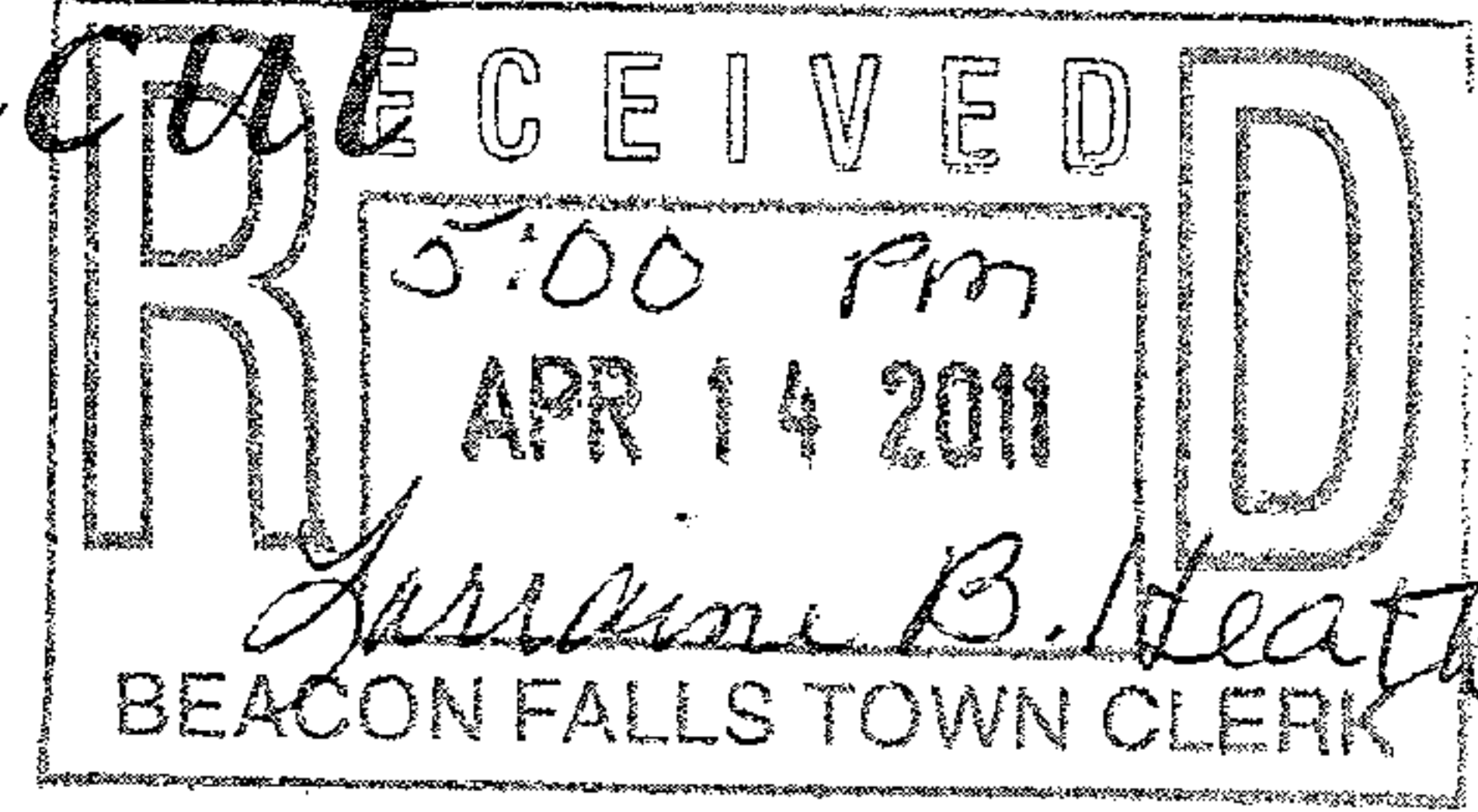


TOWN of BEACON FALLS  
*Connecticut*

Board of Finance



**TOWN OF BEACON FALLS  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN/BOARD OF FINANCE  
Public Hearing re: 2011/2012 Proposed Municipal Budget**

**Tuesday April 12, 2011**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Acting Chairman of the Board C. Bielik called the meeting of the Public Hearing to order at 7:00 P.M. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: Vice Chairman W. Hopkinson, Members J. Dowdell, L. Krepinevich, B. Ploss and R. Doiron

Also present were Selectmen S. Cable, M. Krenesky and D. Sorrentino and approximately 200 town residents.

