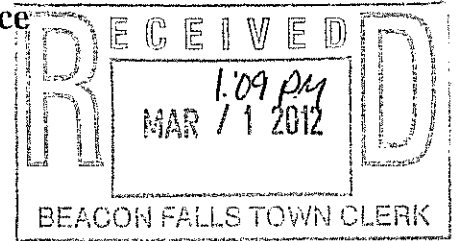


Town of BEACON FALLS  
*Connecticut*

Board of Finance



**TOWN OF BEACON FALLS  
BOARD OF FINANCE  
Board of Finance/Board of Selectmen Joint Budget Workshop  
Tuesday February 29, 2012**

**CALL TO ORDER**

G. Smith called the Joint Budget Workshop to order at 7:30 P.M. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: Members of the Board of Finance; M. Bronn, J. Dowdell, R. Doiron, B. Ploss, J. Huk and J. Levine and Selectmen C. Bielik and D. D'Amico. Also present 7:30 to 8:00 E. Bea – Public Works, 8:00 to 8:30 Lt. Rodriguez and Corporal B. Blakemen – Police Department, 8:30 to 9:00 W. Opuszynski – Wastewater Treatment and Fire Chief M. Pratt 8:30 until adjournment.

G. Smith began the meeting explaining that he has scheduled 4 different departments to come to the meeting for half hour sessions to explain their budget requests and to basically get the gist of what they are looking for. The first department was Public Works.

**Public Works**

G. Smith asked E. Bea to go through some of the high-lights of his requests noting that he did put requests out until 2014.

J. Levine was questioning the report that was submitted to them regarding actuals, amended budget and requested budget.

E. Bea explained that he went up in equipment to \$11,000 (from \$9,000). M. Bronn asked what was included in equipment. E. Bea responded by saying it's basically things that they need to do every day work with like signs and things they can't buy out of his tool budget – things for everyday use. He also explained that more has been spent then

A lengthy discussion continued regarding what was spent in the past as was noted on the report provided to the BOF and BOS. After a lengthy discussion and some confusion, it was determined that the report the BOF and BOS were using for comparison was missing pertinent information such as a column including "actuals" spent for 2010/2011. The boards were not provided the actual amount of money spent from each budget for the 2010/2011 budget cycle. G. Smith will ask M. Gomes to update this report so that comparisons of actuals spent to departmental 2012/2013 budget requests can be made.

It was decided that going forward in this meeting, the BOF and BOS will discuss "capital" purchase requests only. The discussions on the rest of the requests will continue once the information is provided by M. Gomes.

It was discussed that the BOF and BOS goal is to get this budget proposal to a Public Hearing during the week of 4/9 as a target. M. Bronn noted that if all goes well, they could schedule a Town Meeting a week later. R. Doiron noted that he thinks our goal should be sooner.

G. Smith noted that he would like to do it the end of March but we are waiting on information.

G. Smith will have M. Gomes update the report and email to all members.

#### **Discussion – Capital Expenditure Proposal Public Works**

It was noted that the cover of the report – CAPITAL EXPENSE 2011-2012 should read 2012 – 2013 and that Replaced truck #17 in 2011 should read 2012.

E. Bea explained that the 1999 Ford 4x4 Green Plow Truck should be replaced in 2014 noting that this truck never came through correctly when it was purchased. He noted that he does not have the mileage on the truck but knows it's high. He explained it needs paint and body work and we are putting more money into the truck than it's worth and that there is no return on the money being spent. He believes we put in \$10 – 12K over the years. He noted that he does not think it is operator abuse.

G. Smith noted that he was requesting the replacement of this truck be scheduled for 2014. E. Bea responded by saying that he didn't think they were going to get anything this year anyway so he thinks he could get 1 more year out of the truck that is used at the parks. He noted it's also a plow truck and needs the truck on the road too.

It was confirmed that E. Bea is not looking for any capital purchases for this upcoming budget but for the year after 2013 – 2014.

