



Town of Ridgefield
Board of Selectman Meeting Minutes
UNAPPROVED
April 13, 2022 at 6.30pm

Please note – these minutes are not verbatim.

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

1. Public Comment

John Tatagly, Danbury Road, expressed his feelings against allowing Cannabis Retail in Ridgefield, commenting that the Board should vote to opt out and let the residents that support it to petition against the Board's decision. He provided the Board with a written statement of his concerns and opinion on the matter for the record.

Sean Mcevoy, 150 High Ridge, shared his concerns about the Affordable Housing Draft Plan that will be presented in tonight's meeting. In his brief statement, S. Mcevoy asked that the Board look into the plan in greater detail.

Greg Kabasakalian, 2 Washington Street, commented that he agrees with the concerns shared by J. Tatagly regarding Cannabis Retail and added that allowing a Marijuana dispensary in town would not send a good message to the children of Ridgefield.

2. Conservation Commission – Open Space Declaration

Conservation Commission Chair Jim Coyle, Vice Chair Jack Kace, and current member Erik Keller appeared before the Board to talk about adopting an Open Space Declaration. The declaration is a blanket document that would deed restrict that Town owned properties that are not currently protected as open space.

The Conservation Commission has identified 5,600 acres of open space land in Ridgefield. Of those 5,600 acres, about half are owned by the Town. After reviewing over 400 property deeds, the Commission discovered that there are roughly 1,100 acres of Town owned property that are not deed restricted. E. Keller provided a map that highlights those properties.

M. Kozlark asked if the Town has the ability to address violations on Town properties that are not deed restricted. J. Coyle confirmed that yes, the Town can take action on any property they own. E. Keller commented that one of the tasks of the Conservation

Commission is to monitor open spaces and have an enforcement officer on hand to address any violations.

J. Coyle handed out a proposed Open Space Declaration to the Board. The adoption of the Open Space Declaration would mean that the rights of all the properties included would be signed over to the Conservation Commission in perpetuity and therefore could never be developed in any form unless the Commission allows it.

The Board discussed the level of protection that the declaration provides vs the level of protection the Town can provide without it.

M. Kozlark commented that there could be some properties the Town might consider developing in the future and questioned whether adopting a blanket declaration for all the properties is best. It was noted that any property that is not included in the declaration will not be considered open space by law.

S. Connelly suggested adding the deed restriction to most of the land, but leaving out a few of the properties that the Board feels could be used for development down the line.

B. Manners added that the Board should review each parcel and decide which to keep and which to deed.

The Board will review each property and provide feedback at the June 1st meeting.

3. Vendor Permit Renewal – Chez Lenard

Mike Principi, owner of Chez Lenard Hot Dog Stand, appeared before the Board for a Vendor Permit Renewal. M. Principi talked about the impact that the pandemic, the main Street Project and inflation have and will continue to have on his business. He added that despite the challenges, he expects a strong year in 2022.

R. Marconi will set up a meeting to review the details of the Main Street Project with M. Principi to mitigate negative effects to business.

S. Connelly moved to approve the renewal of the Vendor Permit for Chez Lenard Hot Dog stand. M Kozlark second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

The Board broke for the Town Meeting at 7.29pm. The BOS meeting resumed at 7.36pm.

4. Appointments & Reappointments:

a. David Shofi – reappoint to the Parks & Rec Commission

David Shofi has been a Commissioner since 2014 and would like to be reappointed for another term. D. Shofi talked about his experiences on the Commission, his continued interest in serving, recent upgrades to the various buildings and future projects. There was a discussion about the limited parking at the Rec Center and what has been done to address the issue.

R. Marconi read a letter from Phil Kearns, Chair of the Parks & Rec Commission, supporting D. Shofi's reappointment.

B. Hebert moved to approved the reappointment of David Shofi for a three-year term on the Parks and Rec Commission. S. Connelly second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

b. Sara Kaplan – appoint as an Alternate to the Historic District Commission

R. Marconi read a letter from Historic District Commission Chair, Dan O'Brien, that provided reasons for his support of appointing Sara Kaplan to the Commission. R. Marconi also read S. Kaplan's letter to the Board, which included reasons for her interest in joining and her qualifications.

S. Kaplan answered several questions from the Board which included what her philosophy is around preservation, what she plans to accomplish if appointed, and why she decided to move to Ridgefield.

