

BEACON FALLS BOARD OF SELECTMEN
Regular Monthly Meeting
March 10, 2014
MINUTES
(Draft Copy-Subject to Revision)
(Recorded on Olympus DP-201 filed by date)

First Selectman C. Bielik called the Regular BOS Monthly meeting to order at 7:30 P.M. with the pledge to the flag.

Present: First Selectman C. Bielik, Selectmen P. Betkoski and D. Sorrentino, Tax Collector M. Holloway and approximately 6 town residents.

C. Bielik then asked for a motion to add to the agenda item C, the resolution that the Board of Selectmen may enter into with and deliver to the State of Connecticut Department of Emergency Services (Resolution attached and filed with these minutes).

P. Betkoski motioned that the Resolution be added to the agenda. D. Sorrentino 2nd the motion. All voted aye.

C. Bielik also asked for a motion to add a presentation by M. Holloway, Beacon Falls Tax Collector, regarding back taxes and the status of her work since she was elected to office in November, to the agenda.

P. Betkoski motioned to add to the agenda a presentation by M. Holloway, Beacon Falls Tax Collector. D. Sorrentino 2nd the motion. All voted aye.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

P. Betkoski motioned to approve meeting minutes from February 10, 2014, Regular Monthly Meeting, February 20, 2014 Special BOS meeting and February 26, 2014, Special BOS meeting. D. Sorrentino 2nd the motion. All voted aye.

RESIDENT TROOPERS REPORT

D. Sorrentino motioned to approve the Resident State Trooper's report. P. Betkoski 2nd the motion. All voted aye.

WASTEWATER TREATMENT

D. Sorrentino motioned to accept the report. P. Betkoski 2nd the motion. All voted aye.

FIRE MARSHAL REPORT

C. Bielik noted that he had a meeting with NEJ (a business in town), the Fire Marshal and a town resident regarding a complaint due to NEJ's large and loud plows.

P. Betkoski motioned to accept the Fire Marshal Report. D. Sorrentino 2nd the motion. All voted aye.

PUBLIC WORKS REPORT

D. Sorrentino motioned to accept the Public Works report as presented. P. Betkoski 2nd the motion. All voted aye.

Discussion: It was noted that this being the first report in a while that they are off to a good start and that as they go along the report will have a bit more depth.

FINANCE MANAGERS REPORT – none

Discussion: C. Bielik noted that Denise in the Finance Office is kind of keeping things up to date during the interim of a new hire for the Finance Manager's position. Harris Computer Systems have scheduled training sessions on the new software which will correct the "one sided entry" issue. It was also noted that Laurie from the Town Clerk's office will be trained on the new software as well.

C. Bielik also noted that they have received 2 applications for the Finance Manger's Position with the closing period of receiving applications on 3/17. He also noted that the Republican American (Quonna) will be putting a small article in the paper (3/11) and in the article she will cover a bit on the Finance Manager Position opening and hopefully that will attract more applicants.

TAX COLLECTORS REPORT

P. Betkoski motioned to accept the tax collectors report and forward to the BOF for their approval. D. Sorrentino 2nd the motion. All voted aye.

TREASURERS REPORT

P. Betkoski motioned to accept the Treasurers report and forward it to the BOF for their review and approval. D. Sorrentino 2nd the motion. All voted aye.

P. Betkoski had asked if there were any updates regarding bank accounts. With the Treasurer not present, C. Bielik noted that he believes M. Krenesky is looking for a 3rd bank and that he is also looking into a town credit card that can be used for tax exempt purchases which would streamline the process of sales tax re-imburements.

TOWN CLERKS REPORT

C. Bielik noted that this report reflected a pretty good month for the Clerk's office.

D. Sorrentino motioned to accept the Town Clerk's Report and forward it to the BOF for their approval. P. Betkoski 2nd the motion. All voted aye.

LIBRARY REPORT

C. Bielik commended the Library staff for the work they do and did with the copier noting that it was great work. He also asked S. Dowdell if there was anything she wanted to add to the report. She did not have anything to add.

D. Sorrentino motioned to accept the report. P. Betkoski 2nd the motion. All voted aye.

CUSTODIAN REPORT

P. Betkoski motioned to accept the report. D. Sorrentino 2nd the motion. All voted aye.

C. Bielik noted that the repair of the bathroom at the senior center turned out to be a bigger project but now they have a nearly brand new toilet and spare parts for the future if needed.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

D. Sorrentino motioned to accept this report. P. Betkoski 2nd the motion. All voted aye.

TOWN NURSE REPORT – None. This is a quarterly report.

CORRESPONDENCE

1. A letter from J. DeMarco was received regarding her attempt to pay taxes on the day the town hall was closed due to snow. She is asking for her late fee to be waived.

D. Sorrentino motioned to waive the \$104.61 late fee assessed to J. DeMarco due to the Town Hall being closed. P. Betkoski 2nd the motion. All voted aye.

