

Town of Ridgefield
Board of Selectmen Budget Meeting
Tuesday, February 4, 2020- 7:00pm
Town Hall, (Large Conference Room)
400 Main Street, Ridgefield, Connecticut
UNREVISED/UNAPPROVED Minutes

These minutes are a general summary of the meeting and are not intended to be a verbatim transcription.

In attendance: R. Marconi, B. Hebert, B. Manners, M. Kozlark, S. Connelly

Agenda

1. Parks and Recreation Commission Budget
2. Library Board Budget
3. General Budget Discussion
4. Possible Capital/Operating Budget Vote

R. Marconi called the Board of Selectmen's Budget Meeting to order at 7:00pm.

1. Parks and Recreation Commission Budget

Phil Kearns, Chairman of the Parks & Recreation Commission & Dennis DiPinto, Director of Parks & Recreation presented their budget to the BOS, also present were commission members Gina Carey, Barbara Dobbin & Evie Bottali as well as Park & Recreation employees Robert Schneider, Kathy Fastman & Jane Burns.

Park & Recreation expenses are at +2.34%, about an \$112,000 increase; their revenue is +0.4% about a \$12,000 increase. P&R is asking for \$10,500 more than what the BOS has budgeted. R. Marconi eliminated \$25,500 from P&R's original request. They are asking for \$10,500 back.

P&R increase would only be a +1.3% if it were not for the minimum wage increase. Utilities actually decreased by \$5,600. Of the \$65,000 salary increase, \$50,000 is the minimum wage increase and can be expected in future years as well due to the high amount of part-time and seasonal employees that P&R employs. P&R continues to monitor rates for their summer camp program.

P&R is asking to reinstate, \$5,000 for recreation center small equipment, and \$5,500 in the recreation center maintenance account. The \$50,000 account for small equipment hasn't changed in 10 years in terms of increases.

It's important to keep the wellness center properly outfitted so it doesn't suffer. On the capital for next year P&R has \$78,000 for the circuit training equipment that needs to be replaced every 7-8 years.

P&R requested a \$12,000 increase in building maintenance, which was reduced to a \$2,000 increase. P&R is asking that it go back up to a \$7,500 increase. This would be for a new cleaning service, to improve cleanliness at the facility.

P&R is anticipating approximately \$3.5 million in revenues, and they are looking at about \$4,878,000 in expenses.

Capital:

Irrigation upgrades for the athletic fields, there are 9 irrigation systems that cover 22 athletic fields, most of the systems are over 30 years old. Most of the control boxes have all rusted, so the majority of the cost is having the electrician remove all of the components inside & install new boxes. R. Marconi asked if while they are redoing all of these boxes, if it would be possible to put up a timer at the tennis courts for the lights at the old high school because residents are complaining of the lights staying on all night.

Ballard Park wall repair, 20-25 years ago the Marine Corps repaired it, this is a two year project. This year we would fix the Main Street side, and next year it would be the Gilbert Street side. The repair will consist of sandblasting, cleaning the granite, sandblasting all the wrought iron and repainting. The Main Street portion is all granite, and Gilbert Street is more traditional high stone wall. It is in the capital budget for \$18,465 this year.

At Barlow Pool, capital consists of door replacement and the drainage has been a problem for quite some time. P&R is proposing is to replace the slider and to build a wall around them, so you won't get as much natural light in there but it will be a secure building.

P&R is looking to expand 40 parking spaces next to Founder's Hall, the total cost is \$306,694. P&R have put up signage to encourage people to use the parking area by the bridge if they are using the trail since it's right next to the trail. Staff is encouraged to park in this lot as well as an overflow lot to try to help the parking situation. P&R has even talked to Founder's Hall and they have changed their schedules for their busy days & times trying, to alleviate some of the parking issues. M. Kozlark asked about previously discussed parking expansion by soccer field. Since funding was in place, that might be taken into account for total parking.

