



Town of Ridgefield

Special Board of Selectman Meeting and Public Hearing Minutes - APPROVED

June 24, 2020 at 7.30pm via Zoom

Please note – these minutes are not verbatim.

Present: Rudy Marconi (RM), Bob Hebert (BH), Sean Connelly (SC), Barbara Manners (BM), Maureen Kozlark (MK)

Rudy Marconi called the meeting to order at 7.30pm.

**Motion to add an agenda item: Senior Tax Credit Program and possible extension.
Mr Hebert made the motion; Mr Connelly seconded the motion.**

Vote: 5-0, Motion carries.

This agenda item will be discussed as item 5, before the Selectman's report.

Discussion by public hearing of the purchase of two parcels of land by the Conservation Commission. Purchase of the land will be funded in part by a grant and the use of Conservation Commission funds. Parcel 1: 14 acres on Bear Mountain, adjoining Hemlock Hills Open space. Parcel 2: 1 acre at the end of Craigmoor Road allowing access to open space that adjoins the former Garden of Ideas.

Jim Coyle requested the removal of parcel 2 from the public hearing discussion. Mr Coyle described the 14-acre parcel 1 land on Bear Mountain.

Mr Marconi invited the public to make comments either via Zoom or via email by end June 25. No comments were made by the public.

Mr Marconi stated that the purchase of the parcel would bring Ridgefield closer to 30% open space goal. Mr Coyle added that the town currently stood at open space of 25.2%. Mr Hebert asked how 30% of open space was chosen. Mr Marconi answered that in the past, input from the residents who answered surveys indicated that open space was very important. This was when the town decided to increase open space from 25% to 30%. Mr

Coyle said that Ridgefield currently has 2500 acres of open space, but still needs 1100 acres to get to the desired 30% goal.

The public hearing was closed at 7:44pm

1) Public comment:

There were no public comments.

2) Appointments and Reappointments:

- a) Parks and Recreation Commission – appoint Peter Nichols – Vote:
Motion to appoint Peter Nichols to the Parks and Recreation Commission
MK made the motion, BM seconded
Vote: 5-0, Motion carries

- b) Youth Commission (Youth Candidates) – Appoint
Denise Dammer-Qualey spoke in support of Charlotte Bowler and Oliver Dunn, who were present on the Zoom meeting.

i. Diana Marsten

Ms Kozlark read Ms Marsten's letter of application to the Youth Commission. Ms Marsten added that she is a team player and would provide a sense of leadership in a team. Ms Kozlark asked how involved the Youth Commission was at the High School. Ms Marsten said she had not heard about it before speaking to another member and having her English teacher tell her there was a volunteer opportunity to join the commission.

Motion to appoint Diana Marsten to the Youth Commission
SC made the motion, MK seconded
Vote: 5-0, Motion carries

Charlotte Bowler - 15-year-old rising sophomore at RHS.

ii. Oliver Dunn - - 17 year old rising senior at RHS

Both Ms Bowler and Mr Dunn introduced themselves and answered questions from the board. Both felt they could add value from the perspective of a youth. When asked by Ms Manners about the prevalence of cyber bullying, neither felt it was a problem at the high school.

Motion to appoint Charlotte Bowler and Oliver Dunn to the Youth Commission
SC made the motion, MK seconded
Vote: 5-0, Motion carries

c) Commission on Aging – appoint Maureen Culhane

Mr Marconi read a letter of application to join the Commission on Aging. Ms Culhane added that she has property management experience, is a Ridgefield realtor, she has worked with the special needs community, and volunteers at Meals on Wheels which has allowed her to see the needs of the older community. Ms Manners asked what areas the town lacks in helping the aged. Ms Culhane said she has seen that there is a need to a support system for the residents of Ballard Green. Ms Kozlark asked if Ms Culhane has spoken to the Affordable Housing Committee or the Ridgefield Housing Authority. Ms Culhane said that she felt there would be a conflict of interest for her to serve on the Affordable Housing Committee because of her being a realtor; she added that she would be open to serving on the Ridgefield Housing Authority if needed. Debra Franceschini-Gatje, chairperson of the Commission on Aging, spoke in support of Ms Culhane.

