

BOARD of SELECTMEN MEETING – NOVEMBER 16, 2005

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

AGENDA

1. Police Department Addition of Canine to Force – Chief Ligi, Police Commission
2. Ridgefield Senior Center Additional Parking – Ed Tuccio
3. Review Water Discharge Ordinance – Peter Hill
4. BEI Telephone Lease
5. Route 7 Property (next to Ridgefield Athletic Club)
6. Affordable Housing – Prospect Ridge
7. Approval of Meeting Minutes – 11/02/05
8. Selectman's Report

R. Marconi called the BOS Meeting to order at 7:35 p.m.

1. Police Department Addition of Canine to Force – Chief Ligi, Police Commission

Officer Stinson from the Police Department, Newtown, CT, came forward with his police dog to demonstrate the dog's commands and training. Such a dog is trained in tracking/area searches, building searches, narcotic detection, evidence recovery, crowd control/officer protection and suspect apprehension. Officer Stinson works a seven hour shift from 4 p.m. to 11 p.m. with an hour credit for taking care of the dog. Upkeep cost is for food and vet bills. Bill Scribner also came forward to discuss training of these dogs. He is a Sergeant with the New Milford Police Department and has trained police dogs for twenty-eight years. Danbury, Monroe, Bethel and Newtown all have canine as part of their police force. He has been using dogs from Czechoslovakia in the 2 ½ to 3 year age range. They can be worked as police dogs up to about 13 years of age. The dog is trained for on-leash and off-leash obedience and works on the left side of the handler. The dog has to be 100% responsive. Public demos of the police dog are a big part of their program. Public awareness of the K-9 force aids in crime prevention. The dog is trained in detection of marijuana, crack, cocaine and heroin, and will soon be trained to detect ecstasy as well.

John Katz, Ridgebury Rd., inquired as to the training and the rewards used. The dog is first trained with a food reward and then a toy reward.

Dom D'Addario inquired as to how far from the drug is the dog before he picks up the smell. It depends on the drug as some narcotics smell more than others, and also on the amount of the drug present.

Police Chief Richard Ligi, Police Major John Roche, two members of the Police Commission (Susan Craig, Carl Lecher), and Police Officer Shawn Murray came forward to discuss the

Ridgefield Police Department's K-9 Team Proposal as prepared by Officer Murray, who would be the dog's handler if the K-9 Proposal is approved.

Anonymous sponsors will donate \$40,000 to purchase and train the dog and to equip a police car as a K-9 vehicle. The idea is to hold back one vehicle in January from trade-in for 2006 to be equipped and used as the canine vehicle. The trainer's hours have been discussed with the union with the idea of paying minimum wage of \$7.10/hour for the daily hour credit for home care of the dog. This could be a contract amendment. Estimated cost of the K-9 program to the town is about \$6,000 - \$7,000 for 2006 for additional hours based on FLS (Fair Labor Standards). Overtime might be incurred if Officer Murray's shift is short while he is away for the eight-week training period. It is thought the program could begin in February or March 2006. The program is contingent upon BOS approval. Ridgefield Pet would donate dog food and vet services would be donated by Ridgefield Veterinary Hospital.

J. Wahlberg, Town Controller, suggested a specific line item for the cost of the dog, training, overtime, etc. He feels that it will average out to cost the town about \$10,000/year for the future K-9 program after July 1, 2006. A special appropriation commitment is needed for 2006 as this expense would be different than what was originally approved for 2006. It could be an internal transfer within the Police Department's budget. The K-9 Patrol's official full year budget expenses would then start 7/1/06.

The Police Commission is in favor of adding a K-9 patrol to the Ridgefield Police Department. They cannot just go into the schools, but would have to be invited. D. Masters indicated that she sees this as a deterrent to narcotics by the young people of the community; \$10,000/year is a small price to pay for such a deterrent. B. Manners would like to know how the schools feel about this proposed K-9 program; would the dog be welcomed in?

Andy Bodner stated that the Police Department has asked for additional officers in the past. Will the addition of a K-9 patrol help with this? Susan Craig indicated that the dog is like a tool and not in place of an officer.

Peter Hill asked if the dog would be trained to detect explosives? The answer is no. This dog would be trained for restraint and tracking. If Ridgefield were to have more than one dog, then one dog could be trained to detect explosives.

J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to approve the K-9 Patrol program as presented by the Ridgefield Police Department – to accept with gratitude the anonymous donations to cover the purchase and training of a police dog and the cost involved in equipping a K-9 police vehicle, with the understanding that the cost to the Town of Ridgefield will be a \$7,000 inter-fund transfer for 2006, and to continue the funding for this program. Motion passed 5-0.

