

BOARD of SELECTMEN MEETING – JANUARY 10, 2007

TOWN HALL/LOWER LEVEL 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, B. Manners, D. Masters, J. Plock

Special Town Meeting Cancelled

The purpose of the Special Town Meeting was to approve the proposed lease between the Town of Ridgefield and Hearts & Minds Music LLC at the Venus Building, 90 East Ridge, Ridgefield, CT. The proposed lease cannot be approved because the Fire Marshall has denied occupancy for an educational program for children under seven years of age on the second floor of a building. Hearts & Minds Music LLC is seeking possible space elsewhere.

BOS Meeting Agenda

1. Ridgefield Arts Council Interviews: Donna DiAcri
2. AAC Composition: John Kinnear
3. Review and Approval of New Tax Refund Procedure: Jane Berendsen Hill
4. Ridgefield Playhouse 20-Year Lease
5. Golf Committee Composition Discussion
6. VFW \$1/year Lease at Venus Building
7. Ramapoo Gun Club Agreement
8. Waive Permit Fees for Halpin Lane Affordable Housing Project
9. Approval of Meeting Minutes: 11/29/06, 12/13/06
10. Selectman's Report
11. Executive Session to Discuss Property Dispute

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

J. Plock moved and B. Manners seconded a motion to put off until a later date Agenda Item #4, Ridgefield Playhouse 20-Year Lease, and replace it with a discussion of the Leary Property. Motion passed 5-0. The Playhouse lease is not ready for approval. All the terms have not been finalized. A 20-year lease is required for applications for grants from the State of Connecticut. The Playhouse lease will be placed on the agenda at a later date when it is ready for review and approval.

1. Ridgefield Arts Council Interviews: Donna DiAcri
Ms. DiAcri came forward to introduce herself to the BOS and present her candidacy. There are currently three vacancies on the Arts Council. The Treasurer has resigned. Two new appointments were recently approved – Isaac Hirt-Manheimer and Ruth Wilder Feldman. R. Marconi read the December 20, 2006 letter received from Ms. DiAcri. She has attended two Arts Council meetings and was encouraged to apply by Nancy Baldwin. She is past President of the Wilton Arts Council and brought and chaired the American Native Art Festival thru the Lion's Club for ten years. There are three projects of Ridgefield's Art Council that Ms. DiAcri is most interested in working on: The Art Forum for Children, the 300th Ridgefield Anniversary Year, and

Senior Projects including the Art Show. J. Plock inquired if after attending the two meetings of the Arts Council she had identified any areas for improvement. Ms. DiAcri responded that projects need to be done and not just talked about – there is a need to move things forward”. She feels she is good at follow-through. R. Marconi indicated that there are five applicants for the three openings. It was decided to wait until after all have been interviewed prior to making any appointments.

2. AAC Composition: John Kinnear

Mr. Kinnear, Chairman of the AAC (Architectural Advisory Committee) came forward to participate in a discussion regarding the membership numbers for the AAC. Planning & Zoning used to appoint members to the AAC prior to the realization that it was the Board of Selectmen’s responsibility to do so. The AAC currently consists of 6 members and 4 alternates and one vacancy. The initial charter called for a larger membership. The current membership would like to stay at 6 members plus 4 alternates as it is then easier to get a quorum at a meeting.

Becky Mucchetti, Chairman of the Planning & Zoning Commission, indicated that she was in error at the November 29, 2006 BOS Meeting when she stated that there had been frustration with the lack of timely minutes from the AAC. The minutes are being filed within 24 hours following an AAC meeting.

Mr. Kinnear explained the purpose of the AAC – to serve in an advisory capacity to Planning & Zoning. AAC reviews special permits and signs over ten sq. feet in size and reports back to P&Z their suggestions and opinions. The AAC members sit down with an applicant in a roundtable discussion (usually it is an architect or engineer presenting the application). They summarize all the comments and submit their recommendations to Planning & Zoning. There is no actual vote on the project – just advice given.

R. Marconi inquired if there would be a lack of input if a quorum is down to three at a given meeting. The response was that there would still be a consensus of the group which would be submitted to P&Z. A. Bodner asked if it was difficult to get a quorum with a membership of 6+4? Mr. Kinnear replied that a recent meeting had 8 members in attendance. At holiday time both in the winter and summer, it is often difficult to get a quorum. It is helpful to have a variety of creative talent that AAC can call in. Sometimes previous members are called upon as well.

