

BOARD of SELECTMEN MEETING – JULY 1, 2009

TOWN HALL/LARGE 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, B. Manners, D. Masters

Absent: J. Plock

Board of Selectmen Meeting Agenda (*immediately following Special Town Meeting*)

1. Children's Corner Lease
2. Parks & Recreation – Impact of Reduction in Staffing (Barbara Dobbins)
3. Transfers – Kevin Redmond
4. Library Tax Abatement
5. Commission on Aging Request to Amend Tax Deferment Ordinance
6. EDC Report for POCD
7. Ride Provide Program
8. 2008 DEMHS Grant resolution
9. Vendor Permit and Application Review
10. Selectman's Report
11. Approval of Meeting Minutes: 5/6/09, 5/20/09, 6/03/09, 6/17/09

R. Marconi called the **Special Town Meeting** to order at 7:30 P.M. “*to receive comments on the proposal to receive a donation of land of approximately 0.061 acres from 76 Governor Street, LLC.*” Minutes of the Special Town Meeting are under separate cover.

R. Marconi called the **Board of Selectmen Meeting** to order at 7:45 p.m., immediately following the Special Town Meeting.

1. Children's Corner Lease

R. Marconi indicated that he had contacted the Board of Education inquiring as to what they are doing relative to the realignment of the schools. The BOE held a special meeting for this discussion, but they have yet to arrive at any conclusion. They are still in the “data collection” stage. They feel they may well need the Children's Corner property by the end of June 2010, and thus we will draft a renewal lease reflecting this end date of 6/30/10.

D. Masters requested that if the Children's Corner property will be available for rental after June 2010, we should split the zones so that we can charge for utilities and not just estimate each area's probable utility cost. We need a formula x sq. feet x days of the year or split the zones. R. Marconi responded that this had been looked at when Parks & Rec left the building and it was converted to an elementary school. The cost to split the zones at that time was prohibitive and utility charges at that time were much less than they are today. The property was just assessed by a Norwalk consultant and their conclusion was that a rental charge of \$14 to \$16/sq. ft is a reasonable charge. We are currently charging \$16.39/sq. ft, so we are in line. A consultant would charge for estimating the cost to split the utility zones. R. Marconi will research the previous estimate. He will proceed with preparation of a lease thru June 30, 2010 and will request a target

date of October 2009 for a decision by the Board of Education as to whether or not they will need the Children's Corner space after June 2010.

2. Parks & Recreation – Impact of Reduction in Staffing (Barbara Dobbins)

Paul Roche, Director of Parks & Rec, and Phil Kearns, Chairman of the Parks & Rec Commission, came forward to discuss the Parks & Recreation's "Maintenance Staff Reduction Impact" Report dated June 18, 2009. Ms. Dobbins was not present.

This report details a new definition of their scope of services as needed to meet their reduction in income and a resultant reduction in proposed expenditures for budget year 2009/2010. These decisions were made relative to safety, core mission and responsibilities of the Department of Parks & Recreation, and the magnitude of impact on those that are affected. The outdoor maintenance staff was reduced by one full-time and one seasonal maintainer. The Rec Center indoor maintenance staff was reduced by one part-time building maintainer and a 50% reduction in the available hours of the seasonal building maintenance staff. Mr. Roche commented on the list of services that they have had to eliminate or reduce – snow removal, grounds maintenance, tick mitigation programs, reduced mowing, setting up for Rec Center events and break-down following, maintenance of Town Triangles, etc. - a very detailed list.

Andy Bodner commented on "priorities". Some of these services eliminated or reduced are priorities of the Town. If that is the case, then the money needs to be found. D. Masters stressed that the taxpayers want the triangles maintained, the roads plowed, the sidewalks and entry areas to buildings shoveled. The residents pay high taxes and they want their roads clean and safe and no trash around. It seems as if the cuts in services add up to much more than the reduction of 70 man-hours. We realize that program revenue is also down. The BOS wants to be kept aware of what is being cut and why. "Triangles and trash" are important! Mr. Roche indicated that this is a work in progress. They'll see how the hours they have cut work out and make adjustments where needed.

Parks & Rec will report back in a couple of months for a further discussion.

3. Transfers – Kevin Redmond

Kevin Redmond explained the reason for this requested transfer. The Town has an obligation relating to Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB). Under GASB 45, the Town is required to implement the new OPEB accounting standard (GASB 45) in FYE 2009. The liability is based on an actuarial report issued by our OPEB actuaries and is calculated using a five-year phase-in of the liability. The transfer has no net impact on Fund Balance nor does it impact cost centers other than the Employee Taxes/Insurance/Benefits cost center.

