



Town of Ridgefield
Public Hearing & Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes
UNAPPROVED
August 17, 2022 at 7.30pm

Please note – these minutes are not verbatim.

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

Public Hearing

1. Expansion of Economic & Community Development Commission from seven to nine Commissioners and from 1-year to 2-year terms.

John Tartaglia of 638 Danbury Road commented that he is in favor of the expansion and proposed that the ECDC consider adding members who are more focused on an economic mission.

2. Contract between Town of Ridgefield and Aquarion Water Company

R. Marconi described the location of the property where the easement will be and talked about the purpose for extending the water main from North Street to Craigmere Street, which is to improve the reliability of the water system for the residents on Craigmere Street.

In exchange for the easement, Aquarion has agreed to perform the engineering to extend the water main to the Ridgefield High School/Scott's Ridge campus, which is currently on well water.

Mike Hill, a representative from Aquarion, provided details about the pressure reducing facility and Zach Kuegler, also an Aquarion representative, shared pictures of what a facility looks like. Helen Demos of 11 Barlow Mountain Road shared her concerns about the water main being too close to her historic home.

There was a discussion about where the water main will be and ways to avoid putting it near the historic home. Aquarion will work with the Town to find the best solution.

3. Cannabis Prohibiting Ordinance in the Town of Ridgefield

S. Connelly proposed removing the word morals from section 359-2 of the Cannabis Prohibiting Ordinance. The Board members agreed.

J. Tartaglia asked if Planning & Zoning can overrule the policy that the Board of Selectmen have already established and why the Board is allowing this process to happen if a policy has already been established.

The reason for the Ordinance is to make the prohibition of Cannabis establishments & cultivation

a law that cannot be overturned.

The following residents of Ridgefield shared their support for the Ordinance: Ed Tyrell of 17 Pond Rd, Marshall Odeen of 300 West Lane, Greg Kabasakalian of 2 Washington Street and Kirk Carr.

K. Carr asked if the Ordinance has the unanimous support of the Board. R. Marconi commented that the Board would not bring the Ordinance to a Public Hearing and Town Meeting if they did not agree with it.

The Public Hearing was closed.

Board of Selectmen Meeting:

R. Marconi asked to add an agenda item to schedule a Town Meeting on September 21, 2022 to vote on the Board of Education request for a fund balance transfer and the purchase of two new firetrucks.

The Board of Education has requested \$229,420 be transferred from the fund balance to the BOE budget to help fund the installation of anti-vehicle intrusion ballers at the school entrances and new vestibules at Scotland and Farmingville Elementary Schools. Both projects are for added security at the schools.

The Town is asking for the approval to purchase two new Pierce firetrucks this year. The purchase money is in the 2024-2025 budget; however, the need is now. The Fire Department currently has two very unreliable trucks which has been a huge concern. The fund balance transfer will be in the amount of \$1,700,600. The Town will receive an \$18,000 credit for ordering two trucks at the same time.

The Town is currently working toward an agreement with the City of Danbury in which Danbury will provide all the maintenance on Ridgefield's firetrucks. This will eliminate the need find a mechanic which has been very difficult. The agreement will be the same cost it would be for the Town to hire its own mechanic. In addition, Ridgefield is able to piggy bag on Danbury's firetruck order which will cut the lead time significantly.

There will be Public Hearing and Town Meeting to discuss both these items.

M. Kozlark moved to add the transfer of \$229,420 from fund balance to the BOE budget for safety improvements to the schools and the purchase of two new firetrucks to the agenda as item 1a. B. Manners second the motion. Motion carries 4-0. S. Connelly stepped out.

1. Public Comment

Andrea Beebe of 378 Main Street shared her support for the anti-vehicle ballers at the schools and the purchase of the new firetrucks.

The following residents shared their opposition to the Affordable Housing Plan: John Tartaglia of 638 Danbury Rd, Ed Tyrell of 17 Pond Rd, Andrea Beebe, Maureen Sullivan of 7 Quarry Corner, Greg Kabasakalian of 2 Washington Street and Kirk Carr.

1a. Schedule of Town Meeting and Public Hearing

S. Connelly moved to schedule a Town Meeting and Public Hearing on September 21, 2022 at 7.30pm for the vote on the BOE request for a fund balance transfer of \$229,420 and the purchase of two new Firetrucks. B. Manners second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

2. Appointments

a. Zigmas Kaknevicus – appointment to Pension Commission

Z. Kaknevicus talked about his move to the US from Lithuania, his qualifications, work history and his passion for finance.

Chris Christiansen, Chair of the Pension Commission, shared the reasons he feels Z. Kaknevicus is a good fit for the Commission.

Z. Kaknevicus answered a few questions from the Board which covered what his company does, how many meetings he has attended so far and how his job will play a role in his work on the Commission.

B. Manners moved to approve the appointment of Zigmas Kaknevicus for a three-year term on the Pension Commission. S. Connelly second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

b. Michael Ippolitti – appointment to Golf Committee

M. Ippolitti is a lifelong Ridgefielder and avid golfer who wants to join the Golf Committee to put his passion to good use. There was a discussion about the dead grass patches and dried up ponds due to the lack of rain. Water is currently the biggest issue the Golf Committee is facing.

The driving range has been updated with new netting and there is the possibility of realigning the range to allow more room for the use of drivers.

M. Kozlark moved to approve the appointment of Michael Ippolitti as an alternate for a four-year term on the Golf Committee. B. Hebert second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

R. Marconi read a letter from Christine Moore opposing the Affordable Housing Plan. The letter was meant to be read for the record during public comments.

