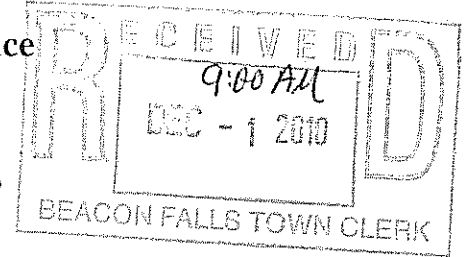


Town of BEACON FALLS
Connecticut

Board of Finance



**TOWN OF BEACON FALLS
SPECIAL
JOINT BOARD OF FINANCE
FIRE DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS
Bond Package Discussion
Monday, November 29, 2010**

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman of the Board of Finance called the Joint BOF/Fire Department Special Meeting to order at 7:30 P.M.

Present: BOF Chairman W. Hopkinson, Vice Chairman G. Smith, Board of Finance members L. Krepinevich, R. Doiron and C. Bielik

Fire Department: Chief M. Pratt, Public Information Officer J. Rodrigo

Also Present were Selectman D. Sorrentino and M. Krenesky. First Selectman S. Cable arrived at 7:50 P.M.

W. Hopkinson opened the meeting noting that J. Rodrigo requested the meeting and she asked him to start the meeting off.

J. Rodrigo noted that he requested the meeting so that he could discuss with the BOF, the outcome of the bond decision; what to bond and what not to bond. He noted that the Officers are very clear that they respect the decision of the BOF as they believe the BOF is acting on behalf of the town in a fiscally responsible way for the citizens of Beacon Falls. He noted that with this in mind, they still need the equipment. He would like to discuss with the BOF what their ideas for the future of the FD and their equipment needs may be.

G. Smith interjected as he noted that he wanted to address an issue at the beginning of the meeting. G. Smith noted that on behalf of the entire BOF, he was completely turned off and offended by one of the Fire Department members behavior at the last meeting. He noted that this member insulted the BOF and also told them that they "should all resign".

G. Smith asked how this could be prevented from happening again. G. Smith also mentioned that he was told that this gentlemen was speaking as a member of the public but G. Smith pointed out that he clearly was not speaking as the public but a representative of the Fire Department. G. Smith noted that this behavior was completely out of line and wrong.

J. Rodrigo responded by saying that he wanted to make it very clear that there are only three people that speak on behalf of the Fire Department: J. Rodrigo, M. Pratt and R. Buzzco. He noted that with that said, he completely understands that if any member of the Fire Department stands up at any meeting wearing a Beacon Hose jacket and speaking of the Fire Department regarding issues or their needs, it's clear that person is speaking as a member of the Fire Department. J. Rodrigo explained that he too was offended and embarrassed by this behavior because he noted that this person did not stand up and speak as the public. J. Rodrigo noted that in his opinion, when this person stood up and referenced "we had an ambulance call last night", he removed himself from the general public. J. Rodrigo noted that this person has been spoken to and it has been re-iterated to the members of the Fire Department who represents the Fire Department. J. Rodrigo noted that with that said, he, on behalf of everyone in the Fire Department, apologizes to the entire BOF for that behavior noting that it should not be tolerated and it is not deserved or appropriate. He noted that while the Fire Department might not agree with every decision the BOF makes, noting that last week he did not agree with their decisions, but he is not going to insult them over their decision. He noted that they have a difference of opinion and that is OK noting that we all need to work together. J. Rodrigo again, for the record, apologized on behalf of the entire Fire Department. M. Pratt agreed and noted that he was not present at the meeting and did not hear the entire story until he spoke with J. Rodrigo.

The BOF thanked J. Rodrigo for his apology.

J. Rodrigo continued the meeting referencing something that L. Krepinevich had said at the last meeting regarding the BOF going through some difficult and painful decisions only to have the BOS disregard their recommendations and how it made him feel. J. Rodrigo compared his feelings regarding the BOF's decision to not include the ambulance and the ladder truck in the bond package to those of L. Krepinevich's feelings. He noted that the Fire Department put a lot of time and research, attended meeting after meeting and presented at the informational meeting only to have the BOF not include these items in the bond package. All their work was done under the assumption that these items were going to be included in the bond package for a town vote. He noted that then the rug was pulled out from under them without warning. J. Rodrigo explained that he understands how the BOF felt when someone was pulling the strings in another direction and understands their sentiment as the Fire Department felt the same way.

J. Rodrigo noted that from the very beginning they were going to go on the advice of the BOF as they are the experts in finance for this community but he thought that ultimately the voters of the town should decide on an item by item basis what they were willing to

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fund and what they were not. J. Rodrigo's question to the BOF is "what was the BOF's rationale to have the FD go through all those steps only to not include them?".

