

PUBLIC HEARINGS & BOARD of SELECTMEN MEETING
NOVEMBER 30, 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, A. Bodner, B. Manners, D. Masters, J. Plock

AGENDA

Public Hearing to consider the purchase of 18 +/- acres of land on Old Sib Road, to be used for Open Space purposes, by the Town of Ridgefield under the jurisdiction of the Ridgefield Conservation Commission. The parcel adjoins other open space owned by the Town of Ridgefield.

Public Hearing to discuss whether the Town desires to purchase State-owned Property, Easterly side of Present Route 7, approximately 100 +/- square feet, shown on map entitled “Towns of Danbury and Ridgefield Map Showing Land Released to _____ by the State of Connecticut Department of Transportation, U.S. Route 7,” dated August 2005, by Arthur W. Gruhn, P.E.

Public Hearing to discuss and hear comments upon a proposal to transfer a certain piece or parcel of land known as 51 Prospect Ridge, Ridgefield, Connecticut and more particularly described as “Parcel A” containing 1.71 +/- acres as shown on a certain map, entitled “Map of Property Owned by the Town of Ridgefield to be Conveyed to the Ridgefield Housing Authority Total Area: 9.437 +/- Ac. Date: June 21, 1988, Revised 6/29/88, 6/30/88 Scale 1” = 80’”, which map is on file as Map No.7644 of the Ridgefield Land Records, to the Ridgefield Housing Authority.

Said premises are further shown on a certain map entitled, “Property Survey Map Prepared For Town of Ridgefield Prospect Ridge Road, Ridgefield, Connecticut Date July 1, 2003, Scale 1” = 10’ Area = 1.725 Acres,” prepared by Kristofferson Land Surveying.

Public Hearing and Special Town Meeting to discuss and act on the proposed ordinance, “Constructing or Maintaining Rainwater, Ground Water or Surface Water Discharge Upon Sidewalk, etc.”, as proposed by Peter Hill, Director of Public Works, Town of Ridgefield.

Board of Selectmen Meeting Agenda

1. BEI Telephone Lease
2. 8-24 for Sturges Park Easement
3. Approval of 2006 Meeting Calendar
4. Route 7 Link (re-route from Route 7 to 102)
5. Reappointment of all Boards and Committees
6. HRRRA Member Appointment and Alternate
7. Approval of Meeting Minutes – 11/16/05, 11/22/05

Fire Commission Meeting Agenda

1. Fire Department Issues – Chief Lou Yarrish

Economic Development Commission Meeting Agenda

1. Approval of 2006 Meeting Calendar
2. Discussion of Appointment of a new Economic Development Commission

R. Marconi called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m., and welcomed Andy Bodner, the newly elected Selectman.

Public Hearing – R. Marconi called the Public Hearing to order to consider the purchase of 18 +/- acres of land on Old Sib Road, to be used for Open Space purposes, by the Town of Ridgefield under the jurisdiction of the Ridgefield Conservation Commission. The parcel adjoins other open space owned by the Town of Ridgefield.

Dr. Oko, Chairman of the Ridgefield Conservation Commission, came forward with a map to show the location of this Old Sib property. This acreage is to be used for Open Space purposes and will adjoin a strip of land presently owned by Ridgefield. It also adjoins Westchester County public land. The same family has owned this property for 100+ years. There are two ridges with a stream in between, a watered pool, and mature trees throughout. There is a small area which would be appropriate for the building of two houses. In return, the builder will put in a two-car parking area in the Town-owned area at no cost to the Town. The engineer's report and appraisal has been received as well as the 8-24. The funds for this purchase will be provided by the Conservation Commission. R. Marconi read the 8-24. A Town Meeting is scheduled for December 14 at 7:30 p.m., Town Hall/Lower Level Conference Room, to consider this proposed property acquisition. Nells Diferient asked for the exact location on the map which Dr. Oko helped him locate. There were no further questions. R. Marconi closed this Public Hearing at 7:43 p.m.