R. Marconi reported on the letter received from Betty Brosius, Director of Planning for the Town of Ridgefield, indicating an increased responsibility for the AAC with the proposed village designation. Increased participation by AAC is desired.

John Katz, Ridgebury Rd. – indicated that one of the primary requirements for membership of the AAC (or any committee) is attendance at the Committee’s meetings. If an individual wants to serve on a Committee, then one must be available to participate actively. Becky Mucchetti pointed out how the AAC was very helpful with the Toll Bros. application. The AAC’s peer review resulted in no vinyl siding and a better use of stone.

Andy Bodner asked for a report on what the attendance has been at AAC meetings – this is found in the Committee’s annual report.

3. Review and Approval of New Tax Refund Procedure: Jane Berendsen Hill

Ms. Berendsen-Hill came forward to explain her request for this new procedure for approval of tax refunds. Most of these refunds are the result of vehicle sales or lease terminations. Currently the

First Selectman signs any refund up to \$2,000. There are many such refunds. It is felt that a monthly list of such refunds is a much more efficient procedure. **J. Plock moved and B. Manners seconded a motion to approve the “New Procedure for Approval of Tax Refunds”, as requested by Jane Berendsen-Hill, Tax Collector, whereby a report will be submitted monthly to the Board of Selectmen for their approval summarizing the information on current certified refund applications, and to approve the January 2007 tax refund approval list as presented at the Board of Selectmen Meeting. Motion passed 5-0.**

4. Leary Property Discussion – The Leary property is 1.2 acres behind the Police Station which is being offered for sale to the Town for \$1,340,000. There is a one-story house with an apartment on the property. The idea would be to spin-off the house and apartment and use the balance for parking behind the Police Department.

D. Masters indicated that the cost is high – it might well be worth it if a combination Fire Dept. and Police Dept. could be built on the property, but she does not see it as a usable property for the cost involved.

B. Manners indicated the advantage of having property abutting Town property and especially at a location where expansion is desired.

Andy Bodner indicated that he is aware of the current expansion plan for the Police Department but this expansion will fit on the current property. The Leary property would be a great piece of property for the Town to own, but the cost is high.

J. Plock indicated that she is in agreement with the positions stated by Ms. Masters and Mr. Bodner.

R. Marconi pointed out that a \$500,000 grant application is underway for Yanity Gym and the Skate Park location which would include parking. There are three housing development concerns interested in the Leary Property. “Once it is gone, it is gone.”

B. Manners indicated her vote in favor of purchasing the Leary Property, the other four BOS members were against the purchase.

5. Golf Committee Composition Discussion –
The following members of the Golf Committee came forward to discuss the Golf Committee membership – what should be the appropriate number of members?:
Ed Tyrrell, Vice Chairman; Judy Breekland, Al Fazi, and Todd Kolb.

The Golf Committee is currently comprised of five members and two vacancies. Membership was set at five members for approximately twenty years. Six years ago the Golf Committee was expanded to a membership of seven. The Committee feels that there is an appropriate “mix” of new and old members currently on the Committee. Two members on the Committee are relatively new. If they increase to seven, then there would be more new members than old – more members with not much experience relative to management of the Golf Course. Almost all the members are in attendance at each Golf Committee meeting. The Golf Committee would prefer to not fill the two vacancies at the current time.

Management of the Golf Course has continued to be most successful. The Committee feel they have a real accurate financial picture, the course is well run and they continue to realize a profit and return dollars to the community.

J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion that the Golf Committee be comprised of five members for the present time. Motion passed 5-0.

6. VFW \$1/Year Lease at Venus Building –

J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to approve the VFW \$1/year Lease at the Venus Building for an additional year thru December 31, 2007. Motion passed 5-0.

7. Ramapoo Gun Club Agreement –

Paul Roche, Chairman of Parks & Recreation, came forward to introduce the following members of the Ramapoo Gun Club: Ted Richards, President, Joseph Sherman, Vice President, and William White, Treasurer. Approximately 120 Ridgefield residents are members. Paul Roche presented a proposed Management Agreement between the Town of Ridgefield, Parks & Recreation and the Ramapoo Rifle & Revolver Club for the management and supervision of the rifle range at 60 Quarry Road, Ridgefield, CT. They currently pay \$3,000 for heat and electrical costs. This will be raised to \$4,000 effective January 1, 2007 with an adjustment at the end of the year to reflect the actual cost. David Grogins, Town Counsel thinks there should be a more formal five-year lease allowing the Club to manage the building for Parks & Recreation, which would replace the proposed Management Agreement, and he will draft one for review. The Ramapoo Gun Club has been in existence for 53 years, starting out in the basement of the Community Center in 1954. They have been under the jurisdiction of Parks & Recreation since 1962. In 1960 the decision was made to build the shell of a building at 60 Quarry Road, which has continued to be their location all these years.

