



## Town of Ridgefield

### Special Board of Selectman Special Meeting Minutes - APPROVED

May 6, 2020 at 6.30pm via Zoom

Please note – these minutes are not verbatim.

Meeting [audio here](#)

**Present:** Rudy Marconi (RM), Bob Hebert (BH), Sean Connelly (SC), Barbara Manners (BM), Maureen Kozlark (MK), Laurie Mazzola, Sheryl Knapp, Dave Goldenberg (attended part of the meeting), Andrew Neblett (Town IT director) hosting the Zoom meeting.

Rudy Marconi called the meeting to order at 6.30pm.

#### 1 ) Appointments and Reappointments:

- a. **New Appointment to the Affordable Housing Committee:** candidates Sheryl Knapp and Lori Mazzola

Rudy Marconi read a letter of recommendation from RAH chairman Dave Goldenberg for both Lori and Sheryl; as well as letters from Sheryl and Lori each requesting appointment to the Ridgefield Affordable Housing Committee.

Board of Selectman members asked questions of each candidate and the decision was taken to vote on their appointment.

#### Motion to approve the appointments of Lori Mazzola and Sheryl Knapp:

Barbara Manners made the motion, Sean Connelly seconded the motion. Vote: 4:1

Bob Hebert opposed pending further discussion with both candidates. Motion carries.

Maureen Kozlark asked about the party affiliation of both candidates. Rudy Marconi stated that that information was not available at this time. Rudy Marconi stated that due to how many open seats there were available on the Ridgefield Affordable Housing Committee, that party affiliation would be overlooked. Mr Marconi stated that all further appointments tonight should be made contingent upon compliance with the minority representation statute.

- b. **New Appointment to the IRMC:** candidates Jeff Wark and Nicole Katz.  
Nicole Katz and Jeff Wark each introduced themselves and spoke about their experience.  
Board of Selectman members asked questions of each candidate and the decision was taken to vote on their appointment.

Motion to approve both Jeff Wark and Nicole Katz to the IRMC:

Bob Hebert motioned to approve both candidates subject to party affiliation rule. Barbara Manners seconded the motion. Vote is 5-0. Motion carries.

- c. **New Appointment to Ridgefield Housing Authority:** Paul Janiero  
Paul Janiero introduced himself and spoke about his experience.  
Frank Coyle, chairman of the committee, spoke of his support for Paul's appointment.  
Board of Selectman members asked questions of the candidate and the decision was taken to vote on his appointment.

Motion to approve the appointment of Paul Janiero to the Ridgefield Housing Authority:

Bob Hebert motioned to appoint Paul Janiero. Maureen Kozlark seconded the motion. Vote is 5-0. Motion carries.

- d. **Reappointment to Parks and Recreation Commission:** Gina Carey and Evie Botalli.  
Gina Carey and Evie Botalli introduced themselves and spoke of their experience. Both candidates have served for many years on the Parks and Recreation Commission.

Phil Kearnes spoke in support of both candidates.

Motion to approve the reappointment of both Gina Carey and Evie Botalli:

Barbara Manners motioned to reappoint both candidates. Maureen Kozlark seconded the motion. Vote is 5-0. Motion Carries.

- e. Reappointment to WPCA: Amy Siebert, Ronald Hill, Kevin Briody, Gary Zawacki, Maureen Kozlark (new appointment)  
Maureen Kozlark spoke about her appointment and the experience she could bring to the board.

Motion to appoint Maureen Kozlark to the WPCA Board:

Bob Hebert made the motion. Maureen Kozlark seconded the motion. Vote is 5-0. Motion passed.

Motion to reappoint Amy Siebert, Ronald Hill, Kevin Briody and Gary Zawacki to the WPCA Board:

Bob Hebert made the motion. Sean Connelly seconded the motion. Vote is 5-0. Motion carries.

## 2) Public Comment

Rudy Marconi told the board of the many emails of comment received prior to this meeting. Comment was opened to the public on the Zoom meeting:

Mary Ellen Foley: of 97 Barry Ave. Please support the BOE budget

Randy Liebowitz: support the BOE budget

Jen Zaire: 34 Old Sib Road. Support the BOE Budget

Arlan Kildorff: 16 Mallory Hill Rd. Support the BOE Budget.

