

**BOARD of SELECTMEN BUDGET MEETING – MARCH 8, 2008**

TOWN HALL/LARGE CONFERENCE ROOM – 9:00 A.M.

REVISED/APPROVED MINUTES

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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, J. Wahlberg

**Agenda**

9:00 Budget Deliberations & Final Budget Recommendation to Board of Finance

R. Marconi called the meeting to order at 9:02 am.

Discussion began with the library. It was decided at the 3/6/08 meeting that B. Manners would draft an amendment to the 1983 agreement. B. Manners drafted what she thought was the consensus of the Board of Selectmen. R. Marconi read the amendment in full:

“Resolved that the Board of Selectmen hereby recommends a capital appropriation of \$4 million to be contributed toward the \$12 million required for the capital expansion of the Ridgefield Library, the remainder of which funds will be raised from the private sector. And further resolved that this appropriation is brought to the voters with the full understanding and agreement of the Ridgefield Library Association, that once said expansion is completed, unless and until the Board of Selectmen of the Town of Ridgefield is able to recommend otherwise, any operating funds for additional staff that may be required to operate it shall be fully provided for by said Association and shall fall outside the scope of covenant One of the agreement dated 18<sup>th</sup> of July 1983 between the town of Ridgefield and the Association, which covenant reads: “1. The town shall appropriate funds each fiscal year, commencing upon the completion of the construction for the new addition to the Library and the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy, sufficient funds to enable the proper operation of the Library by supplementing those funds generated by the Library, allocated by the State of CT and provided by the endowment income; provided, however, the amount of said appropriation shall be determined in the same manner as appropriations for Town department, agencies, boards and commissions.”

A. Bodner suggested the following changes: first line--\$4M change to “up to \$4M”; third line—change to “contingent on the remainder of funds that will be successfully be raised from the private sector.” And on the seventh line, change to “Town is not obligated to provide funds for additional staff.”

J. Plock stated the Board of Selectmen all agree that we cannot take an increase in 5.8 staff members for any department.

R. Marconi then read the full resolution for the amendment:

“Resolved that the Board of Selectmen hereby recommends a capital appropriation of up to \$4 million to be contributed toward the \$12.75 million required for the capital expansion of the Ridgefield Library, contingent upon the remainder of which funds will be successfully raised from the private sector. And further resolved that this appropriation is brought to the voters with the full understanding of the Ridgefield Library Association that once said expansion is completed, the Town of Ridgefield is not obligated to provide any operating funds for additional staff.”

Barbara Dobbins was present and suggested that the word “contingent” be removed from the amendment and replaced with “based on plans currently set forth.” D. Masters commented that the Board of Selectmen cannot say this because Planning & Zoning has not reviewed plans yet. D. Masters mentioned that working from the concept plan and going to referendum is not the ideal situation.

B. Manners then read the revised resolution. **J. Plock motioned to approve the revised resolution, A. Bodner seconded.** Discussion continued with changes to the resolution based on a comment from another audience member.

D. Masters stated that with a project of this scale, the Board should have had more time to think it over and had the opportunity to go through it prior to the budget process. In fairness to the project, there has not been enough time to agree on things, go to P&Z and get specific information. There are still unknowns because it is a concept plan.

**J. Plock amended her motion to take out the words “and agreement” in the resolution and approve the amended resolution, A. Bodner seconded the motion. Motion carried 3 approved (J. Plock, A. Bodner, R. Marconi)-1 abstained (B. Manners)-1 opposed (D. Masters).**

Phil Baumann commented that he agrees with D. Masters. The Board of Selectmen is asking me as a resident to go into partnership with the library. The original agreement states the endowment covers operating. We should know what their endowment is.

R. Marconi stated the endowment info in the Town of Ridgefield annual financial report. Jay Wahlberg can give this info; it is also on the Town website.

Ed Tyrrell questioned if the library is unable to raise all the money, is the Town of Ridgefield still obligated to provide the \$4M?

