

BOARD of SELECTMEN MEETING – NOVEMBER 28, 2007

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

Agenda

1. Cheerleaders – Recognition of State Championship Title
2. Historic District Commission Interview: Dan O'Brien
3. Conservation Commission Interview: Kitsey Snow
4. Reappointment of Constables
5. Housing Authority Reappointment: Phil Bergquist
6. Deer Management Implementation Committee Report
7. Onalfo Field Petition
8. Prospect St. AT&T Easement – Set Date for Public Hearing & Town Meeting
9. Reappointment of Board of Selectmen Committees & Boards
10. Ambulance Rate Approval
11. Natalie Kennedy Day Proclamation
12. Land Conservancy Tax Abatement Request
13. Tax Refunds Approval
14. Scotland-Barlow Water Main Extension Funding Grant Resolution
15. 2007 “2008” DEMHS Grant Resolution
16. Approval of Meeting Minutes: 3/29/07, 6/20/07, 10/3/07, 10/17/07
17. Selectman's Report

R. Marconi called the Board of Selectmen Meeting to order at 7:40 p.m., immediately following a Special Town Meeting for the purpose of acting on the proposed livestock ordinance - minutes of the Special Town Meeting under separate cover.

B. Manners moved and J. Plock seconded a motion to change Agenda Item #15 to read “2008 DEMHS Grant Resolution”, and not 2007. Motion passed 5-0.

1. Cheerleaders – Recognition of State Championship Title
This agenda item was put off until a later date as the cheerleaders are now competing on the national level.
2. Historic District Commission Interview: Dan O'Brien
Mr. O'Brien came forward to introduce himself to the BOS and express his interest in serving as an Alternate on the Historic District Commission, the vacant position. R. Marconi read Mr. O'Brien's email indicating that he has lived on Main Street and undertaken some home renovations in the District. He has restored three properties on Main Street and is currently on the Board of Trustees of Keeler Tavern. J. Plock inquired if Mr. O'Brien had attended any meetings of the Commission? Yes, he has. He is very interested in maintaining the beauty of Main Street and what goes into the restoration of historical properties. His work career was at Price Waterhouse, middle market–audit side. D. Masters commented on how Mr. O'Brien obviously

has “a touch” for capturing and retaining the features of an old house. He has done a great job with one of the signature homes in Ridgefield. Mr. O’Brien pointed out that he does not have a technical construction background and realizes that he has a lot to learn, but is most interested in playing a role in the maintenance of the charm of Ridgefield.

R. Marconi pointed out that Joe Pisoni was interviewed at the last meeting and Andrea Goldin has withdrawn her application.

B. Manners moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to appoint Dan O’Brien to fill the Alternate position on the Historic District Commission. Motion passed 5-0.

3. Conservation Commission Interview: Kitsey Snow

Ms. Snow came forward to introduce herself to the BOS and express her interest in serving on the Conservation Commission. She has lived in Ridgefield for 20 years and has served as an Open Space Ranger for the past 5 years. She has spent several hours each week maintaining current trails and creating new ones, particularly in the Pine Mountain and Hemlock Hills areas. She is most interested in Ridgefield’s open spaces and the maintenance and use of these open spaces.

R. Marconi read Ms. Snow’s bio outlining her Ridgefield volunteer experience. A. Bodner indicated how Ms. Snow has a wonderful background and inquired as to her position on the controversial deer hunting issue. She indicated that her concern is safety. The open spaces are for recreational use. She knows that Hemlock Hills is used by children and out-of-towners and the need for communication regarding deer hunting. She has attended two meetings and has helped Dave Kronin as he looks after the Town’s open spaces.

D. Masters indicated her concern also about deer hunting safety and how the Conservation Commission is charged to work carefully with the Deer Management Implementation Committee. Now that deer hunting has been approved, the question is the “where” and the “how”. Ms. Snow stated that she purposely did go out and look at the deer hunting signs and where they were posted.

R. Marconi read a letter received from Ben Oko, Chairman of the Conservation Commission, in support of Kitsey Snow as a new member of the Commission. She will be most helpful in supporting Dave Kronin with trail maintenance. Mr. Marconi indicated that there were about three other individuals who had indicated an interest in serving on the Conservation Commission.

