

PUBLIC HEARING & BOARD of SELECTMEN MEETING - NOV. 16, 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, D. Masters

Public Hearing

*Notice is hereby given that a **Public Hearing** will be held on November 16, 2011, 7:30 p.m., Town Hall Large Conference Room, 400 Main Street, Ridgefield, Connecticut to hear comment on the proposal to purchase 28.8 acres on Old Stagecoach Road for the purpose of open space.*

Agenda – BOS Meeting (immediately following the Public Hearing)

1. Public Comment
2. Youth Commission Interview: Mark Robinson
3. Boehringer Ingelheim Tax Abatements: Al Garzi, Tax Assessor
4. Approval of 2012 Board of Selectmen Meeting Calendar
5. Selectman's Report
6. Approval of Meeting Minutes: 10/19/11 Special Mtg., 10/19/11 Public Hearing, 10/26/11, 11/3/11 Special Mtg., 11/7/11 Special Mtg., 11/9/11 Special Mtg.

R. Marconi requested a moment of silence in remembrance of Joan Plock who recently passed away. The condolences of the Town of Ridgefield and the Board of Selectmen go out to Joan's family – her husband, sons and grandchildren. She served for 8+ years on the Board of Selectmen and prior to that for many years on the Board of Education. Joan was very dedicated to the Town of Ridgefield. The service will be at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, November 19, at Kane's Funeral Home.

Public Hearing

R. Marconi called the Public Hearing to order at 7:30 p.m. R. Marconi read the call for the Public Hearing. Dr. Ben Oko, Chairman of the Conservation Commission, came forward with a map to show the planned purchase of open space property by the Commission.

The previously proposed plan to purchase the property for erection of a cell tower was voted down by the residents of the town. The seller has now come forward asking if the town wants to purchase the property for open space in perpetuity. During these last three years, the Commission has accumulated additional funds and now has \$800,000 in their "kitty". The price of \$900,000 has been reduced to \$850,000, and the seller will keep three acres on Ledges Rd., which does not change the desirability of the open space property. Dr. Oko stated that the ridge line, the vernal pools, and the laurel groves all remain as part of the 25.8 acres. Adjoining neighbors have raised \$40,000 toward the purchase of the property.

Any housing to be built on the seller's three acres will be limited in size to 2,000 sq. ft., and the tree buffer between this development and the open space will remain. Dr. Oko pointed out on the map an adjoining piece of property to the proposed open space acquisition which is owned by Wilton Bank. The Commission is currently in discussion with Wilton Bank to seek a deed restriction preventing erection of

a call tower on this piece of property. If this agreement is not reached, then there will be no purchase of the proposed open space.

Dom D'Addario, Taunton Hill Rd., asked if the Conservation Commission's proposed land purchase will belong to the Town of Ridgefield? The answer is yes, the Conservation Commission is a commission of the town.

John Katz, Old Ridgebury Rd., pointed out that all the Conservation Commission's funds have been donated by individuals – every penny! Andy Bodner asked how much of the \$850,000 has been donated by developers? Mr. Katz responded – about one-third. Each time a new subdivision is started, 10% of the land or 10% of the appraised value of the land must be given to the Conservation Commission for open space.

R. Marconi indicated that the proposed Town Meeting for November 30 will be left on the schedule for now, but details need to be worked out with Wilton Bank as previously mentioned.

R. Marconi closed the Public Hearing at 7:50 p.m.

Board of Selectmen Meeting (*immediately following the Public Hearing*)

R. Marconi called the Board of Selectmen Meeting to order at 7:40 p.m.

1. Public Comment

John Katz, Old Ridgebury Rd., commented on how the lights at the tennis courts are on every night and all night even if no one is on the court. R. Marconi stated that the lights are on a timer and go off around 10:00 to 11:00 p.m. The timer was the least expensive way to control the lighting. He will check that the timer is working correctly.

Steffi Jones, 549 Branchville Road, requested the phone number given in the Town Hall message be stated more slowly.

2. Youth Commission Interview: Mark Robinson

Mark Robinson came forward to express his interest in serving on the Youth Commission. R. Marconi read the email received from Mr. Robinson. This is his 20th year as a Ridgefield resident and he just finished two terms on the EDC. Mr. Robinson stated how he tries to find appropriate and productive ways to contribute to the town through participation in various volunteer initiatives and committees. He has raised two youths in Ridgefield and cares about the happiness and welfare of the young people in Ridgefield.

M. Kozlark asked Mr. Robinson if he had any particular goals in mind for Ridgefield's youth? Mr. Robinson responded – not specifically, but he is interested in the substance abuse issue. The Youth Commission can influence the climate of the community on this issue. Substance abuse is a community and culture issue.

D. Masters stated how she knows that Mr. Robinson wants to continue to be involved in the community and thanked him for coming forward to again volunteer.

Andy Bodner moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to appoint Mark Robinson to fill one of the adult vacancies on the Youth Commission for a two-year term. Motion passed 5-0.

