

PUBLIC HEARING & BOARD of SELECTMEN MEETING
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION MEETING

SEPTEMBER 21, 2005 7:30 P.M.

TOWN HALL/LOWER LEVEL CONFERENCE ROOM

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, B. Manners, D. Masters, J. Plock

Absent: P. Yanity

PUBLIC HEARING AGENDA

A Public Hearing will be held in the Town Hall Lower Level Conference Room, 400 Main Street, Ridgefield, Connecticut, on Wednesday, September 21, 2005, at 7:30 p.m. to discuss:

- 1) A month-to-month lease to the Ridgefield to the Ridgefield Boys & Girls Club to use the Yanity Gym facility; said lease to terminate upon the issuance of a certificate of occupancy for their current building project. A copy of this lease is available in the Town Clerk's office.
- 2) Modifying the existing deed providing for the right in favor of the Town of Ridgefield to use the pond on the Ridgefield Boys & Girls Club property for firefighting purposes to the right to use the swimming pool on said property for said purposes.
- 3) Granting an easement to the Ridgefield Boys & Girls Club in the Governor Street Municipal parking lot for parking and/or egress as approved by the Ridgefield Planning & Zoning Commission.

BOARD of SELECTMEN AGENDA

1. Vendor permit – Richard Papenfuss
2. Deer Management Implementation Committee Interviews- M. Catanzaro, T. Falconieri
3. Parks & Recreation Commission Appointment
4. Gwen Thaxter Report Presentation
5. Library Update & Strategic Plan – Chris Nolan
6. 35 Cops Hill LLC Open Space Donation
7. Anna Maria Kellen: Gift of land on Ned's Mountain Road
8. Tony Steger, Frank Sergiovanni, Committee Members – Golf Course Overview
9. Affordable Housing Unit Sale Review
10. Approval of meeting minutes – 8/24/05; 9/7/05
11. Selectman's Report

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION AGENDA

Review of meeting with DECD.

PUBLIC HEARING

- 1) R. Marconi called the Public Hearing to order at 7:30 p.m. The first issue under discussion was the proposed lease to the Ridgefield Boys & Girls Club to use the Yanity Gym facility

while their facility is under construction. Ridgefield's Adult Education Office (Peggy Bruno, Director) will move to the VNA, 2nd floor. It is estimated that the construction will take approximately 18 months to complete. The Boys & Girls Club will be open from about 3:00 to 6:00 each afternoon.

John Katz, Ridgebury Road – questioned the meaning of Page 2, Second Point – Use. What is meant by the term use for philanthropic purposes? B. Manners replied that this is probably meant that the Boys & Girls Club can use the Yanity Gym facility for fund raising purposes. Bill Gallagher, Limestone Road, replied that the facility would only be used for Boys & Girls Club fund raising, registration and organizing.

J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to hold a Town Meeting on October 5, 2005, Town Hall Lower Level Conference Room, at 7:30 p.m. to vote upon the month-to-month lease to the Ridgefield Boys & Girls Club to use the Yanity Gym; said lease to terminate upon the issuance of a certificate of occupancy for their current building project. Motion passed 4-0.

The Public Hearing on this issue was closed.

- 2) R. Marconi called the Public Hearing to order to discuss the Fire Department's use of the pool at the Boys & Girls Club instead of the pond should they need the water for fire fighting purposes. This would be necessary during the Boys & Girls Club construction phase. A discussion ensued as to the need to not reduce the pool below 200,000 gallons of water except during repairs to the pool. Dr. Michael Autouri suggested that the Boys & Girls Club must provide notification and receive consent from the Fire Department prior to emptying the pool for repairs. David Grogins, Town Counsel, will prepare the correct wording in the lease prior to the Town Meeting relative to this issue.

J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to hold a Town Meeting on October 5, 2005, Town Hall Lower Level Conference Room, at 7:30 p.m. to vote upon the modification of the existing deed providing for the right in favor of the Town of Ridgefield to use the pond on the Ridgefield Boys & Girls Club property for firefighting purposes to the right to use the swimming pool on said property for said purposes. Motion passed 4-0.