D. Masters moved and B. Manners seconded a motion to approve Department of Finance Memorandum #200913, Year-End Transfer – OPEB (Other Post Employment Benefits), with an increase in #10852-57007, OPEB Liability in the amount of \$84,120, and a decrease in #10853-57001, Medical, in the amount of \$24,120, and #10853-58010, Social Security/Medicare, in the amount of \$60,000. Motion passed 4-0.

4. Library Tax Abatement

Chris Nolan, Library Director, and Bill Wyman and Liz Kelly, members of the Library's Board of Directors, came forward to discuss the proposed tax abatement on the Webster Bank Building. The building has not been occupied since January 1, 2009. The tax liability for 2009/2010 totals

about \$75,400. R. Marconi indicated that the Library Board should have requested this abatement on January 1st when the building became empty. J. Plock has requested that she be present for the abatement vote. The next BOS meeting is July 29. B. Manners expressed support for the abatement of 2009 taxes. There is a move to demolish the building and also someone interested in buying the building. R. Marconi read the statute which allows the BOS to abate property taxes in such a situation, but it will result in a reduction in revenue. This request will be on the July 29 agenda for a vote at that time.

5. Commission on Aging Request to Amend Tax Deferral Ordinance

Members of the Commission on Aging came forward to further promote their request for an amendment to the Tax Deferral Ordinance: Mary Morrisroe, Secretary, Shirley Glennan, Christine Robertson, Chairman and Kathy Brennan. R. Marconi read the June 16, 2009 letter from Mary Morrisroe, Secretary of the Commission on Aging.

The Commission on Aging voted at their June 15, 2009 meeting to recommend to the BOS that Tax Deferral Ordinance 13Y2-20 be amended to allow six (6) months after the death of the taxpayer before the 4% simple interest on the deferred taxes is increased. The current ordinance allows only sixty days. It usually takes longer than sixty days following a death for the estate to be processed. R. Marconi indicated that up to \$55,000 is the amount now allowed for deferral. More and more residents are taking advantage of this – currently about 100 taxpayers. A. Bodner indicated that he is comfortable with the six months as requested and perhaps there should be discussion about possibly raising the \$55,000 amount.

Al Garzi, Tax Assessor, should be invited to come to the next BOS meeting, which is scheduled for July 29. Instead this agenda item will be discussed at the first meeting in August as A. Bodner will be on vacation on July 29th.

6. EDC Report for POCD

Bob Knight and Richard O'Brien of the Economic Development Commission came forward to present the EDC's paper detailing "Business and Economic Development Issues for Update of Ridgefield's Plan of Conservation and Development". Mr. Knight acknowledged the assistance of Al Garzi, Ridgefield's Tax Assessor, and Mark Waterhouse, Consultant, the BOS, the BOF, Betty Brosius, Director of Planning, and Becky Marchetti, Chairman of Planning & Zoning.

Mr. Knight commented on the need for maintenance of an adequate business portion of the Town's Grand List. The EDC is recommending an increase to 18% from the current 13%. Adequate locations need to be designated for business development. They recommend a new business zone on Route 7 between Route 35 and Branchville with the current widening of Route 7. Another area is Route 35 between Rte. 116 and Rte. 7 with a plan for greater density of already developed areas. There are pockets for business development along that route.

Another suggestion was for the improvement of Ridgefield's "gateways". There are no signs. What about Ridgefield's image? What can be done about unattractive buildings that come up for sale in gateway areas?

Regarding the downtown business area, what type of shops should be encouraged? What about parking, upstairs and downstairs occupants? Should the area east toward the Playhouse be an increased business area? The EDC is anxious to get everyone engaged.

There is lots of opportunity for the development of the Branchville area. We need to promote the economic vitality and attractiveness of this area for business development. The Branchville Train Station study is part of this. Possible financing from the Department of Transportation needs to be researched and obtained. The Georgetown Wire Mill project which is a collaboration with Redding, Wilton, and Ridgefield is on hold right now.

EDC members are each assigned to different projects with regard to business retention and expansion. We all need to be proactive and help market Ridgefield. The EDC is compiling a list of all the businesses in Ridgefield. The EDC wants to get to know the individual businesses and be ready to help with a problem – a “rapid response team”. The EDC would like to establish a business ambassador program.

What about creation of an arts cluster district? The Arts Council is already established. The EDC is suggesting a focus on reoccurring events.