Elizabeth Cartland: 31 Mallory Hill Rd. Support the BOE Budget

Ann Blood: 27 Barnam Place. Support BOE budget at 2.9%

Alana DeVito: Support the BOE budget, no cuts.

Douglas Collins: 86 Lakeside Drive. Support the BOE budget.

Mary Walsh: 35 Aspen Ledges Rd. Support the BOE budget.

Michael McNamara: Support BOE budget, no cuts.

Ed Tyrell: 17 Pond Rd. Supports a BOE budget that does not mean a tax increase.

Sandra Mahoney: Support 2.96% budget increase for BOE

Steven Roland: member of the National Education Association of Ridgefield. Support the BOE budget.

Jeane Deming: Support BOE budget.

Kathleen Murdoch: 264 North Street

Michelle and Sarah diMicelli: Support BOE budget.

Elaine Rampolla: Support the BOE budget.

Cheryl Osher: 26 Pheasant Lane. Support the BOE budget.

See Chat notes from the Zoom meeting [here](#) (at the end of this document) for comments from other residents who had trouble getting onto the Zoom meeting.

## 3) BOS Operating Budget 2021 – Vote

Kevin Redmond gave an overview of the 2020 financials and the various scenarios for 2021, making different assumptions relevant to reduction in revenue and varying projections.

Molly McGeehin spoke about the interest rate fall experienced as of March 2020

Rudy Marconi spoke of the need to adjust non-tax revenue to reflect what is going to happen ahead.

Wendy Gannon Lionetti spoke about conveyance and recording fees – it is doing well in 2020.

Expecting a 15-25% reduction in 2021

Al Garzi – Projection for 2021 is that we will have an increase in closing due to people moving from dense areas to less densely populated areas.

Rudy Marconi reiterated from a previous meeting that the town does not want to drop below 8% of our fund balance in order to keep our rating at the rating agencies. Uncollectable of 2% on taxes would put a strain on town funds. Keeping the BOE budget means we would drop below 8% of fund balance.

Barbara Manners asked Jane Berendsen-Hill about collection rates historically – Jane said there was only 1 year in the past where the town collection rate fell below 98%. Jane expects the town will do well this year but Jane forecasts a weakness in FY2021 and asks the town to budget for a 2% uncollectable.

Kevin Redmond asked in the subsidies coming in would help cash flow. Jane agreed it would.

BOS agreed there would be a \$200 000 reduction in conveyancing in FY2021.

Maureen Kozlark spoke of concern that the shortfall for Parks and Recreation was understated. Dennis diPinto said that the budget is based on an assumption that Parks and Rec can open by July 1 and that they would have 6 weeks of summer camp, extensions on memberships and whatever protocols would be required in order to open.

Frank Sergiovanni said the golf course is experiencing high volume since opening on April 27. Budget looks to be consistent with previous years. From May 15 - 4 balls will be available keeping safety protocols in place. Odeen's restaurant will open for outdoor service from May 20.

Kevin Redmond said most towns are using their fund balance to supplement expenses this year.

Maureen Kozlark asked if we spend our fund balance, how quickly could the town make that up? Maureen cautioned use of fund balance too close to the level where it would affect our AAA rating.

Bob Hebert recognized the comments made by residents regarding the projected increased needs of students returning to school. He stated that there may be a need at that time to use the fund balance, and cautioned against using fund balance now to prop up the town budget.

Rudy Marconi responded by saying that budgets are lean, using funds from the fund balance is necessary now.

Barbara Manners said she is not worried about dropping below 8% of fund balance now because every other town will have the same additional expenses to cover in the future. Ridgefield is strong. The AAA rating of this town is not only based on the fund balance but also on the Grand List and that the town is well run.

Maureen Kozlark stated the deficit projected for the state was \$2.4 billion. She asked about the funding expected from the state that is in the BOS budget and that if we don't receive it we would need funds from the fund balance to cover that shortfall.