Public Hearing – R. Marconi called the Public Hearing to order to discuss whether the Town desires to purchase State-owned Property, Easterly side of Present Route 7, approximately 100 +/- square feet, shown on map entitled "Towns of Danbury and Ridgefield Map Showing Land Released to _____ by the State of Connecticut Department of Transportation, U.S. Route 7," dated August 2005, by Arthur W. Gruhn, P.E.

This is a very, very small triangular piece of property and the BOS has decided to not purchase the property as offered by the State of Connecticut. A Public Hearing and a Town Meeting need to be held for any decision concerning land. A Town Meeting is scheduled for December 14 at 7:30 p.m., Town Hall/Lower Level Conference Room, to request approval of this decision. An 8-24 on this property is being requested from Planning & Zoning. R. Marconi closed this Public Hearing at 7:45 p.m.

Public Hearing – R. Marconi called the Public Hearing to order to discuss and hear comments upon a proposal to transfer a certain piece or parcel of land known as 51 Prospect Ridge, Ridgefield, Connecticut and more particularly described as "Parcel A" containing 1.71 +/- acres as shown on a certain map, entitled "Map of Property Owned by the Town of Ridgefield to be Conveyed to the Ridgefield Housing Authority Total Area: 9.437 +/- Ac. Date: June 21, 1988, Revised 6/29/88, 6/30/88 Scale 1" = 80", which map is on file as Map No.7644 of the Ridgefield Land Records, to the Ridgefield Housing Authority.

Said premises are further shown on a certain map entitled, "Property Survey Map Prepared For Town of Ridgefield Prospect Ridge Road, Ridgefield, Connecticut Date July 1, 2003, Scale 1" = 10' Area = 1.725 Acres," prepared by Kristofferson Land Surveying.

The following individuals came forward to discuss this issue: David Goldenberg, Chairman of Ridgefield's Affordable Housing Committee, Phil Bergquist, a member of the Housing Authority, Ann Marie Roller and Mike Trolle, also of the Affordable Housing Committee. Plans call for twenty additional units at Prospect Ridge. Grant funding from the State and Ridgefield Bank financing are available. No bonding is required. The next step is for the Housing Authority to have site ownership. They can then go to Planning & Zoning to seek approval to build. An 8-24 has been obtained. Mr. Goldenberg detailed the income levels the housing seeks to serve. A Town Meeting is scheduled for December 14, at 7:30 p.m., Town Hall/Lower Level Conference Room, to request approval of this property transfer. R. Marconi closed this Public Hearing at 7:50 p.m.

Public Hearing & Town Meeting - Public Hearing and Special Town Meeting to discuss and act on the proposed ordinance, "Constructing or Maintaining Rainwater, Ground Water or Surface Water Discharge Upon Sidewalk, etc.", as proposed by Peter Hill, Director of Public Works, Town of Ridgefield. R. Marconi read the proposed ordinance. Peter Hill came forward to lead the discussion on the issue and to explain why he feels such an ordinance is needed to prevent ice build-ups on the roads caused by water discharge. Labor charges are incurred to rid the roads of such ice, it is hard on the machinery, and also is a liability.

Joe Walsh, Fieldcrest Drive, inquired if this ordinance pertains to the natural flow of water because of the land surface. The answer is no. It pertains to the water which comes after the rain has stopped from footing drains, curtain drains, sump pumps. He feels that the first paragraph needs to be clarified.

Chuck Hancock, North St., asked how many such locations are problems? Peter Hill responded that his department has addressed about 20 such situations in the last five years. There are about six or so such situations now. Most of the time when a resident is approached, the resident shows a willingness to make improvements. Mr. Hancock expressed concern with the wording of the ordinance – it is so broad in scope. There is a current ordinance relevant to a hazardous or public nuisance. Another ordinance is not needed for these few situations. Peter Hill indicated a willingness to speak with Town Counsel and make changes in the wording.

John Katz, Ridgebury Road, indicated that he was present when Peter Hill first introduced his request for this ordinance. He feels this document is not what Mr. Hill first requested. The first part is "very wordy".

R. Marconi pointed out that Town Counsel feels that current nuisance statutes are not strong enough – something more is needed. Nothing else is in place relevant to local roads. Other nearby towns have such an ordinance.

