

TOWN of RIDGEFIELD BOARD of SELECTMEN MEETING
JANUARY 19, 2011

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.

In attendance: R. Marconi, A. Bodner, M. Kozlark, B. Manners

Absent: D. Masters

Agenda

1. Parks and Recreation 2011-2012 Capital Request Discussion: Barbara Dobbins, Phil Kearns
2. Elected Officials Pension Discussion: Dave Campbell
3. Employment Extension Request: Ted Peatt
4. MIRMA Budget: Allocation of Funding
5. Parking Enforcement Officer Discussion
6. Tax Collector Refunds
7. Public Health Preparedness Grant Resolution: Ed Briggs
8. Selectman's Report
9. Approval of Meeting Minutes: 1/5/11

R. Marconi called the Board of Selectmen Meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

1. Parks and Recreation 2011-2012 Capital Request Discussion: Barbara Dobbins, Phil Kearns

Phil Kearns, Chairman of the Parks and Recreation Commission, and Paul Roche, Director of the Parks and Recreation Department, came forward to discuss the Spray Bay Proposal. Katherine Scatterday, representing the Spray Bay Committee, also came forward to present the Spray Bay proposal. Also present for the meeting were the following members of the Committee: Stacey Grijns, Amanda Bergen, Michelle Schatter, Holly Erder, Darcy Scatterday, Jane Byers, Steve Creedon, and Matt Lee. Also presented and thanked for their assistance were: Evie Bottelli, Michelle Schaefer (who worked on the logo and the name "Spray Bay"), and Amanda Bergen (fund raiser). B. Dobbins was not present.

The Spray Bay, outdoor water activity, will be located at the Recreation Center with access to the indoor pool area. Phil Kearns and Katherine Scatterday expressed the Commission's excitement behind this project. They plan to raise 50% of the funding and wish to obtain BOS approval to give the voters the opportunity to vote this May for bonding of the remaining 50%. The Commission feels that Spray Bay will pay for itself with daily passes, birthday and special parties, and summer campers. Ridgefield has 4,000 children age 12 and under and 750 summer campers. 5800 residents are currently members of the Recreation Center. Spray Bay will provide an outdoor water activity at a much cheaper cost than building an outdoor in-ground pool. Paul Roche stated how these water spray facilities are a state-wide trend, as in-ground pools are so expensive to construct and operate plus the liability issue. An attendant is needed and not lifeguards on duty as with a pool. Spray Bay will also be fully accessible for special needs children, which is part of Ridgefield's strategic goal. The Parks & Rec Commission is trying to make every aspect of their park offerings fully accessible to those with special needs.

Ms. Scatterday explained the site-plan of 1,800 sq. feet, which will hold 90 children at a time with extensive shade coverage. The surface will be a rubber non-slip material. There will be a walkway to

the indoor pool as well as showers available. The total cost estimate is \$335,000 with \$167,500 from community fundraising and \$167,500 from proposed town funding thru bonding. Annual operating expense estimates include cost for an attendant -\$8,500, water -\$7,000, and maintenance - \$2,000 for a total of \$17,500 plus \$12,000 bonding repayment – Total = \$29,500. Annual revenue estimates also total \$29,500 (resulting in a break-even situation). Revenue estimates include: Incremental Day Camp (+12 campers) - \$3,000; Incremental Birthday Party Revenue (+16 parties) - \$4,000; drop-in fees (15 on usable days) - \$11,000; and Incremental Rec Family Memberships (+46 new memberships) – \$11,500 for the total of \$29,500.

Can seniors use the water spray facility? What about separation of the different age groups to prevent the toddlers from being knocked down? A. Bodner inquired about fund raising and bonding for a recreational facility that will not be open to all in the community without a charge. R. Marconi asked about the cost for water. It is not a closed system. Water will go into the pond ultimately. The facility would be shut down if there is a drought. Another possibility is to use the well on-site. R. Marconi stated how this project will be a tough sell in a tough economy. There are many other demands for funding including health care costs and pension funding. This is going to be a very tight budget cycle.

M. Kozlark inquired about possible future maintenance costs for Spray Bay; any deterioration of the equipment? P. Roche responded that all the equipment is stainless steel. Nozzles will need to be replaced but that is not expensive. The rubber base should be good for 7 to 8 years. Will any revenue be lost from Great Pond? P. Roche responded that this is being studied. The drop-in charge will include access to both the pool and Spray Bay. A dual membership is a possibility. Spray Bay can be kept open thru the fall months when other outdoor facilities are closed.

B. Manners expressed the need for bathroom facilities in connection with Spray Bay; portable facilities are not adequate. This needs to be looked at.

