



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

**Joint Budget Workshop
April 9, 2024, MINUTES (Subject to Revision)**

1. Call to Order / Pledge to the Flag: G. Smith called the BOS workshop to order at 7:05 PM. K. Brennan called the BOF workshop to order and G. Smith led the assembly in the pledge.
Members Present: G. Smith, M. Krenesky, P. Betkoski, K. Brennan, S. Leeper, W. Giglio, K. Lembo, B. Catanzaro
Members Absent: J. Carroll
Others Present: N. Nau, M. Yamin, L. Mariano, D. Bousquet
2. Approval of Meeting Minutes – 4/2/2024 Budget Workshop – **S. Leeper made a motion to approve the 4/2/24 workshop minutes. K. Lembo seconded the motion. All ayes. M. Krenesky made a motion to approve the 4/2/24 workshop minutes. P. Betkoski seconded the minutes. All ayes.**
3. Public Input – Webform submissions:
We received 3 Webform submission from the following people: K. Bolduc of Hockanum Court, C. Sedita of Cambridge Drive in Prospect, and J. Delenick of Bethany. All 3 submissions pertained to the Region 16 budget. They were read aloud. K. Bolduc was interested in how the budget will impact teaching and learning, as well as professional development opportunities. C. Sedita is in favor of the budget, including recent renovations to the schools. J. Delenick asked how referendums are funded and how an independent accounting review of the Region's budget can be conducted to ensure there are no abuses of policy in the budget.
4. Region 16 2024-2025 Budget Presentation: Michael Yamin
Welcome to Superintendent Michael Yamin as well as our Board of Education members. The Region 16 budget is on their website, and he provided some handouts, including the Region's PowerPoint and 5 Year CIP. He included the 2024-2025 CASBO proposed budgets by district. Statewide education budgets are averaging a 5.35% increase, while Region 16 is at 2%. Page 31 of the PowerPoint shows the total budget for the Town – with changes to ECS and the Excess Cost grant, the result is a \$20,000 increase to Beacon Falls. In February/March, the Region would finalize their surplus and the April 2025 payment to the Region is reduced. This year, the Town's April payment was reduced by \$46,000. Over the past 10 years, Region 16 has had modest percentage increases to their budget. Over 10 years the Region has had less than 7% overall budget increase. The BOE is fiscally responsible yet does not leave a skeleton education program for the kids.
Turning to the questions, M. Yamin noted that the budget supports education and professional development. They have contracted with presenters for next year's PD concerning AI; what teachers will do with AI instruction, and then how will students use AI. This will include a pilot program with special needs and SRBI students. They are increasing staffing in 3rd and 4th grade to make the classes smaller. They are changing some of the 1 to 1 devices from Chromebooks to iPad for the younger students. They are beginning an EMT program, drone classes and flight and aviation courses at the high school. In response to Christine, in the last 10 years Region 16 went from 86 to 26 in the State. We are not in the top 3rd in our DERG in reading/writing, #1 in math. We have made great gains academically. In response to Joann, he noted the weight of the BOE is 1.3 for Prospect and .7 for Beacon Falls by charter. The Region hires an independent auditor, and they switch auditors every 3-5 years. Enrollment did decrease from 2400 to 2000. He is hoping to get to 2100 in the next few years. Costs are up; utilities, gas, salaries, medical. The Region did not file MBR (Minimum Budget Requirements) over the past couple of years. They have put a lot of money into facilities, and they paid for the turf with capital non-recurring, using their



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\$400,000-\$700,000 surplus each year. They have \$2.3M in new bonded monies and they refinanced existing debt and in the next couple of years there will be a reduction in debt. Academics, facilities and refinanced debt sets Region 16 up for the future. They have been fiscally responsible and academically focused. School referendums are paid for by Region 16. The Public Hearing is tomorrow night and the BOE will set the budget and method of voting for May 6th. K. Brennan thanked Mr. Yamin as a teacher and former Woodland student, complimented the tremendous staff at the high school and noted BHC is excited about the EMT program, as Region 16 continues to lead the way with real world classes.