2. C. Bielik received a standard tax rebate list and read the rebates. A copy of the entire rebate list is attached.

D. Sorrentino motioned to refund all the overpaid taxes. P. Betkoski 2nd the motion. All voted aye.

Discussion: M. Holloway explained that these refunds are a result of a car that has been sold or someone who may have over-paid their taxes but she assured the BOS that each refund had been thoroughly researched prior to the presentation.

3. A notice of an FOI (Freedom of Information) presentation was received and read by C. Bielik. C. Bielik noted that he will pass this information on to the various boards to see if they would like to attend.
4. A notice regarding the Region 16 Public hearing was received and read by C. Bielik regarding the Security upgrades and grant money. He noted that about half of the money \$900,000 would be coming from the state and the other half would be bonded. The referendum will be held on April 10th.
5. A notice of the 7th annual Naugatuck River Race and 16th annual Beacon Falls Duck Race was received and read by C. Bielik.
6. A request from the Lions Club to sell flowers in the Fire House parking lot on April 18th and 19th was received.

D. Sorrentino motioned to approve this request as long as the fire house did not need the parking lot for anything else. P. Betkoski 2nd the motion. All voted aye.

7. A notice from Aquarian Water Company was received regarding nominating students for recognition of conservation efforts. C. Bielik noted that the deadline to submit nominations was May 7th.

8. A request from Friends of the Library was received to use the Town Hall Conference room for their book sale June 6th and 7th with set up beginning on Friday.

P.Betkoski motioned to allow the use of the Town Hall Conference room for the book sale on June 6th and 7th. D. Sorrentino 2nd the motion. All voted aye.

OLD BUSINESS

- a. Audible Cross Walk – C. Bielik noted that they still have not had a chance to get up to Wolcott to see a demonstration of an alternative audible cross walk but they plan to within the next couple of weeks.
- b. Treatment Plant – C. Bielik noted that Woodard and Curran will be scheduling information Public Hearing for the town regarding the Wastewater Treatment Project. The date has not yet been announced. The project is very expensive (somewhere in the neighborhood of 16 million. They are hoping to have the Public Hearing at the high school and they are hoping that more people than last time will attend.
- c. Mario Treppca, South Main Street Property – It was noted that Mario Treppca could not be present for this meeting but C. Bielik had enough information to address the subject.

The original discussion regarding this issue was that there is a pipe on the property that Mario Treppca purchased and the pipe belongs to the Town of Beacon Falls. The previous administration voted to pay for 50% of the cost of removing the pipe from his property (if anything should go wrong with the pipe the costs to the town would be much greater) at a cost no greater than \$10,000 or \$5,000 to the town. Since that vote, P & Z has come up with more requirements so the cost of removal has increased. Two written bids and one verbal bid have been received so far and C. Bielik asked if a motion could be made to accept a bid or agree to pay half of the increased price would not be greater than \$6,700 to the town.

D. Sorrentino did not want to vote on this until he received the third bid in written form due to past experience. P. Betkoski felt that they were slowing the process by holding off on the vote and that M. Treppca was building in the town and the only one building right now and he equated it to tax dollars – he felt that they BOS was dragging their feet but also wanted to have D. Sorrentino on board with the decision. D. Sorrentino did say he would abstain.

After a lengthy discussion, it was decided that the BOS would hold off on making a motion until after 3 written bids were received and if need be, they would call a special meeting for a vote.

C. Bielik asked that a motion be made to move the Tax Collectors presentation up on the agenda.

P. Betkoski motioned to adjust the agenda so that the Tax Collector could make her presentation earlier in the meeting. D. Sorrentino 2nd the motion. All voted aye.

TAX COLLECTOR PRESENTATION

M. Holloway began her presentation by taking the time to publicly thank the people and departments that have helped her with her task. She said that the Assistant Tax Collector, Linda Holt along with the Finance Department has been extremely helpful. M. Holloway continued her presentation with the following points made (a copy of her presentation is attached to these minutes).

M. Holloway pointed out that there are many facets to the job of the tax collector. Her first priority is and will always be the collection of taxes in a timely manner. She then began to tell the BOS what she has been doing since she took office. First, she noted that there was a lot of catching up to is done in this office along with organizing, cleaning out files and streamlining procedures.

1. Attended first Tax Payers Assoc. Meeting in Nov. and learned the extremely intricate program of the QDS software
2. She has spent time speaking with and training with several other towns and had a long session with Prospect noting that Prospect is very successful with tax collections.
3. Met with the Marshall that handles warrants and is working with him now but she is focusing on tax payers who own \$10,000 or more in back taxes (it was noted that the group of taxpayers that owe \$10,000 or more make up 50% of the back taxes owed to Beacon Falls). She is currently working with 4 back ower's setting up payment plans
4. She is instituting the 5 step plan which is partly legally mandated and partly her way of giving the tax payers a clear picture of what the end result penalty will be thereby hoping to work with them and encourage them to pay their back taxes. She will be giving them an opportunity to set up personal payment plans with her.
5. At the end of February the first wave of delinquent tax bills went out and she has already received quite a response and she is very satisfied with the responses she received so far.
6. She is also working on compiling reports that will mean more to the BOF than the current reports do.

And finally, she wanted everyone to know that she will continue to give 150% to her task of an elected official Tax Collector.

