

BOARD of SELECTMEN MEETING – DECEMBER 15, 2004

7:30 P.M.

TOWN HALL/LOWER LEVEL CONFERENCE ROOM 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 in attendance @ 7:45 p.m., D. Masters, J. Plock, P. Yanity

AGENDA

1. Mileage Rate Increase – Laurie Scholl
2. RCPC Interview – Debbie Kadagian
3. Ridgefield Symphony Orchestra & Playhouse Lease review; schedule date for Public Hearing and Town Meeting
4. VNA Discussion
5. State of CT Public Health – resolution of authorization
6. Approval of 12/1/04 meeting minutes
7. Selectman's Report

Economic Development Committee Meeting

AGENDA

Review and approve 2005 meeting dates

R. Marconi called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

J. Plock moved and P. Yanity seconded a motion to add to the evening's agenda as #1A a discussion on Weir Farm and the recent decision by Planning & Zoning. Motion passed 4-0. It was decided to wait until B. Manners arrived for the discussion on Weir Farm.

1. Mileage Rate Increase – Laurie Scholl – Ms. Scholl reported that the Federal rate for mileage has been raised from 37.5 cents/mile to 40.5 cents/mile effective January 1, 2005. The Town of Ridgefield is mandated to use the current Federal rate for all mileage reimbursements. **J. Plock moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to amend the Vehicle Policy reimbursement rate to the current IRS rate of 40.5 cents/mile effective January 1, 2005 and eliminate the semi-annual mileage rate review as stated in the Vehicle Policy. Motion passed 4-0.**

1A. Weir Farm Discussion – Recent decision by Planning & Zoning –

J. Plock reviewed the background of the Weir Farm planned building expansion. A Public Hearing sponsored by Planning & Zoning was held in July 2004 in which Weir Farm administration outlined their proposal for Weir Farm expansion. In November 2004, the BOS sent a letter to P&Z expressing their concern over these plans. Last evening, December 14, P&Z had a consensus vote of its membership which expressed

agreement with the expansion plan as proposed. The original agreement between the U.S. Department of the Interior National Park Service and the Ridgefield BOS and the Ridgefield Planning & Zoning Commission states that there has to be a Town Meeting to amend this original agreement, and this proposed expansion will change the original agreement. Thus, a Public Hearing needs to be scheduled as a lead-up to a Town Meeting.

John Katz, Ridgebury Rd. – addressed the issues raised by J. Plock. The consensus vote was not a decision-making vote. The Federal government has agreed to follow special permit procedures but not a Public Hearing, as such, but instead public informational sessions. Weir Farm has come to the neighborhood soliciting their input and the Commission's input. Last evening's consensus agreement was part of this input solicitation. There will be another public informational session reporting back the input received from the neighbors and the Commission. P&Z's consensus was approval of the way the proposed building fits the landscape. The public input process continues. No final approval was made or permission given.

P. Yanity indicated that he was present when the BOS signed the original Weir Farm Agreement. Therefore, the BOS has a big responsibility for any expansion/changes, etc. at Weir Farm. The BOS needs to provide their consensus also as they represent the Town's citizenry.

D. Masters pointed out that before the Town originally entered into the Weir Farm Agreement with the Federal government, many hearings were held. The Federal government purchased the land after the hearings had been held and everyone was in agreement as to the plans for the property.

J. Plock requested that Town Counsel review the agreement and determine if a Public Hearing and Town Meeting needs to be held before any changes can be made. R. Marconi will have Dave Grogins do so. A maintenance facility for 4-6 vehicles (a shuttle van, 2 dump trucks and some other type of truck) and not a motor depot is what Ms. Plock thought was being proposed. Large buses are not desirable.

B. Manners pointed out that what is troubling to many is the proposed size of the building – a 11,500 sq. ft. structure is not in keeping with an undeveloped landscape. The question is whether or not we (the BOS) have authority in this issue. This is the opinion we are seeking from Mr. Grogins. We can also ask for an opinion from the P&Z attorneys.