Ridgefield should be marketed as a “business destination”. How can this be done? They are starting with website development and grassroots types of things. We need to update the info to CERT. The Chamber of Commerce is working on development of a brand for Ridgefield. Creation of a “Team Ridgefield” where all groups are unified in a spirit of teamwork working with the Board of Selectmen is the goal. Does our permit and approval process promote business development? The EDC wants to develop a flowchart of where Ridgefield wants to go with regard to business development. This should include an inventory of Town surplus properties.

R. Marconi thanked the EDC for their dedication to the economic development of Ridgefield.

7. Ride Provide Program

The funds allocated to the Hart bus have been reduced to \$50,000 from \$150,000 for the 2009-2010 budget year. A Ride Provide Program has been implemented to connect people who have needs with drivers. This can result in increased liability for the Town and requires the recruitment of volunteer drivers. IT would develop a database. Do we want to support this? Who is going to manage the program – the same women who administer the Hart Bus Program? How is this going to work? Mary Morrisroe indicated that AARP provides insurance for programs such as this. R. Marconi indicated that his office has received complaints from residents who are finding it difficult to get to doctor appointments and to the Mall.

8. 2008 DEMHS Grant Resolution

Fire Chief Burford came forward to discuss the Memorandum of Agreement Package for the FFY 2008 Homeland Security Grant Program. R. Marconi read the proposed resolution. This agreement provides for a \$935,000 grant for the region which is to be shared by the member municipalities.

D. Masters moved and A. Bodner seconded a motion to approve Memorandum of Agreement for the FFY 2008 Homeland Security Grant Program as follows:

“RESOLVED, that the Town of Ridgefield Board of Selectmen may enter with and deliver to the State of Connecticut Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security any and all documents which it deems to be necessary or appropriate, and

FURTHER RESOLVED, that Rudy Marconi, as First Selectman of the Town of Ridgefield, is authorized and directed to execute and deliver any and all documents on

behalf of the Board of Selectmen and to do and perform all acts and things which he/she deems to be necessary or appropriate to carry out the terms of such documents, including, but not limited to, executing and delivering all agreements and documents contemplated by such documents.

The undersigned further certifies that Rudy Marconi now holds the office of First Selectman and that he/she has held that office since 1999.”

Motion passed 4-0.

9. Vendor Permit and Application Review

Under consideration is a revised vendor permit application and an accompanying waiver/release, which have been requested by Police Chief John Roche. D. Masters commented that she endorses a revised and more complete background check on Ridgefield’s vendors, but questions the “tone” of this waiver/release. R. Marconi indicated that a picture badge will be required plus a plaque on their vehicle.

10. Selectman’s Report

1) Connecticut’s Probate Court system has been reduced from 116 courts to 50 by Governor Rell in a cost-containment effort. Our Probate Judge Egan will probably soon retire. Bethel is currently building a new Probate Court building. The realignment indicates that we go to Newtown, and if not, then to Danbury. R. Marconi indicated that he has spoken our representative, John Frey, about this realignment.

2) CL&P will be starting their tree trimming program in the fall. Maps will be circulated of areas that will be affected.

3) The damaged trees in front of Ballard Park have been replaced.

4) Matthew Peterson, one of the applicants selected to serve on the Charter Revision Commission has moved away from Ridgefield. He needs to be replaced. R. Marconi read the names of the applicants not selected. Their first meeting is scheduled for July 9.

B. Manners moved and A. Bodner seconded a motion to replace Matthew Peterson (who has moved out of town) with Andrew Kelemen as a member of the Charter Revision Commission. Motion passed 3-0-1. D. Masters abstained.

11. Approval of Meeting Minutes: 5/6/09, 5/20/08, 6/03/09, 6/17/09

D. Masters moved and A. Bodner seconded a motion to approve as written the minutes of the May 6, 2009, Board of Selectmen Meeting. Motion passed 3-0-1. B. Manners abstained as she was not present at the May 6th meeting.

A. Bodner moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to approve as amended the minutes of the May 20, 2009, Board of Selectmen Meeting. Motion passed 3-0-1. B. Manners abstained as she was not present at the May 20th meeting.

D. Masters moved and A. Bodner seconded a motion to approve as amended the minutes of the June 3, 2009, Public Hearing & Board of Selectmen Meeting. Motion passed 4-0.

B. Manners moved and R. Marconi seconded a motion to approve as amended the minutes of the June 17, 2009, Public Hearing & Board of Selectmen Meeting. Motion passed 3-0-1. D. Masters abstained as she was not present at the June 17, 2009 meeting.

B. Manners moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to adjourn the Board of Selectmen Meeting at 10:40 p.m. Motion passed 4-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Janet L. Johnson