Sean Connelly said that if we need to use money from the fund balance, he would not like to see it go below 8%. He also asked if there was a chance of increasing the Mill Rate by 1%.

Rudy Marconi responded that now and in future the BOS would ask the residents to weigh in on Mill Rate increases in the same way that the BOE asks residents to weigh in on their budget increase, because response and weigh in from residents is not currently fair to all residents. He stated that raising the Mill Rate would have serious effects on many residents.

Time ran out. The decision was taken to have another meeting to finish the discussion on the BOS Operating budget for 2021 and the Nonbinding Recommendation to the BOF on the BOE Operating Budget for 2021, and to vote at that time. No votes were taken on these two agenda items tonight.

Sean Connelly motioned to set a Special BOS meeting on Tuesday May 12 at 6.30 pm. Seconded by Bob Hebert. Vote was 5-0. Motioned carries.

Bob Hebert motioned to adjourn this meeting. Seconded by Sean Connelly. Vote is 5-0. Motion carries.

Zoom meeting Chat notes:

8:26:31 From Nicole Katz to All panelists : Nicole Katz is here buy cannot get my camera on  
18:27:42 From Christine Parsons : I'm just here for a public meeting, but I'm so thankful that Rudy Marconi is well.  
18:29:47 From Nicole Katz to All panelists : It is not letting me through, it is showing I can only view  
18:30:05 From Nicole Katz to All panelists : Even if I call in says I only have mute access  
18:30:15 From Randy Liebowitz to All panelists : she can call the phone number for the zoom from a land line  
18:30:19 From Nicole Katz to All panelists : I use this each day for my business so not sure why  
18:31:31 From Randy Liebowitz to All panelists : 929-205-6099 code 94031549398#  
18:32:56 From Nicole Katz to All panelists : It is showing that I am only a Town Member with no ability to show my face or speak  
18:35:52 From Nicole Katz : Says I am only an attendee even on phone and cannot speak, will be muted.  
18:39:57 From Town Ridgefield to Nicole Katz and all panelists : You should be able to talk now. See if you can unmute yourself.  
18:41:12 From Nicole Katz to All panelists : Yes I am able to unmute but cannot video in. That is fine, I will just talk when asked. Thanks  
18:44:12 From Jeff Wark to All panelists : I am on as well. Hope you can see and hear me.  
18:50:51 From Nicole Katz to All panelists : Looks like Jeff also having same issues so if you could also unmute him as well that would be great. Thanks  
18:51:19 From Maureen Kozlark to All panelists : ok  
18:58:30 From Jeff Wark to All panelists : I'm on. Not sure what the issue is.  
18:59:13 From Town Ridgefield to Jeff Wark and all panelists : Jeff, I think you are muted on your side.  
18:59:40 From Town Ridgefield to Jeff Wark and all panelists : I show you as unmuted in the meeting.  
20:05:19 From Miira Velia to All panelists : Dear Board members, I'm sending this message as I need to drop off the call before the public comment part of the agenda. As the parent of two Ridgefield elementary school students, I have serious concerns about the adverse impact of a reduction to the BOE budget, as detailed by Dr. DaSilva. I ask you to please reconsider your decision to cut. Thanksfor your service to our town.  
20:12:48 From Town Ridgefield to Stephen Ruland and all panelists : Stephen, please rejoin the meeting. It may allow you to speak when you raise your hand in Zoom.  
20:24:15 From Cheryl Osher : Hi, It's Cheryl Osher. It's not happening now or ever?  
20:27:04 From Randy Liebowitz to All panelists : Cheryl, try calling that number above. maybe that will work. or do the zoom on your phone  
20:27:27 From Michelle DiMiceli : It's Michelle DiMiceli. Can we try again?  
20:29:39 From C B : I support the school budget.  
20:36:32 From Mary Battipaglia : I support the school budget  
20:37:23 From Leah Hayner : I support the school budget.  
20:38:14 From Alison Anderson : I support the school budget  
20:38:32 From Danielle Bender : I support the school budget.