R. Marconi responded stating No—the agreement states “up to.” Discussion moved on to capital items, beginning with Information Technology (IT). Concerns were raised and all agreed the Board would like to implement more control. B. Manners suggested calling a moratorium on any purchase of new computer equipment and have

someone study what each department needs and what needs to be done. R. Marconi does not agree with a moratorium, but believes the Board of Selectmen should have more control; receive a quarterly update or every so often get an update on IT purchases and upgrades. J. Wahlberg gave the Board members a listing of the IT inventory and informed them the number in the budget is just to keep things status quo. R. Marconi further stated the \$220K to IT Department covers salary, licensing, software upgrades, etc.

Discussion ensued about whether to put IT budget number in each department. J. Wahlberg explained that it is difficult to have consistency; every department has reasons to purchase its own different products.

Do we need a CIO? We do not have one person that oversees the department and has a broad perspective of our needs.

It was agreed that the Board of Selectmen will review IT expenses on a monthly basis. J. Wahlberg stated that the only IT proposal is to add GIS to the Town website; LOCIP, WPCA & the Town all contributed to this.

Town Hall interior renovation budget was cut to \$90K.

The Golf Course was discussed. Can we cut back on greens mowers? A. Bodner mentioned that although the golf course brings in revenue, they are more close to a break-even situation. Ed Tyrrell, Golf Committee Chairman, mentioned a \$5 increase in fees is soon to come before the Board of Selectmen.

Parks and Recreation's Sturges Park project was discussed. This is to bring water lines and electric to the upper field at a cost of \$15K. B. Manners suggested deferring it one year. R. Marconi mentioned the Town is still in negotiations with Roger Provey. This item will be deferred until next year.

After some discussion about possibly postponing the purchase of one the trucks, it was determined that the old truck cannot be used and the purchase will be kept in the budget.

Park Safety Improvements was cut to \$15K.

### Police Department

Cruisers—Chief Ligi is very prudent and knows the cars well. The Board does not want to interrupt the trade-in cycle. J. Plock questioned why is the cycle 3 years and not 4? R. Marconi said the Chief has calculated the maintenance cycle and in the fourth year, this is when they begin to break down. Three year trade-in is optimal.

Headquarters Expansion—Rick Zini gave the new construction cost estimate and Charlie Fisher, Town Engineer, supplied an analysis. C. Fisher is not accepting the increases until having a

meeting with the architect. Discussion moved on to the question of whether to include the interest in the total construction cost budget. The Board of Selectmen would like to include \$180K interest in the budget. The Board will leave the \$4.250M in the budget but would like answers to the increases in the estimate.

The Evidence Drying Cabinet was removed from the Police Dept. Capital budget (\$8K).

#### Fire Department

Tanker net cost is \$280K (\$345K less \$65K for sale of old tanker). All other trucks will be deferred one year (Engine 1 to 2010-11; Engine 2 to 2011-12; Truck 8 to 2011-12; and Ambulance 1 to 2012-13).

Security Improvements figure (\$150K) includes Board of Education security—cameras at entrances of schools where the entrance is not seen from the main office. B. Manners requested that both the BOE and Chief Burford sign off on all purchase from this account and that items cannot be transferred from line to line.

#### Highway Department

Discussion took place about removing the wood chipper. A. Bodner is reluctant to remove. Decision was made to keep the wood chipper in the budget.

It was decided to postpone purchasing the Service Truck (\$55K) until 2009-10.

D. Masters stated she is very distressed about road maintenance budget. P. Hill stated that 5 miles (33 roads) would be reflected in the \$800K budget out of a total of 190 miles in the Town. Roads give you an idea of the well being of a town. D. Masters questioned whether \$1M will do 10 miles of road? R. Marconi would not say yes for this year because the wild variable is based on the materials costs and would like to see real numbers from Peter Hill, Public Works Director.

#### Engineering

Richard E. Venus roof must be done. \$900K was already budgeted for this. \$566K is called for in this year's budget. The very high cost is due to the fact that there is asbestos on the roof.