Andy Bodner stated how the forecast for increased membership is easy to understand as well as birthday parties and camper use, but we don't want to steal revenue from other facilities in town. If we are competing with other activities in town, then we do not want to be cheaper than the competition. Phil Kearns responded that the Boys & Girls Club attracts an older age group. Spray Bay will attract toddlers thru 6 year olds. The primary mission of the Parks & Rec Department is to provide recreational activities to the community. They monitor carefully what is charged and feel that they are competitive. Cheshire has a water spray facility. We can inquire about their breakdown in costs and their charge structure.

M. Kozlark asked if the split between the fund raising and the Town bonding needs to be 50/50? Couldn't the fund raising be a larger percent? The answer is yes. P. Roche stated that it is easier to raise funds if the Committee has the Town's support first. B. Manners expressed the opposite. She thinks support for the fund raising should start immediately and before any funding is obtained from the Town. It will be an easier sell if the fund raising is already successful. Why now for this project in these economic times? The response was that Spray Bay will pay for itself and is not a "big ask".

R. Marconi expressed a thank you to Paul Roche for his dedication to the Town of Ridgefield and congratulations on his 34th anniversary as an employee on January 17th.

2. Elected Officials Pension Discussion: Dave Campbell

R. Marconi recused himself from this discussion. Barbara Serfilippi, Town Clerk, and Jane Berendsen-Hill, Tax Collector, came forward with Dave Campbell, Chairman of the Pension Commission, to discuss the pension issue for Ridgefield's three full-time elected officials, First Selectman, Town Clerk,

and Tax Collector. D. Campbell indicated that he had come before the BOS in 2008 when the Pension Commission learned that the Town's elected officials did not participate in a pension plan. At that time the Town's contribution was 6% of salary. This rate has varied, but currently averages out to about 9.7% of salary. Nothing was done for the elected officials in 2008 to raise their contribution in keeping with other town employees. Mr. Campbell is now returning to the BOS to seek a resolution to this problem.

Andy Bodner stated that this issue was deferred two years ago because this is really a compensation issue. Is this to be done in lieu of a raise or in addition to a raise? Total compensation for each position is what needs to be looked at. Are our elected officials adequately paid?

B. Manners indicated that even when looking at this as a compensation issue, there is still a disparity here. Historically, pension contributions have been regarded as a separate issue from compensation. Do we have the power to do something about this?

Jane Berendsen-Hill recounted some of the history of this issue. The salary for these three individuals had been set by the Board of Finance. They were the only ones who could address this. There has still not been a "catch-up". Instead of the BOF addressing this, it should be the BOS.

M. Kozlark stated that this issue should be part of this next budget cycle. The impact would be about \$8,000 to go from 6% to 9% of salary. B. Manners stated that the BOS would not vote on this issue this evening, but it would be part of the upcoming budget discussion and the BOS will report back to D. Campbell regarding their decision.

3. Employment Extension Request: Ted Peatt

Fire Chief Burford and Director of Human Resources Laurie Scholl came forward to discuss this issue. For a firefighter to extend his employment past the age of 55, approval of such has to be obtained from the Board of Selectmen. William (Ted) Peatt sent a letter on 1/2/11 to the BOS requesting an extension of his employment with the Town of Ridgefield. Chief Burford indicated that there are three firefighters who currently fit this situation. There are two others besides T. Peatt who will be coming before the BOS shortly. L. Scholl indicated that this process is part of the pension agreement with the firefighters. A. Bodner inquired as to the financial implications of this decision. L. Scholl responded that we do not have to hire a replacement, but Mr. Peatt receives a higher salary than would a new hire plus an increase in pension costs.

B. Manners moved and M. Kozlark seconded a motion to approve the extension of William (Ted) Peatt's employment as a Ridgefield Fire Fighter past his 55th birthday as requested. Motion passed 4-0.

4. MIRMA Budget; Allocation of Funding

Director of Finance, Kevin Redmond came forward to discuss this issue. He and R. Marconi have discussed the BOE's 40% with Superintendent Deborah Low and Business Manager Paul Hendrickson. Allocation of funding for their 40% portion is on the BOE's agenda for their meeting on 1/24/11. K. Redmond suggested the following allocation to cover the 60% owed by the Town:

B. Manners moved and M. Kozlark seconded a motion to approve Department of Finance Memorandum #201102 as requested by Finance Director, Kevin Redmond, and forward this request to the Board of Finance for their approval. This Memorandum provides for a Transfer – MIRMA Worker's Compensation as follows: "The second MIRMA assessment is \$217,252, of which, the Town is responsible for 60% (\$130,351) and the BOE is responsible for 40% (\$86,901).

In the current year, there are certain expenses that are running under budget. Legal has a budget of \$205K and to date has only spent \$59K. Property, Liability, Umbrella and Other Insurance premiums are final and are \$30K less than budget. Worker's Compensation insurance will come in \$34K under budget as a result of an audit of the FYE 09/10 payroll resulting in a lower premium."

