

BOARD of SELECTMEN MEETING – NOVEMBER 29, 2006

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. Golf Director Contract Review
2. Hearts & Minds Music Lease at Venus Building
3. Architectural Advisory Committee Appointment
4. Acceptance of Barlow, RES, & SRMS Projects
5. Winter Wonderland Walk for the Cure Proclamation (Susan Komen Breast Cancer Foundation)
6. Community Sign Boards
7. 2007 Board of Selectmen Meeting Calendar
8. Approval of Meeting Minutes: 11/15
9. Selectman's Report
10. Executive Session: Discussion of Potential Land Purchase

R. Marconi called the Board of Selectmen Meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Andy Bodner moved and Di Masters seconded a motion to add to the evening's agenda as #2A a discussion on "Reinstatement of the Student Resource Officer at Ridgefield High School". J. Plock asked that the use of Zeus, the Police Dog, in the schools be discussed as well. Motion passed 5-0.

1. Golf Director Contract Review - **J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to table #1 on the agenda, "Golf Director Contract Review", to the December 13 BOS Meeting. Motion passed 5-0.**
2. Hearts & Minds Music Lease at Venus Building – Amy Shinohara and Lili Schroppe, owners of the children's music program called Hearts & Minds Music, LLC, came forward to introduce themselves, and present their proposal to lease 658+/- square feet of space, consisting of Rooms 230, 230A and 230B on the second floor of the Richard E. Venus Building, located at 90 East Ridge, Ridgefield, CT, for a period of five years beginning on January 1, 2007, with no rent being charged for the period of January 1 thru January 31, 2007 in consideration of the tenant making improvements to the premises. They have been using space at St. Stephen's for the past year, but are growing of this location. Their program is KinderMusic classes for children from birth thru seven years of age. Part of this proposed space will include a waiting room for parents. They would use the existing bathroom in the hall. Since the children are small, they would not be going to the bathroom by themselves. The parents stay as part of the program for the youngest children. The music is voice and instrumental, and no loud instruments. The charge is at a rate of \$14.50/sq. ft. The Town is responsible for the utilities.

D. Masters raised the question as to what is the Town's responsibility as landlord's to the existing tenants if sound is a problem? The response was that if any of the existing tenants complain, Hearts & Mind Music would purchase sound machines to place outside the existing tenants' doors. It was agreed that the current Venus Building tenants would be invited to the St. Stephens' location to hear the music sounds and be made aware of the proposed hours of operation for Hearts & Mind Music. The goal is to make every accommodation up front with the current Venus Building tenants – no surprises!

John Katz, Ridgebury Rd., commented on how the lights in the Venus Building are on at all hours. This is especially a concern with the recent and upcoming increases in electric rates. R. Marconi responded that a new breakdown in the panels is necessary in order to reduce the excessive amount of lighting. There are plans to bring a gas line down East Ridge in the Spring for the Boys & Girls Club, which could also then be connected to the Venus Building.

J. Plock moved and B. Manners seconded a motion to schedule a Public Hearing for December 13, 2006 and a Town Meeting on January 10, 2007, to discuss the proposed Hearts & Minds Music Lease at the Venus Building. Motion passed 5-0.

- 2a. Reinstatement of the Student Resource Officer at Ridgefield High School – R. Marconi read the November 27, 2006, letter just received from the Board of Education requesting reinstatement of the Student Resource Officer (SRO) at Ridgefield High School as soon as possible. This will require an officer from the Police Department at the High School and additional funds will be needed to cover this expenditure. The goal is to have this officer in place by February 1, 2007. R. Marconi indicated that he had spoken with Chief Ligi who is in favor of this reinstatement. Two new officers will be starting with the Police Department in February to replace retirees. Chief Ligi will check to see if the previous SRO would be interested in volunteering for this position. If not, then there will be some training involved for a different officer to become the SRO. It is best if someone volunteers for the position because they “want” to do so. This will result in an officer being taken out of daily coverage. Chief Ligi has been invited to come to the December 13 BOS Meeting and provide a breakdown of the costs involved. One suggestion is to take the bus dollars that were put back into the General Fund.

A. Bodner pointed out that there is a problem in the schools at the present time with drugs and alcohol. He feels that it is the Town's responsibility to have zero tolerance regarding substance abuse. We must support all steps necessary to ensure acceptable behavior during school hours. The SRO was taken out of the High School by the Board of Education as they did not want to continue to cover the cost involved. They now want to reinstate this position, but have not addressed how it is to be paid for. It is the Board of Education's responsibility to cover this expenditure in next year's budget, but the period of time from February 1 to June 30 needs to be funded somehow.

