

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
C/O TOWN HALL
10 MAPLE AVENUE
BEACON FALLS, CT 06403**



**SPECIAL TOWN MEETING
VOTE TO AMEND RESOLUTION APPROVED AT 9/3/13 SPECIAL TOWN MEETING
APPROPRIATING \$700,000 FOR THE ACQUISITION OF FIRE TRUCK
SEPTEMBER 23, 2013
MINUTES
(Draft – Subject to Approval)**

First Selectman Gerard F. Smith called the Town Meeting held at Woodland Regional High School, Back Rimmon Road, Beacon Falls to order at 7:01 P.M. with the Pledge to the flag.

PRESENT: First Selectman G. Smith, Selectmen D. D’Amico, C. Bielik, Registrars of Voters: Helen Mis and Katherine Grace assisted by Julie Groth and Mary Ellen Fernandes and approximately 140 town residents.

G. Smith noted that this resolution was previously approved by vote at a Special Town Meeting on September 3, 2013.

Joe Rodorigo made a motion to waive the reading of the full text of the Bond Resolution (copies of the complete text were available for handout), 2nd by Tom MacConnell. All aye.

Clerk read call for this Town Meeting. **Joe Rodorigo made a motion to accept the call as read, 2nd by Jeff D’Amico. All aye.**

Joe Rodorigo made motion to appoint Martha Melville to serve as Clerk for the meeting, 2nd by Michael Pratt. No more nominations three (3) times. All voted aye. One ballot cast for Martha Melville.

Jeremy Rodorigo made motion to appoint Gerard Smith to serve as Moderator for this Town Meeting, 2nd by Dave Rybinski. No more nominations three (3) times. All voted aye. One ballot cast for Gerard Smith.

Joe Rodorigo made motion to have secret ballot as the method of voting, 2nd by Gary Komarowsky. All voted aye with one no vote.

First Selectman G. Smith commented about his change of heart after witnessing the fire at 144 Blackberry Hill Road on September 8, 2013 and his preference not to wait to acquire a fire truck via FEMA grant. He noted that prior to this fire, there was lots of talk about getting a ladder truck for the town but at the time he didn’t understand the need and usefulness of a ladder truck. He applauded the firefighters, who had to wait for a ladder truck to arrive from another town. It

was unsafe to put ladders against the building to get on the roof to fight this fire. He was against putting firemen at risk. He commented that this was an emotional scene that goes beyond finances, but concerns the safety of the firemen and protection of your home. He noted that waiting may not be the most prudent thing to do as it was a safety issue.

Selectman D. D'Amico commented that he has witnessed many fires and has supported a ladder truck from the start. He doesn't like spending town money, but when volunteer firefighters answer a call, they should have the best equipment possible so they can safely return home to their family.

Selectman C. Bielik commented that this was a tough issue and the town had been looking at a fire truck for a long time. There was one vote already about purchasing a new fire truck. The Board of Selectmen aren't the governing body of the town, the people are, and however the crowd tonight voted that's what the town will decide.

Public comment:

Gary Komarowsky, 15 Second Street: commented that as a resident since 1985 he has been to many Board of Finance meetings and town meetings and getting a new fire truck has been discussed over the last 10 years. He fully supported getting a new ladder truck and believed it was necessary although it was always pushed to a back burner. He considered this new vote a knee jerk reaction because of the recent fire at 144 Blackberry Hill Road when two firemen were injured. He commended the Board of Finance for being fiscally responsible and applying for a grant, which could pay for 90% of the truck, would be the best course of action. He stated that the town has waited 10 years and can wait another few months for a new fire truck. The town would still get a fire truck while being more fiscally responsible by waiting to see if we can get the grant.

Joe Pavlik, 21 Fieldstone Lane: questioned the funding and offered a third approach that hadn't been looked at. He stated that the town has the potential revenue of over \$2 million in delinquent taxes owed to the town and that \$600,000 of that was past due motor vehicles taxes accumulated over the last 10-12 years. He noted that there was more than enough money owed to the town to purchase a fire truck rather than bonding and paying interest on it. He suggested the town hire a collection agency with the staff and know how to collect this money. He agreed that Beacon Hose No. 1 personnel deserve the best equipment when they put their lives on the line.