W. Hopkinson responded by saying that there was a lot of items on the list and at the time the FD was asked for this information, the list was not complete. She noted that she does not think they had any clue that the roads were going to come in at 5 million. She noted that it's easy to pick and choose what you would like but until you have all of the information and the entire list, decisions cannot be made. W. Hopkinson noted that she was sorry that the FD had to go through all that work noting that it is painful but at the same time necessary. M. Pratt noted that before the information meeting, they thought they had all the information they needed and that if the people who attended the meeting were in favor of these items, then it would be included in the bond package for the town people to decide. W. Hopkinson noted that she does not think that the people at that meeting was a fair representation of the town voters noting that the meeting consisted mostly of people concerned about the roads. A discussion continued regarding feedback from the meeting and other members of the public and what was said by the public at the last budget process.

W. Hopkinson noted that if the budget process had gone the way they intended it to go, i.e., passing a budget that would keep the town running in good condition, she doesn't think any of the BOF would have a problem putting out a bond package that would include everything. She noted that the taxpayers do not want an increase in their taxes. She noted that if everything in the bond package list was included, it would result in almost a 5.5% increase. The discussion continued regarding situations that if any of these items were purchased, the town wouldn't be able to pay for the operation of them.

G. Smith noted that he was hoping they could extend some of the cycles (rotation from 10 to 15 years for example) on some of the equipment and also noted that not one of the BOF votes was unanimous. G. Smith noted that he was hoping to put off these expenses for the time being hoping that things will change noting that the BOF would not have a chance at passing the next budget if they were to increase it by 5.5% with the bond package. They are trying to figure other ways to get these things such as lease purchases, etc. The discussion continued regarding whether or not it would be the same voter block voting on the budget and voting on the bond package. The discussion also continued referring to information mis-communicated by the public during the budget process.

J. Rodrigo noted that he appreciates the explanation because he did not see it that way but not it has been put in perspective. J. Rodrigo asked going forward, how are we going to replace this equipment. W. Hopkinson noted that there are some items that will be discussed at the next BOF meeting with the BOS as well, possible different options, etc.

G. Smith asked the FD to prioritize the equipment they need. M. Pratt noted that he had a call for a ladder truck twice this month already. J. Rodrigo noted that the need of the ladder truck is right up there with the need for the ambulance noting that one of the ambulance's is getting tired and the newer ambulance is having problems as well. The discussion continued regarding use of vehicles and the possibility of purchasing a used

ladder truck noting that it will save a ton of money but when they find a truck they need to have cash on hand.

W. Hopkinson noted that they would love to have a vehicle replacement fund but they couldn't get contingency in this past budget.

J. Rodrigo noted the FD is stuck right now noting that the town entrusted them to provide public safety for the town and to keep their vehicles in working order and personnel trained, etc. noting that these items are not wants but needs. He pointed out that these items are not being requested for the Fire Department but for the town. J. Rodrigo noted that not only can they not secure these items but there does not seem to be any light at the end of the tunnel either. The discussion continued regarding the current economy and the conditions of the ambulances and how difficult it would be to prioritize between an ambulance or a fire truck.

R. Doiron noted that his thought was that if they put the entire bond package out there, everything would be voted down including the mandated items.

It was noted that the bond package will affect the next budget process and this was taken into consideration when the BOF was making their decisions.

L. Krepinevich noted that if people have the choice and there are some items they are not familiar with, they may just vote no to them. The BOF tried to stick with mandated items and liability items only. It was noted that there will be liabilities whether it's roads, fire trucks or ambulances.

R. Doiron noted that if we can get through the next budget cycle, there might be a better opportunity to do something additional next year. It was noted that these items were not being thrown out forever, just being off to see if some things change in the next year, i.e., economy, businesses moving into town, school population shift, etc.

W. Hopkinson noted that the BOF is aware how difficult this is for the FD and that they definitely want to work together and that the upcoming budget process will be very telling. It was noted that the BOF decision was strictly financial.

A discussion continued regarding all the vehicles in the FD, their ages and their condition.

J. Rodrigo noted that when the ambulance last came due for replacement, they were asked to hold off for a year which they did. They are still trying to replace it.

A discussion continued regarding the last budget process and comments made from the public at the meetings during the process.

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J. Rodrigo and M. Pratt noted that should one of their ambulances die, they cannot do without one for long. They have borrowed in the past but they noted that it takes at least 120 days to get an ambulance replaced.