20:38:45 From Elizabeth Reynolds to All panelists : I support the school budget!

20:39:53 From Christine Anderson to All panelists : I support the school budget.

20:40:28 From Liz Wronski to All panelists : I support the school budget.

20:40:40 From Holli Levy to All panelists : I moved to Ridgefield in 1985. I support maintaining the programs we have in our wonderful school system. A school system that attracts families to this town, supporting our businesses and creating a robust real estate market.

20:44:22 From Eliza Baker : I support the school budget.

20:44:59 From Michelle DiMiceli to All panelists : I am trying again on the phone. I am on, but don't know how to "raise my hand"

20:45:47 From Cheryl Osher : How do I call in?

20:46:19 From Randy Liebowitz to All panelists : scroll up in the chat. I already typed it there

20:46:55 From George Beratis to All panelists : 1-929-205-6099

20:47:26 From Elizabeth Karlan to All panelists : Cheryl, you need to hit the "raise hand" button at the bottom of your screen

20:47:36 From Rayda Krell to All panelists : Dial(for higher quality, dial a number based on your current location):  
US: +1 929 205 6099 or +1 301 715 8592 or +1 312 626 6799 or +1 669 900 6833 or +1 253 215 8782 or +1 346 248 7799  
Webinar ID: 940 3154 9398  
International numbers available: <https://zoom.us/j/acU5foHwf1>

20:48:21 From Shane Peters : Can someone please post instructions for people who wish to call in and speak?

20:49:05 From Leah Hayner : I think there was a number to call in on your email when you registered to attend the meeting

20:49:10 From John F to All panelists : go on top and 'raise' hand

20:49:13 From George Beratis to All panelists : Cheryl you can call in from the number I listed above

20:49:42 From Jaclyn Aaron to All panelists : Dial(for higher quality, dial a number based on your current location):  
US: +1 929 205 6099 or +1 301 715 8592 or +1 312 626 6799 or +1 669 900 6833 or +1 253 215 8782 or +1 346 248 7799  
Webinar ID: 940 3154 9398

20:49:52 From Stephanie Anderson to All panelists : I don't know if this is correct, but at the bottom of the email with the Zoom link there are numbers for iPhone and telephone. I don't know if this will work, but it says iPhone 19292056009

20:50:29 From Natalie Vecchio to All panelists : I join my neighbors in supporting the school budget.

20:50:36 From Jessica Muller to All panelists : I support the school budget.

20:50:37 From Sean Connelly to Town Ridgefield(Privately) : Can you let people know the number to call if they can't get in?

20:51:04 From Mira Jensen to All panelists : I support the school budget

20:51:07 From Sheila Dunphy : Please do not cut the budget.

20:51:13 From Melissa Ettere to All panelists : Thank you so much Jeanne for your words! You know Brooklyn and our whole family appreciate you and support overwhelmingly the proposed school budget! We will pay to not cut school budget, if necessary!

20:51:26 From Cheryl Osher : i'm on the phone

20:51:26 From Jennifer Failla to All panelists : I support the school budget.

20:51:33 From Ann Guerrera to All panelists : I support the budget  
 20:51:34 From Michael La Barre to All panelists : I support the budget.  
 20:51:39 From Cristina Corona : I support the school budget!  
 20:51:54 From Nicole Brodsky to All panelists : I support the school budget  
 20:51:56 From Olga Anaya-Salazar to All panelists : i support the school budget.  
 20:52:04 From Jeanne Deming to All panelists : Phone number is in the email giving you the zoom link  
 20:52:05 From Eileen McKeon to All panelists : I urge you to support the budget  
 20:52:07 From Gigi Bazarian to All panelists : Or iPhone one-tap : US: +19292056099,,94031549398# or +13017158592,,94031549398#

Or Telephone:

Dial(for higher quality, dial a number based on your current location):

US: +1 929 205 6099 or +1 301 715 8592 or +1 312 626 6799 or +1 669 900 6833 or +1 253 215 8782 or +1 346 248 7799