All BOF and BOS members introduced themselves.

L. Classey the Board of Finance Clerk, read the call.

**C. Beilik** began the meeting explaining that this is a very challenging budget season as was last season. He noted that they are going to present to the town the worst case scenario based on not really adding much but moving things along as they have in the past. He noted that we have some very significant revenue challenges that will drive some of the numbers presented.

He explained that there is sign up list for people to sign if they would like to ask any questions or comments and asked that they be kept to 2 minutes each.

**C. Bielik** then acknowledged and thanked his predecessor G. Smith for all this time served.

C. Bielik then reviewed the decrease in revenues. He also noted that most Department heads were present and would be able to answer specific questions regarding each department.

## **REIMBURSEMENT MONIES - REVENUES**

### **Ambulance Corps Reimbursements**

It was explained that with a conservative projection, the amount of change in this line item will be -\$65,000. This is a result of a new hire at the Fire Department and also for some equipment.

### **Mfr's Machinery & Equipment**

It was explained that this revenue line item is now at -\$77,044 as this is a state rebate program that is being eliminated.

### **Pequot Grant**

It was explained that municipalities receive a share of the monies spent at the casinos and due to gaming revenues being down, the amount each municipality receives has also been reduced. This line item for town revenues is -\$9,000.

### **Planning & Zoning Commission**

#### **Building Permits**

#### **Town Clerk Conveyance**

It was explained that all three of these revenue line items have been reduced for 2011/2012 by \$42,000 as a result of lack of building activity and a depressed housing market.

### **Leachate Collection System**

It was explained that this revenue line item is down by \$10,000 from Beacon Heights.

### **Wastewater Treatment Fund**

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It was explained that the fund that was set aside for Wastewater Treatment was dipped into due to the repair and maintenance communicated by the Sewer Board therefore there is \$100,000 less in this line item than last year.

### **Interest Capital Projects**

Due to declining interest rates, this revenue line item has been reduced by \$25,000.

### **Designated Fund Balance**

It was explained that \$200,000 was taken out of the reserve fund as a result of the student population shift from Prospect to Beacon Falls. There is no available money in the fund balance to off-set increases this year.

**The total amount of revenue change from 2010/2011 to 2011/2012 is -\$528,044.**

It was noted that the town is not giving up completely on state programs but they can not budget for something that is not yet solid.

## **INCREASE IN EXPENSES**

### **Tax Collector - Wages**

The position of the Tax Collector was explained. The Tax Collector is currently a part-time elected official. The BOS is going to make this position a full time position (an ordinance will be written to change this position from an elected position to a permanent employee - noting that this will be a non-union management position). It is the hopes of the town that by having a full time tax collector, more of the delinquent taxes will be collected. The town expects to be able to concentrate more on going after those with outstanding taxes. It was also noted that a couple of the properties that are in rears will be going to auction sometime in the next couple of months. The first debt to be reimbursed when the properties are sold are the tax debt.

It was noted that this change will not take place until election time in November.



**S. Cable** explained that this position will be advertised in the paper and interviews will take place. The requirements will be for someone who has experience and is Board certified.

### **Assistant Tax Collector - Wages**

It was noted that the full time Tax Collector position will off-set the assistant Tax Collector Wages therefore the increase to the town for the full time Tax Collector will only be \$10,600.

### **Employee Benefit - Medical Insurance**

It was explained that the increase of \$20,000 is the result of costs going up. It was also noted that this number would have been much higher if it weren't for the town finding another insurance carrier to offer the same coverage to employees for approximately \$25,000 less. It was noted that the contract states that if you move from one carrier to another, the coverage has to be apples to apples.

### **Employee Benefits - Pension**

**S. Cable** explained that the \$62,591.00 increase in pension is due to the Police Union and Public Works Union "buy back" negotiation. She noted that each year, this amount increases. **S. Cable** also explained that due to a recent audit, there were some unfunded liabilities so the town has to now pay that back. **S. Cable** noted that they left HIRMA because they did that and now MIRMA did the same thing.

