

## **PUBLIC HEARING & BOARD of SELECTMEN MEETING – MAY 23, 2007**

TOWN HALL/LOWER LEVEL 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.

In attendance: R. Marconi, A. Bodner, B. Manners, D. Masters, J. Plock

### **Public Hearing**

*A Public Hearing will be held on May 23, 2007, 7:30 P.M., Town Hall, Large Conference Room, 400 Main Street, Ridgefield, Connecticut to discuss a proposed tax abatement agreement between the Town of Ridgefield and Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals, Inc.*

### **Board of Selectmen Meeting Agenda**

1. Homelessness – Mayor Mark Boughton
2. Golf Course Concession Menu & Operations Review – Robert Wool
3. Transfers – Jay Wahlberg
4. Livestock Ordinance
5. Parking Authority – discuss charge
6. Reappointment of Sharon Dornfeld, Parking Hearing Officer
7. Tax Refund Approvals from Tax Collector
8. Tax Collection Issues for Fiscal '07-08—Jane B-Hill
9. Selectman's Report
10. Approval of Meeting Minutes: 5/9/07, 5/11/07

### **Public Hearing**

R. Marconi called the Public Hearing to order at 7:30 p.m. Al Garzi, Tax Assessor, came forward to discuss and answer any questions on the proposed Application for Abatement of Real Property Assessment Increase Attributable to Construction or Improvements in Accordance with Title 12 of the Connecticut State Statutes 12-65b & Section 113 1/2-3 of the Ridgefield Code of Ordinance, and Application for Abatement of Increase Attributable to the Acquisition of Personal Property to be Located in a Manufacturing Facility in Accordance with Title 12 of the Connecticut State Statutes 12-65b & Section 12 1/2-4 of the Ridgefield Code of Ordinance.

These abatements are relative to Boehringer Ingelheim's Phase 2 – Building 10 construction project. The abatement would be for seven years from the date of issue of the Certificate of Occupancy. Taxes will be collected prior to this date of issue during the period of construction and Ridgefield's percent of tax abatement is 85 percent. Part of the personal property abatement covers machinery and equipment which will qualify under the State Machinery and Equipment exemption, for which the Town will receive a refund from the State.

Dom D'Addario, Tanton Hill Rd. inquired for clarification on Phase 1 and Phase 2 and the need for a vote for the abatement of taxes on each Phase. Al Garzi explained further that each construction phase requires a new application for abatement.

R. Marconi inquired as to the estimated length of construction period. Mr. Garzi responded that 1 ½ years is the estimate for Phase 2. Mr. Marconi requested that a schedule be given to the Board of Finance as to an estimate of what tax monies should be received when.

Sharon Dornfeld asked what would happen if the abatement request is not approved. R. Marconi replied that during negotiations, Boehringer Ingelheim was also looking at expansion in either Virginia or Ohio and chose Connecticut because of the tax abatement package offered. It is important that this abatement request be approved.

There were no further questions from the public. R. Marconi closed the Public Hearing at 7:40 p.m. A Town Meeting will be held on June 6, 2007.

### **Board of Selectmen Meeting**

R. Marconi called the Board of Selectmen Meeting to order at 7:45 p.m.

Danbury Mayor Mark Boughton was not yet present. Agenda item #2 was therefore discussed first.

1. Golf Course Concession Menu & Operations Review – Mark Wool

Mr. Wool was not yet present. A letter was received from Mr. Wool on May 14, 2007 with an attached April 2007 sales report for the concession/restaurant at the Ridgefield Golf Course, and also a copy of the menu for the In the Rough Grille. According to the contract with the concession restaurant, the menu and pricing is to be approved by the Board of Selectmen.

**D. Masters moved and B. Manners seconded a motion to approve the new menu and pricing as required by the contract for the “In the Rough Grille” at the Ridgefield Golf Course. Motion passed 5-0.**

2. Homelessness – Mayor Mark Boughton

Danbury Mayor Mark Boughton came forward to present Danbury’s project to reduce homelessness in the greater Danbury area and surrounding towns. Danbury developed a year and a half ago a strategic plan to not just “manage” homelessness, but to strive to end it and at least reduce the numbers. They are attempting to address the “why” these people are on the streets. The homeless bounce from one agency to another offering assistance and do the same in other surrounding towns as well. They are offering a number of recommendations and are seeking a regional approach:

