

PUBLIC HEARINGS & BOARD of SELECTMEN MEETING – MAY 4, 2016

TOWN HALL/LARGE CONFERENCE ROOM – 7:30 P.M.

REVISED/APPROVED MINUTES

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

Agenda

1. Public Comment
2. Golf Committee Interview: Patrick Egan, Debbie Murphy
3. Vendor Permit Renewals: Chez Lenard – Michael Principi
Circusman – Enver, Elif Ceylan
4. Housing Authority Status Update: Bob Hebert
5. Chekhov International Theatre Festival
6. Winters Bros. MSW and Recycling Contract
7. Approval of Tax Refunds
8. Selectman's Report
9. Approval of Meeting Minutes: 3/30/16, 4/13/16, 4/22/16 Special, 4/16/16 Special

Public Hearing

R. Marconi opened the first Public Hearing at 7:30 p.m., pursuant to Section 3-9 of the Ridgefield Town Charter and Section 7-163e of the Connecticut General Statutes to consider the System Site Lease Agreement for Farmingville Elementary School Solar Panels, between the Town of Ridgefield, as Lessor, and CEFIA Holdings, LLC, as Lessee.

R. Marconi provided a brief overview of the background of the solar panel issue for municipal buildings in Ridgefield. Installation of the solar panels on the roof of Farmingville Elementary School will result in a savings of about \$20,000/year and there will be no real cost to the Town for the installation. It is expected that the solar panels have a life expectancy of about twenty years. E. Burns, Great Hill Rd., inquired if other schools or municipal buildings are on the list for the installation of solar panels also in the near future. R. Marconi responded how there is not set schedule for additional installations at this time as we want to be pleased with this initial additional installation first. The next two schools to receive the solar panels will probably be Branchville Elementary and/or Ridgebury.

John Katz, Old Ridgebury Rd., asked for a clarification of the expected life of these solar panels. At the end of the twenty years, does the Town own the solar panels? R. Marconi stated how the technology will probably be different in twenty years. The current installations total about \$300,000. It may be expensive to redo the solar panels in twenty years. We could plan ahead and put aside a certain percent each year for this project. The electric fee will be a flat charge of 7 cents/hour for the full twenty years.

B. Manners moved and M. Kozlark seconded a motion to set a Town Meeting date for May 17, 2016, 7:30 p.m., Town Hall/Large Conference Room, 400 Main St., Ridgefield, CT 06877, to consider the System Site Lease Agreement for Farmingville Elementary School Solar Panels, between the Town of Ridgefield, as Lessor, and CEFIA Holdings, LLC, as Lessee, pursuant to Section 3-9 of the Ridgefield Town Charter and Section 7-163e of the Connecticut General Statutes. Motion passed 5-0.

Public Hearing

R. Marconi opened the second Public Hearing to consider and act on the proposed changes in Ridgefield Code under Chapter 24 Citation and Chapter 262 Open Space Use. Representatives of the Conservation Commission were present for this discussion.

Carroll Brewster provided an overview as to why the Conservation Commission is proposing these changes in the Ridgefield Code. There is a history of public space violations in Ridgefield with residents building sheds on Town property, tree cutting and dumping. It is possible to levy fines for these violations, but it is a cumbersome process. The Conservation Commission used the Blight Ordinance as a model for the proposed changes to tighten up the process for citations. The proposed changes will allow the Conservation Commission to spot violations and levy penalties for non-compliance. But even then, the goal is not to levy fines, but to negotiate out of the problem. There is CT State statute that spells out what the cost should be, for instance, for cutting down a tree that is not on one's private property.

The process for a violation is as follows:

- 1) A call is received about a possible Open Space violation
- 2) There is an inspection of the site.
- 3) Identification of the nature of the violation
- 4) The problem is referred back to the Conservation Commission for review
- 5) An action and/or fine is levied appropriate to the situation
- 6) If the individual does not cooperate, then there is a daily fine, which can be as much as \$250/day.
- 7) In the case of a violation, the individual has the right to appeal
- 8) The goal is to get the situation solved quickly.

R. Hebert asked, "Where does the money go"?

Helen Dimos stated how the Town has had a lot of success with the Blight Ordinance.

Chris McQuilkin, Nod Rd., stated how there was a \$75,000 fine for the taking down of five trees, which seems like a very high amount. R. Marconi stated how there has to be the possibility of a large enough fine to "hurt".

Kitsey Snow, Canterbury Lane, stated how the Conservation Commission explains the process and the individual then usually agrees to pay the fine.

Dr. Oko, stated how the Commission does not want to give someone permission to "take a rock from Town open space". The Commission looked at the rulings and process in place in other towns and rocks were included. Helen Dimos stated how people need to be taught to "respect our rocks in our public spaces".

Doug Martin, Silver Spring Rd., stated he applauds the Conservation Commission.

