

Beacon Falls Board of Finance
10 Maple Ave.
Beacon Falls, CT 06403



BEACON FALLS BOARD OF FINANCE
Monthly Meeting
February 11, 2014
MINUTES
(Subject to Revision)

1. Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Joe Dowdell called the meeting to order at 7:30 P.M.

Board Members present: Robert Doiron, Brian Ploss, Marc Bronn, Joe Roderigo
Jack Levine (arrived at 8:42 P.M.)

Others present: First Selectman Chris Bielik, Selectman Peter Betkowski, and 6 members of the public

2. Approval of Minutes

Motion to accept the January 14, 2013 regular monthly meeting minutes: Doiron/Ploss; no discussion; all aye. J. Roderigo abstained as he was not at the January 14, 2013 meeting.

Motion to accept the February 6, 2013 special meeting minutes: Ploss/Bronn; no discussion; all aye. J. Roderigo and R. Doiron abstained as they were not at the February 6, 2013 special meeting.

3. Comments from the Public

Joe Fitzpatrick, Vice President from the Zoning Commission, presented the plans and maps of the Conservation and Development of the Transportation Initiatives. He indicated that last year the Planning and Zoning completed their 10-year plan of Conservation and Development. The initiative calls for adding north and southbound ramps to Route 8 at Lopus Road to access the entire industrial park. J. Fitzpatrick laid out a map to show a better picture of the plan. C. Bielik introduced two representatives of the Council of Government Regional Planning Commission Ray Jurzynski and Michael Opuszynski.

J. Fitzpatrick indicated the regional plan is to help connect Beacon Falls to Seymour, when the Rt. 67 and 42 connector is built and, then, eventually connect Rt. 42 to Oxford Airport. That is the long range plan. Lopus Road would have a ramp coming up to take the northbound traffic off the highway onto the local roads. Pent Road would be widened and Lancaster Drive would be connected to Pent Road via a new road.

Lancaster Drive is already suitable for truck traffic and heavier amounts of traffic. Lopus Road would be widened as well and then go behind the houses. The new Lopus Road would still come out where it does presently. The town garage and waste treatment has suitable room in between to put a bridge to cross the railroad tracks to service the O & G property and Murtha Industrial Park property. There would be a downtown exit and then an industrial park exit so there would be less traffic funneling through downtown on single lanes in both directions. When this gets built out, the sports complex would be centered around service roads. There is a small road that connects to Cold Spring Road that would make a nice level walk and entrance from downtown area under Rt. 8 to the bottom part of the park.

J. Fitzpatrick speculated that this will go through much debate and this is the preliminary planning stages. M. Bronn questioned who owns the property, if it is privately or publicly owned. J. Fitzpatrick indicated that the property is privately owned, but there is some property is O & G owned, as well as Murtha owned. M. Bronn asked who would be purchasing the property from the owners and J. Fitzpatrick indicated that the State of CT would be purchasing since it would be from State and Federal monies.

J. Fitzpatrick indicated that they will be asking for support from the Board of Finance, the Planning and Zoning, the Board of Selectmen, and from the state representative and senator as well as the U.S. representative and senator. Beacon Falls is in a highway enterprise zone as indicated in an article in the Waterbury Republican American dated October 23, 2013. The article indicated that the Naugatuck Valley Corridor includes the towns of Oxford, Beacon Falls, Seymour, and other valley towns.

J. Fitzpatrick stated that he would propose, if it was him, but it will need to be looked at and more thought out, to have the jog cut off where you go up around the corner - Rt. 42 goes downhill, uphill, right, left - and make it more straight-lined. It would meet up with Ridge Street and follow to the back of Oxford Airport. M. Bronn indicated that is all swamp. J. Fitzpatrick indicated that this would be a good place for Rt. 42 to terminate – state road going to state-owned airport. M. Bronn asked if the area was all Oxford Industrial Park and J. Fitzpatrick indicated yes it is.

J. Dowdell asked if any opposition, if any, has J. Fitzpatrick run into so far. J. Fitzpatrick indicated that everyone has been somewhat positive on the plan. C. Bielik indicated that opposition would probably be expected from the local business owners on Main Street when you get off Exit 24. By moving the exit ramps, you would have to work your way back to them. C. Bielik indicated that they haven't discussed this with the business owners that they are trying to get internal support first, and then step two would be to talk with them about this.

