



**TOWN OF BEACON FALLS
JOINT BOARD OF FINANCE
BOARD OF SELECTMAN MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday June 8, 2010**

CALL TO ORDER

S. Cable called the joint meeting to order at 7:05 P.M. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: BOF Chairman W. Hopkinson, Vice Chairman G. Smith, Board of Finance members L. Krepinevich, B. Ploss and R. Doiron, First Selectman S. Cable and Selectmen D. Sorrentino and M. Krenesky and approximately 20 residents.

S. Cable began the meeting by explaining that this meeting is to finalize the proposed 2010/2011 budget which will be brought before a town vote on June 16, 2010. She noted that anything that they recommend with employees is pending negotiations which will be expected to take place during the week. She noted that the representative of the union was unavailable to meet at this time.

W. Hopkinson reviewed all the proposed cuts that were made to the budget since the last vote.

*Employee benefits were reduced by \$70,245 as a result of negotiations with the insurance carrier (S. Cable interjected that she wanted it to be made clear that this was not with the employees but with the insurance carrier)

*Reducing employee hours from 35 to 30 hours, 40 to 32 hours and part time employees from 25 hours to 20 hours - this would result in a \$139,584 reduction. Closing all town buildings on Fridays would result in a savings of \$8,753. S. Cable wanted all to understand that this would mean closing all buildings, Senior Center, Town Hall, Library, etc. for 3 straight days every week.

*Police - Part time patrol reduced \$30,000 wages over-time reduced \$20,000 - (there is an ordinance in place that states that non-profit organizations are responsible for paying for their own police coverage during events however, the BOS usually pays for the police coverage since the non-profit organizations are run by volunteers and their programs are generally help the town - some of this money comes out of the police overtime)

*Park & Rec - reduced by \$62,300 which includes the following cuts

Summer program wages \$11,500
Recreational programs and activities \$10,00
Independence Day celebration \$10,000
Sports Subsidies \$3,700
Summer Concert Series \$3,500
Matthies Park - \$10,000
Office Supplies \$600
Building Maintenance \$8,000

*Bulky Waste - eliminating the town dump \$29,000

*Library - \$16,635 (this is bringing the 35 hours back to 30 hours)

*Elderly Program \$1,000

*High Way Maintenance

Eliminating street sweeping \$11,700
Eliminating guard rail and line painting \$17,000

*First Selectman Expense - eliminated completely \$1,500

*Legal Fees and Town Council \$10,000

*Public Works Clothing Allowance \$1,000

It was explained that the Town of Beacon Falls gives a tax abatement to senior citizens. There is \$142,000 allotted for this abatement. S. Cable explained that there were 299 applicants this year of which 133 have income over \$50,000 and do not qualify but 115 do qualify under the state income limits and our ordinance. She explained that the BOS by virtue of the ordinance can lower the \$500 or eliminate it at any time as long as there is a majority vote of 3. She noted that while they are looking at budget cuts, this information should be put out there just in case anyone was interested in cutting this amount back.

S. Cable announced to the public that was present that this is a BOS/BOF joint workshop and that the boards had a lot of work to do in a very little time. She noted that with all the above cuts and not included the senior citizen tax abatement that they have reduced the budget to \$81,000 less than it was last year (it's a negative percentage - below zero). She noted that they went below last year's budget based on what she was hearing at the public meetings. She noted that she heard that people did not want an increase at all and some may have wanted only a 2% increase.

S. Cable noted for the record that she received a call from Laurie Brent, 46 Summer Street, asking the town to "please do not cut the summer program".

S. Cable read a letter from Joe Rodrigo, Commissioner of Parks and Recreation - noting that since he was not able to attend this meeting, he wanted his letter read at the meeting. The letter is attached with this filing but in summary he believes he provided an honest and fair budget and believes any further cuts would be detrimental to parks and rec and he will not support a budget that further cuts park and rec. Also included in J. Rodrigo letter is a Priority list if cuts are necessary (also included with this filing).

S. Cable noted that the BOF and BOS did review the cuts that C. Feducia recommended as well as their own cuts.

S. Cable noted that this meeting is not to debate this issue and that it is a very painful process and they are not out to put "fat" in the budget. She noted that the bottom line is that this is what people wanted, this is what they heard and they acted on it. She personally believes that this budget is "kicking the community down".

The meeting was opened to public comments:

Steve Leeper (lifelong residents of Beacon Falls) - talked about the park and rec program - he noted that these are wonderful programs for children and grandchildren. Part of the subsidies that Park and rec gives have the best price in the valley for sign up costs. He noted that we could put some of that money, not all, but some into the subsidies for programs in town will help out some.

Millie Kevit, 55 Cook Lane - asked if the bulky waste is going to be removed completely. The answer was "yes".