M. Kozlark moved to appoint Sara Kaplan as an alternate member for a five-year term on the Historic District Commission. S. Connelly second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

c. Dan O'Brien – appoint to the Insurance & Risk Management Committee

R. Marconi read a letter from Jeff Wark, current IRMC member, showing his support of the appointment of Dan O'Brien to the Committee. J. Wark also spoke at the meeting, reinforcing his support.

Dan O'Brien, who has recently retired from a CFO position, shared his excitement in joining the Committee and talked about his qualifications.

R. Marconi asked about cyber security. D. O'Brien responded that this is something that should be looked into at depth and hopes to get involved with if appointed.

M. Kozlark moved to appoint Dan O'Brien for a four-year term on the Insurance & Risk Management Committee. B. Hebert second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

d. Wayne Floegel – appoint as Town Constable

Wayne Floegel appeared before the Board to be interviewed for one of the three Town Constable positions. W. Floegel talked about his interest and qualifications.

R. Marconi reviewed the duties that Town Constables are required to perform.

B. Hebert moved to appoint Wayne Floegel for a two-year term as Town Constable. S. Connelly second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

5. Lease Agreement Renewal – Boys & Girls Club

The lease between the Boys and Girls Club and the Town for the use of the Teen Barn is up for renewal. The programs provided at the Teen Barn through the Boys & Girls Club have been successful to date.

S. Connelly moved to approve the lease agreement renewal between the Town of Ridgefield and the Boys & Girls Club for the use of 41 Governor Street. B. Hebert second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

6. Lease Agreement Renewal – Historical Society (Peter Parley Schoolhouse)

The Historical Society's lease from the Town for the use of the Peter Parker Schoolhouse is up for renewal.

Tracy Seem, President of the Board of Directors, talked about the upgrades that the RHS have done to the building and the partnership they have with the Town in order to maintain it.

Geoff Harrington, VP of the Board of Directors, talked about some of the building issues that he is currently working on with Jake Muller, Director of Purchasing and Safety & Facilities for the Town. One of the tasks is to make the building handicap accessible.

T. Seem talked about the various programs offered at the RHS. Every month there is a new theme and an open house that provides information on the history relative to that theme.

R. Marconi mentioned Tracy Seem's hard work on the Battle of Ridgefield Reenactment and thanked her.

S. Connelly moved to approve the lease agreement renewal between the Town of Ridgefield and the Historical Society for the use of the Peter Parley School. M. Kozlark second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

7. Affordable Housing Presentation

Dave Goldenberg appeared before the Board to present a draft of the Affordable Housing Plan that is required by State Statute. The plan needs to be approved by the Board of Selectman and Planning & Zoning before it is submitted to the State.

D. Goldenberg talked about the growth patterns in Ridgefield over time and commented that the Town will continue to grow. The plan presented is designed to help the Town take control of this growth while meeting the requirements of the State.

D. Goldenberg went through the details of the plan which include a Needs Assessment, an Overview of Housing Stock, Public Input, and a Gap Analysis. The draft can be found on the Ridgefield Affordable Housing page on the Ridgefieldct.org website.

R. Marconi mentioned that the COG has created a generic plan that municipalities can use as a guideline to help design their own plan.

There was a discussion about the need for Natural Occurring Affordable Housing in addition to Subsidized Affordable Housing. D. Goldenberg commented that Ridgefield is in need of all types of housing.

D. Goldenberg provided an explanation of Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed (ALICE). The term refers to people who are spending more than the threshold dictated by the State on housing.

S. Connelly pointed out that the number of needed Affordable Housing stated in the plan is based off a percentage of the need for the State, and not off Ridgefield's actual needs. D. Goldenberg commented that the State expects each Town to do its part and the number reflected in this plan is not a realistic goal for Ridgefield, which is noted in the draft. Several of the Board members agreed that the plan should reflect what our community actually needs, not a percentage of the State recommendation. B. Manners pointed out that Ridgefield does not have the transportation or infrastructure to support the amount of units suggested.

There was a discussion about the need for deed restrictions to ensure that the Affordable Housing goes to the people that really need it. B. Hebert pointed out that Ridgefield has the recommended amount of Affordable Housing, however the Town is not getting credit for a lot of it because not all of the properties are deeded. M. Kozlark suggested adding deeds with time constraints instead of in perpetuity.