M. Bronn asked about the homeowners on Gruber Road, that the plans show slicing through their back yards and J. Fitzpatrick said yes. J. Fitzpatrick indicated that this is the first draw and will be debated and looked at seriously by many different people.

M. Bronn asked if there is a cost number on this yet. J. Fitzpatrick indicated that the only rough idea on it right now is \$25,000,000 range to put the whole thing in, give or take \$5,000,000. R. Doiron felt that sounds conservative. J. Fitzpatrick indicated that this is 10 years away at best, probably closer to 15 years from listening to people. You have to go through all the processes, if funding is available, and traffic studies when you go to the state with it.

M. Opuszynski asked about a phasing plan and J. Fitzpatrick answered not at this point. M. Opuszynski asked if there is a certain improvement plan for the bridge and J. Fitzpatrick indicated no and that the bridge is coming up on 50 years old and when this is in, then pressure would be taken off the bridge. It is just opinion at this time. J. Rodorigo asked about a road be created and J. Fitzpatrick indicated no going straight. At one time, a bridge was looked at being put across and the DTO said no.

J. Fitzpatrick indicated that they're using the existing Lopus Road, and he would move the road a little to the west and bypass the homes and consider using the bridge and part of Lopus Road as the Greenway Project. If this was done, the waste treatment plant could be used as a training or point of interest showing the effort of keeping the river clean. M. Opuszynski asked if the bridge is factoring in the new work at the waste treatment plant. J. Fitzpatrick indicated that the town engineer is on board with this, that we are in the stage with this that one day a bridge may be put there.

M. Bronn asked if the plan is going near the railroad tracks and J. Fitzpatrick indicated that it would be going over the tracks. Presently, the traffic going into Murtha Industrial Park, to O & G pit area, is going on Railroad Avenue, coming from downtown, crossing the Depot Street Bridge. That bridge has a capacity limit of 40 tons. Railroad Avenue would have a more desirable place to live with this plan going through.

C. Bielik indicated that by looking at the map, you can see there are traffic problems with coming from Murtha Industrial Park with the industry down there and with the residents of Railroad Avenue. M. Bronn asked about the vacancy rate in Murtha Industrial Park and J. Fitzpatrick said that he doesn't know, maybe Economic Development would know. R. Jurzynski indicated that someone would have to have control over who goes in and who goes out of the industrial parks so we don't know regards to the traffic problems.

M. Bronn asked about the justification about spending the money for this plan if there is 50% capacity and Lancaster is 20% full. J. Rodorigo answered that the justification is it will be filled, "if you build it, they will come". C. Bielik indicated that one of complaints that we hear from the tenants about Lancaster is limited access.

J. Fitzpatrick read a letter dated July 10, 2013 from O & G Industries, which was the only one that went into the public hearing for the Plan and Conservative Development. O & G had an opportunity to review the proposal by Nafis & Young dated April 29, 2013 as part of the town's update to the plan of Conservation Development. The letter stated that limited access to many vacant parcels greatly reduces the probability that development can and will occur.

O & G has had numerous development inquiries over the years for several parcels only to discover that access was limited. O & G is in favor of moving these proposal improvements from the drawing table.

M. Bronn asked about if this was tied into the plan that was studied to put a road to Stop & Shop in Seymour. J. Fitzpatrick indicated yes and part of it is to have this plan put in first. J. Fitzpatrick referenced that there are approximately 13 to 14 lights going up Rt. 67 from Seymour to the Oxford line. J. Fitzpatrick mentioned that there must be concerns in Oxford, the same as Seymour, with having problems of having a 2 lane road that needs to be widened. Oxford may have sensitivity with having a 4 lane road right down their main street. By breaking off Rt. 42, it may bleed some pressure off the main road.

M. Opuszynski asked if there is a list of potential tenants, or type of tenants, or a strategy to getting tenants into the industrial park and surrounding areas. J. Fitzpatrick indicated no, not at this point. Economic Development would help with that as well as the other boards in town.

M. Bronn asked if Murtha or Vargas said anything about this and J. Fitzpatrick indicated that he has gone to Murtha and, at one time, Murtha had gone to the DOT to try to get a ramp with no success. The only way this is going to happen if there is enough support behind it.

