

PUBLIC HEARING & BOARD of SELECTMEN MEETING
OCTOBER 3, 2007

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, D. Masters, J. Plock

Absent: B. Manners

Public Hearing (immediately following the Special Town Meeting)

A Public Hearing will be held on October 3, 2007, 7:30 P.M., Town Hall Large Conference Room, 400 Main Street, Ridgefield, Connecticut to discuss the proposed Livestock Ordinance.

Board of Selectmen Agenda (immediately following Public Hearing)

1. Commission on Aging Interview: Gretchen Shine
2. Economic Development Commission Interviews: Alex Karsanidi, Ginny Carroll
3. FAA Airspace Redesign
4. STEAP Grant Nondiscrimination Resolution
5. Contract Approval: Internal Auditor – Jay Wahlberg
6. Tax Refund Approvals
7. Approval of Meeting Minutes: 9/10/07 (special), 9/19/07, 9/26/07 (special)
8. Selectman’s Report

Public Hearing

R. Marconi called the Public Hearing to order immediately following the Special Town Meeting for the purpose of discussing the proposed Livestock Ordinance. The latest revision of the proposed ordinance was available for review. Ed Briggs, Director of Health, was present to answer any questions. The following changes to the draft were agreed upon:

- Section Five: *Enforcement and Penalties*, Second Paragraph: “The Director of Health shall first issue a warning to a landowner if such landowner’s property is in violation of this ordinance. Thereafter, if the landowner does not comply (within 30 days)” – changed from 60 days as 60 days is too long.
- Section Six: *Appeal*, Final Sentence eliminate: “In lieu of said appeal, the landowner may appeal any order hereunder within 7 days of the receipt thereof, in writing, to a Town Hearing Officer appointed by the First Selectman.” – Ed Briggs feels this should be eliminated. Town Counsel will review and decide whether it is appropriate to eliminate this sentence as requested.

Alex Karsanidi, North Salem Rd., inquired as to the definition of “poultry” – the response was anything with feathers.

J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to set a Town Meeting for 7:30 p.m., on November 28, 2007, Town Hall Large Conference Room, relative to the Proposed Ordinance Concerning the Keeping of Livestock on Residential Property in 4-7.5, R-10, R-20, and SD R20

**Zone, Pursuant to Authority Conferred Unto the Town of Ridgefield by the Public Health Code.
Motion passed 4-0.**

R. Marconi closed the Public Hearing and opened the Board of Selectmen Meeting.

Board of Selectmen Meeting

J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to add as #9 on the agenda – Executive Session regarding legal issues concerning Mr. Gaeta. Motion passed 4-0.

1. Commission on Aging Interview: Gretchen Shine

R. Marconi announced that Ms. Shine had withdrawn her application.

2. Economic Development Commission Interviews: Alex Karsanidi, Ginny Carroll

There is one vacancy on the Economic Development Commission, appointment for a one-year term. To date, five applications have been received.

Alex Karsanidi came forward to present himself to the Board and express his interest in serving on the Economic Development Commission. He had interviewed previously for the Commission. He is keen on expansion of Ridgefield's commercial base and an advocate for tax relief. He was part of the Chamber's Economic Development Committee when it was in existence. He feels other avenues need to be addressed relative to parking in the downtown area.

D. Masters asked if he has any particular ideas or skill-set to add to the Economic Development Commission. The State hasn't done much to assist with economic development. Mr. Karsanidi responded that he thinks marketing is the focus. It is important to work with the State Economic Development Commission. We need to use some of the resources available from the State. We need to seek out smaller companies that could come to Ridgefield. He would work on getting the State to "look our way". Working with relocation firms, manufacturing concerns, distribution of the brochure are all important avenues to follow. He thinks the EDC is moving in the right direction.

Andy Bodner indicated how Mr. Karsanidi is a local business owner who has been active on the Chamber and with the Rotary and has worked closely with Chris Shays and Judith Freedman. He continues to support Ridgefield.

Ginny Carroll came forward to express her interest in serving on the Economic Development Commission. Her background is in marketing. She meets daily with business people and is open to bringing in new business that will tie in with our community. We should not "shy away" from commercial development. We need to look at Main Street – who is renting there? She is very busy right now and is seeing a large variety of interest in Ridgefield. A. Bodner asked if she gets inquiries about the 150 acres available on the north side of town? Does she work with the former Union Carbide building area? There is a conflict of interest to be a broker and serve on the EDC. Mr. Cascella is running for a Board of Finance position. If he is elected, he will no longer be able to serve on the EDC and there would then be an additional vacancy.

The BOS will continue to interview the other applicants.

