

## **BOARD of SELECTMEN MEETING – DECEMBER 1, 2004**

7:30 P.M.

### **TOWN HALL/LOWER LEVEL CONFERENCE ROOM REVISED/APPROVED MINUTES**

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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. Fire Chief Report – Appointment to Town’s Local Emergency Planning Committee: Doug Cuny, Walter Wieland; 2005 Ambulance Rates
2. Vehicle Use Policy
3. Committee for the Disabled Interview – Marna Van der Ploeg
4. 2005 Board of Selectmen Meeting Calendar
5. Renewal of VFW lease
6. Approval of November 17, 2004 Meeting Minutes
7. First Selectman’s Report

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION of BOARD of SELECTMEN**

Board of Education Pension negotiations and possible vote

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

**J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to add as the first item on the Agenda: “Discussion – New Sign Regulation”. Motion passed 5-0.**

1. New Sign Regulation – Betty Brosius, Director of Planning, for the Town of Ridgefield presented her memo regarding this issue. Planning & Zoning has passed a regulation requiring sandwich boards and signs advertising activities and functions be placed only on an agency’s own property. This is a problem for non-profits who do not have frontage on Main Street or an office location suitable for advertising. The Theatre Barn, Art Guild, Ridgefield Symphony and the Ridgefield Playhouse fit this category. Ms. Brosius’s memo suggests community sign boards at a few locations around town. If the community is interested in such a solution to the “sign issue”, the BOS would issue an appropriate regulation. Possible locations for the community sign boards could be in front of the library, by the recycling center, in front of the Community Center, and/or next to Town Hall. Pedestrian kiosks are another suggestion. A discussion followed as to whether the signs should be able to be viewed by drivers passing by or stopped at an intersection. R. Marconi inquired as to whether there should also be signage available for merchants not located on Main St. J. Plock suggested a list of businesses under street signs. Ms. Brosius indicated that the Chamber of Commerce is preparing a more complete town map which will include a list of businesses on back streets and alleys.

Ms. Brosius suggested that the BOS designate the development of the community sign board design and procedures to the Design Council. This group would do some research on the subject, including what other towns are doing in this regard, and spearhead the design of the signboards and the procedures to be followed. Roger Guilfoyle and Helen Dimos were present at the meeting as members of the Design Council. They both felt that professional design advice would be needed for a consistency of design. P. Yanity suggested the formation of a committee to work on this project with 3 members from the Design Council, 3 members from AAC, and 3 members from town non-profit organizations. Perhaps a Public Hearing could be held to solicit ideas from the public. Ms. Dimon indicated that it would be advantageous to hire a designer, someone who would pull together all the solicited ideas and come up with a drawing.

**J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to charge the Design Council to work in collaboration with the AAC, Betty Brosius, Director of Planning, and anyone else particularly interested in this project, to suggest location(s), the design, and procedures to be followed for posting of signs advertising town and non-profit activities and functions, and report back to the BOS at their February 16, 2005 meeting. Motion passed 5-0.**

2. Fire Chief Report – Appointment to Town’s Local Emergency Planning Committee: Doug Cuny, Walter Wieland. **J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to appoint to the Town’s Local Emergency Planning Committee for hazardous material incidents: Doug Cuny, Deputy Chief, Ridgefield Volunteer Fire Department, and Walter Wieland, Captain, Fire Police, Ridgefield Volunteer Fire Department, and remove from the Town’s Local Emergency Planning Committee: Ed Gabbianelli and Sid Scott. Motion passed 5-0.**

Chief Yarrish listed current activities of the Fire Department –

- Hazardous Materials training has started with the volunteers
- The \$25,000 recently donated extrication equipment is currently being placed on the fire trucks.
- Annual water rescue training is being started.
- The Volunteer Fund has donated two new stretchers for the current ambulance.
- The new ambulance should be in next week – will take about two weeks to get it fitted and up and running.

2005 Ambulance Rates - Each year at this time J. Wahlberg presents the new ambulance rates being proposed by the State. This rate is a common carrier rate, a median rate. On average, the 2005 rates are 4.4% higher than the 2004 rates. Every town has to submit their rates to the State annually. Ambulance service currently costs the town approximately \$1.1 million/year with about 50% of this collected back from the users. R. Marconi pointed out how we do not want the rates to discourage residents from calling an ambulance when needed. J. Plock asked for ideas as to what can possibly be done to increase the Town’s revenue from EMS calls. Can a surcharge be put on out-of-towners when billing? There will be a cost impact caused by the new medical center. Last year there were 1,765 EMS calls, 2004 numbers to date total 1813 calls for only eleven months. R. Marconi asked Chief Yarrish to chart out in graph form the number of EMS calls for the last five years, and then project out how long it will be until the numbers double again.