5. Open Budget Discussion:

a. Operating Budget: Revenue & Expenditures

- G. Smith noted that last night at the BOS meeting, the BOS agreed to add back to the budget the 7th maintainer position for Public Works. G. Smith noted that he listened to the arguments that an additional person is needed, and we will let the public decide. SLR recommended an additional person, and this should open some negotiations with Public Works. K. Lembo asked if this will reduce Overtime and G. Smith noted that OT will most likely be negligible. S. Leeper likes the idea that we are letting the voters make the decision. B. Catanzaro asked if there is a temporary option, but the position is a union position. M. Krenesky noted that the position has not been funded since 2012, although the position is in the contract. BOS makes the decision of when and how to fill the position. P. Betkoski appreciates the other BOS members, including the 7th maintainer, and he hopes that this full staff will increase productivity. Performance reviews have been lax, and G. Smith noted that they are coming back, so that management can monitor performance. All public works employees have phones for accountability. K. Brennan is still interested in collecting more data to see how much of this is management versus demonstrated need.
- ROV Wages – K. Brennan asked to revisit the ROV wages, noting if we are going to increase their wages, it will be this November when they are reelected. The salary survey shows their salaries are on par with other towns. Do we increase a standard 2.75%? K. Brennan would be in favor of honoring the request. They work an average of 4 hours per week and are paid the same as the 2nd/3rd Selectmen and Treasurer. The Boards reviewed the history of wage increases for these elected positions. The consensus was to honor the request for \$28,324 for ROV wages.
- N. Nau noted that as a result of the recent grant application for a Senior Center vehicle, she has added \$2,000 to the Minibus Gas/Maintenance budget, as the town's contribution.
- On the Mill Rate page, the BOAA and prorations numbers are forthcoming. BOAA adjustments downward are small. Prorations should be lower than past years.

b. Non-Recurring Capital Project Proposals: The boards began their review of the First Selectman's proposals for Capital Projects.

- **Town Hall:** Revaluation – This is a state required project which is mandatory.
- Town Clerk Office Remodel – This project will not impact taxes, as it is coming from Town Clerk funds.
- Community Center Architectural Studies – The Town is reapplying for the CIF grant for community center and this project is the town's good faith portion of costs, to get the project to advertisement status. The next grant round is due in June. We had \$100,000 for Engineering for the O&G Data Center project which is not moving forward. The plan is to shift these funds to architectural services in the FY2025 budget to assist with the Town's vision is to move this project forward. We are adding a third floor to the project.



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- Rimmon Hill Schoolhouse – M. Krenesky noted that on May 10th we will know if we make it to the 2nd round with SHPO grant. If we are in the running for the grant, it would be awarded in January 2025. He noted that a condition assessment of the building is needed, and he has submitted the letter of intent to apply for the grant. W. Giglio asked what is the condition of the building? It needs a new roof and new floor and there is dry rot in the overall structure. Floor joints need to be replaced. The 4 walls are solid, and the foundation stone needs to be assessed. The plan is to recreate an 1800s building. The State will outline requirements for assessments, and it is a Class 3 building intended as a museum. The Town has only owned the building since October, when it was given to us. G. Smith noted the public seems to want to save this building. This is a 1 to 1 grant – 50% match.
- Town Hall Flooring - Replacement of old flooring at Town Hall
- Replace AC Units – Replacement of older AC units at Town Hall
- Vehicle Replacement Fund – Townwide funding for future vehicle purchases of \$50,000
- **Fire & EMS** - Ambulance Lease Payment – Mandatory and funded through Vehicle Replacement Fund.
- Energy Improvements to Apparatus Floor – This project was not approved by First Selectman. This is the 2nd year of this project request.
- Lease Payments for Engine and Tanker - Mandatory
- SCBA Mask Fit Testing Machine - \$0 – This service is contracted/rented, and mask fit testing is an annual service.
- Battery Operated Fans – The decision is to reappropriate Station 2 funds from a prior project which is not moving forward to fund this project.
- Chief's Vehicle Replacement - \$0 – The First Selectman did not approve this project.
- RIT Pack, Air packs, new SCBA Masks, Hose Replacement. All these important equipment replacement requests were approved. The RIT pack is an AFG Grant application with a 5% match from the town.
- N. Nau does not have latest information from the Chief on inventories (airpaks, age and replacement cycles). This will be valuable information for planning when the Slate pages software is joined.
- Replacement of 2016 Chevy Silverado – This is a new project which is the result of an accident which occurred last week on Route 8. An appraiser needs to review the damage and we will have an insurance claim which may total the vehicle at actual cash value. The vehicle could cost \$75,000 to \$100,000 to replace. We expect insurance will come in at book value of \$35,000-\$40,000, so funds will be needed to replace the vehicle. Replacement costs for the vehicle will be explored. \$50,000 was included as a placeholder.
- Fire Marshal vehicle – This project is not being funded, but Public Works is retiring a truck which may work for the Fire Marshal.
- **Police:** The approved projects are the new Vehicle, Portable Radios and the new sign. All of these would be funded by the Police Private Duty fund. The older Patrol car would then go to the Assistant Fire Chief.
- License plate reader cameras: This project is a good idea, but the First Selectman is holding off on the project pending grant funding and research and coordination with surrounding towns. The Police will take part in a 90-day trial of 8 cameras. Then, decisions can be made after the 90-day trial, which will provide knowledge and information on the product and regional needs.
- **Public Works:** Plow Truck Lease Payment: This is mandatory and is being paid partially from Vehicle Replacement.