**S. Pavlik**, 21 Fieldstone Lane asked for an explanation of a "buy back".

**S. Cable** read the description of a "buy back" which is an amount of money which was negotiated through previous contracts noting that the town has to pay back every year certain amounts to the state so that the people get whatever was invested. This was an agreement. She noted that we were specifically paying for the two Police Officers \$22,575 in addition to their annual and the amount is \$129,480 for Public Works.

### **Employee Benefits - Workers Compensation**

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There is an increase of \$19,000 for Workers Compensation due to contractual requirement under MIRMA.

**C. Bielik** referred to M. Pratt, Chief of Beacon Hose, to explain the increases in Emergency Services.

### **Emergency Services - Building Maintenance**

**M. Pratt** explained that that increase of \$10,000 is a result of needing 2 doors at the Fire House and also not having hot water in one side of the Fire House. He explained that the cost was \$2,900 and \$2,500 to replace the front and back doors of the firehouse and an estimated \$5,500 to fix the hot water heater system. He noted that the difference will come out of the existing budget line item.

### **Emergency Services - Service Award Program**

**M. Pratt** noted that this is a service award program for retirees at the fire house. This line item is currently underfunded noting that 65 members currently participate in this program.

**G. Shea**, Wolfe Ave., Chairman of the Service Award Program explained that due to the increase in member participation, this line item had to be increased. He noted that there are 26 new members and that having 26 new members is a good thing in that they will do a much better job for all.

### **Police - Wages Part Time Patrol**

**T. Cipriano** - Resident Trooper explained that this increase is due to a \$3.00 per hour increase to the part time police officers in town. He noted that they haven't received a raise in 3 years and he took a survey of Prospect and Oxford part time pay and they are both at \$25.00 per hour. He noted that Beacon Falls part time police are only at \$21.00 per hour and that a \$3.00 increase will still bring their hourly rate to below Oxford's and Prospect's pay. He noted that the full time police officers have a contract and they get a raise every year.

**J. Gullesh**, 122 Munson Road, noted that a \$3.00 per hour increase is very large increase.

**T. Cipriano** responded by saying that they haven't gotten a raise in 3 years.

**S. Cable** noted that this is a point to be considered.

It was noted that no one was present from Public Works.

**D. Scott**, questioned why Public Works is the biggest item in the budget and there is not a representative from that department.

**S. Cable** responded that the Public Works director is on vacation and nobody else did the budget noting that no one else is able to speak about the budget but him.

### **Highway Maintenance - Snow Removal Materials**

C. Bielik explained that due to the unexpected snow removal from this last winter, they bumped up the upcoming budget in preparation for next.

### **Highway Maintenance - Vehicle Maintenance**

It was explained that there is at least one piece of Public Works equipment that is 20 something years old. C. Bielik explained that they have done away with developing a plan to periodically replace vehicle in a timely manner (noting that this will be addressed later in the meeting).

It was noted that we have old pieces of equipment that have been breaking far more often than they should due to the age of the equipment. It was noted that it is far more expensive to try and fix these vehicles than replace them.

### **Refuse - Bulky Waste Transfer**

*It was noted that the Transfer Station has not been open since October since there was not money in the budget to run it.*

**C. Beilik** noted that they do not think it's a good idea to have the transfer station closed so they put in \$14,500 in the budget to be able to have 6 days open in the upcoming years.

### **Wastewater Treatment - Electricity**



**W. Opuszynski**, explained the sludge process. He noted that there is probably not enough money in this year's budget to accomplish what they need to. He also noted that there is no emergency notification system so he has requested money for a cell phone back up system.

**R. Bacon**, 14 Oak Drive, asked if the cell phone was to be used for personal use as well.

**W. Opusynski** explained that the cell phone will stay at the plant and will only be used as a back-up alarm device and not be used for personal use.

### **Parks and Recreation - Independence Day Celebration**

**J. Rodrigo** spoke and explained that that this line item has \$5,000 in it for fireworks. It was noted that raised money for the 2011 fireworks but cannot continue to do that. He noted that the town has to decide if they want the fireworks celebration for 2012.

