

**SPECIAL TOWN MEETING, PUBLIC HEARING, &
BOARD of SELECTMEN MEETING – APRIL 11, 2007**

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

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, A. Bodner, D. Masters, J. Plock

Absent: B. Manners

Agenda – Public Hearing

*A **Public Hearing** will be held on April 11, 2007, 7:30 P.M., Town Hall Large Conference Room, 400 Main Street, Ridgefield, Connecticut to consider a proposed tax abatement agreement between the Town of Ridgefield and Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals, Inc.*

Agenda- Special Town Meeting

*A **Special Town Meeting** will be held on April 11, 2007, 7:30 P.M., Town Hall Large Conference Room, 400 Main Street, Ridgefield, Connecticut to act on the proposed lease at the Richard E. Venus Building between the Town of Ridgefield and Virginia Roebuck.*

Minutes of the Special Town Meeting under separate cover.

Board of Selectmen Meeting Agenda (immediately following Town Meeting)

1. Affordable Housing Committee: General Report and Update – Dave Goldenberg
2. 300th Anniversary Museum in the Streets Project – Sue Manning
3. Boys & Girls Club \$250,000 Special Appropriation Request
4. Approval of Tax Refunds
5. Proposed Livestock Ordinance
6. Clergy Association Statement on the Environment
7. Approval of Meeting Minutes: 3/21/07 (two meetings)
8. Selectman's Report

Public Hearing

R. Marconi called the Public Hearing to order at 7:30 P.M., and introduced Al Garzi, Ridgefield Tax Assessor, to explain the history of the tax abatement process, the importance of Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals, Inc. as part of the Ridgefield community, and the need for the proposed tax abatement agreement at the local level at this time. The Ridgefield tax abatement ordinance which was passed in November 2003 provides for possible tax abatement if the proposed construction/expansion will be at least 500,000 sq. ft. in size, and expected tax assessment of at least \$75 million and \$50 million in personal property. Boehringer Ingelheim has applied for tax abatement on their property and personal property taxes relative to the renovation, expansion and improvement of its Ridgebury Campus to increase the existing office space, laboratories, manufacturing and biotechnology research and

development space. At the end of the seven-year tax abatement on the new construction, Boehringer's tax bill will increase to about \$7.5 million. This construction includes approximately 4-5 different projects.

Dave Goldenberg, Seth Low Mountain Rd. – inquired as to when does the abatement start? The abatement starts when a Certificate of Occupancy is issued for each phase. The agreement is to abate 85% of the tax bill for seven years following the issuance of the CO. Taxes will be due during the construction phase for each of the 4-5 projects.

Another question was relative to the possibility of asking for an additional abatement at the end of the seven years. The response was yes, Boehringer can request an additional abatement but only for another big building renovation project – a “new” project.

Jan Rifkinsen asked for clarification on some of the numbers. The tax abatement will amount to approximately a savings of \$2 million/year to Boehringer for a total of about \$14 million over the course of the seven years. Ridgefield was most anxious to have Boehringer Ingelheim do their expansion at the Ridgefield/Danbury campus and not go out of state. The proposed tax abatement was part of the incentive to stay in Ridgefield. The Manager of Taxes for Boehringer Ingelheim was also present and he indicated that the 280 acre campus split between Danbury and Ridgefield has a lot of room for expansion. The building permit fees will also be in the millions of dollars. The new daycare facility has been completed; a \$53 million research facility is the next project. Property taxes are much higher in the U.S. than in Europe and it is important to justify to the German headquarters the value of such a large facility in the U.S.

John Katz, Ridgebury Rd. – stressed how Boehringer Ingelheim is an important part of the Ridgefield community, not only for the taxes but also for the people they have brought to Ridgefield. The community is very glad they are here.

The next step going forward is hold a Town Meeting on the proposed “Agreement to Abate Increases of Tax Assessments”, which has already been set for April 25, 2007. The Public Hearing was closed at 7:45 p.m.

Special Town Meeting

Relative to the proposed lease at the Richard E. Venus Building between the Town of Ridgefield and Virginia Roebuck, the minutes are under separate cover.