John Morrisroe, Dowling Drive, read a letter he had written. He has pipes and drains on this property and has had no problem for the past 32 years. He thinks the ordinance should apply to new construction. Existing situations should be "grandfathered" in. Mr. Hill doesn't agree with the "grandfathering" concept. If the problem situation exists, it needs to be corrected. R. Marconi agreed to have the wording reviewed and made more specific. D. Masters suggested using the State hazardous nuisance language, put in the wording "causing icing problem".

Jeff Harrington, Langstroth Drive, feels there should be an ordinance relative to run-offs from new construction. More and more problems are going to surface.

Chuck Hancock asked if citations have been issued? The answer is no. Mr. Hancock feels the ordinance in place currently should be used to give citations.

It was agreed that the wording of the ordinance would be reviewed and clarified. Consideration of the changes of the ordinance will be placed on the December 14 BOS agenda. R. Marconi closed the Public Hearing at 8:25 p.m. The Town Meeting was postponed to a later date once the ordinance is more precisely written.

Board of Selectmen Meeting

R. Marconi opened the Board of Selectmen Meeting at 8:30 p.m. Dr. Peter Yanity came forward to personally welcome Andy Bodner as a member of the Board of Selectmen. R. Marconi presented again to Dr. Yanity his certificate of recognition (which had been reframed) detailing Dr. Yanity's "selfless service and tireless efforts" to the Town of Ridgefield.

1. BEI Telephone Lease – J. Wahlberg, Town Controller, came forward to discuss the proposed lease. Since the previous BOS Meeting on 11/16/05, the lease has been brought to the Board of Finance for their review and approval. B. Manners inquired as to why the Ridgefield Fire Department and Canine Patrol are not being tied into this new phone system? Mr. Wahlberg replied because of the cost involved. He will research what the exact cost of such a tie-in would be. B. Manners inquired as to the \$5,000/year for maintenance and training cost? This is the cost after the warranty period is over and not part of the current budgeted cost. Several wording changes were requested: Section 11, Part 3 and Page 6, #20.

Dom D'Addario, Tanton Hill Rd. – inquired if this was a wireless system? The answer is no – a change from analog to digital system. As J. Wahlberg pointed out, the current system is a "failing system". It has been in use in Ridgefield for the past 13 years and is no longer supported. The equipment is no longer manufactured and cannot support any new enhancements.

A.J. DiMattia, Old Branchville Rd. – inquired if additional service can be added to the new system? The answer is yes – at a later date.

It is a tax-exempt lease, and thus a Town Meeting is needed for approval of the proposed lease. **J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to approve as amended the telephone lease with Business Electronics, Inc. (BEI), contingent upon acceptance by BEI of the changes in the lease wording, and to hold a Town Meeting on December 14, 2005, 7:30 p.m., Town Hall Lower Level Conference Room for public approval of this lease. Motion passed 5-0.**

2. 8-24 for Sturges Park Easement - A well has been drilled on the property for the Boy Scouts to obtain water. Northeast Utilities wants to put in a pole for purposes of the well at the site and needs wire access to the pole. The conduit will be underground. NE Utilities has requested a 40 ft. easement rather than the customary 25 feet. John Katz inquired as to the need for the 40 ft. easement. R. Marconi will see if this can be reduced to the customary 25 feet. Jeremy Schaefer is the primary engineer involved.

J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to request an 8-24 from Planning & Zoning relevant to a Sturges Park easement as requested by Connecticut Light & Power Company. Motion passed 5-0.

3. Approval of 2006 Meeting Calendar - In past years, the proposals for the capital and operating budgets were reviewed separately. Lately, R. Marconi has been reviewing with each department their current budget and requests on both the capital and operating sides, prior to review by the BOS. It was agreed that this process works well and is the procedure to be followed again this year. The budget needs to be ready by March 13, 2006. It was agreed that meetings dedicated to budget discussions should be held in February rather than early March, thus allowing for plenty of time for review and changes.