D. Masters suggests that the Police Dog Zeus be walked thru the high school and middle schools as a deterrent and not on a scheduled basis. R. Marconi suggested that a letter be sent to the Board of Education indicating that it is in the best interest of the children of Ridgefield to have the Police Dog Zeus walked thru both the high school and middle schools on a non-scheduled basis, and the Board of Selectmen is encouraging this step should be taken as soon as possible. He will email a copy of the letter to BOS members before it is sent.

John Katz, Ridgebury Rd., commented on how this substance abuse issue needs to come up for discussion. DARE is not effective. It would be better for the Town to support the SRO and the Police program instead of monies going to support DARE.

J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion for the Board of Selectmen to send a letter to the Board of Education approving their request for reinstatement of the Student Resource Officer at Ridgefield High School and suggest coverage by the SRO at the Middle Schools as well, effective as soon as possible. Motion passed 5-0.

J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion for the Board of Selectmen to send a letter to Police Chief Ligi and the Police Commission (with a C.C. to the Board of Education indicating that the BOS will be requesting additional funding from the Board of Education to help with the cost of the SRO) urging the Police Department to reinstate as soon as possible the Student Resource Officer at Ridgefield High School as requested by the Board of Education and encourage coverage by such officer at the middle schools as well. The BOS is willing to contribute up to \$5,000 from contingency funds from the current budget year to assist in overtime costs. Motion passed 5-0.

3. Architectural Advisory Committee Appointment – A November 28, 2006 email has been received from John Kinnear, Chairman of AAC, regarding AAC membership – recommending that Eugene Smith and Warren Arthur, Alternate, be approved to be on the Architectural Advisory Commission, and listing the current members to remain on the Board. There are two vacancies.

Becky Mucchetti, Chairman of the Planning & Zoning Commission, indicated that there has been frustration with the AAC's lack of a quorum at their meetings, and a lack of minutes. The AAC needs to report back to the P&Z in a more timely fashion. There is a need for responsible AAC membership. Now that AAC membership is appointed by the BOS and not by P&Z, Planning & Zoning no longer hears back from the AAC. AAC members need to want to be very involved. For example, the proposed "Village District" designation is an important issue.

A. Bodner inquired if there is not a requirement for a minimum level of meeting attendance? The charter states that a member must attend 2/3rds of the meetings each year to remain as a member of the Committee. The Chairman of the Committee can recommend to the BOS in writing that an individual not continue as a member of the Committee due to lack of attendance.

D. Masters indicated that attendance has been a long-standing problem. AAC members are creative individuals and have stated that their conversations are often "fluid" in nature and not really appropriate for minutes. Reports back to P&Z need to be more useful and on time. AAC needs to be an active part of the P&Z planning process. Members need to understand the charge and be committed to the process.

B. Manners suggested that the Chairman of each Commission and Committee provide a written notice to the Board of Selectmen indicating attendance records for the Commission and/or Committee, job descriptions for the various members, and a summary statement of upcoming issues/projects.

J. Plock moved and A. Bodner seconded a motion to approve Eugene Smith as a new member on the Architectural Advisory Commission and Warren Arthur, a former member of the Commission, as an Alternate. Motion passed 5-0.

4. Acceptance of Barlow, RES, & SRMS Projects

R. Marconi indicated that there are no problems relevant to accepting completion of these building projects. We have been thru the punch lists. The Ridgefield High School building project is also getting near completion.

J. Plock moved and B. Manners seconded a motion for the Board of Selectmen to accept completion of the Barlow, Ridgebury Elementary School and Scotts Ridge Middle School building projects as recommended by the Building Committee and turn these buildings over to the Board of Education., and to commend the Building Committee for an “amazing job”. Motion passed 5-0.

5. Winter Wonderland Walk for the Cure Proclamation (Susan Komen Breast Cancer Foundation) – B. Manners moved and J. Plock seconded a motion to approve the Proclamation to Honor the Winter Wonderland Walk for the Cure Day scheduled for January 20, 2007, a fund raising and awareness event to benefit breast cancer. Motion passed 5-0.

6. Community Sign Boards - Planning & Zoning has approved the establishment of community sign boards for the posting of temporary event signs. An October 26, 2006, letter has been received from Betty Brosius, Director of Planning, stating the legal notice and adopted amendment to the Ridgefield Zoning Regulations: Section 305.01.C(1) – Exempt Signs, to permit establishment of Community Sign Boards for posting of temporary event signs. Now the Board of Selectmen needs to decide on the locations for the Community Sign Boards. Suggested sites include: 1) The High School, 2) The Transfer Station, 3) Parks & Recreation facility, 4) Main Street. A. Bodner suggested that the Design Council look at this project with their own membership coming up with ideas and not hire a “design consultant”. Couldn’t a Ridgefield resident architect come up with a design on a pro-bono basis? If the CVS location is chosen, CVS wants to hire their own designer.