3. Boehringer Ingelheim Tax Abatements: Al Garzi, Tax Assessor

Mr. Garzi came forward to discuss the proposed tax abatements for Boehringer Ingelheim in connection with their various construction projects. R. Marconi indicated that he had attended another groundbreaking this past week. There continues to be a turnover of Boehringer CEO's, but they continue to all be very interested in working with the town. Mr. Garzi reviewed the five applications under consideration. They were submitted by BI, reviewed by Mr. Garzi who then prepared a tax impact study, and he is now submitting these applications to the BOS for their approval. If accepted by the BOS, then a Town Meeting is the next step in the approval process. Taxing is 100% during construction and until one year after the Certificate of Occupancy (CO) is issued. Abatement starts one year after the issue date of the CO – 85% abatement and 15% tax for 7 years, whatever is the value of the real estate and the personal property at the time (not on the value of the land) - \$75 million on new construction real estate and \$50 million on the personal property. Danbury gives 100% abatement. R. Marconi stated that Ridgefield's mill rate is actually 15% lower than Danbury's for corporations.

Andy Bodner inquired about the personal property tax abatement. Mr. Garzi responded that the town receives about 65% back from the State of CT, about \$600,000 at this time. How long this policy is going to last, we do not know. R. Marconi stated that we now receive back a small part of the increase in sales tax and a small percent of the hotel tax, and a couple of other taxes as well.

Mr. Garzi indicated that we are right "on track" with BI's construction projects. The next step is the Town Meeting on November 30th to approve the abatement on these five projects. One of these buildings is 90% on the Ridgefield side and 10% on the Danbury side.

D. Masters moved and B. Manners seconded a motion to approve the tax abatements for the Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals, Inc. program as outlined by Tax Assessor, Al Garzi, for the following projects:

#4 – Initial Phase Pilot Plant Replacement (PPR) and Personal Property Acquisition

#5 – Initial Phase Building 8 – Fit Out Level 5 and Personal Property Acquisition

#6 – Initial Phase Building 8 Level 3 Renovation, Level 4 & 5 Add-On and Personal Property Acquisition

#7 – Initial Phase Parking Lot – R&D

#8 – Initial Phase Safety Assessment Building (SAB) and Personal Property Acquisition

and to set a Town Meeting for November 30, 2011, 7:30 p.m., Town Hall Large Conference Room, 400 Main St., Ridgefield, CT. Motion passed 5-0.

R. Marconi suggested that Al Garzi bring a chart to the Town Meeting detailing the various projects, their cost, anticipated tax revenue, and tax abatement schedule.

4. Approval of 2012 Board of Selectmen Meeting Calendar

R. Marconi pointed out the dates set aside for budget review in February, March and April. All these dates might not be needed. The Fire Commission meeting scheduled for September 26, 2012 will need to be changed as this is a Jewish holiday.

B. Manners moved and M. Kozlark seconded a motion to approve as amended the proposed 2012 BOS & FC Meeting Schedule. Motion passed 5-0.

5. Selectman's Report

- HRA is requesting that Ridgefield join them for recycling. This issue will take a lot of thought.
- Today R. Marconi met with the First Selectmen of Wilton, Redding and Newtown regarding joint pressure to be put on CL&P prior to the onset of cold weather. How is CL&P going to respond in the future? There is a meeting with the regulatory commission scheduled for November 23rd which R. Marconi will attend. John Pinchbeck cleans up the right-of-ways as quickly as possible. Parks & Rec cleans up the conservation areas. We have yet to be reimbursed by FEMA for last December's snowstorm. The transfer station has been open for free drop-off of brush by residents and will remain open thru the end of the week. The Town will consider keeping the transfer station open to residents even longer.
- Andy Bodner asked if we need to develop a policy on how aggressive we want Ridgefield's trees to be trimmed. CL&P was here trimming about 5 to 8 years ago – not recently. They want to put a 20 ft. path thru the trees which is often unattractive and not desirable by residents. There is often a communication problem between residents and line crews. There were problems also with the lack of responsiveness from AT&T – getting the phone and internet lines up and working again.
- R. Marconi commented on how residents with special needs have severe needs in the cold. The town will not be able to meet their needs if there is a lack of power during the winter months.
- Andy Bodner suggested that the Parking Authority be invited back for the next BOS Meeting. Also, the BOE meeting on demographics indicated that the elementary school enrollment will drop significantly in 8 years. If a school is being closed, the residents will want a voice in which school is to be closed. A. Bodner also asked if there will be any monies left over from paving of the roads. R. Marconi responded that we are not to that point yet. Peter Hill will provide the BOS with feedback on the roads, but he has been very busy with the recent storm and power outage.

6. Approval of Meeting Minutes: 10/19/11 Special Mtg., 10/19/11 Public Hearing, 10/26/11, 11/3/11 Special Mtg., 11/7/11 Special Mtg.

A. Bodner moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to approve as written the minutes of the October 19, 2011 Board of Selectmen Special Meeting. Motion passed 5-0.

D. Masters moved and M. Kozlark seconded a motion to approve as written the minutes of the October 19, 2011 Public Hearing. Motion passed 5-0.

A. Bodner moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to approve as written the minutes of the October 26, 2011 Board of Selectmen Meeting. Motion passed 5-0.

A. Bodner moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to approve as written the minutes of the November 3, 2011 Board of Selectmen Special Meeting. Motion passed 5-0.

A. Bodner moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to approve as written the minutes of the November 7, 2011, Board of Selectmen Special Meeting. Motion passed 5-0.

Note - The minutes of the 11/9/11 Special BOS Meeting were not available for review even though they were listed on the agenda. Therefore, these minutes need to be reviewed at the next BOS Meeting.

R. Marconi moved and A. Bodner seconded a motion to adjourn the Board of Selectmen Meeting at 8:43 p.m. Motion passed 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Janet L. Johnson