Andy Bodner commented on how Ms. Snow is very qualified. He would like to know where we are with the deer implementation plan and would like to be sure that the Conservation Commission is comfortable with this plan.

B. Manners indicated that even though she is personally against the deer hunt, she would vote for Ms. Snow. There is a lot more to the Conservation Commission than just the deer issue, and we usually defer to the recommendation from a Commission regarding Commission membership. Mr. Oko indicated that there are Commission members who oppose the hunt, but the Commission did vote to support it. Safety is an issue for everyone’s concern.

B. Manners moved and R. Marconi seconded a motion to appoint Kitsey Snow to fill the vacant position on the Conservation Commission. Motion passed 3-0-2. A. Bodner and J. Plock abstained as they feel additional applicants should also be interviewed.

4. Reappointment of Constables

J. Plock inquired as to the responsibilities of the constables – they serve papers and have even patrolled some of the hunting areas. James Sullivan indicated that it is an interesting but not burdensome job. **B. Manners moved and J. Plock seconded a motion to reappoint as Constables for another one year term: Dick Aarons, Tom Belote, William Peatt, Bob Spielman, and James Sullivan. Motion passed 5-0.**

5. Housing Authority Reappointment: Phil Bergquist

Mr. Bergquist was unable to be present this evening. His reappointment was put off until after the election and therefore is on the agenda this evening. B. Manners inquired as to how does the Housing Authority work? How do they approve new renters? The response was that there is a waiting list and the applicants would appear before a committee. Joe Markert commented that it “helps to know Phil Bergquist”. Mr. Markert indicated that he is not in favor of Mr. Bergquist’s reappointment. Mr. Markert is not currently a resident of Ballard Green (but he did live there previously for ten years), nor is he a member of the Housing Authority. He stated that no chronological list is kept of the applicants. The claim is that new renters are selected by need.

R. Marconi indicated that it was his understanding that there was a list of applicants who are interviewed and also appear before a committee when there is a housing vacancy. Mr. Markert responded that some applicants are not interviewed. R. Marconi will research this issue and report back at the next BOS meeting.

6. Deer Management Implementation Committee Report

Tom Belote, Chairman of the Deer Management Implementation Committee, and Paul Roche, Chairman of Parks & Recreation, came forward to discuss the Deer Management Implementation Committee’s report: 1) Status of hunt to date; 2) Extension of Canterbury and Spectacle Swamp hunt period; and 3) DEP Sharpshooter application. Mr. Belote provided an update as to status of the 2007 deer hunt. Last year 24 deer were taken; to date with bow hunting, 25 deer have been taken between October 15 and November 13. No deer have been wounded or lost. In Hemlock Hills, 20 deer have been taken between November 14 and November 26. Archery is very effective for deer management. There are three weeks left in this year’s hunt with one of the weeks being by shotgun. This should bring the total to about 60 deer for 2007. No resentment issues were encountered in Hemlock Hills during the hunt. After Thanksgiving, two hunt signs were removed thru vandalism. Mr. Belote indicated that he received calls about the signs being removed and he immediately replaced them. In the future the signs will be elevated so that vandals would need a ladder to remove or mark up the signs. Hunters will be given smaller signs that they can post if they see a sign is missing.

Andy Bodner inquired whether the hunt is really making a big enough impact on the deer numbers? Mr. Belote replied that between accidents and the hunt, about 300 deer were taken last year. This can only help. Last year Ridgefield was #1 in Connecticut for the number of deer/auto accidents – our number is even higher already for this year. 95% of the deer taken are does which helps to both reduce the current herd and future birth rate. State entomologists indicate that by reducing the herd, we are reducing disease as well. It is a slow process, but we must continue. The goal is 12 deer/sq. mile. Ridgefield is a 35 sq. mile area with an estimated deer population of 1,000 deer/sq. mile. Any meaningful reduction is helpful.

Mr. Belote requested an extension of the Canterbury and Spectacle Swamp hunt period from December 18 to January 31. They are also discussing with the State about a possible sharpshooter program. There is a large herd in the area of Ridgefield’s golf course. Both the Golf Committee and the Conservation Commission are discussing this. B. Manners indicated concern about

extending the hunt to school vacation time. Dr. Oko indicated that the Commission has requested no hunting during school vacation dates or on weekends. The next BOS meeting is December 5th. It was suggested that the Golf Committee be invited to attend this meeting to discuss a possible hunt in the golf course area.