Town Hall generator (\$40K) was removed; it was decided Town Hall can use the Police Dept. generator if the PD will have to upgrade.

Handicap Accessibility (\$25K)—this is to adjust the Town Hall and Annex counters and make them lower. A. Bodner questioned whether complaints have been received? No, we are currently compliant. It was decided that pending complete information, such as locations and specific costs, this item would be removed from the budget.

Tree Warden's Tree Replacement budget was cut back from \$50K to \$35K.

### Board of Education

A town-wide energy consultant (\$100K) is included to analyze town-owned buildings, identify energy-saving, lower cost alternatives to efficiently run the buildings. The freezer replacement line (\$52K) is for one at Farmingville and one at Branchville, both of which are originals when the schools were built in the 1960s. J. Plock stated that the food service program should pay for the freezers; this was the arrangement made with the BOE and the food service program when it was implemented.

Per J. Wahlberg, the capital portion of the budget is now at \$4,510,645 after beginning at \$4,811,000. The total budget is \$12,760,000.

The Board of Selectmen expressed concern about cutting into the infrastructure.

**J. Plock moved to approve the Capital Budget, B. Manners seconded. Motion passed 5-0.**

Phil Baumann commended the Board on the amount of scrutiny that has been put into the town-required operations and questioned why aren't they doing the same for the feel-good items that were put forth over the past week, like the library?

The Board of Selectmen requested that the BOE send on to the Board of Finance the specific items reflected in the \$150K security budget.

**B. Manners moved to send the Police Department Headquarters budget up to and not to exceed \$4.250M, all inclusive, to the Board of Finance; J. Plock seconded. Motion passed 5-0.**

### Operating

Town is currently at 5.16%; Board of Education at 5.54%.

### Community Grants

Danbury Regional was cut \$750 to \$1,000.

300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary requested \$10K, cut to \$7,500.

B. Manners suggested cutting out Dream Homes (\$6,500 requested). MaryAnn's letter says it is a good program and Ridgefield does benefit from this regional approach; decision made to cut to \$5,000.

Boys & Girls Club requested \$200K; cut back to \$10K. Last year the Board of Selectmen approved \$50K and sent the request to fund from fund balance on to the Board of Finance. BOF replied that they approved \$40K from contingency and \$10K from fund balance. R. Marconi suggested doing research about what happened and take \$10K out of this year's budget for the Boys & Girls Club.

J. Wahlberg stated the operating budget is at 5.11%.

Tax Collection—cut title search fees \$1K (from \$4K to \$3K).

Police & Fire Safety—the addition of a ½ Fire Inspector brings operating up to 5.2%.

Highway—A. Bodner asked about the increased value of scrap metal—will contractor be willing to negotiate? Budget requested is \$45K.

Venus building—huge increase in fuel oil and electricity—mostly fuel. Cut \$10K.

J. Wahlberg stated the operating budget is now at 5.18%.

Holiday Trust Fund –cut \$1K to \$500.

Welcome to Ridgefield –cut \$1K to \$16K.

Now at 5.15%. If \$800K is contributed from fund balance, this would bring operating to 4.25%

The Board of Selectmen would like to request the Board of Finance consider using the fund balance to help lower the mill rate.

**Andy Bodner moved to pass on the final budget number of \$30,713,491 to the Board of Finance, requesting that they do not cut it further, but rather use a minimum of \$800K from the fund balance to keep the mill rate increase no higher than 3.5%. J. Plock seconded. Motion carried 5-0.**

Phil Baumann questioned why the library operating budget is not in the community grants?

Ed Tyrrell stated the Board of Selectmen have done an excellent job and that any further cuts would not allow the town to provide the level of service that residents have come to expect here in Ridgefield.

**J. Plock moved to adjourn the Board of Selectmen meeting at 1 pm; B. Manners seconded. Motion carried 5-0.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Wendy Gannon Lionetti