J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to approve the 2006 Board of Selectmen Meeting Schedule as discussed. Motion passed 5-0.

**January 4
January 18
February 1
February 7, 8 & 9 – Budget Meetings with a possible Saturday meeting if needed
February 15
March 8
March 22
April 5
April 26
May 3
May 17
May 31
June 14
June 28
July 12
July 26
August 9
August 23
September 6
September 20
October 4
October 18
November 1
November 15
November 29
December 13**

4. Route 7 Link (Re-route from Route 7 to 102) – A smaller 20-passenger bus runs on the Ridgefield Loop route, from the Danbury mall to Ridgefield Center weekday mornings and afternoons. That route will be discontinued at the end of December 2005 because the federal grant financing it will end. This bus is used by workers to get to jobs in Ridgefield and by seniors to go shopping or run errands. The current stops in Ridgefield include the Laurel Ridge nursing center on Route 7, Cops Hill Plaza and Ballard Green. If called two hours or more ahead, it will stop at Fox Hill condominiums and the Prospect Ridge senior housing as well.

A plan to compensate for its loss by having the Route 7 Link bus change its route to go through Ridgefield Center on its way between Norwalk and Danbury is under consideration.

The proposed route would be for the bus to take Danbury Road from Route 7 to the center of town, then go Main Street to Route 102, and 102 down to Route 7 in Branchville. These are the big city-style buses which currently shuttle up and down Route 7 between Danbury and Norwalk. It was felt that such a large bus on Branchville Road is a hazard. B. Manners suggested that the bus stop on Route 35 and not on Branchville Road. D. Masters suggested giving this new route a short-term test to see if it is used. A. Bodner suggested the smaller bus on Branchville Road – not a large city-type bus. John Katz pointed out that the bus route is not near Prospect Ridge. Seniors would have to find their own transportation from Prospect Ridge to the bus route. The HART bus is currently available thru Social Services, but a pickup has to be requested two days ahead. It was agreed to try a six month trial beginning January 1, 2006 with the new route.

5. Reappointment of all Boards and Committees – R. Marconi read the charter regarding this requirement.

J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to approve reappointment of all Ridgefield Boards and Committees as required by the Town Charter within thirty days following a Board of Selectmen election. Motion passed 5-0.

This includes the Commission on the Aging, Pension Commission, Cable TV Advisory Council, Commission for the Disabled/Handicapped, Architectural Advisory Committee, Water Pollution Control Authority, Historic District Commission, Parking Authority, Housing Authority, Youth Commission, Tree Committee, Ridgefield Arts Council, Affordable Housing Committee, Design Council, Golf Committee, Graveyard Restoration Committee, Insurance & Risk Management Committee, Master Building Committee, Constables, and Deer Implementation Committee. R. Marconi will research whether Parks & Recreation Commission should be included in this list.

5. HRRRA Member Appointment and Alternate – R. Marconi read the November 9, 2005 memo received from Cheryl Reedy, HRRRA Director regarding HRRRA Representatives Terms. HRRRA is the Housatonic Resource Recovery Authority and is an organization of ten Connecticut communities, of which Ridgefield is a member. Rudy Marconi is the current representative to HRRRA from Ridgefield and Dr. Peter Yanity is the Alternate. **B. Manners moved and J. Plock seconded a motion to reappoint Rudolph Marconi as Ridgefield's Representative and Peter Yanity as Alternate to HRRRA (Housatonic Resource Recovery Authority) for a three year term from June 30, 2004 to June 30, 2007 Motion passed 5-0.**
6. Approval of Meeting Minutes – 11/16/05, 11/22/05

D. Masters moved and B. Manners seconded a motion to approve as amended the minutes of the November 16, 2005 Board of Selectmen Meeting. Motion passed 4-0-1. A. Bodner abstained as was not yet on the Board of Selectmen at this meeting date.

J. Plock moved and B. Manners seconded a motion to approve as written the minutes of the November 22, 2005 Board of Selectmen Meeting. Motion passed 5-0.

7. Selectman's Report – Love Realty reported on the rebuilding of the Bissell Building. Approvals have been received from all the Boards. The architects are now working on the plans and budgets. They will keep the BOS updated.