C. Bielik indicated that this is a big deal. As discussed during the Board of Selectmen meeting a month ago when J. Fitzpatrick presented this plan to them, the key to having a project of this size and scope is to try to tie it in to regionalize the plan. If the airport expansion can be tied into access into the industrial park, it helps to sell the project at a high enough level to get it pushed through. If it just says "Beacon Falls" on it, it's pretty much dead on arrival. Anything the touches on multiple communities within the valley region would be the way to go.

P. Betkowski asked if J. Fitzpatrick talked with Oxford yet and he indicated that he hasn't as of yet. He is working that into the plans. Beacon Falls is his first level and then will go from here.

J. Fitzpatrick will get copies of the O & G letter to the Board members to go with the package.

4. Update from Town Auditors

Copies of an email from Amanda Backhaus, one of the auditors, were distributed to the Board members. Mike VanDeventer, the other auditor, was not feeling well and needed to go home. Since they came together, they both left earlier this afternoon.

J. Dowdell indicated that it is slowly coming together. R. Doiron indicated that by reading the email, it looks like we have more money that it's showing. J. Dowdell asked if we have received any money from the Ambulance and C. Bielik indicated that we have not for the past 2 years and more to follow on that.

C. Bielik had a meeting earlier today with Jeremy Rodorigo and other members of Beacon Hose Co. and discussed that very issue. There will be more to report at next month's meeting since there is some work that needs to be done before it's ready to see the light of day.

J. Dowdell asked if there were any comments on the email from the auditors and there were none by the Board members.

5. Finance Manager's Report

There were no reports to distribute to the Board members for review since Manny Gomes was not at the meeting. Also, there is no Finance Manager for Beacon Falls at this time

R. Doiron questioned the transfer of \$18,735.00 under "b" on the Agenda, wondering if it was Manny or did it go to the Board of Selectmen and they did that. C. Bielik indicated that he had a brief meeting with our finance clerk Denise Weik and would like to bring her in when we have all the details. It appears that, by her research, D. Weik believes it was her who cut the checks and did the transfers on her own. It was a miscommunication between what M. Gomes told her and what she thought she had to do. C. Bielik doesn't have all the details since D. Weik is working those out.

M. Bronn asked if M. Gomes had anything to do with this and C. Bielik indicated that it doesn't look that way.

R. Doiron asked about the update of the software. C. Bielik indicated that there was supposed to be training sometime this week but the weather will be playing a part with that. The training people need at least 3 consecutive days, if not 4. D. Weik was going to rearrange her schedule since she does not work on Mondays but the training people cancelled on us. It looks like the training will be delayed one week. We are still running parallel with the old software but we need the final training to feel comfortable with running the new one. J. Rodorigo asked who besides D. Weik will be trained in the new software and C. Bielik indicated that Lorrie Heath as coordinated with Len Greene in Town Clerk's Office. M. Bronn and J. Rodorigo asked if there should be a delay in training until the hiring of the new Finance Manager. C. Bielik answered by saying that he can ask to see if there will be special training available for the new person hired. He believes that it would be better to get it started rather than delaying it. We can always arrange training for the new person.

J. Rodorigo asked if there was any update on the bonding. C. Bielik indicated that there is going to be a bond rating sometime next week. He believes that it will be on Tuesday, February 18th and M. Gomes would be available to come in for that. The plan is to create long-term debt for this town for the first time in a while. We would bond about \$3,900,000 of that and hold onto \$700,000 for the wastewater treatment plant as a band. That amount is subject to the possibility of grants. When the bands expire in March, we will convert and reevaluate that as we go forward with the wastewater treatment plant.

J. Rodorigo asked for clarification on the \$3,900,000 that will be bonded for 10 years in March. C. Bielik said yes and we can break that down if it makes sense to do so. Decisions will be made when we get closer to that time.

6. Treasurer's Report

Reports were distributed to members for review.

Mike Krenesky was not at the Board Meeting to answer any questions if there were any.

C. Bielik indicated that there is a \$51.00 difference in the Police Fund between last month and this month. This comes from how the money is paid by the townspeople. People who owe money to the town occasionally write a check to the entity where they are, not who should get the money. The check was written to the Police Dept. and there will be a check written from the Police Dept. Fund to the General Fund in the amount of \$51.00 to correct this difference.

7. Town Clerk's Report

Reports were distributed to members for review.

8. Tax Collector's Report

Reports were emailed to members for review.

