

Annual Town Budget Meeting May 1, 2017

The First Selectman, Rudy Marconi, called the Annual Town Meeting to order at the Ridgefield Playhouse, 80 East Ridge at 7:30 p.m. The audience then recited the Pledge of Allegiance. The first order of business was to appoint a Moderator. Andrew Neblett, Ashbee Lane, made a motion to elect Sharon Dornfeld. A member of the audience seconded it.
Vote: "Aye" votes unanimous and Mrs. Dornfeld was elected Moderator.

The Moderator asked for a motion to waive the notice of the meeting that appeared in the Ridgefield Press issue of April 20 and was posted in the Town Clerk's Office. She said that since it was quite lengthy, she would entertain a motion to waive the reading. Ed Tyrrell, Pond Rd., made the motion, seconded by a member of the audience.
Vote: "Aye" votes unanimous and the call of the meeting was waived.

The Moderator announced that there would not be a vote on the first seven items, because according to the Charter, they are automatically moved to referendum. She then read the resolutions that appear on page 211. Copies were also available at the meeting for the public. Full text of Resolutions at conclusion of minutes.

The Moderator had letters from the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance, in which each informs the legal voters of the Town of Ridgefield that they adopted the eight resolutions that were considered tonight. See letters at conclusion of minutes.

Mrs. Dornfeld proceeded to have Rudy Marconi, First Selectman, give his slide presentation on the Town budget. He reported that the proposed Town budget increased by 2.2%, an increase of \$813,757. The \$47,074,886 for the Town request includes police, fire, highway, parks and recreation, and town administration. It also includes \$11,523.00 for debt service. The finance board had cut the Town budget by \$60,000. Debt service is decreasing 4.46%. By 2021/2022, the debt service should be back to the level it was before the bundle. The only substantial addition in the town's operating budget was adding about \$150,000 to move to a full year of eight man minimum shifts at the fire department. With the eight man minimum, both fire trucks and both ambulances on duty will have two firefighters assigned to them every shift. See slides at conclusion of minutes for details of presentation.

Dr. Karen Baldwin, School Superintendent, followed with her presentation of the school budget. She reported that the proposed Board of Ed budget increased by 2.5%, \$90,374,000 to \$92,634,000. The school board had initially sought a 3.48% spending increase, but the finance board cut the request by \$884,000. She informed the audience that the biggest driver in the Board of Ed budget was health insurance. Ms. Baldwin said the board had looked at closing one of the six elementary schools, but after conferring with consultants, it was decided not to do so. While Ridgefield has lower per pupil spending than most schools in its district reference group, its educational results are still good. Ridgefield High School is No. 4 in the state, and one of the top 300 in the country. She stated that the major goals of the Board were preparing children for the future, educational technology, curriculum and professional learning, and special education. See slides at conclusion of minutes for details of presentation.

David Ulmer, Chairman Board of Finance, also gave his presentation. He told the audience that the finance board's general guideline is to keep the fund balance at about 8% to 9% of revenue. He said

that with the proposed use of \$1.8 million as revenue in the 2017-18 budget, balanced by an expected surplus of about \$1.5 million from the current year, the fund balance should be about \$13.4 million, or 9.7% at the turn of the fiscal year. Mr. Ulmer forecasted increased revenues for the upcoming year and mentioned there may be risks from the state mandates. He also commented that the Board of Finance likes to keep taxes under a 2% increase every year. With the approval of the budget, there will be a 1.92% increase in the mill rate for 2018. See slides at conclusion of minutes for details.

After the presentations were made, in reply to a request to make a motion to decrease a line item, the Moderator quoted to the audience the Charter language in Section 10-1 (c), "that the annual capital and operating budgets of the Board of Education and the Board of Selectmen shall be brought to Annual Town and Budget Meeting for discussion and then sent to referendum."

