

SPECIAL TOWN MEETING & BOARD of SELECTMEN MEETING 3/7/05

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

REVISED/APPROVED MINUTES

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

In attendance: R. Marconi, B. Manners, D. Master, J. Plock, P. Yanity, J. Wahlberg

SPECIAL TOWN MEETING – 7:30 P.M.

The Town of Ridgefield will hold a Special Town Meeting on Monday, March 7, 2005, 7:30 P.M., Town Hall Lower Level Conference Room, 400 Main Street, Ridgefield, CT, to consider and authorize the Town of Ridgefield to authorize the Ridgefield Police Department to change the use of funds (\$4,000) from the Repeater Program to a new Holster Replacement Program under the approved Capital Budget #30851-56412.

Minutes of the Special Town Meeting are under separate cover.

AGENDA – BOS Meeting

(Immediately following the Special Town Meeting)

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|-------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| 7:45 | Police Department Budget Discussion | Chief Rich Ligi
Police Commission |
| 9:00 | Parks & Recreation Department Budget Discussion | Director Paul Roche, Parks
& Recreation Commission |
| 10:00 | Budget Discussion | |

R. Marconi called the BOS Meeting to order at 7:45 p.m.

Police Department Budget Discussion – The following individuals came forward to discuss the proposed Police Department budget: Chief Richard Ligi, Major Roche, Michael Casey, Chairman Police Commission, and Susan Craig, Commissioner. First priority is two full-time police officers. This is part of a program to increase the police department by seven full-time officers – 3 last year and 2 for this coming year. The cost would be \$93,427. They realize the decision is for no new personnel for this coming year town-wide, but this is part of the previously planned personnel expansion program. The goal is to have 6-7 officers per shift.

Chief Ligi indicated that he had spoken with Dr. Freeston, Superintendent of Schools, and the SRO officer at the high school is not to be reinstated. As a result the Police Department will have this officer back for this year. Chief Ligi pointed out how the police officers cover many programs and how they are hoping to initiate even more programs. There has been no increase

in overtime allotment in the last four years and no increase in the number of dollars/hours. They wish to have the radar squad detail out more and DWI road blocks 2x/year.

They are also requesting a one-time adjustment of \$5,000 between the major's and captain's pay. The desire is for a greater differential in the spread. A major is not paid overtime. The captains are the highest paid in the bargaining unit and thus are the last used for overtime.

R. Marconi inquired if most of the overtime is for coverage of planned events versus coverage for sick, vacations, etc? Chief Ligi responded that probably 70% is not planned and 30% planned ("cops in shops", training, etc.)

D. Masters inquired as to the role of traffic agents? These individuals work on holidays such as Memorial Day on Main Street and only direct traffic.

Special Duty item – no increase for outside services. The revenue reported is expenses coming in. Comp time is based on wage increases plus the two additional officers. The salary differential item is based on contractual obligations.

There is \$2,000 additional requested for training. Some training is mandated: 60 hours training within three years is mandated = 20 hours/year. Other training is based on the Police Department's programs such as weapon safety and shooting, defensive driving, defibrillator usage, blood pathogen training, telecom training, 911 training. R. Marconi inquired whether the mandated training is getting excessive? Major Roche replied that if the state puts a mandate out, they should also provide the funding. Training time at the academy has also been increased. The Ridgefield Police Department does as much in-house training as they can do; they train their people to be instructors as well.

Special Comm Services was cut last budget from \$700 to \$100. They wish to raise the number to \$253. Investigation costs are an unknown. This depends on what happens during the year. This fund is most often not used but does need to be available. Vehicle fuel is up because fuel costs are so high this year. The uniforms cost is higher because of 4-6% increase from the vendors plus the need to outfit the proposed two new officers. Under equipment replacements, they are looking for \$22,585. This cover traffic vests, radar units, bulletproof vest replacement, magazine for weapons, metal detectors (do not have any now), drug evidence locker (recommend keeping drugs and drug dollars separate), video-tape cabinet, automatic fingerprint identification system (AFIS) (this is the way all police departments are going with regard to fingerprinting ID – half the cost is for equipment and half for maintenance). Perhaps AFIS should be a capital expenditure. Chief Ligi pointed out that they realize this is big increase in equipment replacement dollars, but these items that have been postponed.

Youth Program – They would like to start a Police Youth Program, a Youth Officer, Teen Police Academy Program, elementary school safety patrol, and wiffle ball league. Programs such as these provide a valuable PR connection between the police and the town's youth.

Traffic Control Services - This includes yellow highway lines, stop bars, parking spots outlined, crosswalks, etc. A discussion followed as to why the yellow highway lines are not holding up.

They are currently using water-base paint. There are new epoxy paints which are supposed to last from 3-5 years. This would save having to paint the lines annually, but this paint is expensive. There is not a guarantee because weather conditions cannot be predicted. Epoxy paint is used by the State on state highways. Chief Ligi is suggesting a graduated program of using the more expensive paint and not on roads slated for resurfacing. Ridgefield's on-line painting contract expires this year and will be going out to bid again. They are in the process of evaluating whether some double-line markings can be changed to single-line markings. R. Marconi indicated that lining of the roads should be a highway budget item and not a Police Department item. When a road is resurfaced, then the Highway Department should do the line marking.