**J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to approve the 2005 ambulance rates as specified in the CT. Department of Public Health Statewide Rate Schedule for 2005, effective January 1, 2005. Motion passed 4-1. B. Manners opposed.**

3. Vehicle Use Policy – Laurie Scholl, Director of Human Resources, presented the latest policy update with only some minor changes from the previously discussed draft. B. Manners suggested tracking of exceptions, even for emergency personnel and how often they are called back to town to respond to a call. Further changes in the policy wording include:
- 1E – Other exceptions to this general Town Vehicle Policy may be granted on a case-by-case basis, only with the approval of the First Selectman and concurrence of the Board of Selectmen.
  - IIA – Town vehicles shall normally be assigned on a 24/7 day basis , etc.
  - IID – Individuals assigned a Town vehicle, which is approved for use for commuting to and from work, will be subject to current IRS regulations and Code provisions, which will be reviewed semi-annually, and should not go below the IRS rate. P. Yanity inquired as to what if someone were to move as far as 75 miles away? R. Marconi indicated that such a case would have to be discussed.
  - VA – Add regarding cell phones, “Employees may request a hands-free cell phone.”
  - R. Marconi read Appendix A – Third paragraph should read, “The individuals currently occupying the following positions as of December 1, 2004, shall be grandfathered”, etc.
- It was suggested that tax counsel review the policy for tax implications.

**J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to approve the changes as discussed at this meeting to the Town Vehicle Usage Policy. Motion passed 5-0.**

4. Committee for the Disabled Interview – Marna Van der Ploeg – Ms. Van der Ploeg came forward to present her credentials and interest in serving on the Committee for the Disabled. She is a three year resident of the town and herself has been on crutches 32 of the last 36 months and at one time was in a cast for 15 months and crutches for 2 years following. She knows what it is like to have difficulties in getting around. She has a degree in Industrial Design and was recently named to the Design Council. She indicated an interest in serving on the Sign Committee. **J. Plock moved and B. Manners seconded a motion to appoint Marna Van der Ploeg to the Commission for the Disabled. Motion passed 5-0.**

5. 2005 Board of Selectmen Meeting Calendar - **J. Plock moved and D. Manners seconded a motion to approve the BOS Meeting Calendar for 2005 as discussed. Motion passed 5-0.**  
**BOS meetings will be held on:**

**January 5 and 19**

**February 2 and 16**

**March 9 and 23 (March 7-13 as Budget Week)**

**April 6 and 27**

**May 11 and 25**

**June 8 and 22**

**July 6 and 20**

**August 3 and 17**

**September 7 and 21**

**October 5 and 19**

**November 2, 16, and 30**

**December 14**

6. **Renewal of VFW Lease - P. Yanity moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to approve the renewal of the VFW lease for one year. Motion passed 5-0.**
7. **Approval of November 17, 2004 Meeting Minutes - J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to approve as amended the minutes of the November 17, 2004 BOS Meeting. Motion passed 5-0.**
8. **First Selectman's Report -**
  - Ed Briggs is requesting authorization to make, execute and approve any contracts with the State of Connecticut Department of Health relative to Emergency Preparedness. The decision is no – all such agreements/contracts need to be approved by the Board of Selectmen.
  - Ridgefield's Rotary Club received the Connecticut Parks & Recreation annual award for the design and construction of their Ridgefield park – The Sky Is The Limit. R. Marconi will write a letter of congratulations from the BOS to the Rotary Club.
  - The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission has decided to divide the State of Connecticut into two different electric billing codes, with this half of the state being billed at a higher rate. R. Marconi attended a meeting on November 23 with Attorney General Richard Blumenthal relative to this issue. This half of the state needs to seek Federal assistance as well as from Hartford to fight this decision. HEPCO is also working on this issue.
  - Another meeting was held recently regarding electrification of the Branchville Line. The goal is at least one train in the morning that will be express to NY.
  - Revamping of the probate court system is an ongoing issue. Losing a probate court in Ridgefield would cost the town \$100,000/year to support the court located elsewhere.
  - Public Hearing scheduled for December 2 on Weir Farm proposed building expansion. The BOS did send a letter expressing our "concern" at the size of the proposed expansion.
  - High School Sports Awards Banquet is Monday evening, December 6 at 7:00 p.m. in the High School Auditorium. At this time R. Marconi will present the BOS recognition to both the Girl's Swim Team and the Girl's Cross Country team for their State victories. The Athletic Department at the High School has requested that the presentations be at this event instead of at a BOS Meeting as the girls' peers will be present to see the presentations.

**J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to recess the Public Session of the BOS Meeting at 9:20 p.m. and go into Executive Session with Laurie Scholl, Director of Human Resources, to discuss Board of Education pension negotiations and possible vote. Motion passed 5-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Janet L. Johnson