### **Minibus Operations - Wages Driver**

It was noted that this line item is currently underfunded and that total expenses to date nearly exceed this year's budget line.

### **Minibus Operations - Wages - P/T Driver**

\$4,000 is also being put in the budget for a back-up part-time driver.

### **Special Projects**

#### **Fire Department Vehicle Replacement**

It was noted that \$70,000 has been put in this budget to reinstate the long term planning for cyclic replacement of aging vehicles. S. Cable noted that due to an outcry from the public that the budget was too high 4 years ago. At that time, the departments noted that they could put the vehicle replacement on hold to lower the mil rate. The vehicle are beginning to need replacement so the program had to be instituted.

#### **Fire Department - Air pack Lease**

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M. Pratt explained that the current air packs are very old. He noted that they received a \$168,000 grant from the government to replace them however there was a shortfall so the department is requesting an additional \$12,613 to finish the cost of replacement. He noted that a firefighter experienced an incident where the current air pack failed. He also noted that the current air packs are very expensive to fix.

It was noted that the comments section of the handout stating that the air packs were passed at a town meeting is incorrect.

### **Police - New Police Car Lease**

\$9,923 was put in this budget for a new police car lease. T. Cipriano explained that last budget cycle he was asked to give back something. He noted that he held off on replacing an old vehicle that had very high mileage. He noted that the head gasket on this

car blew. He noted that it was too expensive to have the vehicle fixed and it is also *dangerous to have a police officer drive a car with such high mileage.*

**T. Cipriano** explained that Oxford and Prospect both have 8 vehicles while Beacon Falls only has 5. He listed the vehicles that the town has.

He also noted that when the town has joined with Prospect and Bethany for road jobs. He noted that when a police officer goes from Beacon Falls with a town vehicle, the town gets \$20.00 per hour.

**J. Groth**, 13 Laurel Ridge, asked that T. Cipriano to explain the Police overtime.

**T. Cipriano** explained that currently a part-timer gets \$21 per hour but if they call out sick, then a full time officer has to replace the position at a higher rate. He noted that he just hired another part-timer to fill in and they are looking for younger officers who will have their physicals and drug tests paid for by another town. The town the officer works for gets the re-certification paid for by that town. C. Bielik stressed this point.

**C. Sullivan**, September Lane, asked what the SUV is used for.

**T. Cipriano** explained that it is used during snow storms. A police officer would not be able to get to emergencies in the town during snow storms without the SUV..

**C. Bielik** explained in summary that they are asking for an increase of \$360,000 for the town and adding to that is the decrease in revenues. He noted that they are at the bare minimum and they will welcome any suggestions.



**C. Bielik** then opened to floor to the residents who signed up to speak.

**D. Scott**, Cedar Circle, pointed out that what was presented to the residents was the worst case scenario. He also noted that they have the tax collections to be estimated at \$100,000.

He commented on the automatic union raises and suggested that the town start playing hardball with the unions. He noted that there are many residents who are retired and have fixed incomes. He noted that he sympathizes with people who are trying to get the budget passed but has an issue with automatic increases during these hard economic times.

**J. Pavlik**, 21 Fieldstone Lane, asked what percentage of revenue is supported by residential revenue as compared to business revenue. He noted that he was shocked to find

out that 98% of the revenue is generated by residential tax payers. He noted that we need to bring businesses into town. He noted that he was told that the economic plan was going to be looked at. He would like to know what the town is doing to encourage businesses to come into town. He also noted that due to lack of businesses in town, that everyone who goes out of town for Dr.'s, etc, are supporting the other towns.

**S. Cable** asked that T. SanAngelo address this question. S. Cable did point out that they originally budgeted \$10,000 for economic development but reduced it to \$5,000.

**T. SanAngelo** explained that the commercial rate of tax revenue is almost 20%. He also noted that there is only \$1,500 in the economical development budget and therefore cannot do much with that little bit of money. He noted that they have gotten over the years between 4 and 5 million dollars in grant money through the years and also noted that there are 11 businesses in the Industrial Park. He noted that we are in the enterprise zone so that any manufacturer receives an 80% tax abatement.