Gary Komerasky, 15 2nd Street - noted that he has been living in town for 24 years and asked the BOF and BOS to look at the long term ramifications of some of these numbers. He noted that the current budget is 70% school and 30% town. He noted that these types of cuts will lead to further problems down the road for example, what happens to the kids? What happens when the bulky waste goes away? Does the river start to get loaded up with furniture, etc.? He noted that we worked very hard over the years to clean the river. He noted that if we cut the 3rd shift of the police department, we might as well "put up a sign on Rte. 8 saying open for business criminals, come on down". He noted that he moved Beacon Falls because it's a nice bedroom community and a very nice place to live and he would like to see it stay that way. He noted that these types of cuts will change the "flavor" of the town. He would like to see the town be a little bit more "right handed" with the cuts.

Sue Dowdell, 32 Wolfe Ave., - asked the BOS and BOF to consider that closing the library on Saturday's will affect many people who are currently out of work and use the library resources to help find employment

Bob Spear, 14 Lakeview Rise - noted that he is concerned about the line painting and guard rail painting. His concern is a safety issue especially in the winter time when

drivers rely on the lines to tell us where we are going when there is snow and ice on the road. He noted that he believes there should be some money left in this line item for this.

Vince Morno, 3 Laurel Ridge - asked why the BOS and BOF felt that they had to reduce the budget to below the amount of what it was last year. S. Cable explained that the thought was that they should go to the same budget but noted that they also heard a lot of cries from people saying they didn't want any tax increase. She noted that even with all the cuts they made, there will still be some type of tax increase because of the school. She was trying to bring that down a little. V. Morno said that he would offer that they don't go below last year's budget and make selective decisions as to where the priority dollars should go (the difference between the two numbers).

Ned Grace, 45 Cedar Lane - noted that the bottom line here is the mil rate and asked that with all these cuts, what is the effect on an average \$200,000 home owner. The answer was that the mil is up .77 from last year and that the proposed cuts would save the average home owner \$180.00.

Bernie Dione, Vice President of the Employees Union- noted that she is here representing the employees and the employees are very upset from a June 2, 2010 budget meeting that it was mentioned at least 3 times in the minutes that the employees made no concessions. She noted that the fact of the matter is that the employees were never asked to make any concessions. She noted that they had a meeting last night and discussed how the town could save money to help the budget. She gave a list of things they discussed to S. Cable. S. Cable noted that she will produce emails that show that there has been communication first with the insurance and after June 2nd they asked for more concessions but she was told by Donna Johnson that this method of writing is not going to be considered and it is kind of a last minute time. She also noted that one of the union presidents was asked to call her last week to move it along. The clerk asked for clarification of S. Cable's statement for proper recording purposes. S. Cable noted that she just wanted to say that when they had their meeting and said nobody has talked to them after June 2nd, they did sit down and talk about insurance which is a big part of employee benefits. She noted that it went back and forth and it seems that's how negotiations go. Prior to this budget failing, she had asked one of the union presidents to contact Donna Johnson and the attorney to contact Donna Johnson, which they did, to say we need a meeting a.s.a.p. to look at what you might want us to cut. She noted that she was leaving it open because up until this last Public Hearing we did not say anything until the public said close town hall. She noted as of recent, letters went back and forth and she received a call and email from our attorney as of this morning that said she can't meet this week and can't meet next week and she will get back to us. She noted that is where we are at. S. Cable also noted that she's a retired teacher from a union herself and knows unions but is afraid to say too much because she seems to always get in trouble with the union and the representative. S. Cable continued to read the letter of suggestions from the employees which began with "the employees are unwilling to make concessions, which is untrue because they were not asked to make concessions" (entire letter and suggestions attached with this filing).

The following comments were made by S. Cable as the suggestions were made and in response to the suggestions:

5th item on list: Fee to Organizations for use of Senior Center at night - S. Cable noted that she has spoke to Organizations to use the Senior Center at night

6th item on list: Building Permit Fees increased - S. Cable noted that is already on the table

8th item on list: Board and Commission - increase fees - S. Cable noted that they have already done that

10th item on the list: Wetland Commission has lost most of the fees collected in the past because of new ordinance fees - S. Cable noted that she's not sure she understands this item

11th item on the list: Police are paid by Town for Community events - why not have a "cost sharing" with the sponsoring organization - S. Cable noted that we already talked about that

13th item on the list: We have already given up one holiday - S. Cable noted that this is not true. She noted that 2 unions have given up one holiday, 1 union did not give up the holiday.

The joint BOF/BOS meeting took a brief recess at 7:40 P.M.

W. Hopkinson called the Regular Board of Finance meeting to order at 7:40 P.M.

G. Smith motioned to recess the Regular Board of Finance meeting. L. Krepinevich 2nd the motion. All voted aye.

The joint BOF/BOS meeting continued and more public comments were heard.

Steve Moffit, 136 Burton Road - asked the board to consider not closing the highway department on Fridays. He noted that the last time they did furloughs and layoffs they had that and feels it's very hazardous to the town because they have had situations in the past where people were out of work on furlough days and we had snow and ice and we had some problems. He also thinks the town takes a big liability when they cut the working hours. Additionally he doesn't know the facts or details but the Town of Middlebury from what he understands laid off and had furloughs for the town hall and all the workers and it didn't work. He noted it is very dangerous for the town to consider doing that. Steve also spoke as the Union President and on behalf of Donna Johnson he noted that she has been in contact with the town and is waiting for time to meet with the town. S. Cable interjected and noted that she does not think this is appropriate conversation for this time and is not the purpose of this meeting. S. Cable said that as a tax payer she believes he could speak but as the Union President she suggests that he

does not talk because she noted that she gets in trouble if she talks to him. He then suggested she defend them.