Motion to appoint Maureen Culhane to the Commission on Aging

SC made the motion, MK seconded

Vote: 5-0, Motion carries

d) Cable TV Advisory Council – appoint Steven Coury

Mr Marconi read an application letter from Mr Coury. Asked if he wanted to add anything else, Mr Coury said he wanted to give back to the community by serving on the committee. AnneMarie Surfaro-Boehme (chairperson of the Cable Advisory Council) spoke in support of Mr Coury. Ms Kozlark asked for an overview of what the Cable Advisory Council does. Ms Surfaro-Boehme explained that the council kept in contact with Comcast, ensured the school channels were kept running and to get back to programming again.

Motion to appoint Steven Coury to the Cable TV Advisory Council

BH made the motion, MK seconded

Vote: 5-0, Motion carries

e) ECDC – appoint Dianna (Dee Dee) Colabella

Mr Marconi read a letter of support from John Devine, chairman of the ECDC, where he highlighted Ms Colabella's strengths, which would benefit the ECDC. Mr Hebert asked Ms Colabella to talk about her experience. Ms Colabella said she has marketing and promotion experience at a credit card company, 10 years of graphic design and web page design, she studied a

masters of Art and then opened RPAC studio and gallery in town last year, she has been a resident since 2005. Ms Manners asked what skills she would contribute to the ECDC. Ms Colabella said her web design, marketing experience would help transition businesses after Covid. Mr Connelly asked what her priorities are in serving. Ms Colabella said that face to face liaison with town businesses, updating the webpage, and creating a network for businesses was her priority.

Motion to appoint Dianna Colabella to the ECDC

BH made the motion, RM seconded

Vote: 5-0, Motion carries

3) Artful to join Friends of Ridgefield – Dianna Colabella

Ms Colabella explained the name change from RPAC Gives to Artful Visual Art Initiative and recapped on the mission of Artful, which is the same as discussed under the name of RPAC Gives in the previous BOS meeting. Mr Marconi said a letter of concern was received from the Guild of Artists regarding conflict of Artful and the Guild's mission. Ms Kozlark said Artful was not in competition with the Guild of Artists but rather they would like to support the Guild of Artists and help their artists. Ms Manners and Ms Kozlark asked if Artful had been in a conversation with Guild of Artists. Ms Colabella said there were talks of collaboration with the Guild of Artists and that Artful would support the Guild through donations, but that the mission of Artful was mainly for scholarships for higher education for artists, resident artist program to help grow the artist and support all aspects of their business and large public art events, which is different from the mission of the Guild of Artists, and that she had not seen the letter from the Guild of Artists and did not understand their concerns. Brook, who works with Ms Colabella at RPAC, explained the mission of the Guild of Artists as a membership based organization, was to promote the visual arts in Ridgefield with community wide events.

The board deferred approval to the next meeting and asked that Ms Colabella meet with the Guild of Artists to address their concerns.

No Vote taken.

4) Tax Rebate relating to Tablao Lease – Stephen Rapaglia

Mr Marconi explained the tax credit offered for a 3 year period on the Tablao Lease with Herstedt-Biddell requested by Geoff Morris of the ECDC, based on square footage used by Tablao, to help get the space rented out. Mr Morris stated that 1000sq foot was leased to Tablao with a 50% tax credit negotiated. Since

Covid the ECDC has not spent much of their budget and have \$2,400 left over to allocate to this tax credit. Mr Marconi said there was money in the Town contingency account that could cover the balance of \$2,867.90. There was debate about whether this tax credit was guaranteed or not. Ms Kozlark said her recollection was that year 1 tax credit was certain, but years 2 and 3 were not. Mr Rapaglia said he is requesting this rebate for another year in order to save Tablao. Ms Manners said with so many businesses in town requiring help to survive during covid it seemed unfair to single out one business. Mr Hebert weighed in saying that since the town agreed to honor the tax credit if there were funds in the contingency account, that this should be done. Mr Marconi also said that since funds were available in the contingency account, honoring the agreement should be considered. Mr Connelly is in favor of renewing the tax credit agreement for another year despite covid.

