



Town of Ridgefield
Board of Selectman Meeting Minutes
UNAPPROVED
October 6, 2021 at 7.30pm

Please note – these minutes are not verbatim.

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

Absent: Bob Hebert

1) Public comment

Russ Porter, 14 Pilgrim Hill, shared his concern about the lack of discussion that has occurred regarding the use of APRA funds for the Route 7 Pump Station Project. Mr. Marconi talked about the reason the use of ARPA funds is being considered for the project and confirmed that the Board will be setting a date for a Town Meeting and Public Hearing to discuss and vote on it.

Nicholas Fischetti asked if the Health Department is responsible for the inspection and disclosure of mold in an apartment when a resident files a complaint. Mr. Marconi commented that a full investigation has already been conducted on this matter. Mr. Fischetti was asked to leave the meeting and was escorted out by Officer Ryan.

Bob Knight commented on the professionalism of the RPD in handling the situation.

2) Appointments & Re-appointments

a. Youth Commission

i. Rian Malhotra (Youth Advisor) and Tina Malhotra (Adult member)

Rian Malhotra is a 10th grader at RHS. Mr. Malhotra talked about his skills and interest in getting more involved with the youth in Ridgefield, especially in terms of mental health. If appointed, Mr. Malhotra will work on spreading the word about Teen Talk, a program that provides kids with confidential counselors to talk with. There was a discussion about the importance of social media as a resource for circulating information.

Tina Malhotra talked about her involvement in various organizations in Town and the benefit of creating a connection between the different groups.

Ms. Kozlark moved to approve the appointment of Rian Malhotra and Tina Malhotra for a two-year term on the Youth Commission. Mr. Connelly second the motion. Motion carries 4-0.

ii. Michael Lordi: Adult member

Michael Lordi talked about what he would bring to the table if appointed to the Youth Commission. There was a discussion about the stress levels and competitive nature within Fairfield County High Schools. Mr. Lordi noted how he would help guide the Youth Advisors to find ways to support their peers with the resources that are available.

Ms. Kozlark moved to approve the appointment of Michael Lordi for a two-year term on the Youth Commission. Ms. Manners second the motion. Motion carries 4-0.

b. Sarah Lorenzini: Prevention Council

Sarah Lorenzini spoke about her experience in working with substance abuse prevention outreach with the military and her plan to educate parents and students on substance misuse in Ridgefield. Ms. Lorenzini also talked about working with the Youth Commission on creating a united message that will help educate the youth on various topics, such as the perception of minimal harm now that marijuana has been legalized.

Mr. Connelly moved to approve the appointment of Sarah Lorenzini for a four-year term on the Prevention Council. Ms. Manners second the motion. Motion carries 4-0.

c. Bobby Knight: ECDC (re-appointment)

Bobby Knight talked about some his accomplishments during his past two terms on the ECDC, which included his recent role in advocating for school bus drivers to get vaccinated to help mitigate the driver shortage due to the pandemic. Geoffrey Morris, Chair of the ECDC, commented on the amazing work that Mr. Knight has done during his time with the Commission. Mr. Knight talked about some of the new ideas and projects he would like to pursue if re-appointed. There was a discussion about the economic recovery from the pandemic and how businesses adapted to survive.

Mr. Connelly moved to approve the re-appointment of Bobby Knight for a one-year term on the Economic and Community Development Commission. Ms. Kozlark second the motion. Motion carries 4-0.

3) Kevin Redmond: Year End Transfers

Director of Finance Kevin Redmond gave an overview of the 2021 fiscal year revenues & expenses and the year-end transfers. Many of the overages that occurred throughout the 2021 fiscal year were COVID related. There was a discussion about the challenges that the Town has faced in getting the reimbursement from the Federal Government for the Emergency Management costs from Hurricane Isaias and also the reasons for the overage in legal expenses and how to adjust the budget moving forward.

IT Department Director Andrew Neblett talked about the overages that occurred in the IT department, which included COVID related expenses and costs for cyber security.

Jake Muller, Director of Facilities/Safety & Purchasing, discussed the COVID related expenses and unanticipated building maintenance costs that accounted for the overages in his department. The COVID vaccination & testing centers, the tent for Town meetings, repairs on Town buildings and improvements at the schools were some of the items that he mentioned. Mr. Muller also talked about a few of the current projects he is working on.

Mr. Connelly moved to approve the BOF Year End Transfers as presented. Ms. Manners second the motion. Motion carries 4-0.