Discussion: There is currently approximately 2.8 million dollars in back taxes owed to the Town of Beacon Falls. Together, C. Bielik, M. Holloway and the Marshall looked at

the list and thought it was best to go after the group of tax payers that owed \$10,000 or more in that this group makes up almost half of the back taxes owed. After that, M. Holloway will chip away at the remaining fewer than 10K group.

M. Holloway noted that delinquent tax bills have not gone out in a quite a while.

D. Sorrentino was concerned about the administrative costs with sending out 3 separate letters to the tax payers and he also thought that 3 letters were too many and 2 should be enough. M. Holloway responded that she is very comfortable with her procedure and that she will not have a problem enforcing the final steps once she has given the tax payer the notifications that she feels will give them an opportunity to pay their taxes before they lose their house. She noted that the entire process will not take more than 2 months. She would like to make sure she gives everyone an opportunity to set up a payment plan if need be.

M. Holloway noted that it is her goal to bring the percentage of tax collections way up and plans on having a 98% success rate. She also noted that once the back taxes are forwarded to the Marshall, the tax payers still has an opportunity for payment plans but fees and penalties keep increasing.

The conversation continued and with M. Holloway completing her presentation, P. Betkoski commended M. Holloway on her efforts and he agrees that her approach is the right approach to give the tax payer every opportunity to save their house and yet still pay their taxes.

NEW BUSINESS

Nutmeg Work Resolution –

C. Bielik read the resolution (attached to this document) which is about high speed internet connectivity throughout the town (Regional Performance Incentive Program) The town has to adopt the resolution to go forward with proposals on how to connect. Attached.

D. Sorrentino motioned to adopt the Nutmeg Work Resolution. P. Betkoski 2nd the motion. All voted aye.

Resolution authorizing First Selectman C. Bielik to negotiation and execute all necessary Agreement/Contract Documents on behalf of the Town of Beacon Falls with the Department of Transportation of the State of Connecticut and to Affix the Corporate Seal. Attached.

P. Betkoski motioned to adopt the above noted resolution. D. Sorrentino 2nd the motion. All voted aye.

Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection resolution. Attached.

D. Sorrentino motioned to adopt the Department of Emergency Services Resolution. P. Betkoski 2nd the motion. All voted aye.

APPOINTMENTS – None

BUDGET TRANSFER REQUESTS

None. It was noted that these were taken care of at the Special Meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

S. Dowdell, 32 Wolfe Ave., regarding the resolutions, Sue asked if it was grants that they were going for. The answer was yes.

J. Pavlik, 21 Fieldstone Lane, very much applauded M. Holloway and all her efforts regarding the tax collections. He noted that what she is doing is something that should have been done long, long ago. He noted that it is incredible the amount of time that has passed without any effort of tax collecting pointing out that he has questioned this over and over again. He noted that for a town this small to have 2.8 million in uncollected taxes is unheard of. He re-iterated that this process is at least 5 or 10 years over-due. He suggested that when the tax collections get down to about 1 million of uncollected taxes, that they seek a collection agency instead of just writing off the uncollected debt noting that 50 cents on the dollar is better than nothing at all.

E. Groth, 13 Laurel Ridge, asked how they came about focusing on the \$10k or more group. It was explained that taxpayers that owe \$10,000 or more make up about half of what is owed to the town so they felt this was a good place to start.

A discussion continued with M. Holloway noting that it is realistic to expect that a lot of the back taxes can be recovered. She noted that she already knows of a few that can't but expects to achieve her 98% collections goal. She also noted that the next time she comes to a meeting she will be presenting figures.

E. Groth – asked that with so much back taxes in consideration would it be cost effective to hire temporary help. M. Holloway explained that it would not be cost effective in that Tax Law requires the Tax Collector to be the only one handling certain issues (no one else can do certain things) and also she noted that it is in the job description of some of the Town Hall office personnel to help with the responsibilities of the Tax Collector. M. Holloway noted that they will have a separate meeting regarding the routine of the office as it pertains to tax collections.

E. Groth – noted that he thinks the tax collecting should be done aggressively and as quickly as possible especially considering the inactivity in the last several years.

E. Groth – asked if there will be an ability to pay taxes on-line and on the town website. M. Holloway noted that she will be looking into that as well.

L. Classey, 79 Munson Road, recused herself as clerk and asked if it was possible to set up quarterly tax payments noting that it's easier for the tax payer to break up payments in 4 payments. M. Holloway noted that she has that exact question high-lighted and will certainly let people know that they can pay quarterly although they would assess fees at this point but it is something that will be looked at.

J. Groth, Laurel Ridge, noted that the tax bills can go out once with perforations to make 4 payments – a discussion continued and M. Holloway noted that she is also looking into putting something in the Citizens News other than in the legal notice section.

G. Komerowski, 15 2nd Street, Asked if the resolution gave authority specifically for its cause. The answer was yes.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

None.

With no further business, a motion to adjourn was made.

P. Betkoski motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:11 P.M. D. Sorrentino 2nd the motion. All voted aye.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:11 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Lauren Classey
Clerk for the Board of Selectmen