Ed Tyrrell, 17 Pond Rd., said that she did not read the next sentence in that section that states, "the meeting shall have the power to decrease or delete any line item, but it may net increase or add to any line item or establish any additional line item." He wondered why last year she allowed a motion to decrease the Board of Ed budget. The Moderator replied that it would be addressed as each budget item was brought up for discussion.

The Moderator said that she would read all seven resolutions, ask for a motion to approve, and then allow discussion. She asked for a motion to waive the reading of the full resolutions 1 thru 7, and the full text be incorporated in the minutes. Susan Cocco, 513 Branchville Rd., made the motion to approve, seconded by Andrew Neblett, Ashbee La.

Vote: "Aye" votes unanimous and the motion was approved.

Mrs. Dornfeld then announced that in terms of voting, the state statutes permits two categories of people who can vote. One being a registered voter or an elector of the Town, and the other a citizen of the United States of the age of eighteen or more who own property, which is assessed at more than \$1,000 on the last completed Grand List of the town.

The Moderator asked for motion to approve the following questions:

Question #1, "the recommendation of the Board of Finance relative the appropriation of \$47,074,886 for Town expenditures (consisting of Town operating expenditures of \$35,552,295 and debt service of \$11,522, 591 on both Town and Education capital projects) for the fiscal year commencing July 1, 2017 and ending June 30, 2018?"

Ed Tyrrell, Pond Rd. made the motion to approve, seconded by Jan Rifkinson, New Rd.

No discussion.

Vote: "Aye" votes unanimous and the motion carried.

Question #2, "the recommendation of the Board of Finance relative to the appropriation of \$92,633,544 for Board of Education expenditures for the fiscal year commencing July 1, 2017 and ending June 30, 2018 be approved?"

Rayda Krell, 39 Wooster Heights Dr. made a motion to approve, seconded by Michael Taylor, 112 High Ridge Ave.

Discussion: John Early, 92 Fieldcrest Dr., showed charts showing education performance and spending levels for different nations around the world. He told the audience that there is no relationship between spending and performance, and the U.S. is the third biggest spender, and its performance is below average. He said that in Ridgefield, enrollment is down and SAT scores are flat.

Mr. Early made a motion to amend the amount in the resolution to \$90,374,229, the same amount voted on for last year. Mr. Tyrrell seconded the motion.

Discussion: Rudy Marconi reported that he had reviewed the issue with the town attorney, who said that the meeting cannot reduce the total amount of the question. It must be on a line item basis. Mr. Early and Mr. Tyrrell argued that the Board of Education budget appears as a single line item, referring to the legal notice on the budget in the Press on April 20.

The Moderator answered that since there was a ruling by the town counsel that the Board of Ed total is not a line item, she would rule that it was not a proper amendment, based on the opinion of the town counsel as reported by Mr. Marconi. Jan Rifkinson also argued that the ruling by the town counsel prevented the voters from voting on the Board of Ed budget.

Mr. Early made a motion to appeal the decision of the Moderator, seconded by Mr. Rifkinson.

Discussion: Susan Cocco, Branchville Rd., supported the opinion of the town counsel and the Chairman and wanted to move the meeting forward. The Moderator decided to have the people vote on whether the amendment to reduce the school budget was out of order. The Moderator called for a standing vote.

Vote: "Aye" votes, 57, and "Nay" votes, 17. In support of the Moderator's decision, the amendment to reduce the school budget did not pass.

Ed Tyrrell made a motion to reduce the Board of Education budget by \$1,355,573, the line item for certified salaries, seconded by Jan Rifkinson.

Discussion: Rayda Krell, 39 Wooster Heights Dr. and Melanee Pearl, 35 Marcadon Ave., spoke in favor of the Board of Ed budget. Tom McManus, High Ridge Ave., said the cost of education is a nationwide issue.

Vote: "Nay" votes carried, and the motion was defeated.