3. FAA Airspace Redesign – R. Marconi reported on his recent meeting in New Canaan with the other municipalities concerned about the impending impact from the proposed FAA Airspace

Redesign. South Ridgefield and Wilton will be directly affected with a proposed flight ceiling of 6,000 feet and an even lower ceiling over Darien and Greenwich for planes heading into LaGuardia. New Canaan and Greenwich are spearheading the opposition to this proposal and have lined up several law firms to be interviewed. There was a discussion as to how to divide up the financial responsibility between the various towns. Stamford was at the meeting and they favor an even split of the legal costs and not by population. R. Marconi would like to receive input from the BOS as to how much should Ridgefield participate in this opposition process.

Michael Kroposki indicated that the FAA has designed the majority of the air traffic going into Newark to go down the Hudson River and LaGuardia traffic will be shifted to over Westchester and Connecticut. With a flight ceiling of 8,000 feet, general aviation traffic will be even down lower. J. Plock asked - What is going to happen to general aviation? – That is a good question! Another obstacle is that many of the qualified law firms already represent airlines.

Andy Bodner indicated that Ridgefield is significantly smaller than Stamford and not as wealthy as Greenwich – How is the cost of fighting the FAA to be divided up? R. Marconi indicated that the meeting to interview the various law firms is scheduled for the next day. Attorney General Blumenthal is investigating how the State of Connecticut can and should be involved. This project is a pilot for the rest of the country; the FAA plans to later restructure around the country – how to deal with delays and update the antiquated traffic control system.

John Katz, Ridgebury Rd., expressed his concern – this is a “big issue”. An increase in noise level results in increases in hearing loss and mental illness. A dollar figure cannot be put on this issue. He feels strongly that Ridgefield should zero in on this community-wide effort. He does not feel that taxpayers will balk at this. The FAA needs to be stopped before this new plan begins. Ridgefield cannot just “go along for the ride”. We need to be aggressive in our approach. An air easement has been requested for over Wooster School. This is asking for the right to pollute. Attorney General Blumenthal is reviewing this request.

Andy Bodner indicated that he does not disagree with the consequences of this FAA redesign, but what is Ridgefield really going to be able to do? What is happening at Danbury Airport with the issues we have been concerned about there? R. Marconi stated that the light jets that we were worried about are being introduced. The FAA is “marching forward”.

R. Marconi indicated that he will continue to attend the various meetings regarding the opposition to the FAA plan and will seek definition as to the cost involved for the various municipalities.

4. STEAP Grant Nondiscrimination Resolution –

R. Marconi read the Nondiscrimination Certification

D. Masters moved and J. Plock seconded a motion to authorize Rudy Marconi as First Selectman, Town of Ridgefield, CT, to sign the STEAP Grant Nondiscrimination Resolution, “RESOLVE: That the Town of Ridgefield hereby adopts as its policy to support the nondiscrimination agreements and warranties required under Connecticut General Statutes 4a-60(a)(1) and 4a-60a(a)(1), as amended in State of Connecticut Public Act 07-245 and sections 9(a)(1) and 10(a)(1) of Public Act 07-142.” Motion passed 4-0.

5. Contract Approval: Internal Auditor – Jay Wahlberg

J. Wahlberg is requesting that the BOS approve the continued appropriation for the Board of Finance expenditure for the Internal Auditing services into fiscal year 2008, and for R. Marconi to sign the engagement letters with Kostin, Ruffkess & Company. Mr. Wahlberg indicated that an

invitation was given out to bid to six firms and this is the only firm that replied. This fiscal year has expired and we are now into the next fiscal year. R. Marconi indicated that he does not like to do this without a Town Meeting for approval; he is concerned about the “mechanics” of spending dollars in this way. The Board indicated that they wish to study this proposal from Kostin, Ruffkess & Company. J. Plock stated that she does not remember voting for \$50,000 to fund this expenditure, advanced funding for 2008. R. Marconi will research this vote. There should be a contract for \$50,000. J. Plock asked why this expenditure is not in this year’s budget? Mr. Wahlberg responded that \$5,000 is needed to start; the balance could be put into next year’s budget.

Another question is how to fund post-retirement health benefits? R. Marconi asked Mr. Wahlberg to research how other communities handle this situation – the split for this cost between the Town and the Board of Education. He will report back at the next BOS Meeting.

Update on the Pension Committee report was then discussed. Laurie Scholl, Director of Human Resources, came forward to participate in this discussion as she also attended the meeting. The trust fund earned 16.2% for an excellent year report; this averages out to 10% over ten years. Ridgefield’s contribution rate went down as the investments paid for some of this cost. We are 100% funded if we would want to close and pay everything out.

6. Tax Refund Approvals

Andy Bodner moved and J. Plock seconded a motion to approve the 9/27/07 list of refunds as submitted by Tax Collector, Jane Bernedsen-Hill, for approval totaling \$5,408.45. Motion passed 4-0.

7. Approval of Meeting Minutes: 9/10/07 (Special), 9/19/07, 9/26/07 (Special)

J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to approve as amended the minutes of the September 10, 2007 Board of Selectmen Special Meeting. Motion passed 4-0.

D. Masters moved and J. Plock seconded a motion to approve as amended the minutes of the September 19, 2007 Board of Selectmen Meeting. Motion passed 4-0.