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- Matthies Park garage doors, Asphalt roller replacing 1985 machine are both funded.
- F-350 Vehicle Replacement: Handing the old 2006 vehicle down to the Fire Marshal.
- Salt Shed Roof: This project will also move forward before the winter.
- Garage Siding and Roof: We are appropriating all the 2024 LOCIP monies to this project which has increased in cost/scope and adding fund balance monies.
- Sidewalk Snowblower – This is a John Deere Tractor which can plow sidewalks and be used year-round. It makes sense to use this over other options, as sidewalks are being added.
- Transfer Station Parking Lot Paving – The Town plans to use next year's 2025 LOCIP funds for this project and \$10,000 from the Transfer Station permit renewal funds to assist with funding.
- P&R Utility Vehicle – This project can be removed, as Parks has received a UTV from Fire.
- Pent Road Walking Path – The Town needs to increase this budget to cover increased costs for paving.
- Riverbend Park Expansion – In 2016 the Town foreclosed on a Hubbell Avenue lot. The Town must remediate the trailer on site, costing \$28,000. The utilities on the property are linked with the adjacent property owners. This project is to complete a land swap, to get rid of the trailer and then straighten out the lot line, which will expand Riverbend Park.
- **Senior Center:** Senior Rides – N. Nau has applied for a 2nd vehicle through a grant through WCAAA (Western Connecticut Area Agency on Aging). It would be an HGAC Jeep Compass should the grant be approved and would be used for smaller trips.
- N. Nau will be working on ARPA Fund application for the bocce court/pavilion at Senior Center. She is finalizing that project with the Senior Center Director.
- A Paving Contract Bid has been released, so we expect that paving costs will increase as a result. Bonded project funds are being used for upcoming paving projects, as well as Grant funds. An increase to the paving numbers could increase the budget for the EV Charging Station lot and other projects.
- **WWTP:** The only project is the electrical upgrade which will take \$477,000 from the Sewer Fund. The Board may consider transferring some of the operating budget funds for the plant to the Sewer Fund if there are surpluses.
- Comments – It is a sizable Capital year. G. Smith noted that we are heavy on cap, but work will be done and we will be mindful of capital next year. Currently the net on capital coming from Undesignated General Fund balance: \$926,000.
- c. Fund Balances – General Fund, Private Duty, Debt Service, Vehicle Replacement; unspent Capital Project: N. Nau reviewed the fund balances for the following funds with the boards: General Fund, Private Duty, Vehicle Replacement and Debt Service funds. The Boards were comfortable with fund balances in funding the capital projects, except the General Fund balance being high. K. Brennan asked that the boards reduce the \$50,000 for the replacement of the 2016 Chevy Silverado to \$0. We can reduce the line for now and when more concrete plans for replacing the vehicle are confirmed, the Boards can consider using Vehicle Replacement Fund money for this new project. This reduces the use of Undesignated General Fund Balance to \$876,000.
- d. **5-Year CIP review and discussion** - N. Nau noted that it is time to renew the 5-Year CIP. Finance asked the departments to put information into the 5-year CIP and the plan is to complete an exhaustive CIP this year, as part of our multi-year budget goals. K. Brennan noted that it is reasonable to look at this over time and asked that the 5-Year CIP be added to BOF agendas for the coming months, and this will involve the boards in the visioning process.



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6. Budget Workshop Schedule: N. Nau will work to publish the budget to the public next Tuesday. The Board of Finance reviewed the upcoming budget schedule and agreed to keep the schedule as is. **S. Leeper made a motion to set the Public Hearing for the FY2025 Budget on Wednesday, May 8th at 7:00 at the Senior Center (if available). B. Catanzaro seconded the motion. All ayes.**
7. FY2024 Budget Transfers – April.
The Board of Selectmen approved 3 budget transfers last night as follows. **S. Leeper made a motion to approve the 3 budget transfers. W. Giglio seconded the motion. All ayes.**



TOWN OF BEACON FALLS
FY2024
TRANSFERS FOR 4/8 BOS & 4/9/24 BOF MEETINGS

4/8/2024

**FY2023-2024 BUDGET
REVISED**

TRANSFER FROM:			TRANSFER TO:			
Amount	Line	Description	Line	Description	Amount	Explanation
\$ (843.90)	10.90.69.1060	Computer	10.90.69.1170	Department Supplies	\$ 843.90	Library request
\$ (2,531.25)	10.90.03.1170	Contingency	10.90.03.1105	IT	\$ 2,531.25	Security Software/Inky Email Filtering
\$ (1,595.00)	10.90.03.1170	Contingency	10.90.79.1943	Senior Center Building Maintenance	\$ 1,595.00	Fire Suppression Extinguisher
\$ (4,970.15)					\$ 4,970.15	

8. Adjournment – **B. Catanzaro made a motion to adjourn BOF at 9:25 PM. S. Leeper seconded the motion. All ayes. P. Betkoski made a motion to adjourn BOS at 9:25 PM. M. Krenesky seconded. All ayes.**

Respectfully submitted,

Erin A. Schwarz
Finance Office