3. Boys & Girls Club proposed waiver of permit fee

The Boys & Girls Club has asked the Board of Selectmen to waive the Building Permit fee associated with their expansion project due to the increase in building expenses. Karl, Chair of the Building Committee for the Boys and Girls Club, described the issues they have run into with contractors and subcontractors, and their struggle to fund the project due to the increase in prices. The project is funded solely by donations and the Club can only ask the already generous people so many times.

Mr. Katz commented that the Boys & Girls Club has been a diversion for kids who might otherwise be involved in inappropriate activities that could ultimately cost the town more money. He supports waiving the permit fee.

The Board discussed the concern of setting precedence by waiving the Building Permit Fee and talked about instead using ARPA Funds to make a donation to the Boys & Girls Club to help with construction costs.

B. Hebert moved to recommend to the Board of Finance an allocation of \$45,000 from ARPA funds as a donation to the Boys and Girls Club toward their construction project. S. Connelly second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

4. Conservation Commission – Open Space Declaration

Jim Coyle, Jack Kace and Erik Keller from the Conservation Commission appeared before the Board to discuss the Open Space Declaration. The Commission has identified 90 properties that are not officially recognized as open space because they are not deeded so. The Conservation Commission proposed an Open Space Declaration that would deed all 90 properties to the Commission as open space in perpetuity. After reviewing these properties, the Board of Selectmen asked for more information on 10 properties that they felt should not be designated in perpetuity.

Tonight, the Conservation Commission reviewed their research of those 10 properties with the Board. The following is a list of the properties and what was recommended:

1. C08-0034 North Salem Rd 27.34 acres- remove from OS Declaration List - prepare a conservation easement instead.
2. C03-0071 Canterbury Lane. 10.71 Acres - Leave on the OS Declaration List
3. C03-0064 Ridgebury Rd 13.23 Acres - Leave on the OS Declaration List
4. D14-0172 Barry Ave - 2.47 acres - Leave on the OS Declaration List
5. F16-033 Rockwell Rd 2.13, 1.37 acres (2 parcels) - Leave on the OS Declaration List
6. G17-0112, G17-0113, G17-0114 Branchville Rd - Leave on the OS Declaration List
7. E15-0209 East Ridge - 10.5 acres - Remove from OS Declaration List
8. F15-0061, F15-0050, F15-0010, F15-0011 Prospect Ridge - 33.68 acres - Remove from OS Declaration List

The next step is to update the declaration and hold a Town Meeting for a vote.

9. USPS/Postal Holdings License Agreement

The parking lot behind the post office has been vacant since the transfer of postal duties to Danbury. The Town is working with Postal Holdings to obtain use of the parking lot for public parking. The license agreement will be year to year and would create more parking for employees working at nearby establishments. The Board of Selectmen are on board with moving forward with the lease.

10. Affordable Housing Discussion & Vote

A petition was dropped off at the start of the meeting requesting that the town owned land at parcel F15-0061 on Prospect Street be deeded as open space to prevent any building on the property. R. Marconi explained that a formal petition needs to be filed with the Town Clerk. The petition will be given to the town attorney for review.

The Affordable Housing Plan is still under review. R. Marconi has not yet submitted a letter of support for the final draft.

B. Manners commented that the target of an additional 125 units over the next five years is a very big number and should not be included in the plan.

B. Hebert commented that the plan should include the basics and not the all the narrative which offers a lot of speculation.

M. Kozlark commented that there is a lot of narrative and that is where residents are finding issue.

The Board will review the plan individually, make their comments and submit one plan to the Affordable Housing Committee and work together to find a plan that everyone is comfortable with.

11. Tax Collector Refunds

B. Manners moved to approve the Tax Collector Refunds in the amount of \$6,157.65. B. Hebert second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

12. Approval of Meeting Minutes

S. Connelly moved to approve the June 15, 2022 Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes with modifications. B. Manners second the motion. M. Kozlark abstained. Motion carries 4-0.

S. Connelly moved to approve the June 29, 2022 Board of Selectmen Minutes with modifications. M. Kozlark second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

M. Kozlark moved to approve the July 13, 2022 Board of Selectmen Special Meeting Minutes with modifications. S. Connelly second the motion. B. Manners abstained. Motion carries 4-0.

M. Kozlark moved to approve the July 13, 2022 Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes with modifications. B. Hebert second the motion. B. Manners abstained. Motion carries 4-0.

S. Connelly moved to approve the June 15, 2022 Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes with modifications. B. Manners second the motion. M. Kozlark

abstained. Motion carries 4-0.

M. Kozlark moved to approve the August 3, 2022 Special Meeting Minutes. B. Manners second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

Bond Language Approvals:

B. Hebert moved to approve the resolution aggregating \$229,420 for the planning design acquisition insulation and construction of school safety improvements. B. Manners second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

B. Manners moved to approve the resolution aggregating \$1,766,800 for the planning design acquisition insulation and construction of two pierce firetrucks. S. Connelly second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

13. Selectman's Report

The bid for the Pickle Ball Court came in higher than what was budgeted for. They are looking into putting off another project until next year and using that money for the pickle ball instead. Jake Muller, Director of Purchasing & Facilities is working with Intern Ryan Williams to create a spreadsheet that lists all the capital projects in the pipeline. This will help figure out how to approach project and the budgeting issues moving forward.

A modification to the demolition delay ordinance is in the works. It will be available for review soon.

The dog leash ordinance is ready for review and will be discussed at a future meeting.

B. Hebert moved to adjourn the BOS meeting at 11:38pm. S. Connelly second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.