Ellen Burns, Great Hill Rd., inquired if open space has been surveyed and marked? The Conservation Commission has to do a survey if it is a contested problem. David Cronin, Lawson Lane, stated there are situations when the homeowner has to pay for the survey.

R. Marconi closed the Public Hearings at 8:10 p.m., and called the Board of Selectmen Meeting to order.

Board of Selectmen Meeting *(immediately following the two Public Hearings)*

1. Public Comment – Chris McQuilkin, Nod Rd., stated he is aware of a proposed cut in the state budget but no vote has been taken. He hasn't heard anything about "the revenue side". What is the process? R. Marconi stated how he has spoken with the Chairman of the Board of Finance and the Business Manager, as to how they think this process is going to happen.
2. Golf Committee Interviews: Patrick Egan, Debbie Murphy
Debbie Murphy was out of town and unable to be present.

Patrick Egan came forward to support his interest in serving on the Golf Committee. Mr. Egan stated how he loves Ridgefield and the Ridgefield Golf Course. He has attended several Golf Committee meetings and has interviewed with the Committee and has received the Committee's endorsement. Mr. Egan is owner of Colonial Home Improvement, a full-service construction and maintenance company. His degree is in Parks and Recreational Management and Resort Management.

E. Tyrrell, Chairman of the Golf Committee, stated how in the '90's there were five members on the Golf Committee. The number was then raised to seven and then back down to five. There is currently one vacancy for a seven-member committee.

S. Zemo inquired about the possibility of an Alternate position. The Golf Committee reports to the Board of Selectmen and the BOS therefore has the right to make a decision as to the number of members of the Committee. Mr. Egan stated how he is "very flexible". Debbie Murphy is retired from IBM and is interested in being interviewed. It was decided to wait to make a decision until after Ms. Murphy has the opportunity to also be interviewed.

3. Vendor Permit Renewals: Chez Lenard – Michael Principi
Circusman – Enver, Elif Ceylan

Michael Principi came forward to express his interest in renewing his vendor permit to continue to sell hot dogs on Main Street. This is his 10th season and "business is great". He enjoys getting to know his customers. He also does catering for special events.

B. Manners inquired whether all his employees have had the required background checks done? Yes, he has handed out applications to all his employees and all applications are "in process".

M. Kozlark moved and B. Manners seconded a motion to approve the renewal for an additional year, the vendor permit for Michael Principi, of Chez Lenard to sell hot dogs with all the trimmings, drinks, chips, candy and cookies on Main Street in Ridgefield, CT. Motion passed 5-0.

Enver and Elif Ceylan came forward to support their request for a renewal of their vendor application for an additional year. Enver explained how she has moved to New Jersey and her Mom is now driving the truck. Last year's season was good. They went mainly to recreational and pool areas. There are no conflicts or issues with other ice cream vendors and they are operating only one truck. They also sell ice cream at CHIRP concerts. R. Hebert asked where they park at concerts? They are at the other entrance to the park by Ballard Green. The concrete pad is in the park and they are not supposed to sell food in the park. B. Manners stated how they need to work out with Parks & Recreation where exactly they are to park their truck. R. Hebert stated how there is one maintenance man for Ballard Green who ends up having to clean up the area following a concert. This is not what this employee should be doing.

B. Manners moved and M. Kozlark seconded a motion to approve the renewal for an additional year, the general vendor permit for Circusman for Enver Ceylan and Elif Ceylan to sell packaged ice cream, bottled drinks, water, Gatorade, and canned Coke in Ridgefield, CT. Motion passed 5-0.

4. Housing Authority Status Update: Bob Hebert

R. Hebert, Director of The Housing Authority, and Frank Coyle, Treasurer, provided a brief overview as to what is happening with Ridgefield's public housing. Mr. Moriarity moved away as of November 1st, 2013. At that time, R. Hebert and F. Coyle reported to the BOS as to the financial situation and the problems facing Ridgefield's Housing Authority. They asked for an abatement of the pilot program and Fairfield County Bank worked with them on this. The Housing Authority oversees 152 units of affordable housing for families, seniors and congregates. 132 of these units are under LP – separate legal structure where rent monies can be used to pay for their responsibilities. The problem The Housing Authority faces is the \$2.1 million mortgage on their 20-unit affordable housing property. Previously, rents were not being raised on a regular basis. They owed pay-backs to the State of CT. Even if there were empty apartments, they still owed the money to the State. A letter was submitted in 2014 to the BOS detailing the problems being faced.

At that time, they brought on a new management company who have done a terrific job. There had been no financial statements prepared. Vendors were not being paid and services were being cut off. At that time The Housing Authority came to the BOS and received an abatement for pilot program at The Meadows for two years. R. Hebert reported that they have come a long way since 2014 and they are now in full compliance and on top of everything. The property's financial situation is now stabilized.