The Public Hearing on this issue was closed.

- 3) R. Marconi called the Public Hearing to order to discuss the Condition #4 of the proposed Resolution of Approval for the Special Permit, Ridgefield Boys and Girls Club for renovations and improvements to the existing facility at 41 Governor Street. Condition #4 covers modifications to the parking lot design. R. Marconi read the September 7 letter received from Betty Brosius, Director of Planning, relative to the Referral under Sec. 8-24 of the Connecticut General Statutes Boys and Girls Club Parking/Governor Street. Planning & Zoning suggested a change in the parking plan at their meeting on September 6, 2005, and this change has been incorporated into the plans.

J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to hold a Town Meeting on October 5, 2005, Town Hall Lower Level Conference Room, at 7:30 p.m. to vote upon granting an easement to the Ridgefield Boys & Girls Club in the Governor Street Municipal parking

lot for parking and/or egress as approved by the Ridgefield Planning & Zoning Commission. Motion passed 4-0.

The Public Hearing on this issue was closed.

BOARD of SELECTMEN MEETING

R. Marconi called the Board of Selectmen Meeting to order.

1) Vendor Permit – Richard Papenfuss

R. Papenfuss came forward to present his request for a renewal of his vendor permit for his Chuck Wagon business. He has been in business in Ridgefield for thirty years. **J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to approve for an additional year the vendor permit for Richard Papenfuss to operate his Chuck Wagon. Motion passed 4-0.**

2) Deer Management Implementation Committee Interviews – M. Catanzaro, T. Falconieri. No decision will be made as to the Committee members until Dr. Yanity returns.

Tom Falconieri, Limestone Rd. – came forward to introduce himself and express his desire to serve on the Deer Management Implementation Committee. R. Marconi read the letter received from Mr. Falconieri. His main concern is the health of the deer and safe hunting. J. Plock inquired whether he was comfortable implementing whatever the Board of Selectmen decides. Mr. Falconieri agreed, “no problem”. B. Manners questioned Mr. Falconieri’s comments on WLAD recently. She feels it is important that the Committee members have verified accurate information when stating their opinions. He replied that he doesn’t understand the feeding of the deer for the purpose of applying tick pesticide if there is a deer overpopulation. A permit is needed from the DEP for the use of pesticide. He has studied deer management legislation in New York, Rhode Island, Maine, and Connecticut. He is retired and has the time to devote to the Committee. He feels his expertise on the subject would be helpful if chosen to serve on the Deer Implementation Committee.

Michael Catanzaro, Mimosa Circle – came forward to introduce himself and express his desire to serve on the Deer Management Implementation Committee.. He now has the time to volunteer as his job has been relocated to Wilton as Manager of Rolling Hills Country Club. He has had considerable experience working with committees and boards from working at country clubs for a number of years.

3) Parks & Recreation Commission Appointment - Both Evie Bottali and Bill Whelan have been interviewed and are very qualified. It was decided to delay any decision until Dr. Yanity’s return.

4) Gwen Thaxter Report Presentation – Ms. Thaxter came forward to discuss her submission of her “Ridgefield Deer Committee Minority Report”. With her was her attorney, Derek Oatis. A letter to the BOS from Mr. Oatis had been received earlier on September 21, expressing Ms. Thaxter’s complaint as to how she was treated as a member of the Deer Committee, that the Majority Report was presented to the BOS on July 6, 2005 without adequate notice to the Deer Committee that this was occurring, and the Deer Committee was then dissolved once the Majority Report was presented. It was Ms. Thaxter’s feeling that the Deer Committee should not have been dissolved until her Minority Report was received and presented to the BOS. BOS members had not had an opportunity to read the letter received from Mr. Oatis.

Mr. Marconi expressed the Board's desire to listen to what Ms. Thaxter has to say, and that he had asked David Grogins, Town Counsel to be present at this meeting. Mr. Grogins commented that the BOS can choose not to hear this report as the official minority report, but can request to hear Ms. Thaxter's version of her report. The BOS has the authority to decide whether or not to hear the report. B. Manners inquired as to whether or not Ms. Thaxter was cut off in any way from making her report. Mr. Grogins will investigate this. J. Plock indicated a willingness to listen to differing views but not willing to listen to anything regarding possible negligence on the part of the Deer Committee as they were not present to defend themselves. Ms. Thaxter refused to answer J. Plock's question as to reduce the size of the herd.

