

BOARD of SELECTMEN MEETING – FEBRUARY 16, 2005

7:30 P.M. – TOWN HALL LOWER LEVEL CONFERENCE ROOM
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, B. Manners, D. Masters, J. Plock

Absent: P. Yanity

SPECIAL TOWN MEETING

Minutes of the Special Town Meeting are under separate cover prepared by Barbara Serfilippi, Town Clerk. The purpose of the Special Town Meeting was to act on the renewal of the lease between 1) the Town of Ridgefield and the Ridgefield Symphony Orchestra, and 2) the Town of Ridgefield and the Ridgefield Playhouse.

BOARD of SELECTMEN MEETING AGENDA

1. Interview David Cronin for Conservation Commission vacancy
2. Student Outreach Counselor, Kids in Crisis
3. Proposal to Amend Ordinance 7-9 to include Pierrepont Lake
4. Discussion of Danbury Airport
5. Discussion of downtown parking
6. Tax abatement for portable classrooms
7. Shadow Lake Ballfield
8. Acceptance of Planning & Zoning approval of Fox Hill Lake property
9. Approval of February 2, 2005 meeting minutes
10. Selectman's Report

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION MEETING

1. Review Norwalk Community College lease draft

R. Marconi called the Board of Selectmen Meeting to order at 7:45 p.m., immediately following the Special Town Meeting.

1. Interview David Cronin for Conservation Commission vacancy – Mr. Cronin came forward to meet the Board and express his interest in serving on the Conservation Commission. Mr. Marconi read the January 12, 2005 e-mail received from Mr. Cronin detailing his experience as an active hiker and town ranger as well as experience with trail maintenance. Mr. Cronin is an active member of the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC), a member of the CT Excursions Committee which organizes the hiking and other activities in the state, a town ranger for Pine Mountain and Hemlock Hills, and has done trail work over the years with the AMC, Connecticut Forest and Parks, Newtown Forest Association and Ridgefield. He is interested in wetlands and building issues and would like to see some town-wide trail maintenance days started to get more people involved. A letter has also been received from Benjamin Oko, Chairman of the Ridgefield Conservation Commission, recommending Mr. Cronin to fill the vacancy on the Ridgefield Conservation Commission. He has attended some meetings of the Conservation Commission. D.

Masters pointed out that Conservation Commission members also rotate attendance at the Wetlands and Planning & Zoning meetings in an advisory capacity. Mr. Cronin indicated his willingness to attend such meetings.

J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to appoint David Cronin to fill the vacancy on the Conservation Commission. Motion passed 4-0.

2. Student Outreach Counselor, Kids in Crisis – Present to discuss the Student Outreach Counselor and Kids in Crisis Teen Talk program at Ridgefield High School was Mary Ann Baldwin, Denise Quailley and Michael Ferguson representing Kids in Crisis, and Leslie Boissy, Student Outreach Counselor. They all feel the program has been most successful at the high school. A recent article in the Greenwich paper pointed out how Greenwich High School would like to have this program in their high school. A similar program at the middle school level would be of great value; intervention prevention is always preferable. R. Marconi reported that the pilot program at Westport High School resulted in the Outreach Counselor being hired by the school system and now is a town employee. Westport has not expanded the Kids in Crisis program to their middle schools. New Canaan’s refunding for the middle school age was not made available. There was such a parental outcry that the program was refunded. Ridgefield’s Kids in Crisis program is currently serving about the same number of students as is New Canaan’s program. The independence of this program being funded by the Town and not by the Board of Education was considered to be a positive.

Leslie Boissy present her Mid-Year Report detailing what she has been working on since the start of the school year. She participated in the New Teacher’s Orientation and has done a lot of public speaking about town and in the school assemblies introducing herself. She is here to “listen to the youth” and not part of academics. She has introduced herself to those who Tara worked with last year. Most of her requests are from the Guidance Department at this time. She has initiated peer mediation and conflict resolution programs for the students.

