

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



**BEACON FALLS BOARD OF FINANCE  
BEACON FALLS BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
Public Hearing  
May 24, 2017  
MINUTES  
(Subject to Revision)**

**1. Call to Order/Pledge to the Flag**

Chairman Joe Rodorigo called the Public Hearing to order at 7:00 P.M.

Board of Finance Members Present: Chairman Joe Rodorigo, Marc Bronn, Joe Dowdell, Tom Pratt, and Jim Huk

Not Present: Brian Ploss

Board of Selectmen Members Present: First Selectman Chris Bielik, Selectman Peter Betkoski, and Selectman Mike Krenesky

Approximately 60 members of the public present.

**2. Municipal Budget for the Town of Beacon Falls, CT for the Fiscal Year 2017-2018**

J. Rodorigo indicated that there are some copies of the proposed budget and an informational sheet on the mil rate. J. Rodorigo also indicated that an informational video was posted on Facebook and You Tube that explained the proposed budget. J. Rodorigo noted that if there is anyone who would like to speak or ask a question on the proposed budget, to please come up to the front of the auditorium and to please state your name and address.

J. Rodorigo gave a brief background of process that the Boards used to arrive at the proposed budget for the Fiscal Year 2017-2018. J. Rodorigo noted that the Grand List went down 5.12% and in order to generate the same revenue as the year before, the mil rate would need to be raised by approximately 1.8 mils. J. Rodorigo also noted that the Regional 16 Budget increased by \$313,000 to the town of Beacon Falls, which equals .7 mils. J. Rodorigo also noted that the Debt Services need to be addressed and the P & I (Principal and Interest) equals approximately \$424,000 or approximately 1 mil.

J. Rodorigo indicated that this is an Expense Budget, with the mil rate being proposed at 36 mils. J. Rodorigo also indicated that we do not control what is going on in Hartford nor do we know what is going to happen in Hartford. The Governor's proposed budget has a cut in aid to the Town of Beacon Falls of \$1,250,000 and is not represented in the proposed budget and not represented in the 36 mils. The Legislative Budget is about half of that, or approximately \$600,000. J. Rodorigo also indicated that the unrestricted Fund Balance was increased so there would be money in the bank if the Governor's budget or the Legislative Budget passes.

One of the members of the public asked for the Board Members to be introduced and J. Rodorigo introduced the Members of the Board of Finance and the Members of the Board of Selectmen. J. Rodorigo indicated that the Boards will entertain questions from the public on the proposed budget.

Tom, 25 Chatfield Drive, asked about the valuation of the homes going down, especially in Chatfield Farms, and the letter that was received indicating that the valuation went up in a significant amount. J. Rodorigo responded that every property is an individual property and the Assessor has to reassess every 5 years. J. Rodorigo noted that the Grand List went down. J. Rodorigo also noted that if anyone has a question on the valuation of their property, there is an appeal process.

Ben, 30 Fieldstone Lane, asked about the information in the Citizens News on the 2016 Net Grand List decrease of \$25,100,000 and has a difficult time understanding how the numbers are arrived. J. Rodorigo responded that the Assessor is not present tonight and does not have an answer. A gentleman from the audience questioned the number of homes outside of Chatfield Farms where the assessment went up since they did not know of more than one home. J. Huk noted that the question is for the Assessor and not for tonight's Public Hearing on the Proposed Budget.

C. Bielik indicated that the State of CT requires every municipality to go through a re-evaluation process every 5 years. The Town of Beacon Falls does not have a Board of Assessors and outsources this process.

J. Rodorigo indicated that tonight's Public Hearing is for the proposed budget and not for the assessments. Questions on the re-evaluation and assessments should be addressed to the Town Assessor.

Ed, 16 Laurel Ridge, asked how would \$1,700,000 affect the mil rate if someone gave the town the money. J. Rodorigo indicated that it would be about 4 mils. Ed asked about the back taxes that are owed to the Town of Beacon Falls and why are we not collecting the back taxes. J. Rodorigo indicated that there was approximately \$3,800,000 in back taxes owed when the current Tax Collector was elected. In the past 3 ½ years, Mary Ann Holloway has surpassed and exceeded expectations in collecting back taxes. Now, after 3 ½ years, there is only \$1,600,000 owed in back taxes. J. Rodorigo also indicated that there are about 100 people on payment plans. Ed then asked if contracts are awarded to people or businesses where they owe back taxes. C. Bielik indicated that the person or business could not pull a permit based on town ordinance.