7. Onalfo Field Petition

The Office of the Town Clerk has checked the signatures on the petition and found them to be valid. R. Marconi reviewed the response process to a petition as outlined in the Charter. Both the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance are to hold Public Hearings within 45 days of receipt of the petition.

D. Masters moved and J. Plock seconded a motion to acknowledge receipt of the Onalfo Field petition as of November 28, 2007. Motion passed 5-0.

D. Masters moved and B. Manners seconded a motion to schedule a Public Hearing on January 9, 2008 relevant to the Onalfo Field petition and to invite the Board of Finance to hold their Public Hearing relevant to the Onalfo Field petition in conjunction with the BOS Public Hearing. Motion passed 5-0.

Resident Stacey Messler inquired as to the purpose of the public hearing? R. Marconi replied that the purpose of a public hearing is to receive input from the public, both in favor and against the petitioned issue. Steffie Jones suggested that the public hearings be held in a room with “good sound”.

8. Prospect St. AT&T Easement – Set Date for Public Hearing & Town Meeting

This easement is for the placement of telephone cabinets behind the stone wall with shrubbery planted around that portion of the site to hide the equipment.

J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to set a Public Hearing for December 5, 2007, relevant to the proposed AT&T Easement Agreement, Prospect Street, Ridgefield, CT. Motion passed 5-0.

9. Reappointment of Board of Selectmen Committees & Boards

This reappointment of the various Ridgefield committees and boards is an annual requirement. A. Bodner pointed out how it is the responsibility of the Chairman of each of these committees to ensure that the list of members is a list of active members who attend 2/3rds of the committee’s meetings. The Chairman of each committee should ask an inactive member to step aside and be replaced. It was also suggested that vacancies on committees and boards be placed on-line.

J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to reappoint for an additional term the names listed as members of the following committees and boards: 300-Year Anniversary Committee, Affordable Housing Committee, Architectural Advisory Committee, Cable TV Advisory Council, Deer Management Implementation Committee, Design Council, Golf Committee, Graveyard Restoration Committee, Insurance & Risk Management Committee, Lyme Disease Task Force, Master Building Committee, and Ridgefield Arts Council. Motion passed 5-0.

J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to appoint Bob Ingraham as a member of the Commission for the Disabled. Motion passed 5 – 0.

10. Ambulance Rate Approval

Fire Chief Burford and J. Wahlberg, Controller, came forward to request approval of the proposed 2008 ambulance rates in accordance with the State of Connecticut proposed ambulance billing schedule. The new rates reflect an average increase of 3.9%. They presented relevant ambulance call information including revenue and expense numbers, statistical information (2 ambulances and 1 non-transport emergency vehicle), and ambulance base call volume. **J. Plock moved and A. Bodner seconded a motion to approve the proposed ambulance rates for 2008 consistent with the proposed statewide ambulance billing schedule. Motion passed 5-0.**

R. Marconi stressed how one should not hesitate to call an ambulance if one is needed because of the cost involved or lack of insurance. The Social Services Department can assist with the costs if necessary.

Dom D'Addario inquired as to the ambulance cost to Danbury Hospital? The answer is about \$450 and most insurance policies cover this charge. Chief Burford indicated that the charge is based on the type of ambulance service needed – does a paramedic need to be present? How many residents ask Social Services for assistance with the ambulance cost? The response was not many – maybe 15 to 20/year out of a total of 1,361 ambulance base calls to date for 2007.

11. Natalie Kennedy Day Proclamation

R. Marconi read the November 19, 2007 email received from Brenda Wagner, Account Executive, CT Region Biomedical Services for the American Red Cross, relative to the December 20th blood drive being sponsored by the friends and family of 6 year-old, Natalie Kennedy of Ridgefield, a leukemia child. December 20th will be designated Natalie Kennedy Day.

