

Fire Department budget discussion - Representing the Fire Department at the budget discussion were: Lou Yarrish, Ridgefield Fire Chief; Anthony Gaeta, Ridgefield Assistant Fire Chief; Doug Cuny, Volunteer Department Fire Chief; and Tim Pambianchi, Volunteer Department Assistant Fire Chief. Also present was Laurie Scholl, Director of Human Resources.

The first area of discussion was personnel needs. The Fire Department would like to add 4 paramedics. EMS calls totaled 219 more than last year and the Fire Department is finding it very difficult to respond to all these calls; call after call and double calls. They are five months into the process with the State to obtain a third ambulance. The goal is to be able to field two ambulances at a time. Lou Yarrish reported on an hourly analysis of the EMS calls by 8 hour blocks and 12 hour blocks. The most calls are between 7 a.m. and 8 p.m. R. Marconi suggested that perhaps this calls for a shift change – increase coverage numbers during the daytime hours and decrease during nighttime hours. Ridgefield participates in “mutual aid”. We do go to Danbury more often than we call on them for assistance. A shift change would involve contract negotiations. R. Marconi stressed the need to look at how service can be improved without impacting the budget. Currently one day position (8 a.m. to 4 p.m.) is not filled. Filling this position would be helpful.

J. Plock inquired as to the impact of Laurel Ridge calls – “huge impact”. She suggested that we ask Laurel Ridge for monetary assistance. Would they fund a fireman? The Fire Department met with Laurel Ridge today providing instruction as to how to make their calls for EMS assistance more specific. They were very receptive to suggestions. It was agreed to speak with Laurel Ridge management to see if they will make a donation.

The Volunteers reported that they are “maxed out” in the areas they can help with. Their primary interest is fire fighting – EMS is not their forte’. It is good to be medically trained, but that is not their primary focus. When asked if the volunteers would be willing to staff Ridgebury in the evening, the answer was that they were not prepared to answer that question. The volunteers expressed their thanks for support received. Each year they bring in approximately six new recruits who need suits and gear. Last year they applied for grant money but were turned down. B. Manners suggested that they apply for grant dollars over and over again.

Lou Yarrish pointed out the need for training time for the EM Dispatcher and medical supplies. They need +\$5,000 just to keep up with the supplies; this expense is again driven by the increased number of EMS calls.

Capital expenditures – Chief Yarrish expressed the desire for another ambulance. It is their desire to have two ambulances available at all times. The diesel engines are much better. Mileage per year on an ambulance is approximately 25,000. Also requested was \$30,000 to replace the Chief’s car which currently has 80,000 miles on it. R. Marconi reported the feasibility study being undertaken with the Police Department for a new First Responder Center.

The Volunteers have ordered a new truck - \$350,000. They have made the down payment and will trade in their old truck. This is a rescue truck and not a pumper. The volunteers are paying for this new truck with fund raisers. They are short \$117,000 and are asking for this amount to be budgeted. Regarding possible grant money – one can apply only for something one does not

have, not for a replacement vehicle. This new truck is 32 ft. in length and can hold 8 people. It would be beneficial used as a rehab vehicle and provides for much increased storage of supplies.

R. Marconi requested a prioritized list. Chief Yarrish will report back. His first response was for the air compressor to be first on the list and the 2 Life Pack XII's second on the list. R. Marconi inquired as to the feasibility of moving the ambulance and car replacement to next year? What about a refresher course in driving? R. Marconi suggested obtaining bids on the compressor to show homework has been done on this request relative to the exact cost.

Laurie Scholl, Director of Human Resources, reported the numbers she and R. Marconi had worked up should there be a 4.5% increase in the budget, a 5% increase, etc. and the corresponding numbers that would be available for expenditures should the increase be each of these percents. Listed were the fixed costs such as health insurance, property insurance, pension, compensated absences, salaries, fuel/utilities, workers compensation, etc. This shows how really tight the numbers are. We are being driven by our fixed costs. J. Plock indicated the preference for the BOS to choose what is to be budgeted and what is to be put off for another year rather than having the Board of Finance do so. P. Yanity expressed the desire for the BOS being supplied with an amount that needs to be cut from the budget and then the BOS deciding where to make the cuts.