Board of Selectmen Meeting (immediately following Special Town Meeting)

R. Marconi called the Board of Selectmen Meeting to order at 7:50 P.M.

1. Affordable Housing Committee; General Report and Update – Dave Goldenberg

In addition to Mr. Goldenberg, the following Affordable Housing Committee members came forward: Joanne Search, Annemarie Roller, Mike Trolle, Kevin Batterton. The Prospect Ridge Groundbreaking Ceremony is scheduled for 10:00 a.m., April 17. It is expected that Connecticut Governor Jodi Rell will be in attendance as well. Dave Goldenberg welcomed their new member, Kevin Batterton. The Committee has been in existence for ten years and they are therefore reporting to the BOS on their research and activities.

- Sunrise Cottage – completed thru the efforts of SPEAR & Habitat for Humanity – houses five residents
- Worked with Planning & Zoning – Robert Jewell with changes made to the accessory housing rules and then marketed these changes as housing possibilities. A seminar was held in the library in 2005 with Patrick Hare of Cornwall, CT as the featured speaker, an expert on the accessory apartment issue. An informative brochure, funded by Ridgefield Bank, is available in Town Hall. 32 accessory apartment applications have been received since May 2003 when the accessory apartment law was put into effect. There is now also an incentive for senior occupancy. Intern Sean Robinson did an affordable housing inventory. Committee member Joanne Search described the process for qualification when there is an affordable housing turnover. It is the municipality’s responsibility to keep the designated units “affordable”. The task is to find creative ways to provide affordable housing in Ridgefield. The Affordable Housing Committee would like to set up a Housing Trust Fund. There are about 600 funds available nationally for affordable housing. R. Marconi suggested that the subject of such a task group/trust fund be an agenda item on a future Board of Selectmen meeting.
- Prospect Ridge – Mike Trolle and Annemarie Roller reported on this current project of four buildings with 20 two and three bedroom units. The trees have been taken down and the ground is being prepped for construction. The building permit has been secured, which includes a lot of “green building” techniques. Annemarie described how the Committee has been working on this project for five years raising the dollars. The project was increased from 13 to 20 units and all the larger units of 2-3 bedrooms. A consultant was hired to assist in raising the needed funds. A loan was obtained from Ridgefield Bank, \$1.1 million from the State of Connecticut and \$800,000 as a Federal Home Loan Banking grant and subsidy. The total cost is \$4 million. The rents will pay for the loans.

Andy Bodner inquired as to the impact on the school system because of the larger 2-3 bedroom units? D. Goldenberg responded that the estimate is for about three school age children with about four units with children. There is already a waiting list for the apartments. By law Ridgefield residents cannot receive preference, but more Ridgefield residents apply because they are aware of the Prospect Ridge opportunity.

A discussion ensued regarding the supervision of the project. Harvey Edelstein is acting as the builder’s agent/construction manager overseeing not only the construction of Prospect Ridge, but also all the renovations of existing affordable housing units in Ridgefield, about \$14 million in total. He has a long-time relationship with the Housing Authority and will be paid approximately \$1 million for overseeing all this work. Mr. Edelstein was very instrumental in raising the funds for Prospect Ridge.

2. 300th Anniversary Museum in the Streets Project – Sue Manning

The following individuals came forward to discuss the proposed Museum in the Streets Project as part of the 300th Ridgefield Anniversary celebration: Sue Manning, Chairman of the 300th Anniversary Committee, and members of the committee, Pam Lowell, Tom Belote and Kay Ables. They will be returning in about a month to speak to the BOS about the committee’s entire plan for the 300th Anniversary celebration, but wish to present just the proposed Museum in the Streets Project at this time and secure permission for a marker to be placed at both Town Hall and at the Community Center. A sample of the proposed historic marker was shown. The plan is for approximately thirty such plaques to be erected podium style on a single post for an historic

walking tour of Ridgefield. Each marker will be sponsored by someone or some organization who will in turn purchase the marker. A pamphlet will be available in Town Hall outlining the walking tour of the signs. Dom D'Addario inquired as to how long will these markers remain in place? The response was "forever".