Allen, 13 Dogwood Lane, asked about a document on the Grand List that he had looked up but could not make the math work. J. Rodorigo noted that the number is 5.1 and may make a difference in the math, and in regards to Assessment Appeals, the numbers may not have been received until after the article was posted.

Jim, 7 Dogwood Lane, noted that he was confused on some of the line items in the proposed budget and the possibility of duplications, such as Computer Tech being listed in several different departments. J. Roderigo indicated that previously, each department was in charge of their own tech support and was billed to each department. This year, the tech support has been merged and was sent out to 3-4 firms for quote. The Library is isolated due to unique requirements. Tom Broesler, the Finance Manager, indicated that the Computer Tech line item includes fees for the Nutmeg Networks which is the state high-speed internet access, as well as other costs. The line item is not just for labor costs. Jim then asked why does the town need a Human Resource specialist. J. Roderigo indicated that there are approximately 45 employees in the town and there were a number of issues when the Administrative Assistant was doing the position. The Risk Assessment Committee recommended that the Human Resource specialist is long overdue and the liability is off the town for any errors that may occur. The position will be through a contractor and no benefits will be paid. Jim then asked if the Town Nurse is a necessity for the town. C. Bielik indicated that she is used every day and the position has been around for a very long time. The Town Nurse is available to anyone in town 24/7 and serves as an advocate for residents when they need to go to the doctor and has no one to go with them as well as making house calls to fill pill boxes for people who cannot, to do insulin injections for people who cannot do it themselves, etc. Jim then asked about the salary increase for Wages, Clerk Part Time and for the Administrative Assistant for the Finance Dept. J. Roderigo indicated that the clerks for the Boards and Commissions were combined into one line item instead of each Board/Commission having a separate line item in the budget. In regards to the Administrative Assistant, the position is going from part time last year to full time this year.

Joe, 21 Fieldstone Lane, indicated that he did a Google search for towns in CT with a population under 10,000 people. There were 71 towns listed and he then obtained the phone number for the Town Clerk for each of those 71 towns. The Town Clerks were contacted to see if their town had public or private trash pickup and found that 85% of those towns had private trash pickup. Joe noted that in tough times, concessions need to be made in regards to the Mini Bus and the Town Nurse.

Rob, 14 Lakeview Rise, asked about the increase in Debt Services, wanting the break down for the increase. J. Roderigo indicated that the breakdown in Debt Services is for old bonds – Wastewater Treatment Plant, the Wastewater Treatment Plant study; new bonds – roads, fire truck, equipment that was purchased. This is the first year for the P & I on those bonds so the Debt Service is net difference from borrowing the money to do the projects that were requested. J. Roderigo indicated that the \$188,000 is for town road aid, funding from the state that was used to offset the bond that was taken out. T. Broesler added that the \$2,100,000 for the new bond was for the roads that were done – Burton Road, Noe Place, and Highland Avenue; \$850,000 was for the fire engine; \$1,000,000 was for the sewer treatment plant upgrades; and the balance was for the police vehicles/boom tractor.

Ted, 68 Fieldstone Lane, asked in regards to property debt, can the names of the people owing back taxes be published so we know who they are. C. Bielik indicated that this was looked into and it was found that there is no incentive for public shaming people owing back taxes. C. Bielik noted that there is a place to look up to see if a person you suspect owing back taxes. Ted suggested that there needs to be someone to do Economic Development to bring in more revenue. Ted noted that there are hundreds of grants available to towns and the Boards need to do this. C. Bielik indicated that the Boards agree and there is a position in the budget this year to fund someone to do that work. J. Roderigo indicated that there was money in the budget previously and it did not pan out. J. Roderigo agreed that this needs to be looked at.

Harry, 24 Fieldstone Lane, asked if everyone on the Boards fully paid up on their taxes and J. Rodorigo indicated that he does not have a list in front of him in order to ask that question. C. Bielik also indicated that there is a website available that anyone could use to find out that information. Harry also noted that Chatfield Farms has been good for the town but if the taxes continue to go up then sales are going to go down. J. Rodorigo indicated that there is nothing for this Board to do to address the sale of homes in Chatfield Farms. J. Rodorigo also indicated that the budget is put together based on the needs of the community and will adjust according to the development. Harry asked what the town is doing to protect its investment in Chatfield Farms and J. Rodorigo indicated that it is outside the scope of tonight's public hearing.

