

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



**BEACON FALLS BOARD OF FINANCE
Regular Meeting
January 13, 2015
MINUTES
(Subject to Revision)**

1. Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance

Board Members present: Joe Dowdell, Joe Rodorigo, Bob Doiron, Marc Bronn, Brian Ploss, and Jack Levine

Others present: First Selectman Chris Bielik; Selectman Dom Sorrentino; Selectman Peter Betkoski; Chief Jim Trzaski, Beacon Hose Co. 1; Mike Krenesky, Town Treasurer; Sue Dowdell, Director of Library; Finance Manager Tom Broesler; Mike Yamin, Region 16 School Superintendent; and Gary Komarowsky.

Chairman Joe Dowdell called the meeting to order at 7:32 P.M.

2. Elections of New Chairman, Vice Chairman, and Secretary

Chairman J. Dowdell indicated that tonight, the election for the new Chairman, Vice Chairman, and Secretary will take place. J. Dowdell opened for nominations for Chairman. J. Dowdell nominated Jack Levine as Chairman. Bob Doiron seconded the nominated. Marc Bronn nominated Joe Rodorigo as Chairman. Bob Doiron seconded the nominated. J. Dowdell asked if there were any other nominations and there were none. J. Dowdell asked if they nominees wanted to talk and J. Rodorigo indicated that they send it right to vote. By a show of hands, the vote was 4 in favor of Jack Levine and 2 in favor of Joe Rodorigo. J. Dowdell announced that the new Chairman of the Board of Finance is Jack Levine.

Jack Levine opened the nominations for Vice Chairman. Brian Ploss nominated Joe Dowdell. Marc Bronn seconded the nomination. J. Levine asked three times for any other nominations. Hearing none, one ballot for Vice Chairman was cast for Joe Dowdell.

J. Levine opened the nominations for Secretary. Joe Dowdell nominated Bob Doiron. Brian Ploss seconded the nomination. J. Levine asked three times for any other nominations. Hearing none, one ballot for Secretary was cast for Bob Doiron.

3. Public Comment

C. Bielik congratulated and welcomed the new officers of the Board of Finance on behalf of the Board of Selectmen and himself.

B. Doiron thanked J. Dowdell for his past years' service as Chairman.

4. Approval of Minutes: December 9, 2014

Motion to approve the minutes from December 9, 2014 as submitted by the clerk for tonight's meeting: Dowdell/Doiron; no discussion; all ayes with one abstention by Brian Ploss since he was not at last month's meeting.

5. Finance Manager's Report

Tom Broesler was present at tonight's meeting.

T. Broesler indicated that he had nothing new to add to his report. They are making progress. The first run of payroll checks was signed by C. Bielik. It was the first run on the new system. It has transitioned from upstairs to downstairs in the Finance Dept.

J. Levine asked if we could return to the Finance's Manager's Report to accommodate the introduction of the Region 16 School Superintendent Mike Yamin to the Board of Finance.

6. Public Comment

J. Levine invited Mike Yamin to introduce himself and speak to the Board. Mike Yamin, the new Region 16 School Superintendent, indicated that he has passed and will be approaching the budget season. He will be aligning his goals to the goals of the Board of Ed. There is a vote in front of the Board of Ed soon – February 25, 2015 – for a full day of kindergarten. This is a new initiative for Region 16. If this vote passed, it will be part of the budget. M. Yamin indicated that he has an “open door policy” and is available 24/7.

He asked for any questions or concerns that the Board may have. J. Dowdell asked if he had a best guess as to the increase will be with full day kindergarten. M. Yamin indicated that he doesn't have a best guess as to the overall budget will be but the round number would be somewhere around \$375,000 for the whole district. The savings would be the midday run.

J. Rodorigo noted that the State of CT underfunded \$660,000,000. In 2012, by identifying the most needy districts, they shifted money away from the suburban schools to the urban schools. The State of CT is looking at a deficit \$1.3 billion starting July 1 of 2015 and a deficit of \$3.3 billion over the next 24 months. M. Yamin added with the largest tax increase. J. Rodorigo asked why would he add \$400,000 to an already inflated budget when you don't know the outcome of the state's budget that won't start until July 1; why not delay the start.