D. Masters inquired as to what is handled by the school psychologist and what is referred to Leslie? A lot of the students in special education are already receiving special instruction and guidance. The guidance counselor has administrative duties and an academic orientation. The Student Outreach Counselor is there “totally available for the kids”. In response to the question – How do the students get to you? – Leslie responded how parents call her, referral of friends, the students walk in themselves, referral from the school nurse. She is trained in substance abuse issues. Sometimes there is a preference by the student for confiding in a woman. The guidance counselor is involved with testing and academics, whereas the Outreach Counselor is involved with social and emotional issues. Divorce support groups and college transition groups will continue. A new group called Vent will be starting shortly to deal with peer conflicts, anxiety and depression.

R. Marconi pointed out how the idea for the Outreach Counselor was for this individual to be located away from administration (not in the Guidance Department). She is not to be an assistant to the Guidance Department. Leslie’s office has been in the Guidance Department because of the high school construction but that will change. She is viewed as a separate resource.

The Board of Selectmen expressed a thank you to Leslie as the Outreach Counselor and to Kids in Crisis for making the program a success.

3. Proposal to Amend Ordinance 7-9 to include Pierrepont Lake – Pierrepont Lake is

a state-owned lake, but the state statute allows the town to enact legislation relative to such property. Members of the Twixt Hill Homeowners Association were in attendance to express their interest in this ordinance. This association has been most active in maintenance of the dam and monitoring of the water quality. An ordinance currently relative to Pierrepont Lake in being proposed like there is for a number of lakes which prohibit motorized vehicle use on the lake; there is no such ordinance currently for Pierrepont Lake like there is for Mammanasco and Great Pond.

R. Marconi read the proposed amended ordinance 7-9 which would include Pierrepont Lake. **J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to hold a Public Hearing on March 9th at 7:30 p.m., at Ridgefield Town Hall Lower Level Conference Room, and a Town Meeting on March 23rd at 7:30 p.m. at Ridgefield Town Hall Lower Level Conference Room for the purpose of amending Ordinance 7-9 to include Pierrepont Lake. Motion passed 4-0.**

Michael Autouri, inquired as to the possibility of adding all Ridgefield lakes to this amendment. R. Marconi replied that this may well be something to pursue, but we cannot do so at this time without contacting all the various lake associations first.

4. Discussion of Danbury Airport – The neighbors continue in their increased concern about the amount of air traffic at Danbury Airport and in particular about the use of Runways 8 and 26. The BOS has paid \$3500 toward the cost for an airport noise and traffic study. This report will not be ready for about another six months. D. Masters visited the airport to get an overview of the situation and the FBO's (fixed base operators). She distributed copies of a map which indicates the various runways and the proposed tree clearing areas. Runway 8 is most often used for take-off and Runway 26 for landing. Paul Estefan is the Airport Administrator. Mayor Bouton of Danbury has been active in working to reduce the amount of tree clearing as requested by airport neighbors and the Wooster School. Instead the FAA wants to install beacons and Danbury has agreed to go along with this plan. The BOS is being asked to look at the map and attempt to slow down the installation of beacons by seeking counsel to take action. The neighbors are concerned that not only will the beacons be detrimental to the value of their property, but they are concerned about the possibility of larger aircraft using the airport in the future. The FAA wants to install the beacons because of safety concerns. D. Grogins, Town Counsel, does not think that the Town of Ridgefield will be successful in opposing the FAA. The 1984 airport agreement contained many stipulations which have not been adhered to. The question is whether there is something that can be done because these items have not been adhered to. The airport was required to install noise abatement signage and this has never been done.