R. Marconi read the February 22nd letter received from the Board of Finance relative to the budget process. The letter detailed the grand list numbers and pointed out how the current spending level will exceed the ability to derive revenue. The Board of Finance goal is a mill rate increase of no more than 5%. This letter shows that there are many tough decisions to be made.

D. Masters indicated that she is "new to the table" and thus does not have the background of past experience to know what expenses have been put off in the past and what "promises have been made".

B. Manners replied that Dr. Yanity's concern is for the health, safety and welfare of the town. A promise was made to Peter Hill that his department would be the first to receive permission for a new hire. He currently is operating with fewer people than he had in '83. The Fire Department went up to a six-man shift with the idea that this would cost more in the beginning. All EMS responses were brought in-house. Perhaps we should look at outsourcing EMS again. Perhaps the Fire Department should return to being just a fire department. Founders Hall wants \$50,000 this year. Originally they asked for a gift of the land and they would supply the dollars for operations. Perhaps out-of-towners should be assessed, even though Founders Hall is reluctant to do so. We cannot afford a free senior center for out-of-towners.

J. Plock indicated her agreement with B. Manners on the Founders Hall issue, but also expressed the desire to give Founders Hall some monies as so many people use the facility.

The budget discussion was recessed at 7:20 p.m. to provide a short break before holding the Public Hearing at 7:30 p.m.

PUBLIC HEARING – 7:30 P.M.

R. Marconi called the Public Hearing to order at 7:30 p.m. for the purpose of discussing the proposed changes in Ridgefield Code under Chapter 7, Offenses and Miscellaneous Provision. R. Marconi read the call for the Public Hearing as appeared in the *Ridgefield Press*, but also included further changes in the wording of the last sentence as proposed by Chief Ligi. The proposed change in wording would read as follows:

Sec. 7-9. Motorboats and snowmobiles on Lake Mamasasco, Pierrepont Lake and Great Pond prohibited.

For the purpose of conserving the health of the inhabitants of the town, preserving the waters of Lake Mamasasco, Pierrepont Lake and Great Pond, and eliminating unnecessary disturbances, the use of motorboats, snowmobiles or any mechanical engine attached to any boat, canoe or other vehicle, except an electric-powered outboard motor on the waters of Lake Mamasasco, Pierrepont Lake or Great Pond, is prohibited. Violations hereunder shall constitute an infraction pursuant to Section 51-164p of the Connecticut general statutes as amended. Fines shall be in the amount of \$60.00 for the first offense, and \$77.00 for each subsequent offense. Said fine amounts as may be levied may be adjusted without further municipal actions so as to be in conformity with the State of Connecticut, Mail in Violations and Infraction Schedule, as it may be amended from time to time. Nothing in this article shall prevent the police department, because of the perceived nature of the offense, from proceeding not under the terms of this article, but under the provisions of Conn. Gen. Stat 53(a)-181 and 53(a)-182, as they may be amended from time to time, which sections relate, generally to breach of peace, etc.

Effective date.

This article shall become effective fifteen (15) days after publication hereof in a newspaper having general circulation in the town.

The Public Hearing was open to public discussion.

Elizabeth Maurer, Nod Hill Rd., commented on what the current statute does cover. Pierrepont Lake is a state park and thus the state statute prohibits use of a snowmobile in a negligent manner, the snowmobile operator is responsible for any damages incurred, the snowmobile engine must be muffled and excessive exhaust noise is prohibited. Snowmobiles cannot be used after dusk. It is her feeling that the current state statute does everything that is desired by a change in the ordinance. A snowmobile has to be operated in a responsible manner.

Helen Dimos, requested that a point of order be made that Ms. Maurer is an attorney and she is representing Andy and Kathy Williams. Ms. Maurer does not live on Pierrepont Lake. Ms. Dimos feels that snowmobiles should be banned.

Duane Barney, President of Twixt Hills Homeowners Association, commented that Pierrepont Lake is really just a large pond. The primary use of the lake in winter is for ice skating and ice

fishing. Snowmobiling is not safe on the lake as the area is just too small. The Twixt Hills Homeowners Association supports the amendment to the ordinance.