M. Yamin indicated that he would not call the budget inflated; it will be a real budget. His recommendation on full day kindergarten will not come from the state's reimbursement. His recommendation will be what he thinks is the greatest outcome you're going to get from investing into education. M. Bronn asked if this is a high priority for him. M. Yamin replied that it is a little premature and want to know where their line items are. B. Ploss agreed with J. Rodorigo about the large expenditure of full day kindergarten and suggested that it should be brought to the towns. M. Yamin sees it as what we want to provide as curriculum wise. He sees it as his responsibility to what the program should look like for our kids.

J. Levine thanked M. Yamin for coming to today's meeting and indicated that everyone is welcomed to go to a meeting to discuss it further. M. Yamin indicated that you don't have to wait until the meeting, that everyone is welcomed to email him.

6. Finance Manager's Report (continued)

T. Broesler indicated that they are just upon done with the audit, all the prior years' work are done. B. Ploss asked how much from the old system needs to be inputted. T. Broesler indicated that nothing else from the old system is being inputted. He did say that the payroll date from July 1, 2014 to December 31, 2014 has to be entered. He will be doing that on a month by month basis. M. Bronn asked from where are the people being paid from and T. Broesler indicated the new system.

J. Rodorigo noted that the auditors cleared the books up until June 2014 and T. Broesler indicated yes. J. Rodorigo next asked if the books from July 2014 to December 2014 forward reconciled and T. Broesler indicated no, payroll has to be entered and has the month is done, then the books will be reconciled. J. Rodorigo asked when they will be done and T. Broesler indicated that it took him from August to today to reconcile all of last year. Hopefully by the summer is his plan. It is going to take a while.

J. Levine asked if anyone else had any questions and there were none at this time.

7. Beacon Hose Co. 1 Report

Chief Jim Trzaski was present at tonight's meeting.

Chief Trzaski apologized that he doesn't have a written report for tonight's meeting. The treasurer thought the meeting was next week. There is approximately \$42,000 in the bank and was a very busy month. There were 60 calls last month and 40 the previous month. They have all been billed up to last week; roughly \$25,000 was billed out.

Their year goes from January 1 to December 31 by his understanding. The audit was done in May/June and a question about the financial institution that should do it. They should be reconciled by the next month and would be ready for an audit. Chief Trzaski noted that Board wanted to choose the firm to do the audit.

J. Levine asked to have an agenda item adding to next month's. He asked if the Board would agree to have the current audit firm to come in and answer questions, and then vote on them. M. Bronn asked about another firm doing a bid versus the current firm. J. Levine noted that that is a good idea. The cost is not known and Chief Trzaski indicated that the firm had to go back three years so pricing could not be compared. J. Levine asked to have the current audit firm give a quote for the Board to vote on.

Chief Trzaski indicated that they have two full time employees, one of the full time people left for another job. Right now, part time Beacon Hose employees are filling in for that position. Probably by May 2015, they will be looking to fill that position. They also started billing for hazardous materials since the accident on Route 8 around Thanksgiving. They became part of the recovery affords and decided they should bill for hazardous materials. The money would go back to the town of Beacon Falls and not to Beacon Hose Co. 1.

B. Doiron asked for the recommendation to be added in their preparation for the budget. Chief Trzaski indicated that it won't be a constant revenue item. B. Doiron mentioned that it can be in the budget at a \$0.00. J. Levine asked that he would like the Selectmen's view on adding a budget line item for firehouse income.

J. Levine asked if there were any further questions and M. Bronn asked if anything has been heard about the fire truck. Chief Trzaski hasn't heard anything but with things going on in the government, it has slowed down. C. Bielik received assurance from our Congressional delegation that there will be a joint resolution endorsing our application for the grant.

There were no further questions for Chief Trzaski at this time.

8. Treasurer's Report

Mike Krenesky was present at tonight's meeting. The Treasurer's Report was distributed to the Board.

M. Krenesky made note to the updated report. There is a challenge under the US B account, the way they calculate the available balance. It double-counts the balance of \$92,000. It should be \$122,xxx. J. Levine asked if anyone has a question for the Town Treasurer and there were none at this time.

9. Bank Rating Report

The bank's rating report showed a rating of A-.

J. Levine noted that the Board should review this bi-annually.

10. Town Clerk's Report

The Town Clerk's Report was distributed to the Board.

11. Tax Collector's Report

The Tax Collector's Report was distributed to the Board.

A counterfeit \$50.00 bill was received and submitted to the bank. The bank did not accept it. J. Dowdell asked if there is a marking pen available and C. Bielik indicated that they should get one.