- Point of Entry Program – An informational intake will be taken which will connect the individual to all social services. This intake will enable access to see where the individual has registered previously both in Danbury and in the surrounding communities. It is a “Homelessness Management System”. The goal is to prevent doubling of services.
- Eviction Prevention
- Home Ownership – offering 100% financing

Danbury’s goal is to raise \$40,000 total from nine Housatonic Valley towns and \$50,000 from Danbury to run this program – asking for \$6,525 for the first year trial period. They will set up this HMIS program and provide training. The Executive Director of the Dream Homes Community Center/Program will come to Ridgefield and spend a day training Ridgefield’s social service agencies how to use the program. This is a non-threatening way to provide assistance to those in need. In Ridgefield, this need may well be the elderly and veterans from Iraq.

B. Manners commented on how this is a “noble task”, but this is a referral service, not a provider. How does this service differ from Ridgefield’s current social services program? How does this differ from our housing development fund? Mayor Boughton stressed how this is a follow-up program; holding people accountable. This service will not be available to illegal immigrants because they are using Federal funds for home ownership. The Dream Homes staff will consist of one full-time person and one half-time person working on credit issues.

Andy Bodner asked if Ridgefield can participate for hopefully a one-year success? The answer is yes, membership can be contingent on seeing the results. Danbury is seeking participation for one year with the hope for an ongoing project.

D. Masters inquired as to the means to measure outcomes? Mayor Boughton responded that the numbers of homeless from the streets to rental to ownership would be the measurement. Ms. Masters commented on how she is very familiar with the Dorothy Day facility. She does not see how this program will help Dorothy Day. Mayor Boughton responded that there were 1100 foreclosures in the greater Danbury area in the last quarter. Every time an individual moves out of single room occupancy to ownership, a space is opened up for another individual to move into a single room occupancy from the street.

Andy Bodner pointed out that the budget process was just completed and cuts had to be made from many providers. Where will the \$6,525 come from? R. Marconi responded – the contingency fund. One idea is regional housing for veterans under the Housing Authority umbrella.

J. Plock pointed out that Ridgefield will not know how this Dream Homes program will impact Ridgefield until we try it.

B. Manners expressed concern about setting up another layer of assistance. Other agencies already offer what is being provided. Mayor Boughton pointed out that the State is favoring regional approaches to many problems. Danbury has the only shelter in the area. Bridgeport and Waterbury are the next closest shelter locations. The point of the program is to get the individual off the street and prevent duplication of services.

D. Manners stated that she wants to be sure to not fund what already exists, but it is important to go to the root of the homelessness problem.

John Katz, Ridgebury Road, pointed out that an individual in SRO (Single Room Occupancy) is not homeless. Is this program to move someone from homelessness or to better housing? Mayor Boughton stressed that the goal is to move people “up the chain”. Ridgefield will be purchasing entry to the Danbury program.

R. Marconi read the email received from Mary Ann Baldwin, Ridgefield’s Director of Social Services. She is not against trying the Dream Homes program for one year and then look at the numbers.

Andy Bodner responded that we do live in a community. Mayor Boughton has come to ask for our support for the trial period of one year. It is not a lot of money. We should try.

J. Plock stated that any program which directs people to resources can only do good. We do not know if Ridgefield residents have participated in the Danbury shelter or in other Danbury programs. We can look at this program as a pilot project and see how it helps Ridgefield.

Keith Miller offered a follow-up to John Katz's comments and a request for Mary Ann's opinion in person. R. Marconi indicated that he will be discussing further the Dream Homes program with Mary Ann.

Sharon Dornfeld relayed a situation with a client just this week and how she found Dream Homes to be very helpful.

Phil Baumann, Keeler Drive, commented on how there have been many requests for funds, decisions were made by "nickel and dime-ing" the budget, more research needs to be done before agreeing to spend monies on this project.

Peter Gomez, Ash Lane, considers this expenditure of \$6,000 very worthwhile. He reported that he recently tried to construct the number of households in Ridgefield. Households include unreported members – individuals with lack of independence, lack of income. It is appropriate to try the program for a year and attempt to reduce duplication of services in the area.