7. 2007 Board of Selectmen Meeting Calendar –

The proposed 2007 meeting calendar was reviewed and agreed upon as follows:

BOS Meetings:

January 10 and 24
February 7 and 28
March 7 and 21
April 11 and 25
May 9 and 23
June 6 and 20
July 11 and 25
August 8 (August 22 meeting deleted)
September 5 and 19
October 3 and 17
November 14 and 28
December 5 (December 19 meeting deleted)

Budget Meetings:

February 5, 6 and 8 (Capital expenditures)
(Possible budget discussions also at the February 7 BOS Meeting)
March 5, 6, 8 and 10 (Saturday a.m.) (Operating Expenditures)
(Possible budget discussions also at the March 7 BOS Meeting)

Fire Meetings with Fire Chief Burford:

February 14 (Prefer a different date as this is Valentines Day)
May 16
August 1
December 12

D. Masters moved and B. Manners seconded a motion to approve as discussed and agreed upon the Board of Selectmen 2007 Meeting Schedule. Motion passed 5-0.

8. Approval of Meeting Minutes: 11/15/06 –

D. Masters moved and J. Plock seconded a motion to approve as amended the minutes of the November 15, 2006 Board of Selectmen Meeting. Motion passed 5-0.

9. Selectman's Report –

- R. Marconi indicated that he has met with the various department heads seeking input as to what they are thinking about for future requests above normal capital expenditures. This info will help the BOS prioritize significant expenditures.

Library – wants to return to the BOS meeting on 12/13 and not wait until the January meeting.

Police Dept. – Police Station, including Central Dispatch, Leary Bldg. Canine Center, Prospect Ridge back to two-way

Fire Dept. – Replace Station One, replace ladder truck in 2011 to 2012

Highway Dept. – Replace metal building on Quarry Rd., new wash facility (DEP may require this to be done inside)

Engineering Dept. – Improvements to sewage plant #1 in 2010 or shortly thereafter, Route 7 plant at a later date. The cost estimate is \$3-4 million after grants. This will be a major facility upgrade. Replace two bridges at the railroad station (\$1.4 million). East Ridge Middle School roof replacement (\$1.6 million), survey of the drainage in the downtown area, especially Casagmo.

Parks & Recreation – Field proposal, community outdoor pool. R. Marconi indicated that he spoke with the Boys & Girls Club and their new pool will be open to the public after 4:00 p.m.

Parking garage in the downtown area is on the “back burner”.

Emergency power town-wide – Currently, the schools have two hours to get the children out. If power lines are down, then the children should not be dismissed and out on the roads in buses. The schools could use their own generators for heat and light. Northeast Utilities will contribute 25% for generators and then will buy back from private generators in a power shortage situation. They would also buy back during summer peak usage hours. Bill Hoff is currently looking into this.

Normal capital and manpower requests each year -

R. Marconi will formalize this list and provide copies to BOS members.

Di Masters indicated that some of these requests are more urgent than others. First should be items for the health and safety of the community. Some of these requests are desires, and not urgent. What is really urgent??

R. Marconi responded that we need to let the taxpayers know what is urgent and not avoidable. New Police building is almost urgent? Is this more important than \$10 million on a library? What about the exhaust recovery system in the Fire building? The ladder truck is twenty years old (1987). We probably need one, but this is not a need that is used constantly. If we plug some of these items into taxes, what is the cost? The debt service is still at \$14 million.

- HRA Uniform Fee – The suggestion is to collect one fee, one stop for the haulers, and then Ridgefield will get our percent back.
- Sustainable Living Forum – R. Marconi attended this forum. We are the stewards of our environment. We are being asked to form a committee on this. We need to understand what sustainable living is – recycle, green products, use of alternative fuels. A. Bodner indicated that he is reluctant to get too involved in social movements. We do need to live more efficiently, but he wants a return on investment. B. Manners asked how can we as a Town conserve energy and save money? R. Marconi asked whether we have a responsibility to lead as an example on this issue? D. Masters stated that she believes we should be as “green as possible”. We should make every municipal building as energy efficient as possible. These are the types of things such a committee could work on.
- Pension Report – The Pension Committee will come to a January BOS meeting to provide feedback as to how they arrived at their conclusions.

10. Executive Session: Discussion of Potential Land Purchase

J. Plock moved and B. Manners seconded a motion to recess the BOS Meeting and go into Executive Session at 10:05 p.m. to discuss a potential land purchase. Motion passed 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Janet L. Johnson