C. Bielik indicated that the Tax Collector ran a spot check and over the last calendar year, we collected just shy of \$1.6 million in back taxes. This gives us approximately \$840,000 in uncollected back taxes. This still has to be smooth over to see what is actually truly uncollectable. He asked about getting extra help and the Tax Collector indicated that would be more counterproductive to bring someone in who didn't know exactly what they were doing.

There is one pending back tax delinquent sale with a pending date of February 4, 2015. This includes the property known as Bear Hill Road, which has an outstanding balance of approximately \$165,000. River Bend Park would be a net zero for the town because we would take it in lieu of back tax payment.

J. Levine indicated that he would like to see charts/graphs for the budget presentation that show the efforts of the tax collector. C. Bielik agreed that that is a good idea and was have that.

12. Selectmen Report

a. Transfers

C. Bielik indicated that there is a property on the corner which is owned by Eric Valentino, going up Rice Lane, before you get to Rice Lane Ext. and Spruce Lane. When that road was being regraded a few years ago, the people were given an opportunity to hook up to the town water/town sewer because some of the properties still had septic tanks and well water. Mr. Valentino was not able to take advantage at that time due to an easement battle with his neighbor behind him. That neighbor ran through his property line to where the hook up could possibly have been. It was agreed by the administration at that time that once those issues were settled, that if Mr. Valentino elected to go forward, the town would support a portion of the hook up from the connection point to his property and he would be responsible for establishing the meter point and running the line to his house. Two months ago, he well ran dry. It was getting towards the end of the asphalt paving season and we pushed through and had the water company dig the hole. The cost of the effort was \$5,400. With going back to the previous administration, this was discussed in April 2013 when Mr. Valentino brought it back to their attention and the Board of Selectmen reconfirmed the original ruling that when presented, we will honor our portion. The work was done and the town's portion was estimated at \$5,500 and the actual cost was \$5,400. In order to pay the bill, it was discussed and suggested to use Public Works – Highway Materials item line, and then transfer from Contingency into Highway Materials to make up for that unbudgeted expense.

The Board of Selectmen's recommendation is to transfer from Contingency Fund, budget line item 10-90-83-1170 to Highway Materials, budget line item 10-90-59-1710 in the amount of \$5,400.

Motion to accept the Board of Selectmen's budget transfer request of \$5,400 to be transferred from Contingency, line item 10-90-83-1170, to Highway Materials, line item 10-90-59-1710: Doiron/Ploss; discussion was by B. Doiron asking what would happen if another transfer is needed from that budget line item. If we have to do 2 transfers, then it would have to go to a town meeting. C. Bielik indicated that that line hasn't had overruns in the past couple of years, so the expectation is that unless something out of the ordinary, then a second transfer is not anticipated. B. Doiron is not in favor until it is absolutely necessary. B. Ploss agreed with B. Doiron. C. Bielik was thinking that we could hold off until the line item goes negative. M. Bronn asked why are we paying for his hook up. C. Bielik indicated that the road was opened and an opportunity was given to the homeowners to take advantage of the opening. Mr. Valentino was unable to take that opportunity since he was in litigations with his neighbor. The administration at that time felt that he was missing out on the opportunity and it wasn't his fault. Legally, he couldn't do it because he was tied up in court. J. Dowdell noted that he was landlocked and whoever sold him the house didn't tell him about this. C. Bielik also noted that it is on a private road too.

J. Levine indicated that he feels that this is a good decision to do but is wondering why with this being a non-budgeted item that you didn't come prior to paying the bill. C. Bielik indicated that it was an emergency with his well running dry; no ayes, five nays, and 1 abstention – Joe Roderigo.

13. Unfinished Business

a. Status Report on Resolving Pending Audit Problems

There was nothing new to add to the Pending Audit Problems at this time. This will remain on the agenda for next month.

b. Sewer Treatment Plant – Woodard & Curran

There was nothing new to add to the Sewer Treatment Plant at this time. C. Bielik will be having a meeting with Dave Prickett on Thursday.

14. New Business

J. Levine indicated that a budget calendar should be set up and asked that the Board of Selectmen would discuss among themselves and let the Board of Finance know when they would have something for them. J. Levine also indicated that he would like to send something out to the Board of Finance and find out what their availability is. C. Bielik noted that the departments have been requested to come in with their projected budgets, not counting utilities but just operational and any downstream capital projects that they are expecting. That input is due the last Friday of January 2015. The Board of Selectmen will probably begin their process a week after that, and will have something the end of February. C. Bielik suggested a special to be held either the end of February or the beginning of March.

