

The City of Beacon Council Workshop  
Monday November 9, 2009

The Beacon City Council Workshop was held on Monday November 9, 2009 in the Municipal Center courtroom. Present were: Council members Sara Pasti, Randy Casale, Charles Kelly and Deanna Leake and Marlene Fredericks. Also in attendance: Mayor Steve Gold, City Administrator, Meredith Robson and City Attorney, Richard Wolf. Council member Eleanor Thompson was absent.

At 7:05 p.m. Mayor Gold requested that the Council adjourn to executive session, for discussions regarding possible litigations for about 15-20 minutes.

The Workshop began at 7:37 p.m.

The City Assessor, Kathy Martin, was introduced to explain further to council the Consent Judgment between the City of Beacon and Preshrock Corp. and exactly how the property in question was assessed. The years in question, by the council, are 2005 and 2006. Ms. Martin explained that the re-assessment was not done until 2007 and that is when her office brought all the values up to 100% of market value. The assessed value: in 2005 the \$700,000 figure was only representative of 33.39 % of the market value because that is what the equalization rate was that year. In 2006 it was 28% of market value so the assessment was still \$ 700,000 and that was only representative of 28% of market value. In 2005 the proposed reduction would bring the overall market value down to \$2,006,732. In 2006 the proposed reduction value was \$ 2,096,436 and the 2007 assessment will stay at \$2,218,000 and that is what it is currently.

Ms. Martin was asked to also address commercial assessments. Generally commercial properties are assessed at their value and use. The assessor's office looks at the increment expense information from the tax payer, if they are willing to provide that information. Also considered are the value use, the market data, similar property sales, and if it is an unusual property the assessor may then go outside the City of Beacon for other similar sales (this is applied to land as well) and cost of construction. Basically the assessor's office looks for three approaches of value 1) cost; 2) income and 3) sales comparison approach. If a commercial property owner disagrees with their assessment they would file a grievance with the assessment board, if they are unsatisfied with the judgment of the grievance board they would then file with a certiorari court. Ms. Martin was asked if she has ever been approached by a City of Beacon councilmember to lower any property owner's assessments. She responded with an emphatic "absolutely not".

Ms. Martin next addressed the Pilot Programs (payment in lieu of taxes) for the tax exemption known as 485b, which the City of Beacon does offer. Basically this program is a business exemption, acting on a sliding scale, which works very similarly to the Senior Citizen exemption. For instance, a business adding an addition to a structure can apply for this exemption within one year of receiving a Certificate of Occupancy. They would apply for a 485b or a business exemption at the Assessor's office. What this program does is phase in the paying of full taxes over a 10 year period. It is a good way

to encourage businesses to stay in the City or to improve and expand their business. It was suggested by council that the City Attorney, Richard Wolf, investigate different options regarding the 485b law. Specifically adapting the law for the City of Beacon specifications, such as limiting the term from 10 years to 3 years, or if the business owner leaves before the term is up they would be required to repay the City the balance of owed taxes, or lowering the percentages of the taxes, or could the City of Beacon simply write their own 485b law (485c?).

City Administrator, Meredith Robson addressed the proposed changes to Chapter 23 Disaster Preparedness. The only further change that may be made is with regard to the meeting date.

The Proposed 2010 Budget:

Building Department: Tim Dexter, Building Inspector, began discussions with regard to the Building Department's budget. This is bare minimum budget with no "wish list" included. It was prepared to just survive. Examples of how this budget has been cut, without cutting service, are in 2010 the building department computers will not be upgraded nor will new ones be purchased. Educational Supplies (which in the past the State provided to some extent) are no longer available at no or little cost, however, the department hopes to get by with the use of supplies we already have or perhaps could borrow. Training has been reduced to maintain licenses only. Materials have been cut back. Regarding the Building Department's revenues it was noted that some of the line items (i.e. rental permit fees, fire inspection fees...) are lower than what were projected. This was explained that they are new items added last year and it was difficult to project accurate figures. Mr. Dexter did make note that there is a significant project that was expected to be completed in 2009 but was not. However, it is anticipated that those monies will now be added to the 2010 revenue. Noted by council was the Building Department generates more revenues than what they spend.

Council requested, and it was agreed, that an additional column be added to the 2010 Budget to provide encumbered/precise figures regarding year to date expenditures.

Fire Department: Both Tim Dexter and Fire Chief Tim Joseph addressed council with regard to the Fire Department's budget. It was noted that the Overtime line item was based on an "uneventful" upcoming year and being minimally staffed. This could change based on the number of fires, sick time, jury duty, assistance with neighboring communities/mutual aid... Presently the Fire Department has 12 career members, the Chief and about 10 active volunteers. Council suggested that closing one of our three fire houses should be considered in the near future. Mayor Gold asked to go on record saying that closing one of the fire houses should not be included in the 2010 budget. In addition, perhaps an operational review study could be done concerning this department. It is not budgeted for 2010 and the approximate cost is \$25,000. Suggested by council was to cut back on the amount of fire engines that respond to various calls. Presently 3 engines respond to each call. These issues will be re-visited at another time. Switching to a Regional Fire District was proposed and the Mayor asked that Chief Joseph draft a letter

to the County Legislature requesting that they look into adopting this program. It was decided that replacing 5 Air Packs, at \$6,000 each, will be taken out of the 2009 budget and removed as a line item in the 2010 budget. Recommended as an additional reduction in this budget is eliminating the Fire Department's secretarial position and re-align the Mayor's secretarial position to assume these duties. This also will be re-visited at a later date.

Water Department: Jamie McCollum addressed council regarding the Water Budget. He is aware of one person retiring from his department in 2010. Council asked if the Water Department could get rid of the second shift position. Presently this shift is Monday-Friday and the work conducted (i.e. chemical testing, sampling...) is best being done when there is not a lot of activity. Perhaps this shift could be from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. but the Chief Operator needs to be consulted before any decision can be made. It was noted that the Maintenance of Equipment line item is high for 2010 because some of the big equipment needs to be replaced as well as pumps and some other costly instrumentation work needs to be done. To date, the Town of Fishkill owes the City of Beacon quite a large sum of money for their water usage.

Sewer Department: William O'Keefe spoke to council about the Sewer budget. He is aware of two people retiring from his department in 2010 and one of them will not be replaced. Council questioned the elevated Chemical line item and was informed that this was due to the high cost of chlorine. Also asked about was the Chemical Analysis line item. The City has to use outside labs because we do not have the equipment to test the waste. Mr. O'Keefe will look into reducing the Refuse Removal line item. Mr. O'Keefe also informed council of an offer he received from a company, near West Point, who is interested in dumping 6-7 million gallons "clean" water at our facility. Discussed was a charge of \$ .04 per gallon. This was estimated to be revenues of a quarter of a million dollars for the City of Beacon. Council asked for further examination into this matter, specifically if Beacon could use our own outside lab to analyze this water before it is dumped, arbitrarily.

Council also addressed various ways to cut back on our consulting fees and our computer support teams. Also the Electrical line item for each department will be further broken down so a more accurate figure can be reflected.

There is an extra Monday in the month of November, suggested was to add an additional Workshop on November 23, 2009 and perhaps schedule a Town Hall Meeting regarding the Budget on November 24, 2009. Further discussions will be addressed at the Council Meeting of Monday November 16, 2009.

There was no further business to discuss and the meeting adjourned at 10:45 p.m.

Respectively submitted,  
Barbara Howley  
November 11, 2009

