



**Town of Ridgefield
Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes
UNAPPROVED
January 4, 2023 at 7.30pm**

Please note – these minutes are not verbatim.

Present: Rudy Marconi, Maureen Kozlark, Bob Hebert

Absent: Barbara Manners, Sean Connelly

1. Public Comment

Geoffrey Morris, ECDC member, encouraged everyone to take the Broadband Survey that the ECDC sent out.

2. Appointments & Reappointments

a. Historic District Commission Reappointment – Sean O’Kane

Dan O’Brien, Chair of the Historic District Commission, told the Board about the great work Sean O’Kane has done during his time on the HDC. S. O’Kane talked about his private practice in architecture, the enjoyment he gets from his interactions with residents and why he likes serving on the Commission.

The Board members asked several questions which included how many historic buildings are currently in Ridgefield, are people made aware when they are buying in the Historic District and what affect would affordable housing have on the Historic Districts.

B. Hebert commented that if affordable housing does end up in a Historic District, it must be done in a way that preserves the character of Ridgefield. D. O’Brien mentioned that in respect to the goal of the HDC, it makes no difference if the building is affordable or not.

The Town received two grants to be used for historic inventory, which has not been done since 1976.

D. O’Brien talked about the Historic District Commission’s plan to put signage at the entrances and exits of the five Historic Districts to give awareness to the public.

Bob Hebert moved to reappoint Sean O’Kane to the Historic District Commission for a 5-year term. Maureen Kozlark second the motion.

Motion carries 3-0.

b. Commission on Aging – Carmen Martin

Commission on Aging Chair Andrea Beebe and Secretary Debra Ann-Franceschini appeared before the Board to show their support for Carmen Martin.

C. Martin talked about her passion for the arts and how she plans to use it to engage the seniors in Ridgefield. One idea is to write articles highlighting a different senior each time. The thought is that it would create conversation among their friend groups and give them each a moment in the spotlight. C. Martin has also reached out to Colleen Cash, Chair of the Arts Council, to brainstorm more ideas.

There was a discussion about the many seniors who are completely alone and isolate themselves within their homes. Some seniors are still nervous about covid while others are homebodies for different reasons. A. Beebe talked about finding a way to bring back the program that pairs High School students with seniors to provide companionship.

Bob Hebert moved to appoint Carmen Martin to the Commission on Aging for a 3-year term. Maureen Kozlark second the motion. Motion carries 3-0.

c. ECDC – Jennifer Gioffre

Jennifer Gioffre talked about the store her and her husband owned on Main Street, her seven years on NCL and her professional background in Marketing and Business Development.

ECDC member Geoffrey Morris told the Board about the contributions J. Gioffre could make if she joins and commented that the Commission would be thrilled to have her.

J. Gioffre explained that her Business Development skills can help the Commission bring in new business to the Town. She also mentioned that owning a small business on Main Street gives her an understanding of how to help that industry.

There was a discussion about the interview process for appointing Board, Committee and Commission members.

Maureen Kozlark moved to appoint Jennifer Gioffre to the Economic & Community Development Commission for a 2-year term. Rudy Marconi second the motion. Motion carries 3-0.

d. Graveyard Restoration Committee – Michael Harrington

Graveyard Restoration Committee Chair Nancy Selander and member

Susan Law appeared before the Board to show their support of appointing Michael Harrington to the Committee.

M. Harrington talked about his recent move to Ridgefield, his desire to get involved in the community, and the understanding & appreciation he has for the history that can be found in graveyards.

The Board asked questions about M. Harrington's passion for graveyards, his attendance at the meetings, and his understanding of the job at hand.

Maureen Kozlark moved to appoint Michael Harrington to the Graveyard Restoration Committee for a 4-year term. Bob Hebert second the motion. Motion carries 3-0.

3. Tax Abatement – Ridgebury Farms

Katy Sherman recently bought the Farm on Ridgebury Road from the Jessup family and started a Hippotherapy Business. The Jessup family has been receiving a tax abatement from the town and K. Sherman would like to also receive the abatement. K. Sherman's accountant, Kim sent in the required paperwork to continue the tax abatement. However, the paperwork got mixed up in the mail and never arrived to the Assessor. K. Sherman appeared before the Board of Selectmen, who also serve as the Town's Abatement Committee, to plead her case.