2. Ridgefield Senior Center Additional Parking – Ed Tuccio

Camille DeGala and Ward Mazzucco came forward representing Tuccio Builders, builders in town for many years, to discuss Tuccio's proposed purchase of four properties, over 12 acres, which abut the Community Center property and access way. Tuccio wishes to build 30 adult age-restricted homes on the property, about 3 units/acre. There is one acre in the rear, which will remain undeveloped. They would expand parking for the Senior Center. The access way would probably need a traffic light. The site being discussed lies outside of the sewer district. The sewer capacity the town has for the Recreation Center complex exceeds the current needs.

B. Manners inquired as to how much sewer excess does the town have? J. Plock inquired as to the proposed cost of these units. The response was that the cost depends on the housing market at the time. The units would be about 3300 sq. feet in size. D. Masters inquired as to any expansion plans Parks & Recreation might have in the future. R. Marconi replied that there is a lot of sewer capacity available at the site presently, but he will get the numbers. Founders Hall might also have plans for future housing growth. How many parking spaces would the Town get and what about the wetlands at this location? J. Plock suggested that one of the existing parking lots in the complex be for Ridgefield residents only. What about senior housing discussed way back – what would be their septic needs? R. Marconi agreed that more information is needed. What can Ridgefield absorb in this type of housing? State census data indicates an increase in residents approaching their 50's. Ridgefield census data is used to determine the number of school age children, not the age range of the residents.

B. Manners indicated that she does not see the need for this type of housing at this location. Smaller homes are desired by residents who wish to downsize. D. Masters pointed out that if such a rezoning proposal is approved for sewer and water, it will override all other uses for this property, and must provide a community benefit, which was not apparent in her opinion. Dom D'Addario indicated that a "buffer zone" was planned by Planning & Zoning for this property many years ago. John Katz indicated that there are plans for parking not yet built – the sewer system was not planned for additional housing.

3. Review Water Discharge Ordinance – Peter Hill

Peter Hill, Director of Public Works, came forward to present his water discharge ordinance proposal. The goal is to eliminate major safety issues created by water discharge and especially during icy conditions. Such icy discharges can block an entire lane or road. The ice forms and has to be chopped off. Such conditions create a liability as well as the cost of equipment to remove the ice. This would be a new ordinance and would read as follows:

“Constructing or Maintaining Rainwater, Ground Water or Surface Water Discharge upon Sidewalk, etc.

No person shall construct or cause to be constructed or allow to remain any rain water, ground water or surface water discharge or footing drain or similar drain from any dwelling house, property, store, tenement or other building in such a manner that the same shall discharge upon, over or across the surface of any street or sidewalk within the town.

Nothing contained herein shall prevent the construction of a discharge drain of such a manner that the same shall discharge into any established storm drain or catch basin in any highway, if the water is not carried thereby upon the surface of such highway or sidewalk, prior said discharge shall have received the approval of the Director of Public Works.

Every person who violates this section shall be subject to a fine of not more than \$100.00 for each violation. Each day of violation of any provision of this section shall constitute a separate and distinct violation.” (Revised 11/15/05)

J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to hold a Public Hearing and Town Meeting on November 30, 2005, to discuss the Department of Public Works proposed Water Discharge Ordinance entitled, “Constructing or Maintaining Rainwater, Ground Water or Surface Water Discharge upon Sidewalk, etc.”. Motion passed 5-0. Such an

ordinance can be passed with both a Public Hearing and a Town Meeting at the same date and time.

4. BEI Telephone Lease –

David Grogins, Town Counsel, and Jay Wahlberg, Town Controller, came forward to discuss the proposed telephone lease presented by Business Electronics, Inc., of Cheshire, CT. Representing BEI was Janet O’Connell, Tom Gale, and Bob Margolis.

BEI is proposing to network the Town Hall to the Ridgefield Fire Department, Town Annex, Ridgefield Police Department and the Highway Department. Currently, the Town of Ridgefield uses approximately 162 Centralink 3100 lines from SBC to allow direct dialing to employees and four-digit dialing between these locations. BEI proposes eliminating the majority of these Centralink 3100 lines and instead implementing VoIP technology over existing point-to-point data T1 circuits to connect the locations. These networked locations will share one universal voice mail system to be located at the Town Hall. Four-digit dialing between locations will still exist. In addition, a digital T1/PR1 voice circuit is being recommended for Town Hall, which would provide 23 voice channels for inbound/outbound calling. The T1/PR1 circuit also delivers caller ID information to employees on inbound calls. Existing published telephone numbers will remain and be ported over to the new digital T1/PR1 circuit. The Reverse 911 (“City Watch”) system is configured to integrate with the Town Hall phone system.