J. Plock moved and B. Manners seconded a motion to adjourn the Board of Selectmen Meeting at 9:45 p.m. Motion passed 5-0.

Fire Commission Meeting

R. Marconi called the Fire Commission Meeting to order at 9:45 p.m. The following individuals came forward to discuss Fire Department issues: Lou Yarrish, Fire Chief, Nick Geata, Assistant Fire Chief, Michael Moore, President, Local 1739, Anthony Cerulli, Vice President, Local 1739, Doug Cuny, Deputy Chief, Ridgefield Volunteer Fire Department, and Tim Pambianchi, Assistant Fire Chief, Ridgefield Volunteer Fire Department.

Radio System - Lou Yarrish, Fire Chief, reviewed the problems with the new radio system. The problems are constant with the new equipment frequently failing. The pagers have had to be reprogrammed. This last month, the system malfunctioned three times. The Town Counsel has been asked to intervene in this situation. A three-page letter has been received back from the manufacturer indicating what they are planning to do. They want to start replacing major components one unit at a time. All the equipment is brand new and top-of-the-line. Is the problem with the equipment itself or with how it was installed? R. Marconi inquired as to backup while going thru this testing program? J. Plock stressed the need for an entire new system on site. The parts should be returned to the factory for testing and not testing while here in Ridgefield. Assistant Chief Geata reported on how the new system was installed – one unit at a time with existing system as the backup – thus never out of commission – no down time. The consensus was that the Board of Selectmen wants the entire system replaced.

William Frazee's Will Donation - Approximately \$227,000 has been left to the Fire Department. Chief Yarrish indicated the desire to purchase a new ambulance with some of this donation. Ridgefield would then have three ambulances. A new vehicle would cost between \$130,000 - \$145,000. Another item on the Fire Department's wish list is a training center, whereby the set-up configuration inside the building can be changed to suit the various training drills and practices. A possible location may be at the Landfill. R. Marconi indicated that the landfill might not work for a Training Center location. 60 percent of the Fire Department's calls are EMS calls. J.Plock expressed her opinion that the money has been left to the Fire Department and thus the Fire Department should make the decision as to what to do with the funds.

Call Volume – October was one of the busiest months ever with regard to call volume with 73 more calls than in the same period last year. 174 EMS calls in October and 66 Fire Alarm Calls. EMS is receiving so many calls to assist other nearby towns, that then the Fire Department is short on coverage in Town. Additional staffing is needed.

Shelter Update – All the equipment that was loaned out for Hurricane Katrina has been replaced. The Emergency Center is progressing methodically and checking with the State regarding the grant dollars. Bids are being solicited for construction inside the building. The State will pay for part of the phone system. A meeting with J. Wahlberg and the phone company will occur shortly. They are required to hold one Emergency Preparedness drill/year.

Quarterly Update Report – Union President, Michael Moore, requested setting aside an evening quarterly for a report night to the Board of Selectmen. It was decided a monthly report time would be even better – meet from 6:30 to 7:30 prior to the first Board of Selectmen Meeting each month. R. Marconi's office will send out reminders.

J. Plock moved and B. Manners seconded a motion to adjourn the Fire Commission Meeting at 10:35 p.m. Motion passed 5-0.

Economic Development Commission Meeting

1. Approval of 2006 Meeting Calendar

D. Masters moved and B. Manners seconded a motion to approve the 2006 Meeting Calendar as presented for the Economic Development Commission. Motion passed 5-0.

**January 18
February 15
March 22
April 26
May 17
June 28
July 26
September 20
October 18
November 15**

2. Discussion of Appointment of a New Economic Development Commission

Expanding the focus of the Economic Development Commission was discussed during the recent BOS election. It is time to advertise for residents who would like to serve on this Commission. Paul Levine and others have indicated an interest in serving in this regard. It is important to establish a permanent Commission.

B. Manners moved and J.Plock seconded a motion to adjourn the Economic Development Commission Meeting at 10:40 p.m. Motion passed 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Janet L. Johnson