Gwen Thaxter then gave a brief overview of her report. In response to Mr. Falconieri's comments about attracting the deer with food in order to use a pesticide, Ms. Thaxter stated that deer eat only about 10% of the corn put out for them. They need protein and therefore seek protein such as acorns. This pesticide is entirely safe and it is a good way to reduce ticks up to 80-90%. Studies have been done and she will get the citations to support this.

The Stricter Light Animal Reflection System is an effective deterrent to discourage the deer from crossing the street.

Ms. Thaxter encourages greater use of the bait box. This coats mice with insecticide. Mice are what need to be targeted to reduce ticks.

D. Masters suggested the use of many of the suggestions in Ms. Thaxter's report as well as reduction of the size of the herd – can we not tackle the problem from many sides? Ms. Masters suggested that everyone should compromise a little. There is no way to accurately count the exact number of deer. She suggests using all available techniques to combat the deer problems. Ms. Thaxter replied that killing doesn't control the Lyme and tick problems. She stressed that if the deer are to be killed, then the science on the subject needs to be brought into any decision-making. Orvis, for example, sells clothing with insecticide in it. The Humane Society is willing to do a program in town on "Deer Proofing Your Garden". Ms. Thaxter indicated that she had done six months of extensive research on the many options for deer control and the many related issues.

J. Plock asked Ms. Thaxter as to how would she reduce the deer herd? She replied that we need to know the exact size of the herd first. There has never been a survey of the town residents. This needs to be done first.

D. Masters responded that the Deer Committee was established because of the many citizens who asked the BOS to seek a reasonable solution to the deer problem. R. Marconi responded that in working with the Lyme Disease Task Force, the Police Department responding to motor vehicle deer-related accidents, and the Conservation Commission's concern over how greenery in open space being decimated, these issues indicated there is a significant problem in our community relevant to the deer problem that needs to be addressed. Ms. Thaxter agreed there is a problem, but feels we need scientific-based studies to support whatever decisions are made. What actually is happening in the woods to the undergrowth? We need to get scientific data and not just start shooting. There is an opportunity for Yale to do their research in Ridgefield. This is an opportunity for Ridgefield to become a model community whereby we bring in science to find solutions. Ms. Thaxter thanked the BOS for the opportunity to speak before the Board and present her report and ideas.

Dr. Michael Autouri expressed his concern about the use of bait boxes coating small animals and pesticide getting into the food chain.

5) Library Update & Strategic Plan – Chris Nolan

Chris Nolan, Director, Sally Savoia, Chairman of the Library Board, and Barbara Dobbin, Head of the Planning Committee, all came forward to discuss the Library's current situation and goals for the future. Sally Savoia presented the many ways in which the Library is a considerable asset to the Town. The level of activity continues to rise with 370,000+ visits/year, circulation of 400,000+ items, and thousands of reference questions. Their operating budget is \$1.9 million with 72-74% coming from the Town. In 2002 they did a community-based needs assessment which stressed space constraints. They then developed a mission statement and goals. Their strategic planning adopted goals for the different age groups. From 2004 on, they have been involved with planning. They hired a firm to assess community support by interviewing a variety of age groups. They did goal testing and identified categories of potential support. The next step is to build a capital fund program for capital and endowment.

With regard to facilities planning, they did a visual scan of lighting and seating and walked from one area to another. Is the top shelf reachable? How can current space be refigured? The width between the stacks is very cramped. There is no room for a chair at the end of the aisles. There is no place for teens to gather and talk.

The next step was a Building Program Statement. They investigated norms in other communities. They are currently working on a full design, which is not yet quite finished. They do need an engineering assessment of the current building with weight considerations and site options. They are hoping that by the 2nd quarter of 2006, they will have a plan as to what a proposed redo will look like and cost. They do want to keep the original building. They are planning for the next twenty years.

