



**Town of Ridgefield**  
**Board of Selectman Meeting Minutes**  
**UNAPPROVED**  
**August 11, 2021 at 7.30pm**

Please note – these minutes are not verbatim.

**Present:** Rudy Marconi, Bob Hebert, Barbara Manners, Maureen Kozlark. Sean Connelly

**1) Public comment**

David Whitehouse of 328 Ridgebury Rd, voiced his concerns about the sheep count at McKeon farm. The number of sheep has increased since the initial contract, which allowed for 30 sheep, was executed. The lease between Whitney Freeman, of Henny Penny Farm, and the Town is up for renewal this year. Ms. Freeman is asking for the allowance of more sheep. Mr. Whitehouse asked the Board to act as advocates on behalf of himself and his neighbors to put a stop to the increase of sheep on the farm.

Mr. Marconi read a letter from John Kelly of South Salem, NY regarding the Norway Maple Tree behind the Ridgefield Guild of Artists. The tree, which is one of the oldest in Connecticut, has been designated a notable tree of Ridgefield. Mr. Kelly has concerns about potential plans to pave a parking lot in the space that will pave up to the base of the tree, which will kill it. Mr. Marconi commented that there is no plan currently to pave near the base of the tree and assured everyone the tree will not be harmed.

Mr. Connelly received a text from Jessica Mancini, who asked that her message be read for public comment. Her text included a letter of concern she had sent to Planning and Zoning regarding the Cannabis Establishment in Ridgefield. A public hearing for a one year moratorium was scheduled at the last P&Z meeting. Ms. Mancini finds this unacceptable and asks that the Board put their feelings and generational biases aside when considering this matter.

**2) Appointment: Catherine M. Potel – Graveyard Restoration Committee**

Mr. Lundberg, chairman of the Graveyard Committee, spoke in favor of Ms. Potel's appointment. Ms. Potel was given the opportunity to speak about her qualifications and interest in the Graveyard Committee and answer questions from the Board. Mr. Hebert

voiced his recommendation for Ms. Potel. There was a discussion regarding the remains found on Main Street and the possibility of burying them here in Ridgefield during the reenactment of the Battle of Ridgefield that is scheduled for April 2022.

**Mr. Hebert moved to approve the appointment of Catherine M. Potel for a four-year term on the Graveyard Committee. Ms. Manners second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.**

### **3) McKeon Farm Lease**

The Conservation Commission had a meeting on Monday August 9<sup>th</sup> at which they discussed the 5-year lease between the Town and Ms. Freeman, owner of Henny Penny Farm. The Commission voted 8-1 to approve the lease. Jim Coyle, Chair of the Conservation Commission, discussed the license agreements that the Board reviews each year and the changes to the new 5-year lease. Ms. Kozlark talked about how the lease has changed from its original intent and expressed concern about allowing for 85 sheep and 3 llamas. Ms. Manners mentioned the concerns that have been brought to her from neighbors of the farm regarding the sheep count and the odor. Ms. Manners also commented that she feels strongly that a lease of 5 years should have a public hearing and a Town meeting because it involves Town property.

Ms. Freeman discussed the initial intent of the original lease and how regenerative agriculture has prompted the need for an increase in animals. Ms. Freeman also discussed the financials of the farm and the reason farmers opt for leases that are at least 5 years.

Dave Grogins, the Town Attorney, confirmed that both a 5-year lease for Town property and the renewal of a 5-year lease with changes require a public hearing and Town meeting.

There will be a public hearing and Town meeting to discuss the renewal of the lease between the Town and Whitney Freeman.

**Mr. Marconi moved to schedule a public hearing on September 1, 2021 and Town meeting on September 22, 2021 to discuss the lease between Whitney Freeman and the Town. Ms Kozlark second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.**

### **4) Cannabis Retail Discussion**

Mr. Marconi updated the Board on the details from the last Planning and Zoning meeting at which they discuss the cannabis retail. The P&Z Board felt this topic should be addressed by the Board of Selectman and voted to hold a public hearing on September 14, 2021. The Board and Town Attorney Dave Grogins had a discussion that covered many aspects of the statute including the requirements for holding a referendum vs election by petition, the pros and cons for setting a moratorium, how the Town can regulate by ordinance, and which decisions fall under the jurisdiction of P&Z. The Board will wait to see the outcome of the vote from the September 14<sup>th</sup> P&Z public hearing before moving forward with this topic.

**No motions were made.**

### **5) Parking Lot Solar Canopy Approval – Escola Brief Presentation**

The Town has the opportunity to add a solar canopy to the High School student parking lot through the CT ZREC program which has awarded the Town a total of \$920,000 over a 15 year period. Dwayne Escola presented the details of the project to the Board which included the estimated costs and savings for the Town, and the savings that the schools that currently have solar panels are seeing. There was a discussion about how the Town can obtain batteries for the panels which would allow them to generate electricity for up to a few weeks during power outages. The Board also talked about how the panels will affect parking, the need for approval from P&Z, and the overall process for the construction and maintenance of the panels.

**Mr. Connelly moved to approve the funding of \$6,525 (refundable upon the project completion) for the Ridgefield High School parking lot solar canopy project. Ms. Kozlark second the motion. Mr. Hebert opposed. Motion carries 4-1.**

### **6) ARPA Committee representation**

An informal committee has been created to work on defining and understanding the guidelines for how the Town is allowed to spend the funds from ARPA. Once the guidelines have been established, a new committee will be formed that will discuss how to allocate the funds. Approval for the spending of ARPA funds will follow Public Hearing and Town Meeting guidelines.

**No motions were made.**

### **7) Adoption of the WestCOG Multi-Jurisdiction Hazard Mitigation Plan Resolution**

Mr. Marconi asked that the Board hold off on signing the adoption until current data is available and more research is done.

**No motions were made.**

### **8) COVID update**

Mr. Marconi gave an update on the current COVID numbers. Both the hospitalizations and case rates in Fairfield County are rising. Many towns in CT have started implementing a mask mandate. The Governor has left the decision for mask mandates in the hands of each municipality.

## **9) Approval of Meeting Minutes**

**Ms Kozlark moved to approve the BOS July 27, 2021 meeting minutes as amended. Mr. Connelly second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.**

## **10) Selectman's Report**

The Town received an 8-24 for the property at Turner Road.

A resident in Ridgefield sent a letter to the Inland Wetlands board letting them know that a neighbor had cleared some land in order to get a view of the pond. The property that was cleared is Town property. The Inland Wetlands Board has requested that the Board of Selectman write a letter to the resident who cleared the land asking that they return the land back to its original condition. The Board discussed the potential issues that could come about from enforcing something of this nature.

Olympic swimmer Kieran Smith and his RAC coach will speak at the Playhouse on Friday August 13<sup>th</sup> at 4:30. All are welcome to attend.

Anton Steger submitted a letter of retirement from his position as Golf Course Superintendent at the Ridgefield Gold Course.