

**BOARD of SELECTMEN MEETING – APRIL 2, 2008**

TOWN HALL/LARGE CONFERENCE ROOM – 7:30 P.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.

**Joint Meeting with Board of Finance – Agenda**

1. Budget Deliberations

In attendance: R. Marconi, A. Bodner, B. Manners (late), D. Masters (late), J. Plock  
M. Heiser, R. Cascella, P. Gomez (late), D. Ulmer, K. Walsh  
J. Wahlberg

M. Heiser called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm.

Discussion began with R. Marconi covering the operating budget. The Library was given a 4 percent increase; no more. The First Selectman's office was given a part-time position. The Fire Inspector position increased from part time to full time; it was pointed out that this will in turn increase the revenue side of the budget.

D. Masters and B. Manners arrived at 7:35 pm.

K. Walsh asked about the First Selectman's office new hire. R. Marconi explained the increased work load, including but not limited to FOIA requests. The person is half-time and receives no benefits. D. Masters stated that as the Town has grown, so has the job. It is past due to fill this position. FOIA requests and the amount of time consumed by responding to them were discussed.

R. Cascella questioned the legal line being cut down to \$130k and stated his concern about this after looking at this year's legal line and the amount spent to date. Per R. Marconi and J. Wahlberg, changes were made to the current line amount; they will be reflected in the new budget book.

R. Cascella discussed the energy consultant. The consultant will cost \$100k; will this be enough? Gary Green, Board of Education Transportation and Energy Coordinator, was present and was asked this question and he responded that it will be enough for the consultant to review all town buildings. Discussion then moved to the amount of energy that Ridgefield

High School consumes. G. Green stated that RHS consumes in six months the same amount of electricity that all buildings combined consume in one year.

R. Marconi then discussed meetings he has been having with Yankee Gas about servicing ERMS, Police Department, Boys & Girls Club, Venus building with natural gas. The concern is that Yankee Gas would like a long-term commitment to their product and that would close the door on shopping for the best price.

R. Cascella asked about the 4 percent increase across the board for non-union employees. What is the thinking behind this? R. Marconi responded people are assets to the town; that is the last place to cut. R. Cascella stated he is not saying to cut their increase; just using the example to state the current economy. R. Marconi clarified that the numbers are used just for budgeting; everyone does not automatically get 4 percent increase.

D. Ulmer asked about the Tree Warden increase of 28 percent—would this be a full-time position? R. Marconi will look at that; should not be a full-time position.

M. Heiser passed out the “yellow sheet” which was the projected budget from 2001 and stated that R. Marconi is running a pretty tight ship. Projections are fairly in line with current budget.

K. Walsh questioned relative to the two large projects—the Police Department and the Library—what is the town sacrificing? R. Marconi responded that it is hard to say. Perhaps the town would extend the cable to the Golf Course or replace the entire Venus building roof, instead of doing this job in phases. M. Heiser commented that the library and the Police Department are worthy, but are they the most important? J. Plock commented that the Police had come to the Board of Selectmen with an expansion request before the bundle.

P. Gomez arrived at 8 pm.

D. Masters commented that the Board cannot support what the Library wants—an increase of 5.8 people. Concerned that the residents don't know the whole story. M. Heiser sees an interesting parallel to the Playhouse. With the Library, the Board of Selectmen approved the \$4M for the building but for additional personnel, they are on their own. This worked out well with the Playhouse. B. Manners stated that the Library is not like the Playhouse; the Town does not pick up the operating costs of the Playhouse. Additionally, the Library cannot charge for anything. She would love to see the Library expand, but if we want to keep the mill rate to 3.5, we cannot support the addition of 5.8 people.

R. Marconi mentioned the resolution that the Board of Selectmen passed. The Town is under no obligation to keep the Town's support of the Library's operating budget at 75 percent; it has just crept up over the years. A. Bodner mentioned the infrastructure of the Town—it is aging—the Town's time is coming, but for now we have to keep the mill rate down.

D. Masters stated that she attended a meeting with the Library before they had made their presentation to the Board of Selectmen. She asked them if the expansion could be staged or done in phases and was told it could not. She mentioned concern that the taxpayers have full disclosure about the proposed increase in the increase in the operating budget; we should give them all the information in order for them to make an educated decision.

P. Gomez asked what is needed to educate the public. Stated his concern that in two years, what will govern the understanding that the Library and the Board of Selectmen have reached? Many projects are competing for extremely limited capital dollars. What we have to do is educated the public about what the debt service will be when projected out. P. Gomez went on to say that the 1983 agreement says the endowment fund is to be used for capital projects only. How much of the endowment will be used for the expansion? R. Marconi did discuss this with them and was told they do not want to deplete the endowment; he will ask the Library Board for specific number.

K. Walsh mentioned he did not see the RVNA in the budget. R. Marconi responded that the VNA asked for a tax abatement for two years and reinstatement of the rent as of 7/1/08 as well as \$40k grant. The town responded that they would give them the rent of \$92k less \$50k for the tax abatement for a total owed to the Town of \$42k.

K. Walsh asked about the Board's decision making process behind Tanker 10. R. Marconi explained the Board's position that there are very few firefighters that can drive this vehicle and the Fire Chief's intention is that the new vehicle will be a multi-function vehicle.

D. Ulmer explained his concern with the capital budget when looking at the next two years, there are \$8M of items each year that are being put off from this year. The dollars will continue to increase each year. R. Marconi stated the Town will be putting together a three-year forecast after the budget cycle ends.

D. Ulmer mentioned that in the capital line, it appears that some things are support, not capital. One is computers and it appears that we have entitlement spending going on. B. Manners stated the Board of Selectmen will be pre-approving computer purchases in the future. J. Wahlberg responded that the computers being discussed are going into police cars, fire trucks, and are necessary tools to keep departments running smoothly and efficiently, thereby increasing personnel efficiency.

