

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN – MARCH 15, 2023**  
**SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES**  
**BARKHAMSTED TOWN HALL**

Meeting called to order at 5:00 PM. Present were First Selectman Don Stein and Selectmen Ray Pech and Nick Lukiwsky. Also present were Steve Elovirta, Barkhamsted East VFD Fire Chief, and Colin Orlowski and Michelle Biel from the Berkshire Trail Riders Club

**DELEGATIONS:** No delegations were present.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** The Berkshire Trail Riders are a 501 (c)3 non-profit with 81 members, who were re-incorporated in 1992. They meet at the Barkhamsted East firehouse and have members of all ages. They hold 4 events a year and use the proceeds from entry fees at their event to make contributions to local public, volunteer agencies. Besides using the firehouse, the members of the fire department help by providing safety support staff and equipment) at the weekend-long events, as does the New Hartford fire department. The club has donated between \$75,000 and \$100,000 to local volunteer agencies in the last 20 years in an effort to support those who help them, and also to counter the negative press trail riders receive by creating good press. They are looking for more land in this area where they can ride. They presented a check for \$1,000 to Steve Elovirta for the BEFD as their donation to this local fire department.

**MOTION:** Nick Lukiwsky made a motion, seconded by Ray Pech, and passed unanimously to approve the minutes of the Special Meeting held February 28, 2023.

**MOTION:** A motion was made by Nick Lukiwsky, seconded by Ray Pech, and passed unanimously to approve the following Tax Refunds:

Karen Michna for Nicholas Michna	96.96	Refund
----------------------------------	-------	--------

**DISCUSSION:** The Selectmen reviewed a preliminary Road Plan for FY 23/24 prepared by the Highway Supervisor, Rich Novak. Accounting for all available funds for the coming fiscal year (town budget, State grants, and Federal ARPA budgets), there is roughly \$503,000 available for the coming fiscal year. Rich Novak has proposed the following projects, which total \$547,000, with a potential shortfall of a little over \$43,000. These projects include repaving Briarwood chip sealing Park Road, creek sealing where required, cost share for STEAP grants for the riverbank restoration and the water line extension from Winsted, funding for the balance of the F-550 purchase, which rose significantly as have all capital purchases, and redoing the crosswalks in Riverton. This also includes a reserve for unexpected expenses. The deficit can possibly be covered by the use of ARPA funds which will be proposed once we know better how the year is shaping up. Additionally, the repaving of Partridge and the town/school parking lot are currently not funded, but could possibly be accomplished by ARPA funds or capital budget next year.

**DISCUSSION:** The Selectmen reviewed the status of the FY22/23 budgets. The General Government budget appears to be on track to meet its target with the use of Town Aid Road and State highway grants to cover this year's construction projects.

Tax collections are slightly behind last year. The tax collections for the year are about 0.4% lower than FY 21/22 or \$126,159 away from hitting the year's budget. It is expected that we will catch up, but probably won't have the surplus like we had last year due to the stipulated agreements with two of our commercial properties. These agreements resulted in abated taxes, which affects this year's collection rate.

Capital expenditures and ARPA fund expenditures are also on track, although in the case of both capital and highway maintenance, inflation has caused a great deal of pressure on budgets and there may need to be some supplemental appropriations. It is too early to determine whether that will be the case or not.

**DISCUSSION:** The Selectmen reviewed and acted on the proposed FY23/24 General Government and capital budgets.

**MOTION:** Ray Pech made a motion, seconded by Nick Lukiwsky, and passed unanimously to approve the General Government budget for FY23/24 for referral to the Board of Finance. The increase is 7.08%, or \$168,746 (~0.46 mills or roughly a 1.4% tax increase). The request for this increase is based on

- negotiated pay increases with the town's union and the application of those increases to non-union employees;
- step increases for newer union employees;
- anticipated increases in election costs due to the State's approval of early voting;
- increased hours for the building inspector and the Assistant Town Treasurer due to increased workload;
- increases in benefits due to a 6% health insurance cost increase and newer employees becoming eligible for pension payments;
- anticipated significant increases in fuel and heating costs and also in the premium for liability insurance.
- emergency services have gone up significantly due to the cost of fuel
- the unavailability of volunteers and the increased cost of materials has had a similar effect on all of the heavy equipment and repairs to town equipment

A new item has been included in the budget; i.e., the Economic Development Consultant that is a shared position with Winsted. This position has been funded by ARPA funds and works with the Town's businesses to promote economic development in Town and to support activities by the Economic Development Commission. The position is new and the expectation is that concrete, measurable results will be seen in the coming year as the prior time has been spent learning

about the town and its businesses. The EDC favors continuing the position for the next year. If beneficial results are not seen during this time, it is likely this position will be eliminated in the FY 2024/25 budget.

**MOTION:** Ray Pech made a motion, seconded by Nick Lukiwsky, and passed unanimously to approve the Capital Plan, which consists only of projects proposed by the Selectmen. All of the Board of Ed projects are being covered by ARPA, so the budget that was approved is \$226,000 for the following projects:

- 2<sup>nd</sup> year of Revaluation consultant - \$39,000
- Senior Center flooring - \$12,000
- Additional funds to cover painting of the town hall or vinyl siding
- Purchase of new road side mower to replace the one that is 18 years old - \$165,000

**DISCUSSION:** The Selectmen discussed possible allocation of a small amount of ARPA funds to help the non-profit Barkhamsted Housing Trust pay current bills for insurance and taxes until they received project funding for the construction and development. This was deferred to the ARPA committee and the Board of Finance as the Town has maintained a wholly separate position from the BHT.

**MOTION:** A motion was made by Nick Lukiwsky, seconded by Ray Pech, and passed unanimously to appoint Anita Deschenes-Desmond as the Municipal Agent for the Elderly for a term ending 12/31/25.

The discussion of School and Town Hall security was tabled. Don Stein will provide more information on this topic before the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Donald S. Stein  
First Selectman