E. Bea noted that he is planning to get another year out of the loader. A discussion continued on the loader. M. Bronn asked if any the vehicles were to fail, which would have the biggest impact on the town. E. Bea explained that it would be the loader

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because if it fails, they would have to throw a lot of money into it to fix it. He noted that he is also asking for a new plow because if he loses one of the plows, the truck is off the road. It was noted that if they purchase a plow for the loader, the loader could plow parking lots. He noted that if he loses a truck tomorrow, the truck would be sitting in the garage.

He's requested the loader for a purchase date in 2014 explaining that he cannot use additional attachments on the loader as the machine is outdated.

G. Smith asked if it would make more sense to put at least one item in the 2012/13 budge instead of putting everything in for the 2013/14 budget. The discussion continued regarding what would be the impact of the pay loader failing. G. Smith noted that if the pay loader fails, we can get a local guy to work for a week or rent a pay loader but if the truck goes down, we are without a truck. The discussion continued.

G. Smith noted that if there were to replace anything this year, it would be the truck. He asked E. Bea to get a price on the truck with everything it needs.

G. Smith noted that we will still be coming back to discuss the rest of the department requests but for now they would be looking for approximately \$80,000 (Plow and Truck) for this department.

#### **Discussion - Capital Expenditures – Resident Trooper**

G. Smith explained that W. Opuszynski needs a vehicle at the wastewater treatment plant so G. Smith is suggesting that the Police Department 2001 Tahoe be given to the Wastewater Treatment Plant. G. Smith explained that the Tahoe has run its course as a police vehicle but would be fine for the purposes of the Waste Water Treatment plant. It was noted that the normal life span of a police vehicle is 5 to 6 years and the Tahoe is 11 years old. Lt. Rodriguez noted that they try not to use the Tahoe except for snow storms as it is 4 wheel drive.

Lt. Rodriguez explained that the goal of the Police Department is to replace a vehicle every other year (rotation). R. Doiron asked how many high speed pursuits does the police department go on. Lt. Rodriguez noted that they are not even allowed any more however if they do have to get into a high speed anything and something happens, the town would be liable for not having the recommended vehicle for a police department.

The discussion continued noting that they do get their tires for less than retail because they are for the town.

J. Levine asked if they could set up a special revenue account and take the extra duty wages and put them in a special revenue account so it wouldn't show up in the budget (separate) having 0 effect on the bottom line of the budget. It was noted that it is currently not included in the budget/balance sheet.

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G. Smith asked about their request to replace the phone system. He asked the cost and the reason. Lt. Rodriguez noted that was discussed when the town hall phone system was upgraded. G. Smith asked if their phone system was working and the answer was yes. He then suggested that they keep their working phone system as the town's phone does not work well at all. He suggested that they hold off until all the bugs are worked out of the town halls system.

The discussion continued regarding their phone system and G. Smith noted that if they still need to replace their phone system then they need to come up with prices.

G. Smith asked for ball park numbers for the vehicles. Lt. Rodriguez noted that the ball park figure for the Expedition would be \$36 - \$38k and the Explorer would be around \$30 - \$35k. The vehicles would come fully equipped.

It was noted that the request for the computers is not necessary as they are doing that now.

G. Smith noted that line item 10-53-1051 should be 0 because he sent out a memo that there will be no more Trooper over time – the line item will be 0 (\$10,596).

**Vehicle Repair** – if the police vehicles are replaced, the vehicle repair number of \$20,000 can be cut in half.

A discussion continued regarding vehicles that have been replaced.

J. Dowdell asked what kind of computer repairs do the police department require. It was explained that they need to upgrade their software.

A discussion continued. It was noted that the police department has 7 computers.

**Vehicle Maintenance** – the Police Department is requesting \$25,000 for gas and oil (an increase of \$3,000 from last year)

G. Smith asked the department to provide them with an estimated amount of gallons of gas that they use annually; he will need this information for when they join the consortium. Once the town is part of the consortium, gas will be approximately \$2.00 per gallon for town vehicles and diesel will go to approximately \$2.50 – it was noted that the fuel costs could be cut in half for the town. M. Bronn asked if there would be security on the gas tanks. G. Smith explained that there will be an electric gate and key fobs. It was noted that there will be room for abuse but they will be able to track those that abuse it.