D. Masters feels that Ridgefield should hire an airport consultant – “we need to find someone who can negotiate. Could the beacons be made more obscure from the surrounding homes? Could there be five beacons instead of seven? How much wiggle room do we have?” There are consultants who are experts in aviation, but there will be a price tag for this advice. “

J. Plock indicated that she will participate in the discussion but will abstain on any vote regarding the airport because both her son and husband fly in and out of Danbury Airport. She feels there is misinformation regarding use of the runways. The wind determines which runway is to be used. If the airport is shorter because of the growth of the trees, the pilot will have to adjust what type of landing he can do accordingly.

R. Marconi inquired as to the timeline on installation of the beacons. Have the RFP's (Requests for Proposals) gone out? D. Masters replied that she believes that installation is being scheduled

for July and tree clearing scheduled for next year. R. Marconi stressed that in this situation communication is critical. At White Plains Airport there is a sophisticated system to track noise and what each airplane is doing.

B. Manners pointed out that at White Plains the pilots are professionals. The pilots at Danbury Airport are private pilots and there are five pilot schools at Danbury. Cooperation of the tower is not what it used to be. The FAA used to run the tower; it is now outsourced.

The 1984 agreement is specifically a Ridgefield agreement. R. Marconi indicated that he has reviewed the agreement and some of the rules are followed and others are not. Between the hours of 11 to 9, touch and go's are to be eliminated. Could we ask the pilots to go out further before they make the turn. It is the turning that creates the most noise. Many of the stipulations of the agreement have never been addressed. This upsets the neighbors. The first step is to get a consultant on the beacon issue. Enforcing the agreement is an attorney issue. Additional ideas would be a consultant issue. A pro-bono attorney who is a Ridgefield resident is needed.

Michael Autouri pointed out that this is a twenty year-old agreement. A lot has changed in twenty years. The beacons will have a tremendous impact. We need to get Christopher Shays involved with this.

Phil Bumann, Keeler Drive, explained why the lighting is important for departures at night time. This is what the neighbors are concerned about. A noise abatement procedure should be published. This airport does not have this.

Marty Carr, Lawson Lane, said that perhaps there is nothing we can do about this issue. We do not want to have costly legal issues.

D. Masters stressed the need for a consultant who can negotiate with the FAA. Perhaps compromises can be made. What about the intensity of the beacons? Would they be on all the time? There can be a "good neighbor" policy. The FBO's need to be compliant. D. Masters indicated that she also has a son who is a pilot, but she will not excuse herself from a vote.

5. Discussion of downtown parking – There was a meeting two weeks ago reporting on the Route 35 study. Two meetings in March are being sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce regarding this. R. Marconi indicated that he has been looking at various options with Charlie Fisher.

- One proposed parking area would be the extension of Governor Street parking. Charlie is putting together the numbers on this. This would add about 20 new spots. Is the BOS interested in pursuing this? Can we do it? The answer is yes, but it would require some blasting.
- Beyond the Post Office where the trucks park is another suggested location. We do have the land there. Could move the trucks farther back and just cover with gravel. Would like to have Post Office help with this. The Victoria Gates residents would be concerned about this proposal.
- Employees at Town Hall are part of the parking problem. Merchants want their employees to be able to park close by.

- There is the empty lot behind the Donnelly Building, beyond Hay Day. We have asked Gavin Donnelly if he would be willing to go along with this. He pointed out that he needs a place to put the snow. This location would result in 40 to 50 parking spots and would cost only about \$85,000. This would result in a huge impact at a good cost.

J. Plock suggested that we find out the costs for all options. She prefers the Governor Street and the Donnelly locations. We should try to do something for both sides of Main Street.