J. Levine asked to have an agenda line item added to reflect the discussion of the budget calendar and everyone can think of what they like. At that point, we can decide on the process of discussing with a department head if needed. M. Bronn indicated that he would like to see a budget first before bringing in the department heads. J. Levine noted that we will decide what we would like to do as a Board. He would like to know first when the Selectmen will have things ready.

J. Levine indicated that we will decide what works best for everyone at the February meeting. B. Doiron felt that we should earmark this to have ready and bring to the public before the school budget. This year is going to be a little bit more of a challenge. C. Bielik mentioned that the Board of Ed and the Region are under no obligation to take their budget to a referendum. In the past, unless they have been forced to do this, they have passed their budget at the regional district meeting.

J. Rodorigo disagrees and noted that knowing this budget better than anyone, there is not a lot of room in the budget. Everything is going to be operational. Last year, we didn't put the light on it. The overall impact to the taxpayer was six-tenth of a mil because this Board did such a good job putting the budget together. The Region budget is going to be "dollar for dollar" and we cannot absorb their debt at more. Rushing it through to try to beat the Region is a mistake. J. Levine indicated that we are going to have the discussion next month and the Board will decide the process and go forward from there.

J. Rodorigo also mentioned that bids haven't been put out in a number of years for insurance, workmen's comp, etc. He would like to see those numbers for 3 competitive bids for workmen's comp insurance, health insurance, garbage pickup, etc. Changing the hourly work week, whether there is a benefit to going to 30-hour work week/full time, closing town hall on Fridays, would there be cost benefits with these things. We can't make an educated decision without those numbers. He also noted that we are running a "hybrid" police department with the resident state trooper and that will be going up. With the line item for the third consecutive year, it has been underfunded by almost \$20,000. We have to decide if we want to modify to the resident state trooper or the police lieutenant. He noted that as he has suggested before, if we need engineering, we should get a price from another firm. This hasn't been put out to bid for about ten years.

J. Levine indicated that if any of the Board would like to see an agenda item added, please email or call him, and he will have it added to the next month's agenda.

15. Correspondence

a. Board of Finance Clerk's Invoice for the December 9, 2014 meeting

Motion to approve the invoice for the December 9, 2014 meeting from the clerk as submitted for tonight's meeting for a total of \$76.25: Dorion/Dowdell; no discussion; all ayes.

16. Comments from the Public

Mike Krenesky, 22 Wolfe Avenue, is the caretaker of the Lewis House and wanted to inform the Board about the roof pulling away and having the rafters exposed. There is water getting in and causing the ceiling on the porch to collapse. He asked the Fire Chief to do a ladder exercise to bring a tarp up there to protect it for the time being. We have a decision on the books to tear down the building, and if that is the direction that the town is going to go in, then perhaps a line item should be added into the budget to do the demolition. We need to get a real cost to bring the building down. He has been in contact with United House Wrecking in Stamford and Boston Salvage in Boston, and asked them to come down and do a walk-through in the house. There may be a number of things in there that may be salvageable and worth something. He doesn't know what the correct action is.

The property, at some point in time, will have to come down by the building inspector's ruling. J. Dowdell noted that the house has become a training facility for the fire department, for ours and for other towns. His concern is for liability. C. Bielik will check with the insurance agent to see about coverage of the Wolfe Avenue property. J. Levine noted that he should get a certificate of liability insurance. J. Levine mentioned that the Board of Finance could choose to put money in the budget but the Board of Selectmen would have to decide on the spending.

C. Bielik indicated that he had a conversation with our District Representative Theresa Conroy a year ago and asked what the priorities of the town, what can we help with around town. C. Bielik mentioned the demolition of the house to her. As soon as he hears back from her, he will inform everyone.

J. Levine asked if there were any further comments from the public and there were none.

17. Adjournment

With no further business to discuss, J. Levine asked for a motion to adjourn tonight's meeting.

Motion to adjourn tonight's meeting at 8:46 P.M.: **Ploss/Doiron**; *no discussion*; all ayes.

Respectfully submitted,

Marla Scirpo
Clerk, Board of Finance