**J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to approve the expenditure of \$6,525 in contingency funds from the approved 2007-08 budget to participate in the City of Danbury's Dream Homes initiative in an attempt to reduce homelessness in the HVCEO (Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials) region. Motion passed 5-0.**

3. Transfers – Jay Wahlberg

J. Wahlberg, Controller, came forward to request approval of some transfer requests.

The Parks and Recreation Commission requests a special appropriation for expenses related to grounds, vehicle and equipment maintenance. They are experiencing much higher than normal maintenance costs of their trucks and equipment due to age and condition, and grounds supplies and materials have gone up considerable due to delivery and fuel costs. Further clarification is requested regarding the Tiger Hollow expenses in the amount of \$10,000 which were previously funded by the Tiger Hollow account.

**J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to approve a portion of Department of Finance Memorandum #200710 in the amount of \$16,600 to cover an interdepartmental transfer whereas the Parks & Recreation Department is under budget in its Grounds Maintenance Accounts, #10352-52013, #10354-52013, #10357-52013 with an increase in such accounts for a total of \$16,600 and a corresponding decrease in #10357-51001, Full-Time Salaries. Motion passed 5-0.**

The request by the Police Department is because of a strong demand in its police special services with a corresponding increase in Special Duty. Therefore, the Police Department is requesting approval for an increase in expense appropriation with a corresponding increase in revenue estimate.

**J. Plock moved and B. Manners seconded a motion to approve Department of Finance Memorandum #20711 relative to an appropriation with a corresponding increase in revenue**

**estimate for the Police Department with an increase in #10401-51020, Special Duty, in the amount of \$120,000 and an increase in #10903-44230, Police Special Services, in the amount of \$120,000. Motion passed 5-0.**

The Fire Department has experienced also an increase demand in its fire special services with a corresponding increase in revenues.

**B. Manners moved and J. Plock seconded a motion to approve Department of Finance Memorandum #200712 relative to an appropriation with a corresponding increase in revenue estimate for the Fire Department with an increase in #10501-51020, Special Duty, in the amount of \$10,000 and an increase in #10903-44242, Special Fire Fees, in the amount of \$10,000. Motion passed 5-0.**

The Planning & Zoning Department will be over budget on the Inland-Wetland Board Expense account due from increased activity and are running under budget on their salary account.

**J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to approve Department of Finance Memorandum #200713 relative to an Inter-Departmental Transfer for Planning & Zoning with an increase by \$1,350, #10131-53001, Board Expenses for the Inland-Wetland Board, and a corresponding decrease by \$1,350, in #10130-51001, Full-Time Salaries. Motion passed 5-0.**

Jay Wahlberg on his Town of Ridgefield Snow Season Report, Ten Year Analysis, distributed to the BOS. They budgeted \$350,350 with a 2007 Actual of \$447,300. However, they have a huge inventory of sand and salt.

4. Livestock Ordinance –

The latest copy of the “Proposed Ordinance Concerning the Keeping of Livestock on Residential Property Pursuant to Authority Conferred unto the Town of Ridgefield by the Public Health Code” was reviewed again and a few changes made to the wording. R. Marconi indicated that he is still planning on doing an assessment of the Town residents to see who this ordinance will affect currently.

This ordinance will be on the agenda for a Public Hearing on June 6 and a Town Meeting for June 20.

John Katz, Ridgebury Road, stressed that the ordinance should read specific to only these certain zones; and the need for grandfathering ZBA variances (barns built within setbacks) or pre-dating zoning. R. Marconi replied that pre-existing non-conforming structures will be grandfathered.

5. Parking Authority – Discuss Charge

**J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to table Agenda Item #5, Parking Authority – Discuss Charge, and reschedule to the June 6, 2007, BOS Meeting. Motion passed 4-0. B. Manners was absent from the room for the vote.**

6. Reappointment of Sharon Dornfeld, Parking Hearing Officer –

**J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to reappoint Sharon Dornfeld for an additional one-year term as Parking Hearing Officer. Motion passed 5-0.**

7. Tax Refund Approvals from Tax Collector

**B. Manners moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to approve the \$969.33 in tax refunds submitted for approval on 5/18/07, as requested by Jane Berendsen-Hill, Tax Collector. Motion passed 5-0.**

8. Tax Collection Issues for Fiscal '07-08 – Jane B-Hill

R. Marconi reviewed the May 18, 2007 memo received from Jane Berendsen-Hill, Tax Collector relative to Recommended Tax-Related Actions for Fiscal 2007-2008. These are recommendations to facilitate the efficient collection of taxes. All of these recommendations require approval at a Town Meeting. Ms. Berendsen-Hill came forward to answer any questions.

