

Town of Ridgefield
Public Hearing & Board of Selectmen Meeting
Wednesday, May 23, 2018; 6:30 pm
Town Hall (Large Conference Room)
400 Main Street, Ridgefield, Connecticut
REVISED/APPROVED MINUTES

These minutes are a general summary of the meeting and are not intended to be a verbatim transcription.

In attendance: R. Marconi, B. Hebert, M. Kozlark, B. Manners, S. Zemo

A meeting of the Board of Selectmen was called to order at 6:30 pm by R. Marconi.

Agenda

1. Public Comment
2. Fracking Ordinance
3. Ridgefield Graveyard Committee Interview – Sara S. Champion
4. Senior Tax Freeze Proposal – John Fisher
5. Brian Humes, Jacunski Humes Architects, LLC
6. Proposed Donation of Land on Lakeside Drive; Set Public Hearing & Special Town Meeting Dates
7. Lift of Town Emergency Declaration Resolution
8. Selectman's Report
9. Approval of Meeting Minutes 5/9/18

1. Public Comment - No Public Comment

2. Fracking Ordinance

R. Marconi gave a brief overview about the Fracking Ordinance and explained that legislators debated Fracking in this year's session, but no action was taken. The commissioner of DEEP has until July 2018 to create regulations about accepting the waste into the State of Connecticut. Taking no action does not mean the statute won't be standing. Fracking Waste will continue to be illegal in the State of Connecticut.

R. Marconi invited Henry Boyd, from Boyd Artisan Well Company, in front of the Board to provide information and to educate the Board on the process of fracking. Henry Boyd came forward and explained the process of Fracking and the differences between Water Well Fracking and Hydraulic Fracking. Water Well Fracking is contaminating free. Hydraulic Fracking is used for oil and gas only.

M. Kozlark asked if the waste from fracking is being contained and if this discharge is what's being put in the trucks that we are trying to prevent from coming into CT. H. Boyd stated most of the fracking waste comes from Pennsylvania and they are containing it. M. Kozlark asked if the contained material is being used for other purposes. H. Boyd stated he hasn't heard anything on that.

B. Manners asked what contaminants are found in the ground. H. Boyd explained the biggest contaminants beside salt are iron and magnesium.

B. Hebert asked why the Board should pass or not pass the ordinance? H. Boyd stated he is here to defend well water fracking and continued to explain the rest of the process of fracking.

R. Marconi informed all that CCM is advising towns that have implemented and adopted the ordinance to reconsider it because it is sweeping, relative to all their bid requirements.

Jack Hicks, RHS Intern, stated there is no reason for the town to implement a fracking ordinance. The state has it covered to where it prohibits almost all transportation of waste fracking water, with the exception of very limited quantities for research. J. Higgs stated he spoke with the legal council for DEEP and was informed that DEEP has no intention of coming up with the regulations, so the statute will stand as of now. J. Higgs stated the only possible recommendation he can give to the Town is if they decide to meet with the group who is suggesting the Ordinance, to push the meeting back until after July, in case the DEEP for some reason does come up with a set of regulations and how that would impact the Ordinance, which seems very unlikely at this point. It doesn't seem to be worth the Town's time to come up with this ordinance and have it pass into law.

H. Boyd explained the negative impact the salt from the roads has on drinking water and suggested the Town take action. R. Marconi explained there have been discussions concerning the use of salt and it's only a matter of time before the state decides to ban the salt because of the amounts we are using.

The Board decided to invite the supporters of the Ordinance to a future BOS meeting to discuss.

The Board had a brief discussion about the salting of the roads and other alternatives such as sand.

3. Ridgefield Graveyard Committee Interview – Sara S. Champion

Sara Champion came forward to introduce herself to the Board. Susan Law, Graveyard Committee Chair, and Nancy Selander, member, also joined to support the candidate.

S. Champion is a Ridgefield resident and she became interested in cemeteries about 25 years ago because of genealogy. S. Champion has worked as a Russian linguist at the National Security Agency. Later, she became a corporate lawyer for CEOs and their benefit packages. S. Champion is Regent for the Drum Hill Chapter of National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution. As part of the Drum Hill Chapter of DAR, S. Champion spearheaded the updating of local historic markers to make certain they were accurate, and also took on the revitalization of the Comstock Burying Ground in Wilton.

B. Hebert asked if the Committee does any restorations. The Answer is Yes. The restorations depend on what needs to be done, what the stone looks like and what kind of stone it is.

R. Marconi asked what the general condition of the Town's cemeteries is? Work has been done over the years but there is a lot more that needs to be done.

M. Kozlark asked what role S. Champion would take on the Committee? S. Champion replied she is not sure yet. It will become more clear as she attends more meetings.

S. Zemo moved and B. Manners seconded a motion to appoint Susan S. Champion to the Ridgefield Graveyard Committee. Motion Carried 5-0.

4. Senior Tax Freeze Proposal – John Fisher

John Fisher, the President of the OWLS Club, came in front of the Board to discuss this matter. R. Marconi read the letter from the OWLS Club of Ridgefield presenting the following Proposal:

- A). An increase in the annual property tax reduction from the current \$1048 per year to \$1200 per year. The current amount has not been increased for several years.
- B). Increase the minimum Property Tax Deferment from an annual income of \$55,000 to \$65,000.
- C). Consider freezing the real estate taxes for people 75 years of age or older.

J. Fisher informed there was a slight change in their proposal and handed out to the Board the revised proposal which states:

- A). Real estate taxes for individuals 75 years of age or older will be frozen indefinitely at the 2018-19 level.