The tax collector was not present at the meeting to answer any questions if there were any. C. Bielik indicated that Maryann Holloway was supposed to be at the meeting and was surprised that she wasn't there.

J. Rodorigo indicated that he has a list showing that there is \$1,700,000 owed to the Town of Beacon Falls in back taxes from a variety of taxes – real estate, car, and personal property. Some of them go back as old as 11 or 12 years up to 1 year. There are some hitters as far as money is concerned. It is \$1,712,533.20 according to the report. M. Bronn asked if interest was included and J. Rodorigo indicated that it is principal and interest. C. Bielik asked if the report is as of the end of January and J. Rodorigo indicated that the report is as of August so there is another 6 months that needs to be taken into account. J. Rodorigo mentioned that his concern is what has been done to collect the back taxes. J. Dowdell indicated that was why M. Holloway was going to be at today's meeting to explain her plan to the Board. C. Bielik indicated that he can suggest that she capsulize it into an email form to the Board. Since M. Holloway took office, they have been discussing this and have been getting the data and will go forward with it. J. Dowdell mentioned that she is going to Prospect and Oxford for training and has already gone to Naugatuck.

R. Doiron asked if surrounding towns use a service to collect the back taxes. J. Rodorigo answered that as far as he knows when you're dealing with personal property taxes and under a certain number; you don't use a service because you only get 50% of what you collect. There is usually a cutoff number that is different town to town. If it's real estate tax, it falls into a different category. C. Bielik indicated that the last time Beacon Falls did a sale of distressed property was approximately 2 ½ years. There were 4 properties where this was done. J. Rodorigo indicated that there are heavy fees and you never collect 100% of the back tax owed. This is a full time job for someone to do. M. Bronn indicated that some would probably be deemed uncollectable and J. Rodorigo agreed. There are some names on the list that he knows are no longer around.

C. Bielik will talk to M. Holloway about emailing the Board and J. Rodorigo will make a copy of the report that he has and email it to the Board members.

9. First Selectman's Report – Chris Bielik

C. Bielik has some accounting information for the Board. On Monday, he received the final numbers from Region 16 for the population numbers in the school system for the upcoming year. The bottom line of the new calculated figure is 39.737 more or less. That represents about a .4% increase from last year, going in the wrong direction. Last year, the figure was 39.36. This is going to have an impact on the mill rate and our plan going forward. There was also the Grand List revaluation from the Assessor's Office that came in and had a small bump up. It was approximately .5% and change in a positive direction. This equals to about \$87,000 of addition revenue based on the tax rate, mill rate, and the new Grand List.

J. Dowdell asked if C. Bielik heard anything on the new roof for Woodland High School. C. Bielik has not heard anything from the Region and Tim James had given him a heads up before the announcement hit the newspaper. C. Bielik has had other issues with Laurel Ledge Elementary School project. There is no resolution as of yet.

J. Dowdell asked about the roof for the fire house. C. Bielik indicated that the roof is on hold due to the weather. The temperature has to be at least 32° for the glue to hold and all the stuff that was prepositioned has been taken off and is being stored in sealable containers. The company is holding it waiting for the good weather to come back. C. Bielik has been assured that we are number 1 on their list to do. M. Bronn asked if there is a price increase and C. Bielik indicated that there is not an increase.

R. Doiron questioned the status of the retaining walls. C. Bielik just did a follow up call with the gentleman. It took a while to track down the name of the project manager and now has his name and phone number. It is the same problem as with the roof on the fire house. Everything had to be put on hold due to the weather. They need a weather window of at least 3 consecutive days with temperatures of 32° or higher to shift the workers off what they are working on now to bring to us to make it worth their while. C. Bielik found out the contract to do this work has a maximum completion date of August of this year. It should not take them nearly that long according to the project manager.

R. Doiron has a concern that it was supposed to be done back in December and fears the over-run costs. C. Bielik indicated that it is a state project and has no bearing on Beacon Falls' budget. He will "tweet" any additional information that he receives on this project.

M. Bronn asked if salt has been purchased. C. Bielik indicated that the salt is on order since all the suppliers have been tapped dry. We have enough salt for this weekend and probably one more storm.