Kim explained that the paperwork for 2023 has already been submitted, however they would like an abatement for the current taxes, which are double the price.

K. Sherman explained to the Board that Hippotherapy is Occupational, Physical, and Speech Therapy using the movement of the horse. She went into detail about her therapists, the scientific background behind Hippotherapy and her future plans for growing her business.

M. Kozlark pointed out that the Board needs to be careful about setting precedence so that everyone who misses a deadline will not expect the Board to grant an exception.

There was a discussion about how the abatement would not affect budgets since it has already been in place for years.

Bob Hebert moved to approve continuing the tax abatement for Ridgebury Farms. Rudy Marconi second the motion. Motion carries 3-0.

4. Town of Ridgefield Policy: Snow Removal & Ice Control

Dave Buccitti, Superintendent of the Highway Department, appeared before the Board to discuss the updated Snow Removal & Ice Control policy for the Town. There was a discussion about sand vs salt on the roads and the impact that salt, which the Town now uses, may have on the roads and cars down the line.

There are a lot of calls about damaged mailboxes after plowing. D. Buccitti

explained that a mailbox post often snaps due to the weight of the snow being pushed up against it, not because it was hit by the truck.

Maureen Kozlark moved to approve the revised Snow & Ice Removal Policy for the Town of Ridgefield. Bob Hebert second the motion. Motion carries 3-0.

5. Charter Revision Commission

The Town needs to form a Charter Revision Commission for the purpose of reviewing and amending the current Charter to reflect the best practices of today. Currently there are 15 candidates who have shown interest.

There was a discussion about the size of the Commission, if there should be a number restriction on appointing elected officials, and when the interviews should take place. Due to the number of candidates, it was decided that the interviews should be split between two days.

Bob Hebert moved to set two Special Board of Selectmen Meetings on Jan 12, 2023 from 4:30-7pm and Jan 14, 2023 from 8:30-11:30am for the purpose of interviewing candidates for the Charter Revision Committee. Maureen Kozlark second the motion. Motion carries 3-0.

6. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Maureen Kozlark moved to approve the December 7, 2022 Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes. Bob Hebert second the motion. Motion carries 3-0.

7. Selectman's Report

The Board of Selectmen need to vote to approve money in lieu of open space for a subdivision off route 35 that was approved several years ago. Planning & Zoning set the amount at \$25,500, which would go to the Conservation Commission.

The target date for Central Dispatch to be up and running is April 25th. The formal date is sometime in July; however, the Police & Fire Departments want it running sooner in order to work out any bugs.

Two more people are needed to fill the dispatcher positions. Currently, the full-time dispatchers are scheduled around the part-time dispatchers. This will change when the Town hires their goal of 8 full timers. Everyone is expected to be fully trained on the new software system, Nextgen, but April 25th.

The Town did not receive the grant for the Venus Building ADA compliant upgrades, but continues to apply for grants for all different projects. One example

is a grant through the COG for a sidewalk upgrade near Starbucks on route 35. There was a discussion about the temporary crosswalk at Gilbert Street that was in place during the Main Street construction. Although many people enjoyed having a crosswalk at that location, it proved to be unsafe. Due to the proximity to the cars turning onto Gilbert Street there is limited visibility for drivers of pedestrians crossing the road.

Dwayne Escola from the Energy Task Force would like to give a presentation to the Board of Education in order to generate enthusiasm about energy efficiency within the schools. There are grants available for school buses, which will all eventually be required by the State to be converted to electric. R. Marconi had a meeting with D. Escola and Jake Muller, Director of Purchasing, to discuss energy efficiency projects. They talked about establishing a model building against which they can measure the efficiency increase and show the overall savings.

Maureen Kozlark moved to adjourn the Jan 4, 2023 Board of Selectmen Meeting at 9:56pm. Bob Hebert second the motion. Motion carries 3-0.