Question #3, "the recommendation of the Board of Finance relative to the appropriation of \$1,840,000 for the planning, design, acquisition and construction of various Town road and infrastructure improvements (including \$75,000 for ADA) for the fiscal year commencing July 1, 2017 and ending June 30, 2018, be approved?"

Ed Tyrrell made a motion to approve, seconded by Sandra Mahoney.
No discussion.

Question #4, "the resolution appropriating \$900,000 for the planning, design, acquisition and construction of Branchville Transit infrastructure improvements and authorizing the issuance of \$900,000 bonds of the Town to meet said appropriation and pending the issuance thereof the making of temporary borrowings for such purpose (provided that the bonds shall be reduced by the amount of any State grants received for such purpose and it is anticipated that grants will cover all expenditures und the appropriation), be approved?"

Jan Rifkinson, New Rd., 169 New Rd. made a motion to approve, seconded by Chris McQuilkin.

Discussion: Chris McQuilkin, 132 Nod. Rd., asked if this would be spent if the state grants are not received. Rudy Marconi replied that it will only be spent if the town receives the grant.

Question #5, "the resolution appropriating \$182,882 for the design and acquisition of a highway Mack truck, \$170,805 for the design and acquisition of a John Deere loader, \$235,000 for the design and acquisition of ambulance #3 and \$4000,000 for the planning, design, acquisition and construction of replacement fuel tanks and authorizing the issuance of \$988,687 bonds of the Town to meet said

appropriation and pending the issuance thereof the making of temporary borrowings for such purpose, be approved?"

Barbara Manners, 109 Round Lake Rd. made a motion to approve, seconded by Jan Rifkinson.

Discussion: Jan Rifkinson inquired as to the number of trucks the Highway Dept. has. Mr. Marconi said they have 17 trucks and 16 drivers. Mr. Rifkinson also discussed leasing trucks.

Question #6, "the resolution appropriating \$950,000 for the planning, design, acquisition and construction to repair water and structural damage to the Recreation Center and authorizing the issuance of \$950,000 bonds of the Town to meet said appropriation and pending issuance thereof the making of temporary borrowings for such purpose, be approved?"

Barbara Dobbins, 499 Danbury Rd. made a motion to approve, seconded by Gina Carey, 107 East Ridge Ave., seconded.

Discussion: Jan Rifkinson asked why the contractor is not responsible. Rudy Marconi replied that the building was built in 2002.

Vote: "Aye" votes unanimous. Motion carried.

Question #7, the resolution appropriating \$378,770 for planning, design, acquisition and construction of school energy conservation measures (which is expected to result in \$250,386 of incentive savings), \$550,000 for the planning, design and acquisition of a school phone system upgrade and \$106,000 for the planning, design, acquisition and construction of school sidewalk and curbing repairs, and authorizing the issuance of \$1,034,770 bonds of the Town to meet said appropriations and pending the issuance thereof the making of temporary borrowings for such purpose, be approved?"

Ed Tyrrell made a motion to approve, seconded by Jan Rifkinson.

No discussion.

Vote: "Aye" votes unanimous. Motion carried.

After the discussion on the Town budget and the proposed bond resolutions, a motion was made by Ed Tyrrell, seconded by Fran Walton, that the First Selectman be authorized and directed to call a referendum to be held on May 9, 2017 between the hours of 6: o'clock A.M and 8:00 o'clock P.M (E.D.T.) at Yanity Gym to consider and take action upon the proposed Town budget and the proposed bond resolutions.

Mrs. Dornfeld read the following resolution: Resolution making appropriations aggregating \$1,322,108 for the planning, design and acquisition of various public improvements and equipment and authorizing the issuance of \$1,322,108 bonds of the Town to meet said appropriations and pending the issuance thereof the making of Temporary borrowings for such purpose.

Ed Tyrrell made a motion to approve, Arnold Dilauro, 7 First Lane, seconded.

The Moderator read the following items under \$100,000 by departments to be voted on.