It was noted that there will be no more open dumping. Dumping brush will be on the same day as dumping other items so that it can be monitored. The discussion continued regarding no more open dumping as a result of abuse of the system. Trash has been found under the brush that is why this needs to be monitored.

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## **Waste Water Treatment**

W. Opuszynski explained that they hired a firm call Woodward & Curran to do an I & I study and a possible facility upgrade. He noted that they are working on nitrogen and phosphates which they are mandated to do. It was explained that we are currently at 52 lbs. per month and we are supposed to be at 13 lbs. per month for nitrogen and that number will be going down in 2013. He expected that the fee cost will also increase.

W. Opuszynski explained that an underground study is also being done noting that we have a serious I & I problem. The I&I will also affect the operations of the plant. He noted that it's important to look at the design of the system.

G. Smith explained that we have never had the plant analyzed for its condition and size. To completely analyze the plant from the plant out including sewer lines, Woodward and Curran will cost \$500,000 to do all of these studies. We are currently hoping for a 50% re-imbursement from DEP but we will not know that for sure until we get an approval from DEP. He explained that when the river runs high, it over flows into the plant and the plant is not supposed to have fresh water as it disrupts the chemical balance of the plant. Gutters and leaders at residents homes that over-flow go right into the plant and all this upsets our credits (what we owe). G. Smith explained that he believes if we have the study done, we will be able to know exactly where we are, they will do smoke tests, camera all the lines and where the water is coming in, the infiltration study. This will also help us for when we do roads. This report will tell us which roads have the worst sewers. He noted that this study is a 1 year process; noting that we could lose the plant if we don't find out where our problems are. His question was what happens if we lose the plant. It was noted that the fines will be outrageous however the fines can be handled but the point is what it will cost to replace the plant. G. Smith noted that we are currently sealing man holes and fixing the problems that we know about but at this point we do not know what all the problems are.

J. Dowdell noted that this subject was discussed 7 years ago when he was on the board.

The discussion continued.

G. Smith also asked about the flow meter at Pines Bridge. W. Opuszynski explained that the low bid was \$90,000 but the tank was inspected two weeks ago and found that the tank was nowhere near as bad as they thought. W. Opuszinski believes they can stay below \$40K and G. Smith suggested they stay at \$60K.

W. Opuszynski also noted that he wants to put in a bypass to the pump station and he's estimating that it will cost \$30K to \$40k to do that. He also noted that they put in a UV system a couple of years ago that cost approximately \$90K. He explained that some of the equipment is from 1971 and is tired.

G. Smith explained that life expectancy will also be included in the Woodward & Curran study.

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M. Bronn suggested with that information, they will be able to put together a proper bond package.

J. Levine noted that he would consider this as not just a priority but an absolute priority. He noted that he has not been involved in this but was incredulous that something like this would be let go for so long. He noted that whatever the bottom line is, he would strongly suggest that the money for this study be put in the budget. G. Smith noted that he pushed Woodward and Curran to get the number to us for everything noting that they numbers will be broken down in the report.

J. Levine noted that it would be irresponsible to let the whole sewer system go to hell.

W. Opuszynski noted it will be 2 – 3 weeks before we get the number from Woodward and Curran and we won't know if the DEP will reimburse until later.

J. Levine asked about the sewer fund that a while back used to have \$800K in it. G. Smith noted that the number that is left is about \$300K.

G. Smith asked if we were planning on doing the tie-ins off of Lopus this year. W. Opuszynski noted that he is trying to do that this year noting that it will cost approximately \$12,800 to do all four homes (back flow preventers).

A discussion continued as to whether insurance would come into play should we lose the pump station and it over flows into these homes however, G. Smith thought that for \$13,000 taking preventative measures is the right thing to do.