J. Plock inquired as to the projected start date – it will probably take several years to get to their funding level. J. Plock replied that Ridgefield has built new schools and the BOS does have a kind of commitment to the Police Department for a new facility. These projects cannot come together all at the same time. There is also an increased cost each year to maintain new facilities. The library currently occupies 25,170 sq. ft. – with less useable space than most libraries of their size. They closed by asking the BOS to participate in a “visual scan” of the current and proposed new space.

- 6) 35 Copps Hill LLC Open Space Donation – 35 Copps Hill LLC, a Connecticut limited liability company with an office at 24 Bailey Avenue in Ridgefield, wishes to grant to the Town of Ridgefield, under the jurisdiction of the Conservation Commission, seven acres of property located at 35 Copps Hill Road. R. Marconi pointed out that an 8-24 has not been issued on this property and it would be helpful to also have a Phase 1 environmental study of the property. If the Town of Ridgefield is accepting these 7 acres, then we should know if there are any problems associated with the property. **D. Masters moved and B. Manners seconded a motion to request an 8-24 from Planning & Zoning on the seven acres located at 35 Copps Hill Road and that Rudy Marconi as First Selectman write a letter to the Conservation Commission requesting a Phase 1 Environmental Assessment on said property. Motion passed 4-0.**

- 7) Anna Maria Kellen: Gift of Land on Ned's Mountain Road – **D. Masters moved and J. Plock seconded a motion to accept with great appreciation the donation by Mrs. Anne Maria**

Kellen of Parcel C, Ned's Mountain Road to be added to the Town's open space inventory. Motion passed 4-0.

8) Tony Steger, Frank Sergiovanni, Committee Members – Golf Course Overview

The following individuals came forward to provide an overview of the Golf Course: Tony Steger, Golf Course Superintendent; Frank Sergiovanni, Golf Course Director; Carol Ancona, Co-Chair of the Golf Committee; Jay Saks, Co-Chair of the Golf Committee, and Ed Tyrrell, Golf Committee member.

2005 was a good season for the Golf Course – not a lot of rain-outs. Frank Sergiovanni provided some financial comparisons between 2004 and 2005, which showed “striking similarities”. 2005 numbers indicate \$1,163 million in revenue. The comparison of resident and non-resident rounds indicates the profitability of the non-resident revenue. What about raising the rates? The trend is not up. In 2004 the non-resident rate was raised \$5 between Memorial Day and Labor Day. This was a way to maximize during the peak demand time. This seems to be working well. Ridgefield did not lose out-of-town users.

Several projects are underway – replacing the cart fleet. The five-year lease is up and the new carts will be delivered next week. The old carts are returned and leased elsewhere. The cart barn has been refurbished for electric carts. The deck replacement bids are out for replacement and expansion of the deck. Concession management and redo of the kitchen is under discussion, including the addition of a dishwasher. The septic system should be inspected and a legitimate grease trap installed.

Tony Steger reviewed the accomplishments of his maintenance staff, which include extensive drainage installation and maintenance and installation of the irrigation system. Future plans include replacement of the bridge between the 16th green and the 17th tee. This is a number one priority and will cost about \$137,000. The present bridge is a safety issue for golf carts, walkers and maintenance equipment. Rain causes the bridge approaches to be closed. A new bridge would be two times the length of the current one. All the cart paths need resurfacing. Repairs continue to be done, but this issue needs to be addressed. They will revisit the possibility of a grant from ADA. Several paths need to be rerouted. They would like to start implementing some of the Master Plan – leveling of the Tee boxes and sand trap renovation. If it rains, currently the bunkers have to be pumped out. The Golf Committee makes money for the Town, but need to spend dollars to continue to make money. Staggering the expenses is the best approach. They would like money in next year's budget for chemicals to fight grass blight. This blight comes on very suddenly and without warning. It would be helpful for the money for the chemicals to be readily available when needed.