D. Ulmer discussed the Public Works budget. The vehicle budget numbers continue to stay very high. R. Marconi stated that the mechanics work on the vehicles and keep them in good repair as best they can. Last year they had to cease repairing the vehicles in March because their parts budget was expended. Parts prices continue to rise. D. Ulmer noted that the roads are now in the capital budget; we didn't always capitalize roads.

Discussion moved on to the Canine budget—it went from \$96k to \$130k. J. Wahlberg explained that this line has been short funded; it is a special revenue fund.

Another special revenue fund is the reval account (there are only two such accounts). The total cost of the revaluation is \$400k. We are in the 12<sup>th</sup> year cycle and so we are accruing money toward the next revaluation.

Discussion moved on to the Barlow Mountain pool. It is an asset of the Town; currently runs a deficit. Parks & Recreation asked for \$340k to repair a crack in the pool. It was decided to spread the cost of repair over several years. D. Masters stated there is a complete, competitive program running there. The RHS swim team practices there. The cost would be prohibitive to have the swim team practice elsewhere (Norwalk, etc.). P. Gomez stated the revenue from the pool is \$80k—the same amount that it was two years ago.

At 9:10 pm the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance concluded their joint meeting and the BOS members moved into the small conference room.

R. Marconi called the Board of Selectmen meeting to order at 9:15 pm.

1. Vendor Permit Application: Christopher Thompson

Mr. Thompson contacted the First Selectmen's office today to reschedule the interview because he has the flu.

2. CT Clean Energy Award

An award ceremony was held in New Haven wherein RACE was recognized for its efforts as a Clean Energy leader. Jay Whalen, former RACE President, and Gary Green, current RACE President, were both present to elaborate. Ridgefield was one of 20 towns (out of 169) that was recognized and received an award. Many other towns call RACE to emulate their work. R. Marconi went on to discuss the Town's efforts at increasing recycling.

3. WCSU Lyme Disease Task Force Symposium Resolution

A Lyme Disease symposium will be held April 30 at WCSU's Westside Campus; a resolution is needed in order for R. Marconi to sign the contract.

**D. Masters motioned, J. Plock seconded the following resolution. Motion carried 5-0.**

**“Resolved that Rudy Marconi, First Selectman is authorized to make, execute and approve on behalf of this corporation, any and all contracts or amendments thereof with Western Connecticut State University for use of the Westside Campus Student Center for the April 30, 2008 Lyme Disease Symposium. ”**

4. Fair Housing Month Resolution

R. Marconi explained this is for the Police Department elevator grant—the Small Cities Community Development Block Grant. **B. Manners moved to waive the reading of the**

**resolution; D. Masters seconded. Motion passed 5-0. J. Plock moved to approve the resolution; D. Masters seconded. Motion passed 5-0.**

R. Marconi provided the Board with a quick update on the Fair Rent Commission. Ms. Morrisroe and Chairman Robertson of the Commission on Aging have met with Mr. Goldsmith about this. He is willing to work with them. R. Marconi will supply the Board with a report.

5. Approval of meeting minutes: 2/28/08, 3/6/08, 3/8/08, 3/19/08.

**J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded the approval of the 2/28/08 meeting minutes as amended. Motion passed 4-0-1 (B. Manners abstained).**

**J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded the approval of the 3/6/08 meeting minutes as amended. Motion passed 5-0.**

**J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded the approval of the 3/8/08 meeting minutes as amended. Motion passed 5-0.**

**J. Plock moved and B. Manners seconded the approval of the 3/19/08 meeting minutes. Motion passed 5-0.**

6. Selectman's Report

R. Marconi gave update on the *Mega Mandate*. Laurie Scholl is keeping up with the issue and watching it closely. There is no revenue package for this.

A. Bodner asked about the status of *Information Technology*. R. Marconi responded that changes have been implemented at the Police Department and Major Roche is happy with them. The security system had been breached but this is now corrected. Andrew is doing an incredible job. A Department Head Staff Meeting is planned wherein a future monthly meeting will be discussed. This is seen as a way for staff to communicate IT needs, issues, updates for each department. J. Wahlberg has suggested removing IT Department from being under Finance Department; at one time it was appropriate, but has evolved out of this situation. R. Marconi has been in contact with the Chief Information Officer at Chef's Warehouse for advice and found him to be very approachable and knowledgeable. Drew suggests one full-time and one part-time employee for the IT Department in the future.

A. Bodner asked about how to replace Jay? R. Marconi responded there is one internal person that is a potential candidate. CFOs of Westport and Newtown are also leaving; think we should move quickly. It was suggested that a Board of Finance representative be involved in the final interview process.

R. Marconi stated that the Town received an FOIA request from both the News-Times and the Ridgefield Press and sent the request to the attorney. The attorney directed the response for the Town; it should be dealt with as a personnel issue and Dah-Miin and Jay Wahlberg would have to approve of the release of the information.

*WPCA update:* the WPCA won the court case. The Housing Authority is thinking of an appeal.

The *Pension Commission* will be coming in April 23 for reappointment and will have a presentation.

B. Manners asked about the \$427 *SAFER Grant*. R. Marconi responded that Chief Burford will present the budget projection at next week's Fire Commission meeting. The grant request was for four years; one person for each year.

B. Manners received a letter from a resident about a noise complaint on Bloomer Road. This was given to R. Marconi.

**At 10:18 pm A. Bodner moved to adjourn the Board of Selectmen meeting. J. Plock seconded. Motion carried 5-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Wendy G. Lionetti