B. Manners pointed out that state statute provides for a municipality to regulate the hours for usage of the lake located within the municipality. Therefore, the regulation could be “no hours” for snowmobile use.

Jacqueline Hogan, Barlow Mountain Rd. – reported that she has lived on the lake for 25 years. It is only recently that there have been snowmobiles on the lake. The most important issue is safety. There are many twists and turns to the lake with an island in it as well. Visibility is not good. She has personally seen numerous near accidents.

Patty McCarthy, Barlow Mountain Rd. – read a letter written by another neighbor, Lee and Dave Goldenberg of Seth Low Mountain Rd., stressing the safety issue. The lake is just too small to support motorized vehicles in the middle of a neighborhood.

Duane Barney, President of Twixt Hills Homeowners Association, pointed out how this ordinance change will also prevent jet skiers on the lake in the summer.

R. Marconi moved and B. Manners seconded a motion to close the Public Hearing and schedule a Town Meeting for March 23, 1005, at 7:30 p.m., at Town Hall Lower Level Conference Room, to approve the following changes in Ridgefield Code under Chapter 7 Offenses and Miscellaneous Provisions:

Sec. 7-9. Motorboats and snowmobiles on Lake Mamasasco, Pierrepoint Lake and Great Pond prohibited.

For the purpose of conserving the health of the inhabitants of the town, preserving the waters of Lake Mamasasco, Pierrepoint Lake and Great Pond, and eliminating unnecessary disturbances, the use of motorboats, snowmobiles or any mechanical engine attached to any boat, canoe or other vehicle, except an electric-powered outboard motor on the waters of Lake Mamasasco, Pierrepoint Lake or Great Pond, is prohibited. Violations hereunder shall constitute an infraction pursuant to Section 51-164p of the Connecticut general statutes as amended. Fines shall be in the amount of \$60.00 for the first offense, and \$77.00 for each subsequent offense. Said fine amounts as may be levied may be adjusted without further municipal actions so as to be in conformity with the State of Connecticut, Mail in Violations and Infraction Schedule, as it may be amended from time to time. Nothing in this article shall prevent the police department, because of the perceived nature of the offense, from proceeding not under the terms of this article, but under the provisions of Conn. Gen. Stat 53(a)-181 and 53(a)-182, as they may be amended from time to time, which sections relate, generally to breach of peace, etc.

Effective date.

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newspaper having general circulation in the town.

The motion passed 5-0.

BOARD of SELECTMEN MEETING (RECONVENED)

R. Marconi reconvened the Board of Selectmen Meeting at 7:55 p.m.

- 1) Approve renewal of Frank Sergiovanni's Contract - Frank Sergiovanni came forward to discuss his position as Golf Director. He has reviewed the contract. Most of the changes in the contract are date-connected. Frank is now also responsible for administration of the driving range. A full-time pro has now been brought in-house. He is paid for hours worked for Ridgefield and charges separately for golf lessons. This eliminates the pro-retainer fee as a Ridgefield cost. **J. Plock moved and P. Yanity seconded a motion to approve the renewal of Golf Director, Frank Sergiovanni's contract for an additional two years effective retroactively to January 1, 2005. Motion passed 5-0.**

- 2) Golf Committee Interviews – Ron Lewis, Mike Blackwell

Ron Lewis – Mr. Lewis came forward to express his desire in serving on the Golf Committee. R. Marconi read the letter received from Mr. Lewis. He has been a Ridgefield resident for 20 years and has volunteered in a number of community programs over the years, especially with the Babe Ruth League. His philosophy was “all children could play”. Work-wise, Mr. Lewis conducts administrative law hearings for the State of Connecticut. He would welcome the opportunity to serve on the Golf Committee and feels his negotiating skills would be a good match for the advisory nature of the Golf board. When asked, Mr. Lewis indicated he does not have a personal agenda as to issues with the Golf Committee. He attended their last meeting.