J. Huk noted that most of the budget increase is due to the Region 16 budget and the State. J. Huk also noted that the mil rate was lowered last year and the Boards have worked hard to bring a proposed budget to the public that was fair. C. Bielik noted that the larger portion of the budget which is out of these Boards' control is the Region 16 budget. Last year, the Region 16 budget came in flat for the first time in so many years. The town of Beacon Falls is a minority vote on all issues with Region 16. C. Bielik also noted that over a course of 4 years, on the municipal side, the town of Beacon Falls is negative .1 mil.

J. Rodorigo asked if there are any further questions on the budget. Ed, 16 Laurel Ridge, asked about purchases wanting to be made and how to pay for them. J. Rodorigo indicated that Dept. Heads make Capital Requests and they express the department's need. The Capital request is debated and is brought to the public for their consideration. Once the public decides to vote in favor of a Capital request, then it has to be paid for and included in the budget. J. Huk also indicated that there is now a 5-year Capital Plan where every department has their inventory and projects are made as to what is going to be needed and when it is going to be needed.

Tom, 25 Chatfield Drive, asked about Region 16 and how people can get involved. C. Bielik indicated that there are Board of Education meetings and Regional Board meetings and everyone needs to attend those meetings. When there are Regional votes, the people of Beacon Falls need to show up and vote. The more people who show up, the better it is for Beacon Falls because we are only 38% of the vote and Prospect is 62% of the vote.

Mary, 41 Chatfield Drive, indicated that she asked the Assessor what her taxes will be and now, according to the chart, the taxes are going up significantly. Mary asked what is the correlation between the mil rate and the assessor. J. Rodorigo explained that the number is given by the Assessor and the Board uses that number. J. Rodorigo explained the chart and how to read it.

Denise, 19 Chatfield Drive, asked how does the town separate from Prospect if we are going to be on the losing end all the time. J. Rodorigo and J. Huk explained that schools would need to be built for Beacon Falls' children to attend.

J. Rodorigo noted that the Boards have been discussing Region 16 and this is not the forum for that discussion. The Region has 2 meetings per month and invited everyone to attend those meetings.

Hans, 10 Lakeview Rise, noted that the Boards need to be forward thinking and haven't been in regards to Chatfield Farms. Hans asked about credits for the Seniors. C. Bielik indicated that Senior Tax Credits have been looked into and compared the Town of Beacon Falls to the State's. The Town of Beacon Falls exceeds the threshold of the State's credit.

J. Rodorigo noted that we are not driving up the tax rate. The tax rate has actually been driven down. The Operating Budget is basically a flat budget.

Bob, 17 Lakeview Rise, expressed his concern about the aid from Hartford is not in the budget. J. Rodorigo indicated that the revenue side is the estimate from January. Since January, the Governor has announced that his new proposal would be a reduction in education aid to the amount of \$1,250,000. The Legislators stated that municipalities should prepare for half of that amount. As of today, there was \$308,000,000 found and it will be used not to impact municipal aid. As a protection to the mil rate, unearmarked fund balance was not spent. The money will be used to cover the cost so it doesn't impact the mil rate.

C. Bielik noted the \$400,000,000 cost share for the municipalities to fund the teachers' pension fund that hasn't been funded properly by the Legislator for decades. The Governor's proposal is to share the pain of that and the 1/3 of the cost will be spread over the municipalities in the state of CT. The estimated cost to Beacon Falls would be \$630,000.

Mike Krenesky, 21 Maple Avenue and a Selectman in Beacon Falls, thanked everyone attending tonight and noted that there were some great questions and concerns. M. Krenesky also noted that there were no comments by anyone if they were supporting the budget or not. The Boards are meeting after this Public Hearing in order to schedule a Town Meeting for the public to vote on this proposed budget.

### **3. Adjournment**

J. Rodorigo closed the Public Hearing at 8:43 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Marla Scirpo  
Clerk, Board of Finance  
Clerk, Board of Selectmen