- 9) Affordable Housing Unit Sale Review – Affordable Housing is governed by Town statute and not by State statute. Ridgefield does, however, want to get State credit for Ridgefield's affordable housing. The sale price of affordable housing was originally set by who built it. Now there is no ceiling on the selling price as of 1995. Now the property can be sold for what the market will pay. Robyn Cohen of Cohen & Wolfe reviewed the documents and all is in place. **J. Plock moved and B. Manners seconded a motion to approve the sale of Unit #C14 located at the “Village at Ridgefield Condominiums”, 570 Danbury Road, Ridgefield, CT., for a sales price of \$360,000, from the Estate of Doris Faski to Barbara Ruschil. The Board of Selectmen hereby approves this sale as being in conformance with the Connecticut General Statute 8-30G as of 1995. Motion passed 4-0.**

10) Approval of Meeting Minutes – 8/24/05; 9/7/05

J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to approve as amended the minutes of the Special Board of Selectmen Meeting of August 24, 2005. Motion passed 4-0.

J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to approve as amended the minutes of the Board of Selectmen Meeting of September 7, 2005. Motion passed 4-0.

11) First Selectman's Report -

- Bailey Avenue Parking Lot – Design Council met on September 19 and has made corrections and changes in the proposed plans. Samples of pavers are under consideration.
- Bissell Building – A small set of plans was dropped off before P&Z. A few suggestions were made – parking realignment. The plans for the additional apartments were presented to the Zoning Board of Appeals on September 6, as they are the Board responsible for building interiors. The goal is to have the foundation in before winter sets in, and the building complete by Spring.
- Airport Meeting scheduled for September 22 with the City of Danbury to discuss beacon and tree cutting issues. Ridgefield paid \$3200 to participate in the noise study and have heard nothing about the study since last November. The word last month was that the draft report was ready and a Public Hearing would be held, but the report had not been received. The meeting was set for September 8 and the report was available on September 7th. This did not allow enough time for review of the report. The meeting was then rescheduled for tomorrow, September 22. R. Marconi reported that he has met recently with several residents of the neighborhood and expressed to them his frustration with the process and the contradictions and errors which continue to occur. He is concerned that this report will supercede the report done in the 80's, which did outline a preferred runway usage program. The question is how is such a program to be enforced? Ridgefield needs to make sure that the right regulations are finalized. Air traffic over Ridgefield has increased considerably. This new study ignores this issue and eliminates the runway preference program. The study acts like there is no noise problem. The only remaining points deal with pilot education and complaint procedures. Also, what about the micro-jet business. These jets are still in the development stage, but Danbury would be a perfect sized airport for such planes. Ridgefield needs to be an active participant in this study.

Phil Baumann, Keeler Drive - inquired as to the consideration of flight path abatement procedures – that is what Ridgefield wants. A definite plan needs to be in place. R. Marconi responded that currently Mr. Estefan, Airport Manager, supervises the runway usage. Also in attendance this evening was Strat Sherman, George Washington Hwy, a resident involved with the proposed Danbury Airport noise reduction. Mr. Marconi is attending the Danbury meeting to express Ridgefield's dissatisfaction with the process and our concerns. There were supposed to be two public hearings which were never held.

The FAA said there was no need for an environmental study. If Ridgefield wants an environmental study, we may have to go to court to get one. We could appeal the FAA's denial. We need to get Chris Shays more involved.

J. Plock moved and B. Masters seconded a motion to adjourn the Board of Selectmen Meeting at 10:25 p.m. and convene the Economic Development Commission Meeting. Motion passed 4-0.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION MEETING

R. Marconi called the Economic Development Commission Meeting to order at 10:27 p.m.

- 1) Review of Meeting with DECD – D. Masters and R. Marconi went to Hartford to meet with the DECD to stress that Ridgefield is seeking corporate development. This agency is currently in a “stop the bleeding mode”. Connecticut is losing businesses. They need to focus on getting businesses to come to Connecticut. The State is not making any expenditures on buildings; expenses are client-specific. A.J. DiMattia inquired as to when had anyone from Ridgefield last met with the DECD. Mr. Marconi responded that he had met with them frequently regarding the Boehringer Ingelheim expansion.

The SBG Building (Formerly Perkin-Elmer) application is in process.

J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to adjourn the Economic Development Commission Meeting at 10:35 p.m. Motion passed 4-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Janet L. Johnson