J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to approve the placement of an historic marker at the Community Center and another at Town Hall, both Town of Ridgefield properties, in conjunction with the "Museum in the Streets" project for the 300th Anniversary celebration of the Town of Ridgefield. Motion passed 4-0.

3. Boys' & Girls' Club \$250,000 Appropriation -

Terry Hughes, Grandview Drive, and Director of the Boys' & Girls' Club, presented the Club's request for a possible \$250,000 appropriation from the Town of Ridgefield to assist with the redo of the facility. The new pool will be large enough to equal the ability of the previous pond to be an alternative water supply for the Fire Department and will also be made available to the public during non-Club hours. Mr. Hughes reviewed the history of the Boys' & Girls' Club, now in its 71st year of operation. They are seeking a continuation of the long-standing partnership with the Town of Ridgefield. Their fees remain very low as they provide activities for after-school hours and summer programs. In the past, the Club provided a gym for Ridgefield High School and housed Special Education when Scotts Ridge was late in opening. The Club has received funds from the State for their expansion/redo and is now seeking support from the Town of Ridgefield as well.

J. Plock indicated that the Board of Selectmen is very aware of what a great job the Boys' & Girls' Club does and what an asset they are to the Community, but the question is the budget – where are the dollars to come from? So much was cut out of the budget that it would be difficult to now support a special appropriation.

Andy Bodner stated that the Board of Finance would ask the question as to whether this is a one-time commitment. What has the Town done for other groups like this in the past? What other partnerships have been supported in a similar manner? R. Marconi replied that the Playhouse is one example, free rent for the VNA is another.

D. Masters stressed how this has been a year for fiscal responsibility – not the year to add support for a new program. This is completely outside of the budget process. \$250,000 seems like a lot. Can the Board of Finance offer the Boys' & Girls' Club something like what has been offered to other organizations in Town?

R. Marconi suggested that the decision be passed back to the Board of Finance; let them determine what is best financially for the community. Any donation would help the Boys' & Girls' Club reach their goal.

Jeff Harrington, a 40 year Ridgefield resident, suggested that the Town buy the pool and lease it back to the Boys' & Girls' Club.

Chris Murray responded as a participant in the swimming team interest using Barlow – the Town is not funding this. There is a strong healthy swimming club in town that should be supported.

Phil Bauman stated that the budget process for this year has been closed. It is not a good precedent to add a new financial obligation at this time.

Jan Rifkinsen stated that the Board of Finance knows what expenses are coming up as they do forecasting. It is appropriate for them to make the decision.

A member of the Boys' & Girls' Club Board of Directors commented on how the Club has been in existence for more than seventy years providing a healthy place for the children to go after school and in the summer. The Club has been working very hard to raise the dollars and she feels the Board of Selectmen should help with this fund raising.

John McNicholas feels that the budget process is important in Ridgefield and a contribution to the Boys' & Girls' Club at this time would be circumventing the budget process. This is not a gift; it is funding a community program.

Jeff Mose stated that the Boys' & Girls' Club is asking for a small contribution. This is an investment in the Town's future.

Phil Bauman indicated that the Fire and Police Departments have been "pinching" their budget requests for the last few years. If the Board of Selectmen do this for the Boys' & Girls' Club, they are circumventing the budget process.

J. Plock moved and R. Marconi seconded a motion to recommend to the Board of Finance that the Town of Ridgefield participate in an appropriate amount for the Boys' & Girls' Club renovation and expansion project, if the Town is able to do so. Motion passed 3-0-1. A. Bodner recused himself as he received an award last week from the Boys' & Girls' Club.

4. Approval of Tax Refunds - **D. Masters moved and J. Plock seconded a motion to approve the list for the month of April 2007 of certified refund applications as submitted by Jane Berendsen-Hill for a total amount of \$7,410.24. Motion passed 4-0.**
5. Proposed Livestock Ordinance – A draft "Proposed Ordinance Concerning the Keeping of Livestock on Residential Property Pursuant to Authority Conferred unto the Town of Ridgefield by the Public Health Code" and maps of Ridgefield divided into various zones were distributed to Board of Selectmen members for their questions and comments.

