



**Town of Ridgefield**  
**Board of Finance**  
**Approved Meeting Minutes**  
March 26, 2018

**I. Call to order**

D. Ulmer called to order the meeting of the Board of Finance at 7:32 PM on February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2018, Ridgefield Town Hall, 400 Main Street, Ridgefield, CT (Large Conference Room). Board Members (D. Ulmer, D. Moccia, Connelly, J. Mancini, and A. Freidenrich) were in attendance.

Additional Officials in attendance include: J. Berendsen-Hill (Tax Collector), Kevin Redmond (Controller), and Molly McGeehin (Treasurer).

**II. State of the Town | Presentation by: Rudy Marconi**

- a) Parking & Repairs - R. Marconi stated that the BOS are looking to expand the Governor Street parking lot due to inadequate parking. Additionally, there is a drainage issue leading into Casagmo that requires attention.
- b) BOE- The BOE's capital budget asks for safety upgrades, a cooling tower for RHS, asbestos abatement and removal, and a replacement of the oil tank Scotland, Scott's Ridge, and East Ridge school and roof repair at ERMS. \
- c) Teacher Retirement Fund – R. Marconi states that he is concerned that the state can't fund the retirement fund.
- d) The Annual Town Budget Meeting will be held on May 7, 2018 (7:30 PM) at East Ridge Middle School.

### **III. Board of Education Budget | Presentation by: Robert Miller**

- a) Rising Costs - R. Miller states that one of the major increases in the proposed budget is health care due to the increased number of staff seeking medical care. The increased costs are included in contract negotiations.
- b) Staff Changes – R. Miller discussed proposed staffing changes which include the onboarding of two school Psychologists, three Special Education Teachers, and one Certified Behavior Analyst for the RISE Program.

### **IV. Board of Finance Public Hearing | Presentation by: David Ulmer**

General review of report.

### **V. In-Person Public Comment**

- a) Dr. John Fisher of 116 Olcott Way: A resident for 23-years, he states that he was there on behalf of the Owls Senior Organization. Dr. Fisher states that they have 65-members, all of whom are retired and live on a fixed income. The Owls are seeking help to obtain property tax relief and that their request has three parts.
  - (i) Consider freezing property taxes and real estate taxes for people 75+ years.
  - (ii) Increase annual property tax reduction from the current amount of \$1,048 per year to \$1,200 per year.
  - (iii) Increase the minimum property tax deferment income from annual increase to (\$55k-\$65k).
- (b) John Locke of 94 Danbury Road states that he is concerned with the school budget and the salaries of the administrators. Mr. Locke said, “it’s the teachers who are on the line day-to-day”. Mr. Locke also feels strongly that teachers should not be trained in weaponry, as he feels it’s a waste of money that won’t increase safety. Mr. Locke also discussed his concern over the investigation of Dr. Baldwin and that the school committees should have been aware of the accusation of plagiarism. Mr. Locke posed the question, “How much is this costing tax payers?” and states that its embarrassing.

- (c) Karin Fallon of 141 Indian Cave Road, served as a PTA Co-president at all three levels. Mrs. Fallon fails to understand why its being proposed that students are being housed in the same number of buildings despite having 702 fewer students. Mrs. Fallon feels the BOS should seek revenue opportunities wherever possible and that they should rekindle economic development on the Route 7 corridor. She feels that the BOF should consider the increased homeowners taxes, as Ridgefield is the hitching post for commuters and the mill rate must be competitive.
- (d) Bob Payne of 263 Spring Valley Road said he is hopeful that the BOF will be proactive and have the courage to mirror what other towns have done within the DRGA group, similar to Darien, Wilton, and New Canaan (budget increase of 2.5%). Mr. Payne expressed concern that he hasn't heard anything in the presentations about the desire to seek greater efficiencies.
- (e) Rich Fasanelli of 26 Gay Road. Said he has been a Ridgefield resident for 30+ years, has never sent a child to public schools, and was there to advocate for better tax policy for senior citizens. Mr. Fasanelli describes the taxes as "insane" and states that he pays approximately \$18k per year. Mr. Fasanelli has invested a great deal of money into the town by retail spending and now feels as though the town is forcing him to move from a house that he loves.
- (f) Howard Schnidman of 40 Armand Road states that the student enrollment is down but spending is up. He feels that the Superintendent spent no time in the school budget presentation explaining the people do that account for the 19% of the budgetary amount.
- (g) Ed Tyyrell of 17 Pond Road, said that the BOE's budget is impossible to understand and evaluate. Mr. Tyyrell describes it as "49-pages of babble that plays on the fears of special education parents and all parents. Mr. Tyyrell said that based on the 49-pages, its impossible to make a recommendation.
- (h) Sarah Pettitt of 99 Bayberry Hill Road said that she moved from Danbury for a stronger education, while also having a daughter who is "not a strong learner". Mrs. Pettitt is grateful for the

assistance that the paras suffer her daughter beyond learning just numbers and letters. Mrs. Pettitt has a second child entering the school system next year and wants to feel confident in knowing there will be support. Mrs. Pettitt is disappointed that the town is not standing behind the schools and the residents who grow this town.

- (i) Stephanie Anderson of 3 Barrack Hill Road, states that she supports the elderly tax cut, but is concerned about potential cuts to the school budget. She hopes that the BOF will look at the “big picture” and think about what attracts families to the town.
- (j) Gina Carrey of 107 East Ridge Road said she is glad to see there will be funding for the Governor's Street parking lot expansion but is concerned about flooding. She also feels that more needs to be done on the Route 7 expansion, and that more commercial space in town should be developed as a way to promote growth.

## **VI. E-mail Public Comment**

E-mails addressed to the Board of Finance were sent by the following residents: Sherry Terry, Robert Eissig, Negin Royae, Abatak Royae, Wendy Gabello, Michelle Anderson, Nancy Barlow, Tricia Soltesz, Joseph O'Dea, Michael McNamara, Sarah Pettitt, Magdelana Fincham, and Louise Kennerley.

## **VII. Adjournment**

**Meeting adjourned at 9:10 pm. Motion carried 5-0.**

Respectfully Submitted By:

Shannon Freda