Mike Blackwell – Mr. Blackwell came forward to introduce himself to the BOS. R. Marconi read the e-mail received from Mr. Blackwell indicating his interest in serving on the Golf Committee. He is a four year resident of Ridgefield and works as a Certified Senior Advisor. In connection with this, he is very interested in the Ridgefield Commission on Aging and has been attending some of their meetings. He feels that his experience and professional training would be a benefit to the mission of that group. He is also interested in the Risk Management committee as he has been a licensed insurance producer in CT, NY, NJ and IL for the past five years. Mr. Blackwell commented on how he is a “terrible golfer”, but he loves the game. He believes that Ridgefield benefits immensely from the presence of a municipal course, and he would like to contribute in preserving that course. He has been attending the Golf Committee meetings.

Several members of the Golf Committee were present. They have not made a recommendation from the many candidates for the Golf Committee. They will review the list of candidates and make a recommendation for the March 23 BOS meeting.

3. Charter Revision Commission Interviews – Jill O’Connor, Esq., Jim Mele

Jill O’Connor, Esq. – Ms. O’Connor came forward to introduce herself to the BOS. R. Marconi read her e-mail and reviewed her resume. She has lived in Ridgefield since 1990 and has a son at Scotts Ridge Middle School. Through her legal training and career, she has experience drafting legal documents and doing legal research, which would be relevant skills for the charter revision project. Family law and real estate are her current legal focuses. She has read the charter and indicated revision of the code of ethics as an area to be addressed. She has a flexible work schedule and could easily attend evening and Saturday meetings.

Jim Mele - Mr. Mele came forward to introduce himself to Board. He is a 21 year resident of Ridgefield and has 30 years of experience as a business writer and magazine editor. He expertise is in “translating fairly complex subjects into readable prose for a general audience”. This skill would be valuable in the charter revision process. He does travel some but would find time to attend meetings. He feels he could be most helpful in the communication process, communicating to the public what the charter is, what the revisions are meant to do, and writing press releases explaining the work of the Commission to the public.

R. Marconi indicated that 12 candidates have now been interviewed and 9 need to be selected to serve on the Commission. This will be addressed at the March 23 BOS meeting.

4. Public Works Budget Discussion – Present for this discussion were Peter Hill, Director of the Public Works Department, Bill Hoff, Office Manager and Burt Molla. Peter Hill reviewed his requests for additional personnel. The DPW has increased in personnel by 4% since 1980; other departments have increased by 40-60%. Since 1980 Ridgefield has 30 additional miles of road plus a huge increase in population. The Public Works Department has decreased 6% in manpower in the last six years. They are now up to 2/2 miles/man. Mr. Hill stressed how they are not getting things done which need doing. An example of this is cleaning of 4000+ catch basins. They have the equipment to do so, but not the manpower to run the equipment. Another item is roadside mowing and brush clearing. They have 2 tractors, but only have the manpower to keep one tractor on the road at a time. Ponds need to be cleaned before the growth gets out of hand. The department tries to do these projects themselves rather than contracting out. Last year they did 13 miles of paving. This year’s list is for 14.5 miles of paving – “playing catch-up”. They are jumping all over town doing what badly needs doing. It would be much more efficient to pave in one area of town each year on a schedule-basis. Their paving schedule is from May thru October. They do all the handwork themselves. Many of the Ridgefield signs are DEP illegal as they are non-reflective. These need to be replaced.

D. Masters inquired about possibly changing the salt/sand mix. Mr. Hill pointed out that the sand is for traction and the salt melts the ice. They have researched this and there is no real affordable replacement to the salt on the market yet. Salt works at a lower temperature than the chemicals available.

They are requesting a full-time clerk. Last year the BOS suggested 2 part-time people instead. This has not yet been discussed this year.

Snow removal costs are currently \$140,000 over budget for this year. Each year the cost of fuel, salt and sand goes up as well as the cost of the steel plow blades. This year the costs are especially high. They have requested a budget increase of \$50,000.

Mr. Hill reviewed their capital requests. R. Marconi asked him to prioritize and report back to him the next day. Mr. Hill thought it would be screener first, then a loader and put off the incinerator until next year.