M. Bronn asked about homes that are using the sewers.

### **Sewer Fees**

G. Smith explained that we are one of the few towns that do not have sewer fees. He noted that if we want to get with this study, DEP is going to make us institute a sewer user fee. He noted that if we don't institute a sewer usage fee, DEP starts pouring more money into the plant explaining the concept is if you can save money or make money somewhere we should encourage it. G. Smith noted that therefore we are going to have to institute a sewer fee but the question is how we do it. He noted that most towns base it on the water bill however a lot of our residents have wells. The Woodward and Curran study will tell us for our town how much the fee should be. The book will even tell us what, where, how and when.

M. Bronn noted that therefore there should be some Public Hearings to educate the town.

### **Fire Department Capital Expenditures**

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M. Pratt explained that a re-furbished ambulance which will include a new cab and chase will cost \$130,000. It was noted that a brand new ambulance would cost \$220,000.

M. Pratt also explained that the number went up to \$130,000 because it will now have a new A/C and heating system. The \$130K includes rental of another ambulance for the time it takes to build a new one.

G. Smith asked why we are not buying a van like AMR uses. M. Pratt noted that it is due to our 4 wheel drive requirement.

A lengthy discussion continued.

It was noted that this ambulance is now close to 16 years old. M. Pratt explained how much money is being put into the old vehicles. It was noted that we should get approximately 10 years out of a \$130,000 refurbished vehicle as compared to 12 years for a brand new \$220,000 ambulance.

G. Smith noted that he thinks we have been putting the ambulance off for a long time and it's time to replace it.

A lengthy discussion continued regarding rental monies and using monies from this year or next. G. Smith would like to know what the rental amount is.

### **Radio System**

G. Smith noted that the request is for \$85,000 and thought that they just purchased radios. M. Pratt responded by saying that the radio system upgrade was not completed. He noted that he has a tape from 911 where you can't hear one portable from where they were at a structure fire. M. Bronn asked about cell phones and M. Pratt noted that cell phones wouldn't work.

M. Pratt noted that the \$85K includes putting in a repeater site on the Rimmon Hill area noting that it would be a joint effort between Beacon Falls, Seymour and Oxford. He also noted that they need to put a repeater in the Beacon Valley Road area. They are also hoping that they can put something on Andrew Mtn. Road because that would be the best spot to put the system.

A lengthy discussion continued.

M. Pratt noted that he currently has a repeater on loan. The radio company brought in a repeater at their own expense but they will be taking it out in the next couple of weeks.

M. Bronn asked that the radio system be explained. A discussion continued regarding the upgrade from the low band system to the high band system. M. Pratt noted that the radio

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system works very badly right now noting that for instance it doesn't work on Cook Lane, at the school and many other areas.

M. Pratt noted that this system is the only way to go because everything has to go through the dispatch center and be recorded.

A lengthy discussion continued.

The town's cell tower was discussed and G. Smith noted that they are entertaining selling our cell tower.

**Summary** – M. Pratt believes \$85,000 will complete the entire radio upgrade project – a company named Utilities Communications would do the work as they do all the work for surrounding towns.

### **Defibrillator**

M. Pratt noted that our current defibrillators do not meet the standards. The department is looking for 10 of them at approximately \$2,200 each. It was noted that the current defibrillators will not work on a child.

A discussion continued on who actually creates the "standards".

M. Bronn asked the status of the Jaws of Life (M. Pratt noted that he did call the office but has not yet heard back.).

M. Pratt noted that the defibrillator should be in each car that is first on scene and also in the ambulances. He noted that the cost includes a trade in of our existing units.

### **Kitchen Hood System**

A lengthy discussion continued regarding the current hood system at the fire house and the cost of \$10,000 for a new hood system. M. Pratt explained that the fire marshal could shut their kitchen down and the fire house is used as an emergency shelter.

A lengthy discussion continued.

B. Ploss suggested they may get some stuff from Laurel Ledge when the upgrade. The discussion continued. M. Pratt explained that they have been requesting the kitchen hood system for many years and it always gets pulled out.

