



Town of Ridgefield
Board of Selectman Meeting Minutes
UNAPPROVED
May 18, 2022 at 6.30pm

Please note – these minutes are not verbatim.

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

Absent: Barbara Manners

1. Public Comment

Kurt Carr, 62 Prospect Ridge, asked why a Cannabis Ordinance Draft is on the agenda tonight after there was a 4-1 vote to opt out at the last Board of Selectman meeting. R. Marconi explained that the policy of the Board of Selectman does not preclude the Planning & Zoning Commission from passing its own regulation. An ordinance, however, will and this is why the Board has begun drafting one that will prohibit the sale and cultivation of Cannabis in Ridgefield.

2. ARPA Funding: ECDC & Arts Council

The ECDC appeared before the Board to request \$50,000 of ARPA funds for a feasibility engineering study for an all fiber broadband network. ECDC member Bob Knight provided details on why it is important for Ridgefield to have the Broadband project ready to go before 2023 when Federal infrastructure funding will be allocated. He also explained how the feasibility study will help show the government that our need for an all fiber broadband network is crucial. B. Knight answered questions about the different types of models and the project in East Hartford, which is the first area in CT to build out the network.

Several businesses in Town wrote letters in support of using the ARPA funds for the feasibility study. The request needs to be reviewed by the selected committee to be sure it meets the requirements from the State. If it does, it will then go before the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance and finally presented at a Town Meeting for a vote.

Colleen Cash, Chair of the Arts Council, appeared before the Board to request the allocation of a percentage of ARPA funds for various arts organizations who experienced significant loss during the pandemic and continue to struggle. There have been some

changes to the budget since their initial meeting with the Board on March 1st.

There was a discussion about the larger organizations that have already received State and/or Federal funding and if those businesses should receive money through ARPA as well. B. Hebert commented that the allocation of ARPA funds should be needs based rather than across the board.

G. Nowitt, ECDC Chair, pointed out that all of the organizations are still in need and the Board of Selectman would need to provide guidance as to what criteria determines who needs it most.

Thrown Stone founder Jonathan Winn, 538 Branchville Rd, commented that he believes the Arts Council's request is fair and shared his reasons why.

M. Kozlark asked about the large increases in budget for a few of the organizations. C. Cash clarified that there was confusion on how to fill out the survey, which caused inaccuracies on the information initially collected.

A women from the audience spoke in support of the Arts Council request.

The Board broke at 7.30pm for the Public Hearing.

The Public Hearing was closed at 7.35pm.

3. Vender Permit Renewal: The Coop

John Damici, owner of The Coop food truck, based out of Danbury, appeared before the Board for a permit renewal so that he can continue vending at some of the Ridgefield High School Events.

S. Connelly moved to approve the vendor permit renewal for The Coop for one year. M. Kozlark second the motion. Motion carries 4-0.

4. Reappointments: Andrea Beebe - Commission on Aging

Commission Chair Andrea Beebe talked about the struggles the Commission has seen during the pandemic and shared an outline of accomplishments during her time and what is in store for the future. There were discussions about the challenges that Zoom presents with the elderly members, updates and distribution strategies for the new Directory and ideas on how to find new members.

A. Beebe would like develop measurable goals and objectives for the Commission. Some things on the agenda are to restart the speaker series at Founder's Hall, create a newsletter, expand their social media presence and produce brochures that can be placed around town.

A. Beebe thanked Steve Zemo for purchasing the tree and donating the land for the memorial that recognizes those lost to Covid.

Greg Kabasakalian, 2 Washington Street, asked about the cost of the directory.

B. Hebert moved to approve the reappointment of Andrea Beebe for a three-year

term on the Commission on Aging. M. Kozlark second the motion. Motion carries 4-0.

5. Transfer Station Permit Update

There is a proposed Transfer Station permit fee change. Non-resident permits will increase from \$40 to \$50 and there will be a new Local Business permit for \$50. Resident fees will stay the same. The Local Business permit came as a recommendation from the HRRRA.

M. Kozlark moved to approve the fee changes for non-resident permits and the addition of a separate local business permit for the Transfer Station. S. Connelly second the motion. Motion carries 4-0.

6. Cannabis Ordinance Draft and Rent Commission

Jax Mantione and Lauren ?, who are interning in the First Selectman's office, have been researching ideas for the Cannabis Ordinance and the Rent Commission.

Lauren talked about the research she had done on the Fair Rent Commission, which is a Commission that accepts complaints from tenants regarding rising or unusually high rents. There is a new state statute that requires any town that reaches a population of 25,000 to begin the process of forming a Rent Commission. There was a discussion about the process that happens once a complaint has been submitted and if there is a need for this type of Commission in Ridgefield.

Town Attorney Dave Grogins discussed the Cannabis Ordinance that was drafted by Cohen & Wolf.

Jax talked about the Cannabis Ordinance that she drafted that prohibits Cannabis retail and cultivation.

There was a discussion about the rules for smoking cigarettes in public areas and if they also apply to cannabis.

There was another discussion about if and how employers can control the use of cannabis by employees. The Town of Ridgefield has a strict no drug use policy for employees at all times.

The Board will review both ordinances in more detail and discuss them again. If an ordinance is passed, it becomes the law of the Town and no policy can supersede it.

Andrea Beebe, 378 Main Street, asked about the rules regarding vaping in public areas.

7. Approval Meeting Minutes

M. Kozlark moved to approve the April 28, 2022 BOS meeting minutes. S. Connelly second the motion. Motion carries 4-0.

S. Connelly moved to approve the May 4, 2022 BOS meeting minutes as amended.

M. Kozlark second the motion. Motion carries 4-0.

8. Selectman's Report

The town has recently adopted MFA for extra cyber security. R. Marconi suggested purchasing laptops for the Board of Selectman, Board of Finance and Planning & Zoning so that employees do not need to use personal computers for work purposes. The money for the laptops could come from the contingency funds that are left over at the end of the year. The idea needs to be brought to Board of Finance and Planning & Zoning to determine what their needs are.

Greg Kabasakalian, 2 Washington Street, suggested using Amazon Workspace.

9. Executive Session

S. Connelly moved to go into Executive Session with Town Attorney Dave Grogins.

B. Hebert second the motion. Motion carries 4-0.

a. Review of Property Sale

b. Possible vote to schedule a Public Hearing & Special Town Meeting

No vote was taken.

B. Hebert moved to adjourn the May 18, 2022 BOS meeting. S. Connelly second the motion. Motion carries 4-0.