R. Hebert asked F. Coyle to review the financial highlights as to where we were in 2013 and where we are now at the end of 2015 and where we need to go to move forward. There are no capital resources put aside. They did do a rent increase from \$100 to \$150/year for the 132 units. The Meadows is not subsidized but is legally limited. They have raised the rent 25% in these two years. They are now managing at 100% occupancy with an average unit turn-around of 3 to 4 days. They have a cleaning crew ready to move in immediately when someone moves out. At The Meadows, they have managed the turnover. They hired a company to come in and do a capital needs assessment for over a ten-year period. They came up with a need to spend \$238,000 over these ten years. They have started to put funds aside to cover this. At the end of 2015, they ended up in a very good position. Going forward, they cannot raise rent. They feel they could face problems going forward with the CT economy.

The Meadows owed the Town \$37,000 in 2014, which went up to \$45,000 by the end of 2015. In 2017, they should owe the Town \$27,000. R. Marconi asked how long do they see this trend continuing? R. Hebert responded that they do not know what will really happen. A lot of maintenance are direct costs.

R. Marconi suggested a possible Eagle Scout project to renovate the grotto. But liability insurance will be needed to have this happen.

R. Hebert reported how in the last nine months, they have changed the role of the Resident Services Coordinator. They are now building a case file on the seniors at Ballard Green and the Congregates. It is now much more orderly helping them with their needs and aging in place.

The Housing Authority is requesting an extension of their abatement for two more years. They hope to be able to pay back the \$45,000 owed in arrears.

B. Manners thanked R. Hebert and F. Coyle for an incredible job well done with “such a mess”.

S. Zemo moved and B. Manners seconded a motion to extend for an additional two years the abatement as requested by The Housing Authority. Motion passed 4-0-1. R. Hebert abstained because of his position as Director of The Housing Authority.

5. Chekhov International Theatre Festival

The Chekhov International Theatre Festival has existed and operated in Ridgefield since 2009. During that time, its Board of Directors has met in Town Hall on a monthly basis. Every September they bring professional theatre from New York and around the world to perform for three days in Ridgefield to honor the legacy of Michael Chekhov who maintained a studio school in town.

B. Manners stated how the Chekhov Festival has never been adopted as a Town project. They should be included as an organization and be part of the Friends of Ridgefield Community Programs with their accounting to flow through the Town’s MUNIS accounting system. This will also allow their organization to raise dollars and to be tax deductible.

S. Zemo moved and B. Manners seconded a motion to approve the Chekhov International Theatre Festival’s request to be officially included as an organization on the Friends of Ridgefield Community Programs, and that the Chekhov Festival accounting will now flow through the Town’s MUNIS accounting system. Motion passed 5-0.

6. Winters Bros. MSW and Recycling Contract

David Grogins, Town Counsel, has reviewed this contract. R. Marconi asked the members of the BOS to review the contract and let him know of any concerns or questions they may have. The goal is to approve this contract by the end of May.

7. Approval of Tax Refunds

M. Kozlark moved and R. Hebert seconded a motion to approve the tax refund totaling \$9,679.25, as requested by Tax Collector, Jane Berendsen-Hill in her memo dated 4/29/16. Motion passed 5-0.

8. Selectman’s Report

- National Day of Prayer – Thursday, May 5 – with a program at Lounsbury House.
- Fire Commission Meeting – May 11 or May 18? R. Marconi to confirm the date
- Committee on the Arts meeting – May 12 at Keeler Tavern
- Conservation Commission Annual Meeting – May 12 at 6:30 p.m. at Parks & Recreation

- Route 35 construction is so slow!! Problem with a sewer line from Parks & Recreation that did not know it was there. Will need to re-route.
- Connecticut State Budget still not settled, which greatly affects municipal budgets. Town budget meeting – will need a motion to reduce BOE amount. Also issue of MBR – minimum budget requirement. No municipality can appropriate less than the previous year's budget.
- Resignation received on Ridgefield Prevention Council.
- Fly-over scheduled for Memorial Day has been confirmed. BOS meet at Jesse Lee Church at 11:30 a.m. to walk in the parade. Two Boy Scouts to carry the banner. Ceremony scheduled for Memorial by Jesse Lee and then the Parade kick-off will follow.

9. Approval of Meeting Minutes: 3/30/16, 4/13/16, 4/22/16 Special, 4/26/16 Special

S. Zemo moved and M. Kozlark seconded a motion to approve as amended the minutes of the April 13, 2016, Board of Selectmen Meeting. Motion passed 4-0. B. Manners abstained as she was not present at the meeting.

M. Kozlark moved and R. Hebert seconded a motion to approve as written the minutes of the April 22, 2016, Board of Selectmen Special Meeting. Motion passed 3-0. B. Manners and S. Zemo abstained as they were not present at the meeting.

M. Kozlark moved and B. Manners seconded a motion to approve as written the minutes of the April 26, 2016, Board of Selectmen Special Meeting. Motion passed 5-0.

B. Manners moved and M. Kozlark seconded a motion to adjourn the Board of Selectmen Meeting at 10:10 p.m. Motion passed 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,
Janet L. Johnson