Webinar ID: 940 3154 9398

20:52:29 From Karen Griffith to All panelists : Please support the BOE-approved school budget.  
 20:52:34 From Jennifer Mignano to All panelists : I support the school budget!  
 20:52:49 From Erica Meier to All panelists : I support the the BOE budget in full, please do not cut it.  
 20:52:54 From Olga Anaya-Salazar to All panelists : budget cuts will be devastating for our schools, kids and our community  
 20:52:55 From Jean Macaluso to All panelists : I support the school budget.  
 20:52:55 From Stephanie Anderson to All panelists : I support the BOE budget. I understand if 3.96 is not doable at this time, but please support the 2.96. We know that a lot of that money is going to have to go to new state mandates so we will most likely be cutting things that we currently have in our schools just to meet new mandates for social distancing. Thank you.  
 20:53:07 From Timothy Ward : I support the school budget.  
 20:53:15 From jessica Wilson to All panelists : I support the school budget  
 20:53:23 From Kristin Ward to All panelists : I support the school budget and ask that you do not cut the budget below the 2.96%  
 20:53:55 From Deborah Colon to All panelists : I support the school budget. Please do not cut the budget. This time is the time to support our children and use rainy day money.  
 20:54:29 From Douglas Silver to All panelists : I support the budget. It is my hope that you will not recommend a cut to the school budget given the massive unknowns of what the state will require of the schools if they return in the Fall. Please remember that if we touch the rainy day fund to balance our budget, there will not be a mid year backstop if the school needs to come back to the town. Uncertain funding to begin the school year is no way to run a school. Doug Silver  
 20:54:39 From John Dunphy : I support the budget as proposed. I am a town resident for 14 years, a high school counselor for 21 years and a parent of 2 RPS students. John Dunphy  
 20:55:33 From Elaina Rampolla to All panelists : I support the school budget

20:55:48 From Kelly Feeney to All panelists : I support the school budget!

20:55:57 From Hilary Brown to All panelists : My husband and I are both 20-year residents of the town; both sons graduated RHS and benefited from people before us who supported the school budget year after year. I am a music teacher in town; my husband and I also own a business in town. We support the school budget as proposed.

20:57:21 From Melissa Ettere to All panelists : Cheryl Osher is at her neighbor's (Melissa Ettere's house). please acknowledge and let her speak!

20:58:02 From Chris DeVito : raise your hand if you want to speak  
Shane

20:58:30 From Shane Peters : Not for me, for everyone else.

20:58:50 From Kathleen Murdock to All panelists : try logging out and coming back in

21:00:07 From David Griffith : As a teacher, resident, and parent in Ridgefield, I strenuously urge you to fully support our schools, teachers, and children. Please approve the 3.96% board of education school budget.

21:00:15 From Erica Digrazia to All panelists : The way Mary Walsh phrased it was perfect. This is the time to think about the children and not our wallets. Our children will undoubtedly be going back to unknown times and leaving as much as we can unchanged is the best thing we can do for them. I wouldn't recommend as much as changing paint colors at this time, just to keep things stable and comforting for these little beings. We should put the town projects we can on hold, use what we can from the rainy day fund, keep our town prosperous by NOT cutting jobs, Fund the schools, keep the teachers, keep the arts/music programs because it is an outlet for the kids during their long school days, not to mention additional fields for them to explore and wonderful ways for them to exercise their brains. We (who are the future of this town) are continuously asking you for this. Please do this for the children and for the future of the town.

21:00:29 From Andrew Clavi to All panelists : I support the school budget!

21:01:48 From Deanna Lovasik to All panelists : Please approve the 3.96 percent budget. The children of Ridgefield need all

21:03:03 From Deanna Lovasik to All panelists : need all the support, teachers and experiences they can get. Do not make the world a scarier place for them upon their return.

21:18:21 From David Griffith : Yes, so we should fully support our schools, so more people will be attracted to Ridgefield!

21:20:43 From David Griffith : Who's going to move to Trumbull with its dramatic school budget cuts?