P. Yanity would like to know what exactly are the responsibilities of the Board of Selectmen? What does this agreement mean? What constitutes an alteration to the agreement? R. Marconi replied that he would obtain legal counsel and put this issue on the agenda for the January 5 meeting.

A.J. DiMattia, Old Branchville Rd. – reflected on his perception of the consensus agreement at the previous evening's P&Z meeting. There was no opportunity for public opinion – he could not comment. Neighbors were not present, and he felt there was "disdain" for public opinion. He felt there was acclimation about the proposed building – "it is perfect, it is terrific, leave it alone". He would appreciate continued interest of the BOS on this issue.

John Katz, Ridgebury Rd. – responded to Mr. DiMattia’s comments. There is a need to understand what P&Z was endorsing – “This is not a cooked cake, it is a baking cake – people can continue to have their input.” With regard to lighting and landscape features, the proposed construction will try to be neighborhood friendly. P&Z was not prepared to discuss Weir Farm at this BOS Meeting. This topic was not on the agenda, but an add-on this evening.

2. RCPC Interview – Debbie Kadagian – The RCPC (Ridgefield Community Prevention Council) replaces the Ridgefield Community Partnership and RADUC. They recently had their first meeting, which Debbie Kadagian attended. She is on the Playhouse Board. Debbie commented on how substance abuse is a serious concern in Ridgefield and in particular at the high school. The RCPC’s goal is to help parents talk to their teenagers, sponsor lectures and flyers at the schools, and promote a commitment which the students will sign pledging to not use or distribute alcohol or drugs. D. Masters inquired as to any special interest Debbie might have. Ms. Kadagian replied that she has fund raising ideas. She also feels that the Community Resource Officer position at the high school needs to be reinstated. B. Manners commented on how she has worked with Debbie on multiple projects over the years, and RCPC is very fortunate to have Ms. Kadagian come forward to serve on the Council. Debbie has a real sensitivity to young people. **J. Plock moved and P. Yanity seconded a motion to appoint Debbie Kadagian as a member of the Ridgefield Community Prevention Council (RCPC). Motion passed 5-0.**
3. Ridgefield Symphony Orchestra & Playhouse Lease review; schedule date for Public Hearing and Town Meeting - Both of these leases have been in discussion for some time. A discussion followed regarding the Playhouse’s request for a flat rate lease as opposed to a base rental rate plus a common area fee. The Ridgefield Symphony would like to do likewise. John Mannuzza has been asked to compute what this rate should be. The bookkeeping will be much easier with one flat rental rate for each organization. Barbara Dobbin, Danbury Road, a member of the Playhouse Board, expressed strong endorsement for the one rate lease and thought it would be most helpful for other rental organizations as well. Sabina Slavin, Co-President of the Ridgefield Symphony Orchestra Board, pointed out that the lease has been changed also whereby the RSO does not need to provide an umbrella liability policy. The terms of the leases will be for a five year period, with the option to renew for an additional five year term, effective on the day following the date upon which the lease is approved by the Town Meeting.

The Landlord **or the Tenant** (the bold print added in) shall have the right, at any time during the term of this lease, upon one hundred eighty (180) days’ prior written notice to the Tenant or the Tenant to the Landlord, to terminate this lease.

A discussion ensued regarding licensing and how the renters cannot sublet without the approval of the Board of Selectmen. Should this restriction also be in effect at the time of renewal in five years? For example, this would effect the current rental situation for the ballet studio. This need for BOS approval is to be put in all future Town of Ridgefield leases.

J. Plock moved and P. Yanity seconded a motion to approve the Ridgefield Symphony lease as amended and set a Public Hearing for discussion of the lease on January 5, 2005. Motion passed 3-0-1. B. Manners abstained from voting as she is

a member of the Ridgefield Symphony Board and thus felt it was inappropriate to vote. D. Masters opposed as she would like further clarification of several terms of the lease.