Highway Dept.:

Lowboy Dump Truck	\$64,697
Double Drum Vibratory Roller	\$40,400
Guardrail Replacement	\$40,000

Ed Tyrrell made a motion to approve, Andrew Neblett seconded

No discussion

Vote: "Aye" votes unanimous.

Parks & Recreation Dept.:

1-1/2 Ton Truck W/Plow & Sander	\$60,120
Scotts Ridge Field Replacement	\$55,000
Playground Replacement/Repair	\$30,000
Field Renovator/Combinator	\$28,500
Turf Tractor	\$24,000
Parks/Fields Safety Improvements	\$23,600
ADA Compliance	\$21,300
Tennis/Basketball Court Repair	\$20,500
Field Conditioner	\$20,116
Maintenance Bldg. Floor Repair	\$12,075

Ed Tyrrell made a motion to approve, Alex Harris, 37 Christopher Road, seconded

Discussion: Chris McQuilken asked where the tennis/basketball court repairs would be done. Paul Roche replied they were at the Yanity Gym.

Jan Rifkinson asked how old the plows and sanders on the trucks are. Kevin Redmond replied that they were purchased in 2002.

Vote: "Aye" votes unanimous. Motion carried.

Golf Course:

Fairway Mower	\$43,600
Turf Truckster	\$9,200
Towbehind Debris Blower	\$7,200

Richard Larson, 10 Belvedere Court made a motion to approve, seconded by Alex Harris.

Discussion: Jan Rifkinson asked how old the fairway mowers were. Frank Sergiovanni, Gold Director, replied they were purchased in 1997.

Vote: "Aye" votes unanimous. Motion carried.

Town Engineer:

Lake Windwing Dam Repairs	\$90,000
ERMS Roof Repairs	\$87,000
Tiger Hollow Stairway Reconstruction	\$64,000
Window Replacement-VNA Wing	\$53,000
Storm Drainage Study	\$45,000
Dam Emergency Action Plans	\$41,000
Highway Exterior Painting & Carpentry	\$40,000
Fire Station #1 Exterior Painting	\$9,000

Ed Tyrrell made a motion to approve, Arnold Delaura seconded.

Discussion: Chris McQuilken suggested that the painting be done after the study.

Vote: "Aye" votes unanimous. Motion approved.

Tree Warden:

Tree Replacement	\$55,000
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Ed Tyrrell made a motion to approve, seconded by Barbara Dobbins.

Discussion: None

Vote: "Aye" unanimous. Motion carried.

Fire Dept.:

Headquarter Station Renovations	\$85,000
Fire Protective Equipment	\$44,000
PPE Washer & Dryer	\$18,000

Ed Tyrrell made motion to approve, Arnold Delaura seconded.

Discussion: Chris McQuilken asked about the PPE washer and dryer item. Assistant Fire Chief, Jerry Meyers informed the audience that a special washer and dryer would be used to launder hazardous uniforms.

Vote: "Aye" votes unanimous. Motion carried.

Information Technology:

Storage Area Network (SAN) Disks	\$33,400
Datto Backup Solution	\$17,400

Ed Tyrrell made a motion to approve, seconded by Alex Harris.

Discussion: None

Vote: "Aye" unanimous. Motion carried.

Town of Ridgefield:

Town Wide ADA	\$75,000
Public Safety Building Replacement Study	\$65,000

Ed Tyrrell made a motion to approve, Alex Harris seconded.

Discussion: None

Vote: "Aye" unanimous. Motion carried.

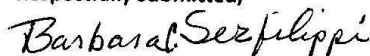
At the conclusion of the votes, the Moderator asked for a motion to reconvene to April 9, 2017 at Town Hall.

Ed Tyrrell made a motion to adjourn to reconvene, Gina Carry seconded the motion.

Vote: "Aye" unanimous. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 10:05 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,



Barbara Serfilippi, Town Clerk

Adjourned Annual Town Meeting May 9, 2017

Rudy Marconi, First Selectman, reconvened The Annual Town Meeting at 8:50 P.M. in the Large Conference Room of Town Hall.