J. Dowdell asked how many emergency situations is the kitchen used for in one year.

A lengthy discussion continued noting that the kitchen is used for fire department fund raisers at least 50% of the time. J. Dowdell asked why a fundraiser can't pay for half of the kitchen hood. M. Pratt explained that they do put a lot of their fundraiser money back

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into the building and also if someone leaves a donation to the fire house they use it for things that are needed at the fire house.

A discussion continued with J. Dowdell noting that the Fire Department often refers to monies as the Fire Department's money when in fact it is the town's money.

The discussion continued.

### **Roof**

M. Pratt explained that it will cost about \$200K to replace the leaking roof. He noted that they currently have a 5 year warranty to patch the roof every year. M. Pratt explained that he thinks they should get a metal roof but they do cost the same.

It was noted that the alternative to a new roof was to let it leak and ruin the building.

A discussion continued regarding the roof and the patching but it was also noted that a new roof is needed.

### **Fire Engine**

A lengthy discussion took place noting that it would be approximately \$600k to \$700k to replace the engine and approximately \$100k more to add a ladder. M. Pratt noted that they have to check with the insurance company to find out what conforms to the ISO rating.

To get one engine/pumper/ladder truck would cost approximately \$900k.

G. Smith noted that they have look hard into the insurance re the ISO rating to see if this is possible noting that now would be the time to do it. He also noted that if we're going to spend \$650K we might as well get everything for \$900K.

M. Pratt noted that it will be another 10 years out for a tanker trunk.

M. Bronn noted that at this point in the workshop, without getting into anything operational, 2 million dollars has already been thrown on the table.

R. Doiron noted that is exactly what we did last year and the year before.

### **Grand List**

With discussion regarding the Fire Department completed, G. Smith continued noting that our grand list is down 12.75%. He noted that Mayor Bob called him and told him that Prospects grand list is down 16%. With that information, Mayor Bob was going to send out a memo requesting a 0% increase in the school budget. G. Smith asked if the boards would like G. Smith to make the same statement. The answer was yes.

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G. Smith pointed out that in addition to what was just mentioned re: \$2,000,000 increase before operational costs that with the Region 16 project and an estimated 1.04% mil increase in 3 years that the town has to consider implementing 1/3 of a mil increase each year over the next 3 years. This money should be put in a non-reoccurring fund. G. Smith noted that we should consider it or just put our heads in the sand and in three years be questioned why we did nothing to prepare for it.

M. Bronn noted that if they do that, there is no chance of this budget getting passed. M. Bronn noted that the way to get the budget through is to put together a bonding package. G. Smith noted that on some of these capital purchases, the life expectancy is less than the bond would be.

A discussion continued with G. Smith noting that he doesn't think it makes sense to bond these items with the exception of the fire truck maybe.

M. Bronn noted that with the first year of this Board of Finance, the town is already being hit with a 12% increase noting that we are already behind the 8 ball.

G. Smith noted that it doesn't matter the administration, the boards or who is in control noting that we let the town fall apart. He noted that we just have to put in the things we need to put in. He explained we can cut what we can cut and justify what we can justify but we have to do what we have to do.

M. Bronn noted that if we let this stuff go, we may be walking in two inches of wastewater on our new walkway. G. Smith responded by saying absolutely.

G. Smith also said that if they have knowledge that something is coming, they have to put it out there and let the people know.

M. Bronn noted that economic times are very bad right now and he hears people all the time saying taxes can't go up. M. Bronn said that even though they won't, the town is going to think they have a 12% increase in taxes because the mil rate is going up.

G. Smith noted that this is not pretty and as challenging as the last budgets were, this one could be worse, with M. Bronn adding that this one is the worst.

M. Bronn suggested that they figure out how to go flat by looking at personnel changes, etc.

G. Smith noted that the good news is that they are currently in contract negotiations and that he hired a new labor attorney noting that this new attorney is a little bit more aggressive. He explained that they are going to help us in a lot of different things such as the police department with the different shifts and spending money out there that we don't need to. G. Smith explained that they are going to have a bigger pay-in to health

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insurance and also change the insurance plan to hopefully save some money. G. Smith noted that he doesn't see flat.