5. Golf Course Budget Discussion – Both Frank Sergiovanni, Golf Director, and Tony Steger, Golf Course Maintenance Director, came forward to review the Golf budget requests. The totals are the same as last year. The only increase is in the salary line. Tony Steger stressed the need for tree care for both aesthetic and safety reasons. On the capital side, most important is club house deck repair due to rotten boards. This needs to be done for safety reasons. Deck expansion might as well be done at the same time. Equipment-wise, most important is the two Greens Aerofiers. They are replacing units that are 14-16 years old which often break down.
6. Library Budget Discussion – Present to discuss the proposed library budget were: Chris Nolan, Library Director, Gloria Bucher and Carroll Brewster, Ridgefield Library Board Chair. R. Marconi read the January 20, 2005 letter received from Carroll Brewster relative to the Proposed Library Budget for fiscal 2005-2006. The graph in the letter illustrated how the population has grown 3% in the last four years and the circulation at the library during the same time period has increased by more than 30%. Attendance at programs rose during the same time by 12% and the number of reference questions answered by library staff rose by 44.5%. The Ridgefield Library is committed to increase their returns in fund raising. They are becoming more systematic and professional in doing fund raising. They are switching to email notification of overdues in the near future, which in turn will reduce postage and material costs. Most of the increases in expenses are for items over which they have limited control such as health insurance and pension costs. Their request is for just under \$1.5 million.

D. Masters inquired about the feasibility of closing on Sunday to save operating expenses. Chris Nolan pointed out how weekends at the library are very busy. They often get 1100 users in on Sunday between 1:00 and 5:00. What about opening at noon a couple of days or any other daytime hours shortened to cut costs? They are currently open 52 hours/week.

P. Yanity inquired if there are any services that can be revenue generating?

Capital expense requests include \$24,000 to redo a bathroom and for exterior lighting.

7. Tax Assessor Budget Discussion – Al Grassi was not present. There were no budget increases for his department to discuss.
8. Conservation Commission Budget Discussion – George Orlan reviewed the proposed budget for the Conservation Commission. They are seeking additional hours for their part-time person. This individual now works 3 half days/week. They would like to have this individual work one additional half day – 16 hours/week so that they can work one full day. This will result in increased efficiency. B. Manners inquired as to the feasibility of a senior volunteer to help out with these extra hours. Mr. Orlan replied that it is difficult to find a volunteer who is available on a year-round basis.
9. Planning & Zoning Commission Budget Discussion - Betty Brosius, Director of Planning and John Katz, Planning & Zoning Vice-Chairman, came forward to discuss the proposed budget for Planning & Zoning. They are presenting essentially a flat budget request. Most important is their request for a part-time Wetlands and Conservation Officer. This would be a 20 hours/week position. The Wetlands and Conservation Officer would provide staff assistance and perform field inspections for the Inland Wetlands Board and The Conservation Commission, assist the Inland Wetland Agent in the review of development permits and wetlands permit applications, and serve as the enforcement agent under the Agent to ensure compliance with the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Regulations.
Ms. Brosius reviewed her March 6, 2005 memorandum outlining justification for this position. Most neighboring towns have full-time Wetlands personnel on staff. She feels that Ridgefield is not enforcing State Wetlands laws appropriately due to the lack of manpower. Planning & Zoning, the Conservation Commission, and the Norwalk River Association are all in agreement with this. Ms. Brosius suggests a \$25 fee per Development Permit Application which would be charged for any building permit application that pertains to outside construction (any application that also requires a zoning permit). Wetlands does not now charge a separate fee, but proper review includes at a minimum a review of all materials submitted and checking the proposal against wetlands maps. P. Yanity inquired as to the accuracy of Ridgefield's wetlands maps. The maps that are used originate from 1972.

The next budget discussions will be held Thursday evening, March 10 at 7:30 p.m., Copper Beech Room, Parks & Recreation facility, and 9:00 a.m., Saturday, March 12, Town Hall Lower Level Conference Room. **J. Plock moved and P. Yanity seconded a motion to adjourn the Board of Selectmen Meeting at 10:30 p.m. Motion passed 5-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Janet L. Johnson