Motion to issue a tax rebate to the Tablao Lease for another year –tax rebate and Mill Rate increase of 0.24%, gives a total credit of \$5,267.90.

SC made the motion, BH seconded the motion

Vote is: 3:1:1 (BM: abstained, MK: opposed). Motion carries.

5) Senior Tax Credit Program and Extension

Mr Hebert explained that according to the Town Ordinance, application for the Senior Tax Credit program of \$1040 per year, is between January 1 and April 15 in the year after someone turns 65. Mr Marconi said there was already one extension to May 15 requested by Al Garzi (Tax Assessor). Mr Hebert said that on average there are 100-150 people who apply after the deadline which indicates people are not informed about it. Ms Manners asked if Town hall would open for people to apply for the credit. Mr Marconi said that though the services are available, Town Hall will remain closed and open for appointments only. Mr Marconi read a letter from Mr Garzi regarding how people can apply for the Senior Tax Credit while satisfying the requirement of our town Ordinance..

Motion to approve the extension of the Senior Tax Credit Program.

BH Made the motion, MK seconded the motion

Vote is: 5-0. Motion carries.

6) Selectman's Report

- i. Mr Marconi said that Mr Adessi had requested that merchants be allowed to use the sidewalk to display their products to encourage more business, starting July 1 – September 7. Rules were read out: regarding Covid social distancing, Planning and Zoning and Fire Hazard. Mr Marconi said that the Chamber of Commerce would be involved. This initiative would be for

- downtown, Copps Hill and Branchville business districts.
- ii. Geoffrey Morris, chairman of the ECDC, raised concern regarding the narrow sidewalks in Ridgefield and the requirements of social distancing , possibly requiring closure of parking down Main Street as well as the need to put in place a protocol to evaluate if the initiative is working or not.
 - iii. The Insurance Risk Management Committee is recommending an insurance program to address insurance requirements for liability and workers compensation.
 - iv. A request from a scout to build a memorial to first responders on the side of Town Hall, down Bailey Avenue, for an Eagles Scout Project. It will be a low face brick structure with a flagstone top holding 3 plaques – one for Police Department, one for the Fire Department and one for EMS services.
 - v. The paving schedule for Ridgefield is starting on June 29th subject to weather - from Osaletta to Yankee Hill, and Peaceable Ridge from Peaceable Hill to house #105. On the week of July 15th, there will be both milling and paving Maple Shade, Standish Drive, Revere Place, Great Pond Road, Longview Drive, Stoney Hill Road, and Stoney Hill Terrace. The week of August 3rd there will be micro sealing overlay project on Turner Hill Road.
 - vi. Mr Hebert asked for an update on the Main Street project. Mr Marconi said that construction was delayed until the 2022 season due to covid, he said he had no specific update right now but would get the information to the board.
 - vii. Ms Kozlark asked about the oversight committee recommended to the Board of Finance. Mr Marconi said he had not received an update and recognized that the BOF had not discussed the BOE bank accounts that the BOS request at their last meeting.
 - viii. Mr Connelly asked about the Turner Road Affordable Housing complex. Mr. Marconi said that the permits needed to be applied for by the applicant and approved by Planning and Zoning. The Fire Marshall has send a letter stating code violations seen on the plan that the applicant needs to address before any permits can be issued.

7) Minutes Approval

No minutes to approve. Drafts still need to be approved.

The board discussed the availability of meetings online and on channel 24. Zoom meetings are recorded and loaded onto the website

8) Adjourn

Motion to adjourn at 10:08 pm

BM made the motion, MK seconded the motion.

Vote is: 5-0. Motion carries.