Mr. Richards gave a history of the Ramapoo Rifle & Revolver Club. They run programs and manage the infrastructure of the building. They are a non-profit organization and totally run by volunteers. The members who train are all certified nationally as firearms instructors. Their charter is to “provide safe and reasonable shooting” for their membership. They also provide public availability. They conduct handgun certification classes, youth programs for approximately 40 young people currently, including a Friday night program with Mom and Dad shooting a 22 rifle safely, Scout programs for badge certification, and Ridgefield Police certification training. The Ridgefield Police also store some of their equipment at the Gun Club’s location. The Club has a 53 year unsurpassed safety record with never an incident. It is their goal that this safety record continues.

8. Waive Permit Fees for Halpin Lane Affordable Housing Project –

The following individuals came forward to present their request for waiving of the permit fees for the Halpin Lane Affordable Housing Project: Harvey Edelstein, Ridgefield Housing Authority Consultant, and Annemarie Roller and Dave Goldenberg, members of the Affordable Housing Committee. Mr. Edelstein reviewed the Prospect Ridge Housing finance numbers and construction costs. There is still about a \$100,000 shortfall. They are building twenty two or three-bedroom unites of 900 to 1100 sq. feet for about \$200,000 per unit. They will rent for about \$700 to \$800 per month. The Housing Authority of the Town of Ridgefield is the owner of the property. The income criteria for the tenants is determined by the State of Connecticut rules regarding affordable housing. A. Bodner inquired if all the tenants will be from Ridgefield or will the housing be available to those outside the town as well? Mr. Edelstein replied that the housing has to be made available to all, but as in other communities, approximately 80% of the residents will probably be current Ridgefield residents. This percent seems to continue to happen over and over again.

J. Plock moved and B. Manners seconded a motion to approve the waiving of permit fees for the Halpin Lane Affordable Housing project. Motion passed 5-0.

9. Approval of Meeting Minutes:11/29/06, 12/13/06

B. Manners moved and J. Plock seconded a motion to approve as amended the minutes of the November 29, 2006, Board of Selectmen Meeting. Motion passed 5-0.

J. Plock moved and B. Manners seconded a motion to approve as amended the minutes of the December 13, 2006 Public Hearing and Board of Selectmen Meeting. Motion passed 5-0.

10. Selectman's Report –

- Chief Ligi wishes to poll the BOS as to their “feeling” about the Police Department’s budget to include a second Student Resource Officer (SRO) for the middle schools. There would then be two officers to attend the four days of SRO training. It was agreed that two officers should be trained so a back-up is available, but there is no guarantee that the Board of Education will recommend use of a second SRO for the middle schools or that the BOS will approve the expenditure for 2007.
- Memory Lane – The Town has been plowing this access way for many years even though Memory Lane has never been accepted as a Town street. It was agreed to finish plowing this winter season, but a letter will be sent to all Memory Lane residents that plowing will not be done by the Town of Ridgefield in future years.
- Monday, January 15 is Martin Luther King Day. Ridgefield will honor Frank Lancaster with the Spirit of Dr. King, Ridgefield Community Service Award at the Town Hall commemorative celebration on Monday, January 15 from 3 to 4 p.m.
- Dr. Chung presented to the Board of Education on January 8, 2007, the 2006 Update of the 10-Year Enrollment Projections – 2007-2016. A downturn in enrollment is forecasted.
- The report has been received from the Regional Planning Commission regarding plans for downtown parking

11. Executive Session to Discuss Property Dispute -

B. Manners moved and J. Plock seconded a motion to recess the Board of Selectmen Meeting and go into Executive Session at 9:45 p.m. with Carrie Larsen of Cohen & Wolfe present, to discuss a property dispute. Motion passed 5-0.

J. Plock moved and B. Manners seconded a motion to recess the Executive Session and adjourn the Board of Selectmen Meeting at 10:45 p.m.. Motion passed 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,
Janet L. Johnson