J. Fisher stated most of seniors in Ridgefield are living on a fixed income. The cost of living has increased but the income has remained flat the last couple of years. Seniors have contributed a great deal to the Ridgefield community, now it's time for the seniors to receive some additional help. J. Fisher stated the City of Danbury has frozen real estate taxes for seniors 65 years of age and older since 2012.

B. Manners did not agree with the proposal.

S. Zemo stated he would support the increased Property Tax Deferment from an annual income of \$55k to \$65k as it was written in the original proposal.

R. Marconi explained the Tax Credit program funding is approximately \$1,700,000. There are 47 households that have deferred. That's a total of \$2,100,000. R. Marconi informed that people don't have to defer 100%, they can defer whatever percentage they want.

The Board discussed and decided to do some more research regarding the Senior Tax Freeze Proposal, looking at what other communities are doing, what the real increase cost would be going forward, and how many seniors are coming off the program each year.

5. Brian Humes, Jacunski Humes Architects, LLC

Brian Humes, Chief of Police John Roche and Fire Chief Jerry Myers came in front of the Board.

B. Humes was present to discuss the study for the Fire and Police buildings, to give background of the Jacunski Humes Architects firm, and provide recommendations.

Jacunski Humes Architects is located in Berlin, CT. They have been in business for 22 years and specialize in Public Safety. The firm does Needs Assessment and Facility Studies for Public Safety. In 22 years, the firm has done work on a total of 80 facilities.

M. Kozlark asked if the firm has done work on both Fire and Police departments. B. Humes stated the firm has done work on Fire, Police, and EMS facilities. B. Humes stated the Town of Monroe hired the firm to study their Police, Fire and EMS facilities. The Town didn't do them all at once but one at a time.

R. Marconi asked what is a better option, to do all of the facilities at once or one at a time? B. Humes stated the firm looks at the Public Safety as a whole umbrella which allows them to look at solutions that have some commonality to them. The study was helpful to the town of Monroe; it gave them an idea of expected costs and expected solutions and helped them create a 5-year plan.

S. Zemo asked what is the firm's protocol for gathering information and for developing the scope of work? B. Humes stated the firm proposes the Needs Assessment, compares the town to other similar communities, and puts together a projection of 20-year growth.

M. Kozlark asked is there a trend to keep Fire and Police departments in one facility or separate? B. Humes stated the firm has done facilities where both Fire and Police work out of one facility. There are some common spaces, but they are limited.

B. Hebert asked what the Needs Assessment will cost the Town? B. Humes stated the firm must sit down and find out exactly what we are being asked to do. The firm has given the Town a ballpark of \$40,000.

S. Zemo asked whether other towns have come forward with a set budget? B. Humes stated the feasibility study is done in phases. The first phase is the Space Needs Assessment. That will give the Town information about the facilities. After the Needs Assessment is done, the firm then is able to give the Town a dollar amount on things that need to be done. The Town then decides to go forward or to stop the process. S. Zemo asked about the percentage fee the firm would charge? The answer is 7 percent, which is based on industry standards; however it might scale up if the building is very complicated. S. Zemo asked how does the firm estimate the demographic changes 20 years into the future? B. Humes stated the firm looks at population growth, cost for services, incident responses, calls for services in the Fire Department and all the data going 20 years back.

R. Marconi asked what makes Jacunski Humes Architects stand out. The answer was the firm has more experience than all other firms in New England.

B. Humes showed the Board pictures of facilities the firm has designed and worked on.

Fire Chief Jerry Myers asked if the firm consider the potential growth of the response and the call activity? B. Humes stated the firm does not do those studies, but they recommend other firms that do it.

6. Proposed Donation of Land on Lakeside Drive; Set Public Hearing & Special Town Meeting Dates

M. Kozlark moved and S. Zemo seconded a motion to set a Public Hearing for June 6th at 7:30 pm and Special Town Meeting for June 20th at 7:30 pm both to be held in the Town Hall large conference room for the proposed Lakeside Drive land donation. Motion Carried 5-0.

7. Lift of Town Emergency Declaration Resolution

R. Maroni informed the Board that State of Emergency that was declared during the storm for the Town of Ridgefield was lifted on May 22, 2018.

Selectman's Report

- Referendum Results – A lot of work needs to be done due to the results.
- Vendor Ordinance Change Petition – Nod Hill Brewery submitted the missing signatures. Once they are verified, the Board needs to schedule a Special Town Meeting to make a decision regarding the food truck.

- McKeon Farm use – There is a request from Cornerstone Farms Foundation that teaches adults in the autism spectrum about farming. Conservation Commission is working on a lease for a piece of the farm and will come in front of the Board to discuss it.
- Ridgefield Theater Barn – R. Marconi stated he would like to add this to the June 6 meeting agenda, to tie in Barn to the Town sewer line.
- The storm – Eversource had 15 crew members working in town. The 72 hours wait for reinforcement from Eversource will remain permanently.
- Memorial Day Parade – Starts at 11:30 am

The BOS discussed the help from volunteers for clean up during storm times and the liabilities.

8. Approval of Meeting Minutes 5/9/18

M. Kozlark moved and B. Hebert seconded a motion to approve as amended the 5/9/18 BOS meeting minutes. Motion Carried 5-0.

B. Hebert moved and S. Zemo seconded the motion to adjourn the BOS meeting at 9:20pm. Motion Carried 5-0.

Respectfully Submitted,
Nita Asani