B. DeGeorge was asked the mechanical condition of the ambulance. He noted that it's a 6.5 liter Chevy and is on its 4th head gasket noting that it's a ticking time bomb. He noted that everything is fixable but becomes very costly and not a good return on the money. B. DeGeorge also noted that the reason the ambulance is on a 10 year purchase is because the warranty is 100,000 or 10 years as after 10 years, problems begin. The plan was that every 5 years, one of the ambulances would be replaced.

The quality of the ambulance was discussed and that it is a "middle of the road" ambulance they are looking for. The FD looks for solid vehicle with excellent wiring and good service.

Lease purchase was mentioned again as a possibility at some point. G. Smith asked the FD if they could get a lease purchase price so the BOF can at least have a number.

S. Cable noted that everyone should have received her letter asking them all for their budget requests so they can start the budget process at the beginning of the year.

G. Smith asked that all be diligent in getting their numbers in so that they are not behind the school budget being passed. S. Cable noted that only happened one time. It was *difficult but it only happened once.*

M. Pratt noted that there are a lot of angry people at the Fire House right now regarding the decision of the bond package and noted that he is concerned about the bond package being passed as it is. He noted that it's not just members of the Fire Department but some members of the public as well.

W. Hopkinson asked if that meant they would not come out and vote. The BOF noted that they would hope that the Fire Department would at least support what the Fire Department needs. It was noted that the BOF is looking for support and would be very disappointed if things got voted down because of animosity. It was noted that the easier this budget process is, the easier it will be to sell items the next time.

W. Hopkinson noted that the BOF has always worked very well with the FD and would hope that because it's not going exactly the way they would both like it to go, that there is no animosity between the two groups. She would find there very difficult to deal with noting that the issue last week was an indication of animosity.

J. Rodrigo noted that they understand completely the BOF's position and they respect their position. J. Rodrigo guaranteed that no matter what the BOF gives to them, they will still go to all the calls. He noted that just because they do not get what they want all the time does not mean they are not going to work with or support the BOF. He also

noted that if any members of the Fire Department are giving the BOF that indication, please let him know.

S. Cable noted that she had said since day one that she wanted all the questions out there. She noted that she understands all the tough decisions and did not like the respect she received (which was no respect) at the last meeting. She noted that she felt it was unfair and did not have both of her Selectmen with her. She noted she supports the BOF in their decision (as an individual she is having a hard time with it herself) and she knows the pain that went into the decision making. She noted that the burden now goes to the BOS to find them grant money or come up with some ways to get stuff. She noted that she hopes the BOF will also work towards helping them getting some money. She noted that she is very concerned about the ambulance and she really thought it was going to be part of the bond package. She noted that she will support the BOF in their decision noting that she thinks if the town had individual choices, the result may have surprised the BOF and would have taken a lot of burden off of all three departments. She asked that everyone work together to find other ways to get these vehicles.

S. Cable also noted that she was highly insulted at the disrespect that she, as the First Selectman, was given at the last meeting. She noted that now it is over and done with and we will all move forward and asked that all look for ways to get some money. She also noted that hopefully, they will have 3 new businesses coming to town.

B. Ploss noted to S. Cable that earlier in the meeting they had discussed other thoughts regarding possible ways to purchase the vehicles and will continue at the next meeting and they will continue to do the best they can.

B. DeGeorge, 124 Cedar Lane, wanted to note that people who are angry and upset are that way because they are passionate about what they do. He also noted that they have been talking about a ladder truck for 8 years now and it's difficult to take knowing that there are minimal options. Again, if there are people who are angry about this, it's because they are passionate. He noted that the Fire House has gone out and gotten over half a million dollars in grants. The discussion continued regarding the ladder truck being included in the last bond package but was voted down by members of the fire house. It was noted they have now come full circle. It was noted that due to all these circumstances, the ladder truck has been a difficult item to pass.

The discussion continued regarding the towns response during the last budget process and the current operating budget. It was noted that the ladder truck is almost two times the value of the town's operating budget.

The discussion continued regarding the decisions made regarding the bond package.

M. Pratt noted that if people were better educated regarding these issues, they would be more apt to support them financially and that each department should work hard at educating the public.

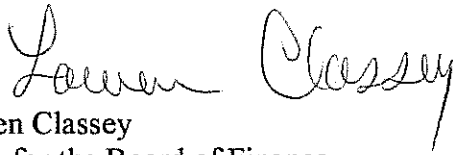
W. Hopkinson summarized the meeting noting that they are going to look at what they can do and see how the budget process goes this year. She noted that things can change a lot in a year.

W. Hopkinson thanked everyone for attending and for their input.

G. Smith motioned to adjourn the meeting. R. Doiron 2nd the motion. All voted aye.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:30 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lauren Classey". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Lauren Classey
Clerk for the Board of Finance

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