Mr. Marconi stated that the first item of business was to elect the Moderator. Barbara Serfilippi made a motion to elect Jane Berendsen-Hill, seconded by Jessica Mancini.

Vote: "Aye" votes unanimous, Mrs. Hill was elected Moderator.

The Moderator reconvened the meeting and asked the Head Moderator of the Budget Referendum, Wayne Leiss to read the results of the Referendum. See results at end of minutes.

The Moderator announced that all questions were approved. She then asked for a motion to recess the meeting in order for the Board of Finance to set the mill rate. Jessica Mancini made a motion to recess and Barbara Serfilippi seconded.

"Aye", votes unanimous and the meeting recessed. The Board of Finance met to set the mill.

The Moderator reconvened the meeting at 8:55 P.M. and asked David Ulmer, Chairman of the Board of Finance to announce the mill rate. Mr. Ulmer announced that the new mill rate would be 27.21 on the Grand List of 2016. The Moderator then asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Michael Raduazzo, 195 Peaceable Street, made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Marty Heiser, 92 Spectacle Lane.

Vote: "Aye" votes unanimous and the meeting adjourned at 9:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Serfilippi
Barbara Serfilippi

Budget Referendum May 9, 2017

	YES	NO
1) "Shall the recommendation of the Board of Finance relative to the appropriation of \$47,074,886 for Town expenditures (consisting of Town operating expenditures of \$35,532,295 and debt service of \$11,522,591 on both Town and Education capital projects) for the fiscal year commencing July 1, 2017 and ending June 30, 2018, be approved? YES/NO"	1943	595
2) "Shall the recommendation of the Board of Finance relative to the appropriation of \$92,633,544 for Board of Education expenditures for the fiscal year commencing July 1, 2017 and ending June 30, 2018, be approved? YES/NO"	1478	960
3) "Shall the recommendation of the Board of Finance relative to the appropriation of \$1,840,000 for the planning, design, acquisition and construction of various Town road and infrastructure improvements (including \$75,000 for ADA) for the fiscal year commencing July 1, 2017 and ending June 30, 2018, be approved? YES/NO"	2051	384
4) "Shall the resolution appropriating \$900,000 for the planning, design, acquisition and construction of Branchville Transit infrastructure improvements and authorizing the issuance of \$900,000 bonds of the Town to meet said appropriation and pending the issuance thereof the making of temporary borrowings for such purpose (provided that the bonds shall be reduced by the amount of any State grants received for such purpose and it is anticipated that grants will cover all expenditures under the appropriation), be approved? YES/NO"	1511	897
5) "Shall the resolution appropriating \$182,882 for the design and acquisition of a highway Mack truck, \$170,805 for the design and acquisition of a John Deere loader, \$235,000 for the design and acquisition of ambulance #3 and \$400,000 for the planning, design, acquisition and construction of replacement fuel tanks and authorizing the issuance of \$988,687 bonds of the Town to meet said appropriation and pending the issuance thereof the making of temporary borrowings for such purpose, be approved? YES/NO"	1814	606
6) "Shall the resolution appropriating \$950,000 for the planning, design, acquisition and construction to repair water and structural damage to the Recreation Center and authorizing the issuance of \$950,000 bonds of the Town to meet said appropriation and pending the issuance thereof the making of temporary borrowings for such purpose, be approved? YES/NO"	1805	562
7) "Shall the resolution appropriating \$378,770 for planning, design, acquisition and construction of school energy conservation measures (which is expected to result in \$250,386 of incentive savings), \$550,000 for the planning, design and acquisition of a school phone system upgrade and \$106,000 for the planning, design, acquisition and construction of school sidewalk and curbing repairs, and authorizing the issuance of \$1,034,770 bonds of the Town to meet said appropriations and pending the issuance thereof the making of temporary borrowings for such purpose, be approved? YES/NO"	1756	657