R. Marconi read what D. Masters had written. She suggested the term "hooved animals" and not term "animal unit", and that such animals not be allowed in the downtown high density area and on smaller lots. Ridgefield is no longer as rural as it once was. Her suggestion is to call the historic area and downtown area the "residential village district". One animal per half acre is the suggestion.

J. Plock suggested putting in the term, "not limited to" relative to the definition of livestock and agreed with the idea of a "residential village district". She questioned Section 3, Item C regarding set-back, "Livestock shall not be kept within 50 feet of a neighboring residential lot". The configuration of various pieces of property differs. A piece of property can be above the lot size but such that the barn or other livestock area is very close to the neighbor.

Andy Bodner stated that any ruling about livestock should be Town-wide and not limited to a village district. He suggested the procurement of a neighbor's permission for the keeping of livestock. Perhaps there should be a ruling about animal feces on the property.

R. Marconi asked the BOS members if they want an ordinance. The response was “yes”. The next question is a town-wide ordinance or just relative to the downtown and historic area? He prefers no livestock in the central business or village residential district. He likes the boundaries as presented by D. Masters.

Ed Briggs, Ridgefield’s Health Director, came forward to express his opinion. He feels that regulation of lot size for livestock is a Planning & Zoning issue and should not be a health ruling. R. Marconi asked Mr. Briggs for his opinion as to what needs to be in an ordinance so that it is enforceable? Setbacks should not be part of the ordinance.

Mona Thorpe, 21 Abbott Lane – pointed out that her animals are no longer there. The odor is from the stone dust. The problem is the closeness of the neighbors.

John Katz, Ridgebury Rd. – stressed the need to think through this livestock issue very carefully. After an ordinance is passed, zoning regulations will still be in effect. The problem is the closeness of the neighbors in certain situations, not solved by the designation of a village residential area.

It was agreed to work further on the wording of the proposed ordinance, the word unit gets changed to animals, the map for the village residential district determined and the setback requirement eliminated.

6. Clergy Association Statement on the Environment –
As requested by the Clergy Association of Ridgefield, R. Marconi read the Clergy Association’s statement entitled, “On the Preservation of God’s Creation”.
7. Approval of Meeting Minutes: 3/21/07 (two meetings)

J. Plock moved and A. Bodner seconded a motion to approve as written the minutes of the Special Meeting of the Board of Selectmen on March 21, 2007. Motion passed 3-0-1. D. Masters abstained as she was not present at this Special Meeting.

J. Plock moved and A. Bodner seconded a motion to approve as amended the minutes of the March 21, 2007 Special Town Meeting & Board of Selectmen Meeting. Motion passed 3-0-1. D. Masters abstained as she was not present at this BOS Meeting.

8. Selectman’s Report –
 - The budget has been approved by the Board of Finance and is now moving on to a Town Meeting set for the first Monday in May. It is up to the Board of Selectmen to decide what capital items under \$100,000 to place on the ballot and what items should be voted upon at the Town Meeting. It was agreed that BOS members would email their choices to R. Marconi.
 - Post Office Parking – meeting scheduled for April 12 at the Post Office to look at the safety of the building. A letter has been received from Philip Esser regarding the historic significance of 20 Catoonah Street. A. Bodner inquired as to the possibility of any other areas for expansion near the Post Office. BOS members are familiar with the correspondence from Gregory & Adams.

- Met with new contractor for Bissell's – preparing to start in May. Oil remediation will probably take 10-12 weeks.
- A. Bodner commented on oversight of the affordable housing building and renovation projects; this is not a criticism, just need to look at the situation. R. Marconi suggested the possible hiring of a “Nels Berg type” as an independent liaison to the Board of Selectmen.
- Annual contract between Utopia and the Ridgefield Visiting Nurse Association – Now have Ridgefield VNA in town to bid back on the contract.
- Health Fair Day – Sunday, June 3 from 10 – 3 at Veterans Park School. Mini-triathlon the same day
- Air Age has moved out and the Dairyland lease has started. They may like to lease additional space. Need to look at non-profit rates and utility costs in the building.

J. Plock moved and A. Bodner seconded a motion to adjourn the Board of Selectmen Meeting at 10:30 p.m. Motion passed 4-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Janet L. Johnson