

BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING

DECEMBER 5, 2001 – 7:30 P.M.

TOWN HALL LOWER LEVEL CONFERENCE ROOM

APPROVED MINUTES

These minutes are a summary of the meeting and are not intended to be a verbatim transcription.

In attendance: Mr. Marconi, Ms. Manners, Ms. Plock, Dr. Yanity, Mr. Zemo

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AGENDA  
**PUBLIC HEARING**

To review and discuss proposed Application to the State Department of Economic Community Development for funds under the Small Cities Program.

The purpose of the hearing is to obtain citizens views on the Town's community developmental and housing needs and review and discuss specific project activities in the areas of housing, economic development or community facilities which could be a part of the Town's Application for funding. The Town is considering submitting an Application for funds not to exceed \$400,000 for renovations to a portion of the Old Grange Building to support the Meals on Wheels program.

Immediately following the Public Hearing:

AGENDA  
**BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING**

1. Introduction of new Superintendent, Randy Turner, of Weir Farm National Historic Site.
2. Joint meeting discussion with the Board of Education on East Ridge Middle School Phase II renovations.
3. Review of MCCA and Senior Center leases.

First Selectman R. Marconi called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m. for the Public Hearing portion of the meeting. The purpose of the meeting is to solicit community input. R. Marconi reviewed the Small Cities Program, part of the State Department of Economic Community Development. Ridgefield fits into this category, and the program is designed to benefit the elderly, disabled, etc. in the areas of housing, economic development or community facilities. R. Marconi introduced Darwin Yoran, 17 year Chairman of Ridgefield's Meals-on-Wheels Program. Mr. Yoran described the present facility which has been in operation since 1984. Since that time, they are serving 300-400% more meals, a total of 20,000 meals per year. He introduced Jeff Mose, the Architect and Larry Wagner, of Wagner & Associates. They showed a rendering picturing the proposed small addition to one corner of the existing building, in the middle of Ballard Green, an addition of 1300 sq. feet. This will provide additional space to

house new cooking equipment, refrigeration and storage space – all in keeping with the Health Department codes.

Sandy Horowitz – Olmstead Rd., inquired as to the cost estimate for the project and will the grant from the State cover all expenses? The estimate is approximately \$350,000-\$400,000. It is estimated that Meals-to-Wheels will provide approximately 10% which will be used to cover the cost of the architect and equipment.

Martin Carr – West Lane, wondered if the delivery area for Meals-on-Wheel covers only Ridgefield or does it extend into Danbury as well? Only Ridgefield is covered by Ridgefield's Meals-on-Wheels program.

Barbara Manners commented on the excellent town-wide fund raiser recently sponsored by Meals-on-Wheels.

Larry Wagner of Wagner & Associates indicated a desire to submit a preliminary letter to the State regarding a grant for additional housing in Ballard Green. A request for such a letter needs to be initiated by citizens at a public hearing such as this one.

Marilyn Carroll of Keeler Drive asked if the Town of Ridgefield can expand housing at Ballard Green and can the Town apply for such a grant from the State?

R. Marconi commented that currently there are 60 people on the waiting list for Ballard Green. Ballard Green is a very successful program. The Town of Ridgefield will investigate the possibility of expanding housing at Ballard Green.

John Frey – State Rep indicated that Hartford is interested in assisting with funding for an additional twelve units.

Mike Violante – Craigmoor Drive – Would the process include public bids?

R. Marconi responded that the parking at Ballard Green would be expanded and a master plan developed. An architectural firm would be used

P. Yanity responded that we do not need to buy the land!!

The public hearing portion of the meeting was closed at 7:53 p.m.

First Selectman R. Marconi opened the Board of Selectmen Meeting at 7:55 p.m.

- 1) R. Marconi introduced Randy Turner, the new Superintendent of Weir Farm National Historic Site. Mr. Turner described his 28-year background with the National Park Service, much of it in connection with legislation. Weir Farm has been in existence for 12 years. High on the priority list is maintenance and an administrative facility. Federal dollars are available for this purpose; need to

begin pre-design work this year. Mr. Turner plans to work closely with the Board of Selectmen and the community of Ridgefield.