The Board will review the plan in depth and send their comments to the Affordable Housing Committee, after which there will be more discussions.

M. Kozlark moved to hold a Public Hearing on May 25, 2022 at 7.30 pm to discuss and vote on the Affordable Housing Plan. B. Hebert second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

8. Cannabis Retail and Possible Vote

There are three options of action that the Board of Selectman can take regarding Cannabis Retail in Ridgefield.

1. The Board can vote now and send their decision to Planning and Zoning, who can then accept the decision or go against it. If Planning & Zoning agrees with the policy that the Board of Selectman establishes, the residents will then have the opportunity to petition.
2. The Board can draft an ordinance, vote, and then send it to a referendum. The question presented at the referendum cannot be an advisory/opinion question.
3. The question can be presented at the scheduled Budget Referendum, however there will need to be a separate ballot and machine. The pro to having the Cannabis Retail Referendum at the same time as the Budget Referendum is that there could be a larger turnout since many already plan to attend the Budget Referendum.

B. Manners moved to approve the motion that the BOS hereby establishes a policy not to allow any form of Cannabis Business to be established in the Town of Ridgefield. M. Kozlark second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

9. Tax Collector Refunds

B. Manners moved to approve the Tax Collector Refunds in the amount of \$4,243.74. S. Connelly second the motion. Motion carries 5-0

10. Approval of Referendum Questions

The Board voted to approve the Resolutions that will be voted on at the Referendum.

B. Hebert moved to waive the reading of all the detail bonding resolution language at the May 2, 2022 Public Hearing.

B. Hebert moved to approve the Town Budget & Debt Service Resolution read by R. Marconi. S. Connelly second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

M. Kozlark moved to approve the BOE Budget Resolution read by B. Hebert. S. Connelly second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

S. Connelly moved to approve the Road Infrastructure Resolution read by M. Kozlark. B. Hebert second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

M. Kozlark moved to approve the FD Budget Resolution read by S. Connelly. B. Hebert second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

S. Connelly moved to approve the Parks & Rec Budget Resolution read by R. Marconi. M. Kozlark second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

M. Kozlark moved to approve the Budget Resolution read by B. Hebert. S. Connelly second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

B. Hebert moved to approve the School Upgrade Resolution read by M. Kozlark. S. Connelly second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

M. Kozlark moved to approve the School Upgrades Resolution read by S. Connelly. B. Hebert second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

M. Kozlark moved to approve Resolution #9 read by R. Marconi. S. Connelly second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

B. Hebert moved to approve the Notice of Annual Town Meeting to be held on May 2, 2022 at 7.30pm as required by Town Charter to vote on the Resolutions approved at the April 13, 2022 BOS meeting. M. Kozlark second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

S. Connelly moved to approve a Referendum on May 10, 2022 between 6.00pm and 8.00pm for the vote on the Resolution read by R. Marconi. M. Kozlark second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

11. Approval of BOS Budget Meeting Minutes

B. Hebert moved to approve the February 28, 2022 BOS Meeting Minutes as amended. M. Kozlark second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

S. Connelly moved to approve the March 1, 2022 BOS Budget Meeting Minutes as amended. M. Kozlark second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

S. Connelly moved to approve the March 16, 2022 BOS Meeting Minutes. B. Hebert second the motion. M. Kozlark abstained. Motion carries 4-0

B. Hebert moved to approve the March 30, 2022 Special Joint BOS & Fire Commission Meeting Minutes as amended. S. Connelly second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

12. Selectman's Report

The Main Street Project is scheduled to start on April 23, 2022.

Ridgefield has received the final ok on a \$3.4 million grant from the State for a boardwalk along Ligi Way. The project will piggyback on the sewer line project to mitigate road closures.

The Branchville project, which includes updates to the sidewalks, crosswalks, and walking bridge, is moving along.

Other projects in the pipeline are the Depot Road Bridge and Portland Avenue Bridge upgrades. The funding is coming from the Federal Local Bridge Program.

R. Marconi will put together all of the ARPA request letters so the Board can get a clear idea of what is being asked.

S. Connelly moved to adjourn the April 13, 2022 BOS Meeting at 10.57pm. B. Hebert second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.