4) Pension Commission Presentation

The Pension Commission appeared before the Board to discuss the annual pension evaluations. The Commission provided a presentation which detailed the reasons behind their recommendations for the revised pension plan. There was a discussion about the need for future presentations from the Pension Commission and which departments should be involved with the approval process. It was agreed that the BOS would continue with the final approval process.

Mr. Connelly moved to approve the reduction of the expected rate of return to 6.25% for the July 2021 pension and OPEB. Ms. Kozlark second the motion. Motion carries 4-0.

5) Set Public Hearing & Town Meeting for WPCA – ARPA Funding

Mr. Marconi gave an overview of the Route 7 Sewer Plant project and the reason the Board is considering the use of ARPA funds to help subsidize it. Russ Porter commented that a breakdown of overages should be provided to the public. Robert Hendrick, from the Planning and Zoning Commission, asked about the contingency of 7% and commented that the public should be educated on the details. Mike Recker also commented on the contingencies. A fact sheet that provides information on the project for the public is available on the Town website.

Mr. Connelly moved to approve the scheduling of a Public Hearing and Special Town Meeting on October 20, 2021 at 7:30pm at Town Hall to discuss and vote on the

allocation of the ARPA funds for the purpose of partially funding the construction of a sewer force main from Route 7, district 2, to South Street, District 1 sewer plant. Ms. Manners second the motion. Motion carries 4-0.

6) Set Public Hearing & Town Meeting for acceptance of Open Space

Ms. Kozlark moved to approve the scheduling of a Public Hearing on November 3, 2021 & Town Meeting on November 17, 2021 for the acceptance of 7.41 acres on route 7 for open space, subject to the phase 1 review report. Mr. Connelly second the motion. Motion carries 4-0.

7) Cannabis Retail Discussion

The Board discussed the benefit of holding several meetings so that they can hear the public's positive and negative arguments on the topic of Retail Cannabis separately. There was also a discussion about getting feedback from various committees and departments, such as the Prevention Council, Police Department, Ridgefield Coalition Against Substance Abuse, Youth Commission and others.

Planning and Zoning Commission member, Robert Hendrick, clarified that role of the Board of Selectman is to hold a Public Hearing and Town Meeting to find out if the community wants to allow Cannabis Retail, while the Planning and Zoning Commission's responsibility will be to decide on and regulate the location if the Town vote's to allow it Mr. Marconi stated.

The Board will begin gathering input and holding public forums for discussion on the topic.

8) COVID update

Mr. Marconi discussed the most recent COVID stats in Ridgefield and the push back from some members of the community on the current quarantine rules.

9) Approval of Meeting Minutes: September 22, 2021

Ms. Kozlark moved to approve the BOS meeting minutes from September 22, 2021 with the modification. Ms. Manners second the motion. Motion carries 4-0.

10) Selectman's Report

Ms. Manners moved to approve the annual MOA with the Department of Emergency Management and Homeland security. Mr. Connelly second the motion. Motion carries 4-0.

Ridgefield Arts Council Chair, Jennifer Rose-DiLaura is resigning from the Council. Mr. Marconi read her resignation letter.

Mr. Marconi held a meeting with the residents of Branchville regarding the potential leasing of the Old School House to the Ridgefield Father's Club. Some of the concerns from the Branchville community include parking, noise, and appropriateness of the facility, litter and alcohol use. There will be another meeting on October 9, 2021 for more discussion.

Mr. Marconi has a meeting with the President of the Thrift Shop on October 12, 2021 to discuss parking for the volunteers who work at the Shop. The volunteers have asked that the Town forgive their parking tickets. The Board agrees that this would not be a good precedent to set and discussed other solutions.

There is limited cell coverage at the Golf Course and the area surrounding it. Homeland Towers is conducting a propagation study and working on a proposal for a tower near the maintenance facility on the Golf Course.

The Board discussed the idea of implementing a leash law. Currently there is a leash law in the Town parks only. Mr. Marconi will work with the council on creating one.

Mr. Marconi received a letter from a woman with young children regarding the Vape/CBD sign on Main street. The woman feels the sign is inappropriate. Mr. Marconi commented that if signs are allowed, messaging cannot be restricted. During COVID the Town relaxed the restriction on sandwich boards, however he believes that next year this will change. According the Federal law, there must be specific information posted on the signs, which the Vape/CBD sign currently does not have. The issue will be looked into.

The house demolition that took place at 8 and 10 New Street did not have the proper permits that are required. The town is proceeding with reviewing their legal options.

Mr. Connelly motioned to adjourn the BOS meeting at 10:47pm. Ms. Kozlark second the motion. Motion carries 4-0.