12. Land Conservancy Tax Abatement Request

R. Marconi read the November 15, 2007 letter received from Sidney Kelly, President of the Land Conservancy of Ridgefield, Inc., requesting the abatement of property taxes on the Bertalovitz Danbury Road property. **J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to approve the abatement of \$470.04 in property taxes owed on the Bertalovitz Danbury Road property as the property is now owned by the Land Conservancy of Ridgefield, Inc. Motion passed 5-0.**

13. Tax Refunds Approval

D. Masters moved and J. Plock seconded a motion to approve the refund of automobile taxes totaling \$11,037.89 as requested by Jane Bernedsen-Hill, Tax Collector in her memo dated November 19, 2007. Motion passed 5-0.

14. Scotland-Barlow Water Main Extension Funding Grant Resolution

This issue was previously voted on but the dollar amount was not stated in the resolution. R. Marconi read the Authorizing Resolution for the amount of \$1,450,000.00. **B. Manners moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to authorize the First Selectman on behalf of the Town of Ridgefield to proceed with the state grant and/or loans application to the Commissioner of Environmental Protection in the amount of \$1,450,000.00 to be used for the Scotland-Barlow Mountain Elementary Schools water main extension State of CT Drinking Water State Revolving Fund application. Motion passed 5-0.**

15. 2008 DEMHS Grant Resolution

B. Manners moved and J. Plock seconded a motion to authorize the First Selectman on behalf of the Town of Ridgefield to execute a Memorandum of Understanding with the State of Connecticut, Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security, for

participation in the FY 2008 Emergency Management Performance Grant program. Motion passed 5-0.

16. Approval of Meeting Minutes: 3/29/07, 6/20/07, 10/3/07, 10/17/07

J. Plock moved and B. Manners seconded a motion to approve as written the minutes of the Board of Selectmen Special Meeting of March 29, 2007. Motion passed 4-0-1. D. Masters abstained as she was absent from the March 29, 2007 meeting.

J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to approve as written the minutes of the Board of Selectmen Special Meeting of June 20, 2007. Motion passed 5-0.

J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to approve as amended the minutes of the October 3, 2007, Public Hearing and Board of Selectmen Meeting. Motion passed 4-0-1. B. Manners abstained as she was absent from the October 3, 2007 meeting.

J. Plock moved and B. Masters seconded a motion to approve as amended the minutes of the October 17, 2007, Board of Selectmen Meeting. Motion passed 5-0.

17. Selectman's Report

- Planning & Zoning met last evening with a Public Hearing regarding first floor retail space on Main Street. 75-100 people attended with a good discussion. Another discussion is scheduled for December 18.
- Commission on the Aging letter regarding the establishment of a Fair Rent Commission - R. Marconi read the letter received from the Commission on the Aging regarding this issue. A Fair Rent Commission would represent senior citizens and act as a mediator between the tenant and landlords and would consult with legal and/or Social Services regarding rent issues. The seniors sometimes feel that they are not listened to.
- A letter has been received from Charles Hall indicating that he will be resigning from Parks & Recreation at the end of the year, but will resign earlier if a successor is found before year-end. This vacancy will be advertised.
- Andrew Pisanelli sent a letter to the Town Clerk indicating that he is resigning from his position as Alternate on the Ridgefield Zoning Board of Appeals. The ZBA has thirty days within which to find a replacement, someone from the same party. If a replacement is not found during this time period, then the Board of Selectmen is to appoint a successor.
- The proposed increase in water rates is a possible 29%. R. Marconi will draft a letter regarding the Board's opposition to this increase.
- Mr. Fisher has been released on \$1 million bail pending appeal and is still residing in Ridgefield. A proposed ordinance for safe zones is being researched and drafted.
- FAA issue – both New Milford and Bridgewater have joined the consortium of municipalities. Newtown is considering and Bethel is being asked to join as well. R. Marconi is meeting with Brookfield on December 12 to discuss their participation also.

Ridgefield's contribution is now down to \$69,000 because of the participation of these additional towns. \$1.1 million has been raised. Both Governor Jodi Rell and Attorney General Blumenthal are also now "on board". D. Masters inquired as to the timeframe for this legal battle. The court case will probably take about two years. The full implementation of the new flight patterns over Connecticut will probably occur within five years. The first goal is to stop any new flight patterns while the court case is on – this is what is currently being sought. The new flight patterns have been ten years in the making by the FAA. Neither General Aviation nor the development of Stewart Airport have been taken into consideration.

J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to adjourn the Board of Selectmen Meeting at 10:00 p.m. Motion passed 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,
Janet L. Johnson