M. Fernandez - suggested as an alternative to employees being cut, can work days be scheduled so that the shifts are staggered to still have 5 days coverage yet still cut costs

Cheryl Feducia, Bonna Street - noted that she works for the State of CT and last year during the budget process state workers did give back \$700,000 + to help offset the budget and one of the options they used was that anyone who wanted to take a day off could without pay and no penalty to their job or seniority. She also noted that the insurance did not increase but the employees are paying a lot more because they agreed to pay more. She noted that everyone should work together and that the state employees knew that if they didn't agree to their contract there were going to be layoffs. She noted that she has 20 years of service so this round or last round of layoffs will not affect her but she cares enough about the person sitting next to her who may be just getting married or just had a baby, for example, to try and help that person out. She suggested that if we all do a little bit, it will help benefit the entire town.

M. Krenesky thanked C. Feducia for that insight and noted that he is assuming that she, as a member of the Board of Education is going to go back to all the teachers unions and administrative unions and are going to ask for the same cutbacks "now", not what was done in the past but in going forward to help us eliminate the \$600,000 increase to the Town of Beacon Falls. M. Krenesky noted that he would appreciate that and thanked her.

S. Cable noted that one of the things she wants to point out as a response to not defended the employees is that at the last Public Hearing, the BOS and BOF did defend the town employees whole heartedly. She noted that when people were saying close the Town Hall for two days she stood up personally and said that we are town that has offices with 1 person in that office. She explained to the taxpayers that this is very painful but noted that they knew what was going on. She also noted that she is not going to debate the union issue because that is something that management will take care of themselves but noted that the bottom line is these suggestions are very nice suggestions but they are not from the union, they are from the employees.

Vince Morno, 3 Laurel Ridge - spoke again regarding the percentage increase to the budget. He noted that at any of the meetings he has attended, no one has ever said that you can't have an increase from the 09/10 budget. He noted that he thinks they can all live with a modest increase and that what they were objecting was the 8% and 7% increase, etc.

D. Sorrentino noted that it was very difficult to read exactly what the public wanted. He noted that they even asked for a show of hands and that showed about a 50/50 split. He noted that they did not know if this was because they thought the budget was too high or too low or just enough.

S. Cable noted that she thinks some of the confusion is related to seeing all the towns that are around us that are cutting their budgets to 2%, 1%, 0% because their budgets are being shot down. She noted that they are getting a message that way also. She noted that it's very disheartening when out of 3,600 voters only 500 show up to vote. She noted that she appreciates that some of the public is attending this meeting but noted that even some of the town employees didn't come out to vote on this budget.

V. Morno asked if 15% voter turnout is normal for this community. S. Cable answered "sometimes" and noted that they did everything they could to get voters out. V. Morno suggested that there be a program to try and get people interested in voting.

E. Groth - commented "aren't most budgets passed with the BOS and BOS and a handful of people? S. Cable answered that at a town meeting, yes. Ed Groth noted that 550 is actually a high turnout and noted that trying to present that the town budget was voted on by such a small amount of people is incorrect because historically this was a large amount of people. S. Cable responded that people who are opposed to the budget are opposed to the budget but the bottom line is that they are also hearing from a lot of people who have passions and who want things and all they are saying is "get involved". It is a nationwide problem. She noted that it took them literally going door to door to get a high school. S. Cable also noted that historically it is a comment that she made for years that they have to go out and pull people in for some of their votes.

Al Tornatore, 12 Laurel Ridge - asked how often the budget goes to referendum. The answer was maybe every other year. Al Tornatore asked if they are then generally passed in between at a town meeting. The answer was yes. It was noted that the town meetings usually have more people, usually between 70 to 100. It was noted that it is always a poor turnout.

Kathy Grace - noted that she appreciates all the work that the BOF/BOS has done making all these cuts to the budget but respectfully asks that the town go back to their original budget. She noted that we can't cut more out and referred to a comment about not cutting the line painting. She noted that people are saying they want cuts but don't cut the line painting, baseball, library, etc. Everybody wants something and what they have to understand is that if they want their thing, they have to also want something for the rest of the community. She noted that it is the BOF and BOS job to put together a budget that is fiscally responsible for the entire community, not just for specific requests but the entire community. She noted that we need to come together and vote on this budget for the sake of everyone in this community. She noted that she is pleading with the BOF and BOS to put things back into the budget because this budget is pathetic. She noted that she hates to think that this is what our town is going to look like. She noted that our town is going to look like Pottersville.

Ed Groth, 13 Laurel Ledge - noted that he was one of the few that attended the BOF and BOS special meeting that was held after the last town vote. He noted that once again he heard negative comments directed towards the taxpayers in a public meeting and was a little unsettled about that. He noted that the essence of some of those comments was that