B. Manners inquired as to educational programs planned for the summer months. Mr. Turner replied that a new program entitled “Brushes with History” is planned, plus existing programs repeated. Last year Weir Farm had approximately 16,000 visitors. He did not have with him the breakdown as to how many of that number were school field trips and similar outings.

- 2) R. Marconi opened the discussion with the Board of Education on the East Ridge Middle School Phase II renovations. He reviewed the situation to date and the problem of specifications versus the referendum budget. The purpose of the discussion is to select a course of action that will satisfy all parties. We all share the common goal to move ahead. The Board of Education is anxious to satisfy all the education specs and adhere to the budget. R. Marconi introduced Nels Berg, who has been on board since October 15 as the Project Manager reporting to the Board of Selectmen. N. Berg read a summary he had prepared as to the current status of the East Ridge Middle School project. The meeting was then open to questions from the Board of Education.

The following individuals were seated around the conference table:

Board of Education members – Frank D’Angelo, Vice Chairman;

Dr. Keating, Board of Education Business Office Manager; John Armato, Kitty Fischer, Mary Pat Devine, Mary Miller, Sandi Rose, and Glen Corielli.

Master Building Committee members – Paul Anderson, Chairman; Lisa Gillingham; Allison Hickey-Dyon; and J. Delmer. Also present was Dr. Wallace, Superintendent of Schools.

Kitty Fischer (Board of Education) outlined the four areas to be reviewed – referendum items, code items, maintenance items, and program items not included in the referendum budget. Pre-referendum items include the carpeting issue (Have decided to eliminate the carpeting which will result in a \$280,000 savings, but now must address the repair/replacement of existing flooring), corridor lockers, bathroom updates.

J. Plock inquired as to whether the State will allow “code work” to be removed from the project and put in a different category, such as under a maintenance umbrella? N. Berg replied that code items that need to be tested, have to ask for modification. Does \$8.2M to \$8.5M trigger a higher level of mandatory compliance? The review by S. Fould indicated that some items would not have to come under the umbrella of State compliance, but N. Berg prefers to have direction from the State code officials.

Mary Pat Devine (Board of Education) asked if we are coming closer to resolving the list of items that need to be replaced/repared and the cost? J. Plock asked if the list distributed is the list of these items?

Kitty Fischer (Board of Education) asked how did the cost go from \$5.8M to \$1.5M since yesterday? N. Berg replied that he is estimated that the additional cost for items that need to be replaced/repared will be about \$1.5M. He has picked out some projects and has started the process of reconciliation. There are significant dollars in “soft costs”. Defining “soft costs” are expenses outside of the actual building such as architect costs, financing, equipment, etc.

Frank D’Angelo (Board of Education) inquired as to the list of approximately 50 items, will they be in the design that goes to the State? N. Berg responded that code items – yes; maintenance items – no; program items – should be.

Dr. Wallace (Superintendent of School) asked for examples of maintenance issues.

R. Marconi suggested that we stick to the budget. The Board of Finance has left the door open for securing additional funding on the capital program portion. Let’s do everything we can do for the \$8.2 million and then identify other areas that need to be done. We need to come up with a way to move the project ahead. What are the “hard items” that need to be done so we can be ready for the State Program Completion Test (PCT)? The State is very firm on some issues. We must satisfy the code requirements in Hartford. This is the process we need to do right now.

Paul Anderson (Master Building Committee) asked if we are sure that the referendum items will enable us to pass the PCT? We need to do an analysis of what SLAM has covered for us in the referendum items.

Dr. Keating (Board of Education) suggests working item by item – what should be in the project and what can be handled effectively in a different manner. We need to come up with a bottom-line proposal. SLAM can move ahead and address this list and then we can sit down and figure out where the additional dollars should come from.

It was agreed that N. Berg represents the Board of Selectmen regarding this issue.

Frank D’Angelo and Dr. Keating suggested creating a special small committee to work on this, bring the result to the Board of Education for approval, get the Education Specification worked up, and then present that to the State. Everything will be costed out before it goes to the State for approval.

Glen Corielli (Board of Education) commented that we all need to work off the same list to start with, same breakdowns and same terminology.