21:43:54 From Erica Digrazia : What is the point of having a "rainy fund" if you aren't going to use it at a time like this?!?!? When WOULD you use it??

21:44:43 From Melissa Ettere to All panelists : exactly!

21:46:30 From Michael McNamara : Seriously! Erica is right. When would you use it if not now?

21:47:30 From Michael McNamara : YES RUDY!!! Thank you!

21:48:02 From Nora Marrinan to All panelists : I am asking about the "town saving" related to the buildings closed. I am paying for my extended electricity, my extended heat, water, Internet - just saying.

21:48:16 From David Griffith : Exactly! We have the balance for situations precisely like this.

21:48:16 From Melissa Ettere to All panelists : Yes Rudy!

21:48:22 From Erica Digrazia : Justin DiGrazia (here) - this is absolutely absurd. This is NOT like 2008. This is unlike anything anyone



(unless you were born prior to 1918). Point being, stop waiting for a "rainy" day and WHAT IFs. This is a NOW situation. If you all ignore public outcry to maintain funding for schools, this is completely tone deaf of what we need for our educational system and children. We do not need to deal with what if later period.

21:48:56 From David Griffith : Here, here, Erica!

21:48:57 From Steve Zipkin to All panelists : Yes , Rudy Make it happen! The benefits to fund

21:49:04 From Michael McNamara : YES Justin!

21:49:11 From Erica Digrazia : Let us vote on the fund balance. It's our tax money, our schools, our children!!!

21:50:00 From Melissa Ettere to All panelists : Yes, let us vote

21:50:10 From Michelle DiMiceli : We should not be proud of having a lean school budget. It is already been too low to!

21:51:29 From Michael McNamara : Ned Lamont also said that they were looking for federal reimbursements on COVID to bring that state deficit down.

21:51:57 From Erica Digrazia : Please stop comparing us to other towns. Their problems are theirs to deal with. This is irrelevant. What's relevant is we need to figure out how to fund what we have now and everyone on this board is kidding themselves if they think school will return to normal anytime soon. Where is the funding coming from when we eliminate the round tables and need desks for all elementary schools. What about the kids that have significant learning challenges and newly acquired stresses due to this. Who's going to fund those school counselors? Assume COVID is not gone until there is a cure, the fund balance is for this situation period.

21:52:57 From Erica Digrazia : Yes, Michelle DiMiceli - not proud of the lowest spending per student in our DRG considering our mill rate either!!!

21:54:08 From Michael McNamara : That's important Rudy. I agree. Put it to the town. I think you will find that the people are behind the schools.

21:54:18 From Stephanie Anderson : Thank you Sean for listening to your constituents. The people speaking out for the school budget ARE taxpayers.

21:54:26 From Michael McNamara : Sean, hear hear!

21:54:28 From Erica Digrazia : Yes!!!

21:54:40 From Rachael Zumbo-Penney : I think the calls and comments demonstrate that Mike- I agree.

21:54:45 From Kristin Ward to All panelists : Let the town vote Rudy! Don'

21:55:24 From Erica Digrazia : Great idea, Rudy.

21:55:46 From Michael McNamara : That's sensible, Rudy. Thank you.

21:56:29 From Michelle DiMiceli : Thank you. This cannot be rushed!

21:56:33 From Joseph O'Dea to All panelists : Ask for email public comment only.

21:56:34 From Andrew Clavi to All panelists : Yes, it is very important this conversation continues...

21:57:09 From Cristina Corona : Agreed! Thank you Rudy. Great suggestion!

21:57:49 From Angela Rice to All panelists : Thank you for scheduling another meeting. Very responsible and considerate!

21:57:55 From David Griffith : Why don't you reach out to the public before next week's meeting?

21:57:56 From Erica Digrazia : Thank you all!!!

21:58:04 From C B : Thanks.

21:58:12 From Chris DeVito to All panelists : Thank you!

21:58:30 From Christine Parsons : Great idea! More discussion. Thank  
you all!  
21:58:51 From Shane Peters : Dave Griffith makes a great point.  
21:59:00 From Michael McNamara : Yes, reach out to the public before  
next week