6. Tax Abatement for Portable Classrooms – **B. Manners moved and J. Plock seconded a motion to approve the tax abatement for the portable classrooms in the amount of \$19,095.59 and request that these portable classrooms be removed from the grand list. Motion passed 4-0.**
7. Shadow Lake Ball Field – Joe Walsh and Dave Scott came forward representing the Ridgefield Little League. There is one flat area at Shadow Lake which is appropriate for a ball field. Parks & Recreation does not want to build the field nor maintain it as the location is too far from the town center. The Shadow Lake neighbors would like it and the Little League would be responsible for the maintenance of the field. The town owns the land. The Little League currently pays \$32/person/year to Parks & Recreation for field maintenance. Little League has built four other ball fields in past years. They do not see Shadow Lake as a game field, but more as a practice field. **J. Plock moved and B. Manners seconded a motion to approve the use of Shadow Lake open space for development of a ball field, and have an 8-24 be sent to the Planning & Zoning Commission if Town Counsel determines that an 8-24 is needed. Motion passed 4-0.** Contact will be made with Charlie Fisher to check on the timeframe for work on this project.
8. Acceptance of Planning & Zoning Approval of Fox Hill Lake Property - **B. Manners moved and J. Plock seconded a motion to approve acceptance of Planning & Zoning’s approval of the donation of the two lots for open space located at Lakeview Drive on Fox Hill Lake, owned by Bernice Becker. Motion passed 4-0.**
9. Approval of February 2, 2005 Meeting Minutes - **J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to approve as amended the minutes of the February 2, 2005 Board of Selectmen Meeting. Motion passed 3-0-1. B. Manners abstained as she was not present at the February 2 BOS Meeting.**

J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to hold a Town Meeting on March 7, 2005, at 7:30 p.m. at Ridgefield Town Hall Lower Level Conference Room, to approve the request by the Police Department to purchase holsters and not repeaters with the \$4,000 in the Capital Reserve for the Repeater Project as previously approved by Town voters. Motion passed 4-0.

10. Selectman’s Report –

- Received an invitation to attend a Police Commission meeting on Wednesday, March 9. They also invited the Board of Finance. Responded that we cannot attend that week as budget meeting are scheduled each evening that week.
- Have spoken with Lieberman’s office and they are pulling together all the files and notes regarding the wording of the Weir Farm agreement.

- Completed the tabletop exercises – we were given a possible smallpox outbreak. Our region includes Ridgefield, Bethel and Redding. This will involve two days of training to show how we are prepared. We are making up books which would include phone numbers and procedures. The guidelines are outlined for each department head. A lot of people will be involved. B. Manners and D. Masters want to be trained. Reverse 911 should be installed within two weeks.
- Need to set the date for Freedom of Information training – 2 sessions - one for the general public at 7:00 p.m., one at 3:00 in the afternoon for employees. Tom Hennick, of the Freedom of Information Commission will speak.
- Polar Bear Plunge – March 5 at 10:00 a.m. (a fundraiser)
- Impact of CT Governor's 2006 budget. Our total increase for the municipal government of Ridgefield would be +\$27,472 if her budget is approved.
- Open Space Task Force – Only John Olson came forward to serve on it. Will put in another ad.
- Wetland's Conservation Officer - \$20,000 for this budget. A great deal of correspondence has been received in support of such a position.

J. Plock moved and B. Manners seconded a motion to adjourn the Board of Selectmen Meeting at 10:03 p.m. Motion passed 4-0.

Economic Development Commission Meeting

R. Marconi called the meeting of the Economic Development Commission to order.

1. Review Norwalk Community College lease draft - First suggested was \$150,000 to renovate and for parking expansion costs. This was sent to Judith Freedman, our representative for her assistance in making this happen. The Chancellor pulled this proposal off the table. Instead they would take 3 classrooms which are currently sized properly. They would sign a 2 to 3 year lease with an escape clause. This way they can try a Ridgefield location and see how it goes. It is a pilot project. Do we want to do it? The classes would be held from 8 to 12 a.m. and 5 to 10 p.m. At an estimated enrollment size of 20 students/class, 3 classrooms could result in 60 cars that would need parking spots. We need to look at the impact of this.

J. Plock moved and B. Manners seconded a motion to adjourn the Economic Development Commission Meeting at 10:10 p.m. Motion passed 4-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Janet L. Johnson