John Gulesh, 122 Munson Rd: asked if the town would lose the option of a FEMA grant if the fire truck was purchased now. G. Smith responded: yes. J. Gulesh asked why the town couldn't wait another few months for possible grant money to cover this expense when there were trucks from other towns that could assist when needed. Beacon Falls has done this for 10 years and why not wait another few months. He understood the need for a new fire truck, but not the urgency to pass on getting a grant.

Mike Pratt, 125 Bethany Road, Beacon Hose Fire Chief: noted that it takes more time, approximately 13-18 minutes, for a truck from another town to arrive and the Beacon Hose truck first on the scene would need to be strategically placed to allow space for other trucks to assist.

He noted that once the town applies for a grant it could be over a year to wait for any grant money.

Dave Rybinski, 7 Quail Hollow Court, former Beacon Hose Fire Chief: noted that the town has received over \$500,000 in grants for equipment in the past. He commented that Beacon Hose had applied for grant money for a ladder truck in 2007 and again in 2012 which were both denied. He noted that grant criteria changed each year but that chances to get a FEMA grant were slim. He also noted that the prices of a fire truck will increase each year. He encouraged the town residents to vote to amend this resolution to save the town money in the long run.

Harry Roscoe, 24 Fieldstone Lane: commented on the suggestion of hiring a collection agency to collect delinquent taxes.

G. Smith noted that this topic could not be addressed at this forum.

Jim Huk, 47 Terese Road: commented that this was your money and would you rather finance the fire truck or have a grant finance it. He noted that he does support getting a fire truck but felt that the grant was the best option. He cited the key criteria for a grant was the age of the current truck due for replacement. He noted that previous grant requests were rejected because of the age of the truck. He commented that it was worth pursuing grant money and felt considering the age of the truck being replaced, the town had a good chance to get a grant. He also noted the town doesn't have the money to pay for a fire truck with waste water treatment upgrades and Region 16 bills coming up.

Martha Berge, 75 Laurie Lane: asked the audience how to put a price on a life. She commented that she doesn't want to have to wait for help from surrounding towns.

Kevin O'Donnell, 11 Laurel Ridge: commented that it was not good to wait for a fire truck, nor was it a good idea to spend money the town doesn't have. He suggested listing the delinquent property owners just as the top property tax payers are publicized.

Sue Pavlik, 21 Fieldstone Lane: asked about hiring a grant writer, which was mentioned at the meeting to vote on the fire truck, to increase our chances of getting a grant.

G. Smith noted that the town could hire a grant writer at the cost of \$3,000.

John Besse, 34 Fieldstone Lane: raised a safety concern and asked why the firemen went on the roof of the house at the 144 Blackberry Hill Road fire when no one was in the house to be rescued.

Jeremy Rodorigo, 140 Burton Road, EMS director at Beacon Hose No. 1: commented that when Beacon Hose personnel arrive at a house fire, they determine the risk of someone going on the roof of a burning house to try and save the property and surrounding area. Beacon Hose firemen rescued a man outside the house from this fire by pulling him to safety. The firemen then tried to extinguish the fire from the roof in an attempt to save the contents of the house. It was determined no longer safe to try to protect the property. When it was deemed unsafe, the fire personnel retreated.

Joe Rodorigo made a motion to move the call and cease public comment so the vote can be conducted 2nd by Paul Brennan: vote by showing of hands, Selectmen D'Amico and Bielik counted votes. 84 votes to proceed with the vote via secret ballot, 51 votes to continue public comment, no abstentions.

G. Smith gave the voting instructions to the attendees: approach the registrars table, state your name, get a ballot, vote, then place in one of the voting boxes located on the stage.

Vote to amend the Resolution approved at Special Town Meeting, September 3, 2013, appropriating \$700,000 for the acquisition of a 75 foot quintuple combination pumper ("quint") fire truck by removing the limitation on encumbering the appropriation prior to July 1, 2014:

Yes - 52

No - 92

The Resolution stands as previously approved.

With no other business, **Dave Rybinski made a motion to adjourn this Town Meeting at 8:35 P.M., 2nd by Gary Komarowsky. By show of hands all voted aye.**

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Melville, Clerk for September 23, 2013 Town Meeting – Vote on amending Resolution approved at 9/3/13 Special Town Meeting appropriating \$700,000 for the acquisition of fire truck