This system will replace the existing SBC system and will result in a return on investment in five years. Currently the charge is \$27.90/month per dial tone plus long distance charges. The cost of \$136,000 will be paid over five years. The desire is to switch from analog to digital system for Town Hall. The current voicemail system is not supported and could collapse. This new cost would fall within the current budget for the next five years. BOS approval is needed. The Board of Education has this new system in effect. The schools are now all digital. This is a lease/purchase. J. Plock inquired whether it would be better to lease rather than purchase because of constant upgrades to technology. Long-distance charges will remain the same. The new equipment will be much more user-friendly. Calls will be able to be rolled over and there will be Caller ID. J. Wahlberg pointed out that the current system was purchased in 1993. It is difficult to service the current system. The cost will fall within current budget guidelines. It would be a 4-6 week project to install the new proposed system.

D. Masters inquired as to how long the Board of Education has had this new system. The answer is three years and no complaints. They did a site visit to Bristol prior to the purchase and are happy with the product. This lease needs to be approved by the Board of Finance because it is a tax-exempt lease, even though it involves no additional funds.

Andy Bodner inquired as to service agreements on the new system. BEI maintains the systems once they are installed. There is a one-year warranty on all the equipment.

It was decided to wait for a vote at the next BOS meeting once all have had a chance to review the lease/purchase agreement in detail. In the interim, J. Wahlberg will go before the Board of Finance for their approval contingent upon BOS approval at the November 30, 2005 BOS meeting.

5. Route 7 Property (next to Ridgefield Athletic Club) –

R. Marconi read the October 5, 2005 letter received from the State of Connecticut, Department of Transportation, Richard C. Allen, Rights of Way Administrator, relative to this very small piece of property on Route 7 next to the Ridgefield Athletic Club. Andy Bodner, who owns property adjacent to the property under discussion, pointed out on the map where this small piece of property is located. By State statute, the Connecticut Department of Transportation has to offer the property for purchase by the municipalities involved, in this case – Danbury and Ridgefield. We have to give the OK for the State to sell the property. We have to have a Public Hearing and a Town Meeting to say we do not want the property.

J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to notify the State of Connecticut of the Town of Ridgefield’s desire to NOT purchase “State-owned Property, Easterly side of Present Route 7, 27,530 +/- sq. ft., File No. 34-000-9A, to request an 8-24 from Planning & Zoning on said property, and to hold a Public Hearing on 11/30/05 and a Town Meeting on 12/14/05 for the consideration of not accepting this purchase. Motion passed 5-0.

6. Affordable Housing – Prospect Ridge

Mike Trolle, Anne Marie Roller, and Dave Goldenberg came forward representing Affordable Housing Committee in Ridgefield. The Town of Ridgefield has been working for the last three years on expanding their stock of affordable housing. The State is providing a \$1 million grant for this project and Ridgefield Bank is willing to loan the balance of the funds. The property currently belongs to the Town. In order to proceed, the Housing Authority has to have site control of the property. Thus, the property has to be deeded to the Housing Authority. It is zoned CAA (Congregate Affordable).

D. Masters moved and J. Plock seconded a motion to hold a Public Hearing on 11/30/05 and a Town Meeting on 12/14/05 for the purpose of deeding to the Ridgefield Housing Authority the Prospect Ridge acreage on Halpin Lane for the previously-approved development of affordable housing. Motion passed 5-0.

7. Approval of Meeting Minutes – 11/02/05

J. Plock moved and B. Manners seconded a motion to approve as amended the minutes of the 11/02/05 Public Hearing and Board of Selectman Meeting. Motion passed 5-0.

8. First Selectman’s Report –

- Charter Revision - The Charter Revision Commission has put the Board of Selectmen on their agenda for their December 12, 2005 meeting, 7:30 p.m., Town Hall/Lower Level Conference Room. R. Marconi will provide BOS members with copies of the Charter Revision Commission’s minutes for their review. The Commission has voted to not extend BOS terms from two to four years.
- Old Sib Road – A favorable referral has been received back from Planning & Zoning on the 8-24 sent to P&Z relative to the purchase of Old Sib Road property by the Conservation Commission. A vote on this issue will be put on the November 30th BOS Meeting agenda. The Conservation Commission has the funds earmarked for this purchase.

- Thank You to Dr. Yanity - R. Marconi honored Dr. Peter Yanity for his many years of service to the Town of Ridgefield and in particular his years of service since 1989 on the Board of Selectmen. In addition to serving as a Selectman, Dr. Yanity served for 16 years on the Parks and Recreation Commission, many of these years as Chairman. The gym in town has been named Yanity Gym. He is a past President of the Boys and Girls Club and an active member of St. Mary's Parish since 1955, to name a few of Dr. Yanity's many volunteer activities to the Town. We wish him the very best in his retirement.

J. Plock moved and P. Yanity seconded a motion to adjourn the Board of Selectmen Meeting at 10:05 p.m. Motion passed 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Janet L. Johnson