B. Ploss asked about getting the new line item for the Region 16 tax aspect that was discussed last meeting. C. Bielik indicated that we have not received any figures yet. B. Ploss indicated that we need this to factor into the new budget.

a. Transfer

C. Bielik indicated that there were no transfers tonight.

b. Update on hiring of New Finance Manager

C. Bielik indicated that we advertised in the newspapers twice and have 6 candidates. There is not one applicant in the group that has any municipal experience in dealing with finance. J. Dowdell indicated that he has not had a chance to review the applicants. C. Bielik indicated that he has spoken to J. Rodorigo and a few others if there is a better avenue for trying to access candidates that better fit the profile of what we're looking for. The problem is the addition cost of doing this. C. Bielik thinks that you cannot spend too much to get the best candidate for what is such a critical job for the town. J. Dowdell asked what the ad contained – was it a full ad. J. Rodorigo answered that both times we put the full ad in the newspaper.

C. Bielik indicated that there may be other places other than the Waterbury Republican American that may lead us to better qualified candidate. J. Rodorigo indicated that in his conversations with several presidents and human resource directors of companies, they each mentioned CareerBuilders as a place to go. J. Rodorigo mentioned that he doesn't know if a motion needs to be made to have the Board of Selectman go elsewhere. M. Bronn indicated no, that we should look at what we already have.

J. Rodorigo indicated that it is about \$1,000 to post on CareerBuilder and that it is a much, much too important of a job. We do not have anyone in-house to train the new person. J. Dowdell indicated that that may be the best way to go. C. Bielik said that he will look at that and another option, and will compare & contrast to which way we will be exploring.

10. Unfinished Business

a. Fire Truck Status

C. Bielik indicated that the Board of Selectmen took a vote last night after a bit of discussion. The fire house is getting ready to have their annual Election of Officers.

The current fire chief, Mike Pratt, announced that he will not be seeking the position again this time around. Under their charter, he could opt for one more stint but is volunteering not to run. There is going to be an entire change in the line-up of the leadership of Beacon Hose Co. 1. They discussed the fire truck and the recommendation of the Board of Finance last night at the Board of Selectmen meeting. The Board of Selectmen voted, at a time to be determined, that it may be better after the election of the new officers to get a feeling in the fire house of how the new officers feel about the fire truck. We can explain to the public in an informational town meeting where we are in the process and how we got there and get the town's feeling as to what the next step to be.

11. New Business

a. Budget Preparation Process and Calendar

J. Dowdell indicated that we should wait on the planning until we get a new Finance Manager. R. Doiron asked if the department heads submitted the budget proposals and C. Bielik answered yes, that we are 100%. J. Dowdell asked any idea how it looked and C. Bielik indicated that he knows that there will be some capital projects, certainly in Public Works.

J. Rodorigo asked if they were anyone from the Board of Finance who meets with Region 16 as they prepare for their budget. J. Dowdell indicated that there is not. J. Rodorigo would like to see the numbers for the bond impact now that the project in Prospect is underway. They want to bond the roof and the security upgrades and those upgrades are directly tied to the costs.

M. Bronn asked if there is a warranty on the roof. J. Rodorigo indicated that he personal would go after someone even though it's been 10 years. C. Bielik indicated that the maintenance people were dealing with the effects and not the cause. J. Rodorigo indicated that you can try to go after but would probably not get you anywhere.

12. Correspondence

a. CCM Municipal Leadership Training

J. Dowdell informed the Board of a leadership training being held by the CT Conference of Municipalities. The first is on Thursday, February 13, 2014 from 9:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.M. in Rocky Hill. The second is on Tuesday, March 25, 2014 from 9:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.M.

C. Bielik indicated that the training is worth the time if available to attend.

b. Board of Finance Clerk's Invoice

Invoices (2) were distributed to Board Members. First invoice was for a digital recorder that Marla purchased herself, as well as batteries for the recorder, to be used at the Board of Finance meetings. The cost of this invoice is \$74.41.

Second invoice is for the meeting on Tuesday, January 14, 2014 and the cost of this invoice is \$110.00. The total cost of the two invoices combined is \$184.41.

Motion to accept the two invoices from the Board of Finance Clerk and pay the total of \$184.41; Doiron/Ploss; no discussion; all aye.

13. Comments from the Public

No comments from the public.

14. Adjournment

The next regular monthly meeting will be Tuesday, March 11, 2014 at 7:30 P.M.

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:52 P.M.: Doiron/Levine; no discussion; all aye.

Respectfully submitted,

Marla Scirpo
Board of Finance, Clerk