He noted that they have had businesses from Belgium and Italy who have looked in Beacon Falls. He noted that there is a physician who intends to stay in town and asked the residents to support the town businesses and those that support the school. He noted that they definitely need more businesses in town.

He noted that these are tough economic times and there is not much they can do with a \$1,500 budget.

**S. Pavlik**, 21 Fieldstone Lane, noted that she works in the private sector and has not gotten a raise since 2009. She also noted that she contributes a lot of money to her

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insurance and has a high deductible. She stated that automatic raises cannot be warranted anymore - it is not justified. She noted that performance increases cannot be justified at high percentages. She asked that when the union contract negotiations come up that they remember the residents are all saying this now and hopes that it is addressed.

**S. Pavlik** agrees that residents being responsible for their own trash removal is a very good idea. She noted that other towns in CT are doing it. She also noted that other towns are coming up with a 0% increase in their budgets and that this town should be like them.

**V. Morneau**, 3 Laurel Ridge, asked what is generating the additional \$90,000 in property tax.

**C. Beilik** noted that the \$90,000 is from an old coverage sheet. The correct number is \$1,066,000. He explained that the Region 16 increase of \$180,000 and the municipal increase.

**B. Coppolella**, 30 Fieldston Lane, noted that since he has been in town, there have been sizeable increases 2 years in a row. He asked what the tax increases were prior to those 2 years.

*He was told that this can be addressed and the information will be provided at a later time as the only information that was available at this time are the mil rate increases.*

**H. Roscoe**, 24 Fieldstone Lane, noted that he has been in town for 3 years and loves the town but he noted that he has received 3 pay cuts in pay in the last year. He noted that he has not received vacation for 5 years. He noted that the car that he drives is 11 years old. He wanted to know where the town expects him to get the money to pay the increase in taxes because he simply does not have it. He noted that many people are in the same position with a fixed income.

**H. Roscoe** referred to union give backs and costs of insurance and other states are doing that as well. He asked about the \$5,000 for fireworks. He asked how many other towns have a town nurse. And he also noted that he thinks trash pick-up should be privatized.

**L. D'Amico**, Maple Ave., noted that he served the town for 18 years and knows how difficult it is to prepare a budget. After the presentation that he has heard tonight, he noted that this is not a good budget. He noted that different parts of it are incurrected. He noted that he doesn't understand how the BOS adn BOF are looking for increases in various line items when in fact they are giving a 3.2% increase in wages for the town employees. He noted that this is not right. He noted that he has been retired for 11 years and noted that they have not received any increases since 2009.



He also brought up the police wage increase noting that he is pro-safety but disagrees with the hourly rate increase and the purchase of a new vehicle. He noted that while he has a high respect for the resident trooper, he has a problem with him comparing how many vehicles the town of Prospect and Oxford has as well as what the police are paid in those towns noting that both towns are much larger than Beacon Falls.

**L. D'Amico** also brought up the mini-bus. While he believes it's a wonderful thing, he thinks a \$12,000 increase is unacceptable. The bus does not need to run that many hours and asked that a cut in this line item be considered.

He also noted that he was very disappointed that the Boards took the worst case scenario to present to the town as he does not think that is fair to the taxpayers.

**A. Tornatore**, 12 Laurel Ridge, noted when he looked at the budget, he noted that every single department put in for an increase. He noted that not one department stated any plans or changes that they will be doing to save money in the budget. He noted that it is a "let's go see what we could get".

He noted that someone should be stepping up to the Department Heads and telling that they need to come up with plans as to how they are going to save money in their departments.

**E. Chromczak**, 19 Fieldstone Lane, noted that he agrees with the air packs but he agrees with nothing else.

**E. Groth**, 13 Laurel Ridge, wanted to repeat the same comment that has already been made noting that it's tough to justify an increase of 5 - 6 % especially when the revenues are down by \$500,000. He noted that if the town has to look at layoffs or outsourcing then so be it.

He also questioned whether the accounting software is being addressed. The response was that the money was originally put in to correct the software problem but has since been taken out. E. Groth's response to that was he didn't think it was a good idea that the town's accounting software is buggy and only one person knows how to work it.

