenue, so there are no gaps in service. Is the Asst Tax Collector working towards certification? The position should be working towards certification. The pay rate remains unchanged, but the position would be eligible for medical benefits.
- k. Wages - Asst Assessor – G. Smith noted that Assessors are difficult to find, and we have an Assistant Assessor who currently fills multiple roles. Moving her to be a Full time Assistant Assessor will allow her to slot into the Assessor position and fill that role completely when the current Assessor retires. The recommendation is for a \$2.00/hour increase in wages and 35 hours per week in the Assessor's office. This will make Tax and Assessor's departments fully staffed. K. Brennan noted that having those personnel in place and those 2 departments working well together benefits the town. The Asst. Assessor will be fully certified as an Assessor in October.
- l. Land Use Admin – The change above means the Asst. Assessor will move out of the Land Use Department and Land Use admin will take over Building Dept Admin. The Land Use Admin will work 15 hours/week in the Building Dept and 10 hours/week in Land Use. She is currently training to become a ZEO. So, we have 2 positions (Building Admin and Land Use Admin), and 1 person is doing them. This person also clerks for all the Land Use boards, so she has all these roles. We are currently relying on NVCOG's planner, our Building Official and WEO to serve as ZEO in the interim. The change to the Land Use/Building Admin lines will ensure we have the people we need in the right seats on the bus.
- m. EDC Consultant/Marketing: K. Brennan asked what is the plan for these monies? G. Smith noted that for this year's money, they will host an event – a spring open house. Next year, does EDC have a plan? They are planning a couple events per year to bring in commercial realtors. They hope to use some of their funds to increase marketing on the website. Lancaster and Main Street are the 2 principal areas for economic development. G. Smith is also discussing bringing gas and utilities to the other side of Lopus/Pent Road, which would open it up for development.
- n. Registrar: M. Krenesky noted that the elected officials normally only receive raises when their positions are up for reelection. The ROV is up for reelection in November, so the Board should consider their request for



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raises. Finance will investigate the CCM salary survey for the ROVs for comparable towns to see how their salaries align.

- o. EMS and FF Pay per call – G. Smith has removed the requested stipend for Asst Chief and EMD Director. He had proposed adding pay per call amounts for Fire and EMS at ½ the level requested to meet BHC partway and get the programs started. It is clear that an ambulance contractor would be a much larger expense than volunteer EMS, and EMS would still be paid per call. This allows a program to also pay per shift and pay for Fire calls. K. Lembo is concerned that we may lose people, as volunteering is down, and would rather be proactive rather than reactive. Neighboring towns may be paying more. G. Smith is hoping to meet BHC halfway and phase the expense in over time. BHC is the benchmark of service, and this is a way to support them and value them, but we also need to be fiscally responsible. K. Lembo asked about the fundraisers in the community and K. Brennan explained that all their community programs are funded through fundraising. Fire and EMS services are town funded. KB abstained from the discussion.
- p. Fire Marshal – G. Smith noted he did not increase the Fire Marshal stipend above 2.75%. There is an increase for the Deputy Fire Marshal due to an increase in his admin. duties.
- q. Police Dept – Wages represent the largest increases to this budget and the increases are the result of stepped-up patrols. G. Smith would rather have the shifts filled rather than skimp on the budget for PT wages.
- r. Public Works – G. Smith currently stands opposed to the 7th maintainer. He feels that lack of oversight is the issue with the department and the division of labor between Highway and Parks is a problem. They should be working as one unit, not two factions and they require better supervision. P. Betkoski feels everyone is working hard in Public Works. G. Smith noted that he has considered options such as a Public Works Director who is outside the union. W. Giglio asked about an administrative person to do the paperwork for a couple of hours per day to allow the Foreman to be out supervising? Without the 7th person, filling the union contract, none of these changes would be possible. P. Betkoski in favor of the 7th person. For 10 years, the Town has been kicking it around, and the Selectmen agree to disagree. He has shadowed them, and they do not mess around. If the 7th person is hired, then there are many things that can happen to improve the town, hiring subcontractors or seasonal help or admin help. K. Brennan noted that in reviewing the request for the 7th maintainer, there is a list of new property which has been added in town, showing that their workload has increased. He also reviewed the SLR study on staffing at Public Works which recommended a Public Works Director. M. Krenesky would like to see more documentation that a 7th man will solve their problems. P. Betkoski emphasized that more manpower will help with Matthies Park and other parks. The Boards would like to know what is not being done, which would be completed with an additional staff member. Discussion continued with G. Smith opposed to the position and P. Betkoski strongly in favor of the position. The Boards looked at ways to quantify how Public Works is working by keeping data or tracking productivity to demonstrate how a 7th person will impact the town. The 7th maintainer position is currently not included in the First Selectman's proposed budget. The position represents an overall \$120,000 increase to the budget's bottom line, when benefits are included.
- s. Town Nurse – The position is a bargaining unit position, and it is fully funded in the budget. After the current Town Nurse retires, the Town will decide about the position in the future.
- t. Minibus Driver – The request was that the position's hours increase to 31 hours which would make it full time. G. Smith has recommended keeping the position at 29 hours/week.
- u. Non-Recurring Capital Project Proposals: Tabled for next meeting. N. Nau noted this is a heavy capital project year, with many projects to review.
- v. Fund Balances – General Fund, Private Duty, Debt Service, Vehicle Replacement; unspent Capital Project funds: Tabled until the next meeting.



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6. Budget Workshop Schedule: The boards agreed that a workshop is needed on April 9th. The Board of Finance will cancel their regular meeting on 4/9/24 and replace that agenda with a budget workshop, which will include April's Budget transfers.
7. **Adjournment: S. Leeper made a motion to adjourn the BOF workshop at 9:30 PM. K. Lembo seconded the motion. All ayes. P. Betkoski made a motion to adjourn the BOS workshop at 9:30 PM. M. Krenesky seconded the motion. All ayes.**

Respectfully submitted,

Erin A. Schwarz
Finance Office