IT System - This is becoming more and more complicated as they integrate more and more with State and Federal IT systems. The system is very multi-layered and the need is for professionals to oversee maintenance and any upgrades. The computers have to be working

Capital Expenditures - Chief Ligi reviewed next year's requests. They are looking for a non-written policy of replacing police cars. One car comes up for lease renewal this year. They would like a 3 year/3 car replacement plan for the 3 police cruisers. The office furniture has been used since 1976. A requested addition to the police building was discussed three years ago and funding was held off because of the school building bundle. The architectural plans that were done three years ago would have been bid out for approximately \$4 million. A new estimate would probably be about \$5.1 million. Code law changes have been enacted within the last three years which would now have to be complied with.

There has been talk in the past about a new fire/safety complex. Should there be a new police building instead of adding on to the old? Chief Ligi pointed out the need for a cell tower. A new location would have to provide the height for a new tower. It is also best to have the cell tower at Police headquarters for security reasons. He stressed that they could not wait for five years for a new building. They are in year 29 of a 25 year proposed building. All the new computer equipment in the last 25 years has contributed to a real space shortage in the current building. Equipment and storage is out in the hall. The addition was to provide for another 20 years in the existing building. P. Yanity inquired as to the variance for the proposed plans regarding fire. New fire rules are in place also since the addition plans were drawn.

Chief Ligi suggested that the upgrade/addition of the police building should be a separate budget item and let the residents vote on it – see if they want to go for it. The drawings are not “working drawings” and they have never gone out to bid to obtain firm numbers for a possible vote.

R. Marconi suggested a feasibility study by putting the proposed addition out to bid and come up with specific numbers. This would probably take about six months to complete. This feasibility study could be funded by this year's budget. Chief Ligi and R. Marconi will brainstorm as to who to ask for estimates, etc. – what would be the cost of this study?

Interior improvements on the police building, window and furniture replacement would depend on what is being done about a proposed addition or new building.

A discussion followed on the use of Tasar equipment – no more billy clubs. This is a less lethal way to disarm someone and thus provides protection to both the officer and the individual being apprehended. The goal is to stay away from trauma-causing equipment. The goal is to incapacitate someone, handcuff them and take them away without lethally hurting anyone.

Parks & Recreation Department Budget Discussion – Chuck Hall, the Chairman was not present. The following individuals came forward to discuss the proposed Parks & Rec budget: Jonathan Chase, Parks & Rec Commission Vice Chair, David Thaxter, Eileen Cipolla, Paul Roche, Director of Parks & Recreation, and Bob Schneider.

Jon Chase asked the BOS members to look at the proposed budget and commented, “Nothing in here is fluff at this time”. Neither a tractor nor a mower has been replaced since 1997; an active replacement plan needs to be put in place. Parks & Recreation maintains a very long list of properties – parks, sidewalks, athletic fields, fountains, building grounds, plantings at intersections, etc. etc. Everything on their “wish list” is necessary. Their capital expenses are operational items that need replacement and thus not really capital items. J. Plock inquired as to the possibility of putting some items under capital expenditures for schools. R. Marconi commented that changing some grouping of needed capital items was appropriate but this could not be done at this time and would require the input of bond counsel. Jon Chase expressed appreciation for the new storage barn; now they need the replacement equipment to properly do the maintenance work assigned to the Parks & Recreation Department. B. Manners suggested a careful look at how the vote for equipment in being worded and grouped for bonding. Perhaps this should be addressed in the annual Town Meeting. J. Wahlberg commented on how bond counsel should take direction from the BOS on this issue.

J. Plock raised the issue of the Barlow pool. The goal is to make the pool self-sustaining within two years or turn it into a handball court. The swim team is not charged for what it really costs to maintain the pool. Each student who participates in the swim team program is charged \$200/year. If the pool is eliminated, Ridgefield will not have the facility to host swim meets. Is it possible to rent the pool out to other towns?

D. Masters commented on how the differential charged to residents and non-residents is still very modest. Jon Chase reported on how membership numbers are lower than in the past; some members are not renewing. They do now have a professional marketing committee helping with surveying and pricing. Satisfaction numbers are continually going up. They have made the decision to hold firm on fees for now – justification needed before raising the fees. The opening of the new Parks & Recreation building did result in a swell in membership. Founders Hall has 2400 members, which includes a significant number of out-of-towners.

Fencing costs are listed in the budget. Fencing at various parks and schools needs repair; this is a safety issue.

General Budget Discussion – P. Yanity expressed again his desire to hear from all departments first before doing any “cutting”. R. Marconi pointed out how the last group to present to the BOS will be Wednesday evening. Then, the BOS will have Thursday evening and Saturday

morning to discuss each department's wishes further. He would like to do a summary sheet listing what has been cut and what fixed items are costing more, such as insurance. He would like to get the budget down to a 5 ½% increase; if so, then \$225,000 still needs to be cut.

B. Manners commented on how prior to 1997, the town was "maintenance-starved". The town was in terrible shape. We have been working to change this. The goal has been to upgrade maintenance. If dollars for maintenance are continually cut, these projects will cost more to fix later. There are only finite ways to find money. The BOS needs to go back and look again at the big areas – capital funding for roads is one big area that could be looked at.

D. Master inquired as to the feasibility of forestalling repaving of some of the roads. Can the mixture of sand and salt be changed to use a cheaper mixture? The BOS needs to look at the big numbers, environmentally and financially.

R. Marconi reported that he has spoken with Peter Hill regarding these last two years of the ten year plan of repaving. He asked him to rework the plans for these last two years into a new five year program of capital projects financing. Peter Hill feels there are certain roads which really need work. Roads should be in capital expenditures as they are geared to last for 10 to 12 years. B. Manners commented that residents vote for roads. There are liability issues if the roads are not maintained.

**J. Plock moved and P. Yanity seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:45 p.m.
Motion passed 5-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Janet L. Johnson