**J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to set a Public Hearing on June 6, 2007, 7:30 P.M., Town Hall Large Conference Room, for consideration of:**

1. Waiver of Small Property Tax Bills

**Commencing with Fiscal Year 2007-2008 and continuing thereafter, all property taxes from each annual Grand List due in the amount of \$10.00 or less shall be waived in accordance with the provisions provided in Section 12-144c of the Connecticut General Statutes.**

2. Waiver of Refunds of Excess Payments Less Than \$5

**Tax payments made to the Town of Ridgefield in excess of the amount due, whether for principal, legal interest, penalty, or fees, shall be retained by the Tax Collector where the amount of the excess payment is less than \$5.00. Where the amount of excess payment is \$5.00 or greater, the procedure for refunds outlined in Section 12-129 of the Connecticut General Statutes, as amended, shall be followed.**

**and set a Town Meeting on June 20, 2007, 7:30 P.M., Town Hall Large Conference Room, for consideration of #1, Waiver of Small Property Tax Bills, and #2, Waiver of Refunds of Excess Payments Less Than \$5, and #3, Tax Installments:**

3. Tax Installments

**The taxes on the Grand List of October 1, 2006 shall become due and payable on July 1, 2007. Each real estate and personal property bill in excess of \$100.00 may be paid in four quarterly installments commencing July 1, 2007, and quarterly thereafter, pursuant to Section 12-142 of the General Statutes of 1958 revised as of April 1, 1969 (Public Act 54).**

**Motion passed 5-0.**

9. Selectman's Report

- Schedule for the Memorial Day Parade – no breakfast at the Fire House this year. The route is shorter with all the festivities at Ballard Park following the parade. The Board of Selectmen may ride the antique fire truck equipped with four new tires.
- In response to requests, copies of FOI documents are available, but effective June 1, there will be a charge of 25 cents/page to cover paper and labor.

- Proposed ordinance from Planning & Zoning on zone enforcement will be on the agenda for discussion on June 6<sup>th</sup>.
- Results of the vote on the budget referendum on May 15, 2007 are now available.
- R. Marconi is writing a letter of objection to the water rate hike for the Town of Ridgefield of a 50% increase.
- Copy distributed of letter written to Mr. Steve Kelley, of the Federal Aviation Administration relative to Ridgefield's concerns with the FAA plan to redirect New York air traffic over Ridgefield. The plan to expand operations at Stewart Airport in Newburgh, NY will directly affect flight paths and this should be part of the consideration as well. A redesign of air space will also bring air traffic directly over Weir Farm, interfering with the natural tranquility of Connecticut's only national park.
- The request for a donation to the Boys' & Girls' Club was previously forwarded by the Board of Selectmen to the Board of Finance for their consideration. The Board of Finance has returned this issue back to the BOS requesting stipulation of an amount. This issue will be put back on a BOS agenda.
- Storm Follow-up -- Chief Burford indicated that the Fire Department is conducting a Post-Incident Analysis. John Mannuza is tracking all of the Town's expenses. Once the numbers are together, Ridgefield will submit a storm costs appeal to the State. The Reverse 911 Ssystem was used; a lot of residents did not get it; checking on the numbers that did not receive a call. There was one emergency situation with a small child surviving from recent brain surgery. Both a tree crew and a line crew opened up an emergency exit if needed for this family. This is what should be done in every emergency situation. A. Bodner commented on how people moved barricades and tape – "unmanageable". There were many downed wires. Parks & Recreation opened up for showers and use of the pool. Residents could also fill jugs with water.
- Lunch with Di and Chief Burford on June 6 from 12:00 – 1:00.

10. Approval of Meeting Minutes: 5/9/07, 5/11/07

**J. Plock moved and B. Manners seconded a motion to approve as amended the minutes of the May 9, 2007 Board of Selectmen Meeting. Motion passed 5-0.**

**B. Manners moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to approve as submitted the minutes of the May 11, 2007, Board of Selectmen Special Meeting. Motion passed 4-0. J. Plock was not present at the May 11 meeting.**

**J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to adjourn the Board of Selectmen Meeting at 10:15 p.m. Motion passed 5-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Janet L. Johnson