J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to approve as written the minutes of the September 26, 2007 Board of Selectmen Special Meeting. Motion passed 4-0.

8. Selectman’s Report

- Shop Local Banners – Penny Hoffman, Chamber of Commerce President, Debbie Roche, Chamber Chair-Elect, and Suzanne Brennan, Shoe LaLa, representing the Ridgefield business community, came forward to request permission to hang several banners about town (Copps Hill, Branchville, Downtown) promoting support of local businesses. They had been stopped from hanging the banners by Planning & Zoning’s signage requirements. One sign (approximately 2 ft x 6 ft) stated “Put Your Money Where Your House Is”. Penny Hoffman stated how P&Z requires an application for a special permit for permission to display a sign for a two week period. They would then have to take the sign down and re-apply (pay an additional fee) each time they wished to put up the banner - four times allowed. The support of the business community is needed right now. They have three banners with different messages regarding support for the local Ridgefield businesses.

They want to display these banners from now thru the holiday season and would like to have the permit fee waived. Could the BOS write a letter to P&Z requesting permission for these banners to be displayed for a three month period?

D. Masters stated how she likes the campaign – makes one feel good about Ridgefield. She is supportive of the banners, but does not feel rules should be manipulated for one group. The regulation needs to be kept “pure”. The BOS is willing to help the business community in many ways, but a sign variance would be necessary to have a change in the P&Z ruling.

R. Marconi stated that if a sign is up too long, it becomes part of the landscape and no longer draws the desired attention. The P&Z requirements cannot be changed by the Board of Selectmen. The BOS can send a letter to P&Z seeking accommodation and also waiving of the fee.

Bob Cascella, Chairman of the Economic Development Commission, did send an email asking for a waiving of the fee by P&Z and expressing support for use of the banners.

J. Plock indicated that this is a worthwhile request, but non-profit organizations also have worthwhile requests. If changes in the requirements are made, then the door will be open to requests from other organizations as well.

A letter will be sent to P&Z requesting a waiving of the fee and consideration of this request from the business community.

- Wireless Capital Partners – J. Wahlberg is working with an individual regarding selling leases on the Police tower. Wireless Capital is offering a 40 year lease for \$1011,000. J. Wahlberg indicated that Fairfield, CT has entered into an agreement with a company in Florida. He is contacting that company and will report back with more information.
- Town-wide Internet Access – A. Bodner indicated that such a program is available to municipalities whereby internet access is free to residents. The internet company makes their dollars from advertising revenue.
- Health Department Vehicle – Ed Briggs, Ridgefield’s Director of Health, stated how his town vehicle is on its “deathbed” – completely rusted out with over 100,000 miles. There is a per capita grant available for which he would like to apply (necessary to apply annually) which could pay for a leased vehicle. The vehicle would be leased for a period of three years (cannot prepay for more than one year). He would need to obtain three bids and then send the request to the State Health Department for approval. A BOS vote is not needed as the Health Director has the right to seek a grant and use it accordingly.
- Construction Parking Signs will be going up shortly fencing off a construction staging area for the Bissell’s Building rebuilding.
- Master Building Committee is down to two projects. Most of the work yet to be done has been encumbered:
 - 1) East Ridge Unit Ventilators – the noise decibel has dropped on all but two units. The CT State Legislature has passed a required decibel level – there is not a manufacturer that

can provide down to a 35 level. Because the project is still open, we need to comply only to 55. There has been discussion about roof-top units as replacements. A central duct system for East Ridge is much too expensive.

2) High School – There are about eight outstanding items – timelines and strategies are planned. There has been no communication from the State about extending the water main.

- Water Hike Public Hearing is scheduled for October 9. R. Marconi will ask Mr. Blumenthal to attend.
- Planning & Zoning Project Status Report – Betty Brosius has prepared an excellent report.
- Main Street Retail Space – Planning & Zoning has discussed this subject. They are being asked to consider what is being currently done about this issue in New Canaan and Greenwich. A. Bodner asked if there is a good definition of retail? The answer is “no”. A definition of retail should be a big part of this discussion. A Public Hearing is scheduled for November 27.
- Reverse 911 – D. Masters indicated a desire for this subject to be placed on a future agenda. She never received a call when Reverse 911 was recently put into action. Why does the Town have one system and the schools a different system? She receives calls from the schools immediately. R. Marconi indicated that if a resident is on the “do not call list”, they do not get a call. A lot of research went into the selection of the Reverse 911 system which is in place. The feeling was that it was the best system available. Everything is being moved over to the Emergency Center.

A. Bodner moved and J. Plock seconded a motion to recess the Board of Selectmen Meeting at 9:45 p.m. and go into Executive Session to discuss legal issues concerning Mr. Gaeta, with Laurie Scholl, Director of Human Resources, invited to attend. Motion passed 4-0.

9. Executive Session

The Executive Session ended at 10:10 p.m.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Janet L. Johnson