M. Bronn responded by saying that if they increase the mil rate no one is going to want to move to Beacon Falls. G. Smith noted that he is in agreement with M. Bronn on going "flat" he just doesn't see how it's possible. M. Bronn said that they have to look at it, look at everything and it has to happen noting that there is no way the budget will pass with an increase.

J. Dowdell also noted that there is no way that it will be flat.

The discussion continued with M. Bronn noting that 2 out of every person in line at the super market are unemployed or under employed.

J. Levine asked how we went down \$70,000,000 in property tax. It was a result of revaluation, a lengthy discussion continued regarding the revaluation but the bottom line is that all properties values decreased.

J. Levine noted that they have to "sell" the budget noting that if you look at it by the mil rate, there would be an increase however if they sell it by the total dollars it may not appear to be an increase. M. Bronn responded by saying the average person doesn't care.

B. Ploss noted that when they tried to pass the budgets last year, the town people came back and said things like shut down the library and the town nurse. G. Smith noted that the public is not rational.

J. Levine noted that he and some others strongly went out against the budget. He is now wants to tell everyone that since reading this general information, this meeting and tonight has been his biggest awakening he has had. He noted that he knew about the roads but not the other stuff.

B. Ploss noted that they bring this information to the public every year.

J. Dowdell noted that they look at the percentage and show the percentage. He explained that they have to present the budget without the percentage noting that the public looks at for example a 6% increase and their response is that they did not get a 6% raise. He explained that needs to be avoided at all costs.

M. Pratt noted that in Stratford or Shelton, a flyer is sent out each year explaining everything. It was noted that unfortunately it costs money to send out the flyer.

J. Huk noted that the only thing that really matters to the people is the money that is coming out of their pocket suggesting that they can do a flyer, advertise it on the internet site explaining that they still need to get the word out and it shouldn't be that difficult.

M. Bronn noted that what they need to do as a Board is think outside of the box explaining that the average person doesn't even know what they pay in taxes as it's lumped into their mortgage.

B. Ploss suggested that they just keep putting the same budget out even after it's defeated.

A lengthy discussion continued.

It was decided that the next budget workshop will be held on Tuesday March 13<sup>th</sup> beginning at 8:00 P.M. (after the regular BOF meeting). G. Smith noted that he should have all the information needed by then.

The discussion continued.

J. Levine noted that in order to have any kind of intelligent discussion, they need to have all the numbers they are working with even if they have to plug in preliminary numbers. He noted that there are going to be changes however they need the information from the revenue side and expense side. He explained that he thinks it's a waste of time if they don't have the total noting that you can't make an intelligent decision without it.

G. Smith noted that his goal is to have M. Gomes plug all this in.

J. Levine noted that they absolutely need the information on the taxes in that they need to know how much they think they will be getting on taxes. He noted this information is critical noting this is impacted by the economy.

J. Levine also noted that it's critical that they know where they stand in this year's budget because if they can find money in this year's budget, perhaps there are things they could buy out of this year's budget.

J. Levine would also like to know what their fund balance is as this is critical information for when they go out to bond noting if they are down around 5% or 6% they are in serious trouble.

M. Bronn asked if the bonds were done. G. Smith noted that he just signed another 30 day extension noting that they got sidetracked on a couple of issues.

J. Levine also suggested that they concentrate on the big items then after that if there is money to spare then they look at the smaller departments noting this would be his approach.

J. Levine also noted that he thinks it's a waste of time bringing in Department Heads until they have directions themselves of where they want to go noting that if they have someone who gives a great presentation and we don't have the money, it's just a waste of time and frustrating for them.

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**R. Doiron motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:51 P.M. J. Dowdell 2<sup>nd</sup> the motion.  
All voted aye.**

**Respectfully Submitted,**

**Lauren Classey  
Clerk for the Board of Finance**

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