**E. Groth** also discussed the economic development noting that they did lose ground with the fire school. He believes that steps should be taken so that this doesn't repeat itself.

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**E. Fuller**, 35 Chatfield Drive, explained that he is a municipal employee for another town and during the past few years, they were told that "this is what they need and what is he going to do to help get it". He noted that he is currently taking 9 furlough days and 14 planned for next year. He noted that he does not want a pink slip and raises are out of the question. His medical pay as increased 3 times and thinks that the town needs to be looking at these issues and that everyone should be looking at what they could be doing for the town. He also asked what percentage the pension plan is being funded.

**S. Cable** noted that she will address that after everyone has spoke.

**S. Dowdell**, 32 Wolfe Ave., thanked the BOF and BOS for their hard work on the budget. She asked that the boards look at the telephone line at the senior center as it looks out of line. She also suggested that things like turning the thermostat down at the town hall noting that it seems very warm there. She asked that during this process that they do not attack the children.

**A. Vizneau**, 30 Bonna Street, noted that while going through the budget there seems to be money being budgeted for computer software all over the place. He asked if anyone has considered consolidating this and maybe finding someone who may have the same type of equipment and software support noting that the most expensive way to do it is the way the town is currently doing it. He also suggested that during the budget process, they should start the budget telling the departments that they need to come in 10% lower than last year. He noted that he was responsible for budgets in his job and that is the way they began each budget process.

**N. Grace**, 45 Cedar Lane, noted that if they are truly looking for the financial interest of thousands of tax payers in the town of Beacon Falls, then they should look elsewhere than trash removal for those cuts.

**S. Cable** thanked everyone for coming tonight. She also thanked the BOF and BOS. She noted that she wanted to get through the budget process before the BOE put theirs through due to the confusion last year. She noted that she is aware they have work to do and thanked all for their politeness and being generous with their suggestions. She noted that all the departments originally came in with very high requests noting that they have already made a lot of cuts.

She noted they have a book of plans.

She addressed the union issues. She explained that a few years ago they started to pay the police out of the Public Works union and have been paying ever since. She noted that because of the Police and Public Works unions, the Town Hall employees also got a union but noted that they don't have buy backs.

She noted that before the first of the year they have asked the unions for give-backs. She asked that they lower their increase, pay more for their insurance, look at longevity and that they be cooperative so that everybody can stay employed. She noted that to this day, they have not received a response. She noted that they are still pursuing this and that they have sent requests in writing, etc.

**S. Cable** noted that she asked that the worst case scenario be brought to them so that they know what they are working with, where they are at and what they are trying to do.

She noted that she will be in Hartford tomorrow trying to get some of the programs put back.

She addressed the economic development noting that they are growing little by little. She noted that medical the building is still going up in Beacon Falls. She noted that she has been working very hard to make this happen, explaining that these are tough economical times.

She also pointed out that the elected officials in this community have not gotten a raise in 6 years. She noted that the animal control officer has also not gotten a raise in 5 years.

**S. Cable** noted that the senior center and mini-bus and other items that were brought up at this meeting will be discussed.

**D. Scott** asked what they are doing about Wolfe Ave.

**S. Cable** answered that there is a committee that has just been formed and that some day, down the road they hope to put up a Community Center.

**L. D'Amico** suggested a registered letter be sent to inform them that if there is no response, layoffs will begin.

**B. Bortzfield**, noted that the BOS should have mandated to each department that they have to cut their budgets 10% across the line. He noted that the BOS should have

mandated what needs to be cut. He also asked why the revenue that is supposed to be generated by the new Tax Collector is not in the budget.

**S. Cable** answered that they will be addressing that.

**R. Binkowski** talked about the towns income debt and wanted to know what rating we are.

**S. Cable** explained that at this time Beacon Falls is not rated at this time because we have no debt.


**R. Binkowski** suggested that during the budget process, each department start at zero rather than where they left off. He noted that they need to tighten up.

With no more resident speakers, a motion to adjourn was called for.

**B. Ploss** motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:45 P.M. **R. Doiron** 2nd the motion. All voted aye.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:45 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

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