Of the other three items, two of them are trucks, one is with a plow, and one is with a plow and a sander. It's part of the 10 year replacement plan, they are both 2010's. The last item is a very expensive item. The cost after a \$3,500 trade-in is \$112,000 for this particular mower. It's the P&R's one and only large mower. It mows 60%-70% of our 550 acres, it drives all over town, so it doesn't just have wear and tear on the mowing parts. The motor was replaced in 2017 for \$30,000. If this particular unit goes down, it would put P&R very behind. They propose that since they are only offering \$3,500 for a trade-in that they keep the mower to use as a back-up or possible for parts.

P&R dropped 4 things from their five year plan, and added 3. P&R had one HVAC unit in dire need, which is currently in engineering. There was no provision for Barlow Mountain, which needs more attention than it's been getting, so P&R feels strongly that one of the HVAC units at Barlow Mountain should be in P&R's five year plan, as well as the next one for the recreation center.

At Martin Park there has been a bath house there since the 1960's, the current location of the bath house is not very efficient because of where it is located on the property. P&R in a long term plan would like to have a more usable handicap accessible bath house, but in a different location.

2. Library Board Budget

Library Board of Directors Members, Chairman Gary Rapp, Tizzie Mantione, as well the Library Director Brendan McKinley presented the Library Budget to the BOS. Roughly 800 people visit the library daily, making it one of the busiest public buildings in Town, in fiscal year 19' they had over 266,000 visitors. The library offers over 1,400 programs, and is open 338 days of the year. Circulation was up last year, totaling a little over 290,000 items. Wireless in the building is being used heavily, and was up almost 15%, nearly 124,000 wireless sessions. About 97% of Ridgefield households have at least one library cards, and about 34,000-35,000 people came out to the library's programs.

Ms. McKinley's staff has done a great job in delivering a lot to the community. The increase of healthcare costs is a challenge that is out of their control. Since there isn't a significant source of income, at some point service may have to be sacrificed.

They made financial sustainability one of the primary goals of their strategic plan, and they were able to take one huge liability off their balance sheet. They had an underfunded defined benefit plan that was frozen in 2010, there were 9 participants. They sold the plan to an insurance company, and this has been a huge savings.

The library only has a couple sources of income. The efforts of their development office, which is led by Laureen Bubniak & Connie Marsala, manage to exceed the expectation of monies raised. The library's other sources of income are their trust income, and their investment portfolio income.

The library is asking the Town for a 2.5% increase, which is a \$51,462 increase from last year. The library is looking at a 2.5% increase on salaries, and an 11.6% increase in insurance. There was a slight increase in the building expenses and are holding collections and programming flat for a few years prior to fiscal 2019.

The library has three projects, one of the challenges that they face with their 2014 building, is that all of their technology is 2014, so a few years ago they started a project of slowly replacing and upgrading. For technology upgrades, they will do another 23 workstations, the server needs to be replaced as it predates the building, it will be \$20,000 to replace the server, and all the software.

There was a discussion about cyber security, and what the library does in terms of protecting the patrons information, it is something that they take very seriously.

The library was built in 2014, so it's going on six years old, in the five year capital plan starting in 2023 under Miscellaneous Building Improvements, they have put as a placeholder for things like paving, etc. The library had a request for doing rubber on the treads for the public stairwell for safety. This was cut prior to this meeting, however

there was some discussion about possibly doing the staircase at the entrance, and possibly putting the back staircase off until next year which would cut the ask from \$22,000 to about \$13,000.

3. General Budget Discussion

The BOS discussed their tour of the schools, and how the Town is responsible for the exterior of the building, as well as the landscaping and the BOE is responsible for the interiors.

The BOS discussed Ridgefield's possible exploration of a concept that the Attorney General is discussing. This would help taxpayer's with relief relative to the \$10,000 limit placed on their Federal deductions on Income Tax (SALT).

4. Possible Capital/Operating Budget Vote

There was no vote.

B. Hebert moved and S. Connelly seconded the motion to adjourn the Board of Selectmen Budget Meeting at 9:26pm. Motion carried 5-0.

Respectfully Submitted,
Hollie M. Rapp