N. Berg indicated that he needs 3 to 4 days of staff work to get the list (document) in shape for review by such a committee. He described the process involved for

resolution of each item and how so many factors impact on the decision as to what is to be done and the cost involved. For example – the flooring issue. Now that no longer going to use carpeting, do we replace the broken, damaged or mismatched tiles? If we take up the floor in certain areas, what about the asbestos issue? Do we do absolutely all room in this fashion? Regarding the bathrooms – partially upgrade or redo everything? There are so many parts to every issue. Reimbursement from the State is 22%. We can pull out maintenance items (such as refinishing doors), and then can look realistically at what is left. We need to put items into categories so we can “get an arm around the project”. We need to agree on the process.

J. Plock expressed agreement to this plan. Where is the list that we start from? Dr. Keating has the list (October 30 list). There are 75 items on the list and need to go item by item and determine the status of each; then develop an Education Spec that will pass the Program Completion Test.

Should the Board of Finance be represented on the committee also? R. Marconi will contact the Chairman of the Board of Finance regarding this.

Mary Miller (Board of Education) indicated that she understands the concept of reducing “soft costs”. She also likes the idea of a small committee with Board of Education representation. A similar group worked on the high school project.

Frank D’Angelo (Board of Education) made two suggestions to help with the process: (1) Prior to the meeting of the committee selected, N. Berg needs to come up with a tight definition of items to be covered in the redo and need to include O&G and SLAM to help refine the estimate; (2) If items are pulled out and designated to be done at a later date, then need definite plan as to when and how these items will be completed. This will aid in concensus-building of what needs to be done and when. Such a process would provide “comfort” to the voters.

Mr. D’Angelo also inquired as to how much time does N. Berg need to provide the input needed to get the committee going? N. Berg suggested that the committee meet the beginning of the following week (December 11/12). N. Berg feels he needs to get his part done before the Christmas holidays.

Mary Pat Devine (Board of Education) indicated the need for clarification on the conceptual design estimate from O&G.

R. Marconi opened the discussion to the public.

Mike Violante, Craigmoor Drive, commented on the possibility of a \$90M budget.

Nancy Fogarty, Hamilton Road, asked questions about the process – Why were the estimates for East Ridge handled differently?

Rob Miller, Acre Lane, - When we get the numbers, will we be going to the Board of Finance with Board of Selectmen support? R. Marconi responded – Yes, Yes!!

Joanne Duncan, Wilton Road East, - expressed her concern about East Ridge being the last project being done. She feels that she voted yes on what she did not get – what voted on is not on the list to be done. HVAC – where does it stand? R. Marconi replied that it is covered by the \$8.2M. She hopes that this new committee will come up with a good education spec, and wants the problems in the building fixed.

Molly McGee, Tanton Hill, - wants the process reviewed. What if we need an additional \$2.5M. R. Marconi responded that the Board of Finance would look carefully at Ridgefield's total capital program and see what else could be pared down and/or eliminated at this time in order to offset the additional expenditures on East Ridge. Dr. Yanity replied that the voters would have the opportunity to vote.

Andy Bodner (Board of Finance) asked if we could go back to other building projects to see if there are any dollars available that can be switched over to the East Ridge project. R. Marconi responded that the Master Building Committee would have to look at that.

John Thompson, Spring Valley Road, - Should the architects not develop a design that meets the budget? Dr. Wallace indicated that we should be sure to have O&G and the architects on board with this whole process. N. Berg indicated that the architects are committed to working with us on design issues.

Tim Sullivan, North St., - asked how did this happen? SLAM should have had the responsibility. We relied on their judgment. The finish on the doors is not part of an education spec. We need to be realistic. Everyone needs to be on board to make it work.

J. Plock is concerned about taking dollars from other projects. If the Board of Education changes the spec to suit the budget, need to keep in mind what is being done.

R. Marconi – did not discuss contingencies in building construction. On big projects, 2% allowed for contingencies becomes a sizeable number. Not setting a return date for a report back to the Board of Selectmen, but aiming for December 19.

- 3) Review of MCCA and Senior Center leases – Board members did a preliminary review of the leases and the changes made in order to be prepared for the town meeting on these leases. Suggestions were made for several additional changes, deletions and additions.

**Dr. Yanity moved and B. Manners seconded a motion to adjourn at 9:30 p.m..  
Motion passed 5-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Janet L. Johnson