J. Plock moved and P. Yanity seconded a motion to approve the Ridgefield Playhouse lease as amended and set a Public Hearing for discussion of the lease on January 5, 2005. Motion passed 4-1. D. Master opposed.

J. Plock moved and P. Yanity seconded a motion to hold a Town Meeting on January 19, 2005 to vote on both the Ridgefield Symphony Orchestra (RSO) and the Playhouse leases. Motion passed 5-0.

4. VNA Discussion – The VNA is remodeling the first floor as the result of their space consolidation. The lighting needs to be redone, and the VNA is requesting the Town of Ridgefield to assist with the lighting expense. The Ridgefield Symphony Orchestra, the Playhouse, and Norwalk Community College, if they decide to definitely rent space in Ridgefield, will all have to redo their own space. Exceptions cannot be made for the Town of Ridgefield to pay for some remodeling expenses and not for others. Barbara Dobbin, Danbury Road, suggested that if the Town were to redo the interior lighting, a rebate is available from Northeast Utilities. This is being done at the library and in other municipal buildings.
5. State of CT Public Health – Resolution of Authorization – Ed Briggs had previously requested authorization to approve Department of Public Health bio-terrorism authorizations and was told no – the BOS wishes to retain authorization power. **J. Plock moved and B. Manners seconded a motion to approve the State of CT Public Health – resolution of bio-terrorism authorization whereby the First Selectman will sign on behalf of the Town of Ridgefield. Motion passed 5-0.**
6. Approval of 12/1/04 meeting minutes - **P. Yanity moved and J. Plock seconded a motion to approve as amended the minutes of the December 1, 2004 Board of Selectmen Meeting. Motion passed 5-0.**
7. Selectman’s Report –
 - December 14, 2004 meeting of the Master Building Committee was held with Drs. Freeston and Keating and several members of the Board of Education in attendance. Nels Berg and Paul Anderson are retiring from the MBC effective January 1st. The rest of the Committee will stay intact in order to complete any outstanding issues. The Building Committee has to turn a completed building project over to the BOS who in turn turns the completed building over to the Board of Education, and then the State will reimburse the final 5% of the project cost. The Building Committee therefore has to remain intact in order to facilitate this process.

One ongoing issue is the ERMS ventilation units and the resultant noise level. Additional testing is being done in each room with detailed documentation.

The Barlow water problem is another ongoing issue. Aquarion will be submitting a letter in January detailing the cost to extend the main water line. They will also

detail the costs involved in two other options – reverse osmosis and the ION exchange method. The State Health Department is encouraging extension of the main water line as the preferred solution. R. Marconi is currently exploring options as to how to finance a possible extension of the main line. Approximately \$300,000 will be left over from the building projects. The State requires a Town to go out to bid on such a project and choose the lowest bid, and in such a case, Aquarion might well not be the lowest bidder. David Connor of Aquarion is checking into what other communities have done in such a situation.

- Judith Freedman, Norwalk Community College’s area legislator will sponsor a meeting on January 7th seeking support from the State for NCC to hold courses in Ridgefield. She is seeking special appropriations from the State. The Town is very close to completing the parking, and Ridgefield wants NCC and the Area Legislator to come up with dollars for this project.
- Laurie Scholl is continuing to work on the Policy Book.

J. Plock moved and B. Manners seconded a motion to adjourn the Board of Selectmen Meeting at 8:40 p.m., and convene the Economic Development Committee Meeting. Motion passed 5-0.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING

R. Marconi called the Economic Development Committee Meeting to order at 8:40 p.m. **B. Manners moved and J. Plock seconded a motion to adopt as amended the proposed 2005 Economic Development Committee Meeting Dates as follows:**

January 19
February 16
March 23
April 27
May 25
June 22
July 20
September 21
October 19
November 30

R. Marconi reported that it might be 2007 before Schlumberger actually moves.

Happy Holidays to all!

P. Yanity moved and J. Plock seconded a motion to adjourn the Economic Development Committee Meeting at 8:45 p.m. Motion passed 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Janet L. Johnson