Increase: #10853-58008, MIRMA Assessment in the amount of \$130,351, and Decrease: #10030-52400, Legal – Professional Services in the amount of \$50,000; #10851-57006, Insurance – Property, Liability, Umbrella in the amount of \$30,000; #10853-57002, Insurance – Worker's Compensation in the amount of \$34,035; and #10890-59101, Contingency in the amount of \$16,316. Motion passed 4-0.

Andy Bodner suggested that someone from the BOE (D. Low or P. Hendrickson or both) come to the next BOS Meeting on February 2nd, to discuss further this commitment.

5. Parking Enforcement Officer Discussion

Kevin Redmond, Director of Finance, Laurie Scholl, Human Resources Director, and Mike Zap, representing The Parking Authority, came forward to discuss the Parking Authority's request to make the Parking Enforcement Officer a full-time position instead of the current 28/hour/week part-time position. This was discussed at the previous BOS Meeting and referred to the next meeting with availability of a more complete lay-out of income and expenses for the Branchville Train Station. The current part-time position does include costs for worker's compensation and pension, but not medical benefits. Currently there is no parking enforcement on one day/week, either in town or at the Branchville station. There is a resultant loss of parking revenue from that one day with no coverage – no daily tickets issued at the station and no parking fines.

R. Marconi pointed out that the 28/hours/week position costs \$27,500; the proposed full-time position of 35 hours/week would cost \$50,859 with the increase in salary and medical coverage. A. Bodner stated that the income numbers do not justify this extra expense. We can estimate the costs to run the Branchville Station, but the numbers are not definite. If we have excess income from the Station, then we should reduce the cost of the season passes. R. Marconi responded that we cannot charge less for season passes than what is charged at other stations on the same rail line. We researched the cost for season passes at the other stations and thus \$250 was the number we needed to charge.

B. Manners stated that we could hire a part-time person for coverage on just the 5th day. R. Marconi indicated that we could also extend parking coverage to Saturday until 1:00 p.m. He discussed this issue with D. Masters (not present this evening) who indicated that she would love to increase the enforcement officer's position to full-time, but she does not think that now is the right time to do this. L. Scholl indicated that it would probably cost about \$15/hour for a part-time individual for parking enforcement coverage on the 5th day.

The BOS agreed to tell The Parking Authority and Fred Fields that it is not appropriate at this economic time to turn the part-time position into full-time. Thank you to The Parking Authority as they have done a lot of work on this issue. R. Marconi offered to attend The Parking Authority's next meeting to explain the BOS's decision.

6. Tax Collector Refunds

A. Bodner moved and B. Manners seconded a motion to approve the refund request submitted by Tax Collector, Jane Berendsen-Hill on 1/13/2011, in the total amount of \$8,979.45. Motion passed 4-0.

7. Public Health Preparedness Grant Resolution: Ed Briggs

A. Bodner moved and B. Manners seconded a motion to approve the Authorizing Resolution of the Town of Ridgefield Board of Selectman authorizing Rudy Marconi, First Selectman, to make, execute and approve, on behalf of the Town of Ridgefield, any and all contracts or amendments thereof with the State of Connecticut Department of Public Health, and in particular, this Public Health Preparedness Grant Resolution as requested by Ed Briggs, Director of Public Health. Motion passed 4-0.

8. Selectman's Report

- R. Marconi indicated beginning work on the various department budgets. Capital requests are not as high as in previous years for items at a cost of more than \$20,000 and/or will last 20+ years.
- K. Redmond is preparing an analysis of equipment breakdowns. A. Bodner inquired as to the cost of doing repairs ourselves. Where do these ancillary repairs costs show up? Outsourcing may be more costly, but we then have a perspective of what these costs are, and then can make a decision as to whether it is better to do repairs in-house or outsource.
- A. Bodner requests an Executive Session be scheduled for insurance issues and settlements that have been made. R. Marconi indicated that insurance risks are being closely monitored and that a check is made to make sure than any outside contractor has liability insurance.
- The Board of Finance approved yesterday the costs incurred as Ridgefield's share of the Probate Court move to Bethel.
- Al Garzi is currently working on the supplemental automobile tax billing. He reports that automobile values have gone up by about \$10 million which will result in approximately another \$90,000 in revenue.

9. Approval of Meeting Minutes: 1/5/11

M. Kozlark moved and A. Bodner seconded a motion to approve as written the minutes of the January 5, 2011, Board of Selectmen Meeting. Motion passed 3-0-1. B. Manners abstained as she was not present at the January 5th BOS Meeting.

A. Bodner moved and M. Kozlark seconded a motion to adjourn the Board of Selectmen Meeting at 10:15 p.m. Motion passed 4-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Janet L. Johnson