

## SPECIAL BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING

APRIL 4, 2001 7:30 PM

### TOWN HALL LOWER LEVEL CONFERENCE ROOM

#### APPROVED

These minutes are intended to be a summary of the meeting and not a verbatim recording. A transcript of the meeting is available on request for a fee.

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

#### AGENDA

Consideration and possible action regarding the acquisition of all or a portion of the so-called "Bennetts Pond Property," the means of financing such acquisition, the referral of such acquisition to the Planning and Zoning Commission for a report pursuant to Section 8-24 of the Connecticut General Statutes, the setting of dates for public hearings, a town meeting and referendum with respect to the acquisition and its financing, and related matters.

Discussion of Central Dispatch

Executive Session: Fire Department personnel discussion

Ms. Manners read her proposed resolution [[amended from the original proposed resolution, (see 3-28-01 meeting minutes)]] including a public hearing notice tentatively set for April 11, 2001. The resolution read as follows:

#### Resolution

##### Acquisition of Bennetts Pond Property

**Whereas**, the town of Ridgefield has not yet met its goals for acquiring open space as provided in the 1999 Town Plan of Conservation and Development; and

**Whereas**, the 613+/- acre parcel lying in the Town of Ridgefield further known as the Bennetts Pond property is designated for such purpose in said Plan; and

**Whereas**, most of this parcel is designated as "Conservation Land" or "Preservation Land" in the State of Connecticut Conservation and Development Policies Plan 1998-2003; and

**Whereas**, numerous studies have shown the Bennetts Pond property to have important floral, faunal, watershed and recreational values; and

**Whereas**, the most recent U.S. census shows that the population of the town of Ridgefield has grown 13% in the past ten years and that the proportional number of children has also increased significantly; and

**Whereas**, it is anticipated that Ridgefields increasing population will require the construction of additional municipal facilities in years to come; and

**Whereas**, the State of Connecticut has expressed an interest in assisting in acquisition of some or all of the property which lies adjacent to the existing Wooster Mountain State Park; and

**Whereas**, The Town of Ridgefield has secured an appraisal of the Bennetts Pond property, which appraisal sets the value of the approximately 613+/- acre property at \$10,600,000; and

**Whereas**, for the above stated reasons the Board of Selectmen of the Town of Ridgefield has determined that it is in the long term best interests of the Town to acquire the 613+/- acres known as The Bennetts Pond Property,

**Now Therefore**, it is resolved that the Board of Selectmen of the Town of Ridgefield hereby recommends to the Board of Finance and to the voters of the Town of Ridgefield, the acquisition for the negotiated purchase through the exercise of the Towns powers of eminent domain of said 613 +/- acres of land known as the Bennetts Pond property currently owned by Eureka, V, LLC,

**And Further Resolved**, that the acquisition of said 613 +/- acres be referred to the next scheduled Planning and Zoning Commission meeting for a referral to acquire the property known as the Bennetts Pond parcel existing of 613 +/- acres by purchase, eminent domain or otherwise for municipal purposes.

**Further Resolved,** that a public hearing of the Board of Selectmen be held on Wednesday, April 11, 2001 at 7:30 P.M. at the East Ridge Middle School, in accordance with Section 3-9 of the Town Charter on Proposed Land Acquisitions and that notice of such public hearings is substantially posted before these meetings.

Ms. Manners began the discussion of her proposed resolution by reiterating her comments previously made on the April 4<sup>th</sup> meeting. She stated that due to the plan negotiated between Mr. Marconi and Eureka, V, LLC was "too dense" and was contingent upon Planning and Zoning approval of Eureka's application, she felt it was in the best interests of the Town to obtain the entire parcel for Town use.

Mr. Zemo stated that this matter has been discussed for a long time and now the voters need to decide via referendum.

Mr. Marconi stated that public comment needs to be heard and understood and then the Board of Selectmen should then make a decision based on public input.

Dr. Yanity stated that he is in favor of the resolution and that the time has come to make a decision on this matter.

Mr. Heyman stated that he is against the resolution for several reasons. He stated that he finds eminent domain disturbing in that there is an open ended price which can be jeopardize the Town financially. He stated that careful scrutiny must be made in looking at what the financial impact really would be on the Town. Mr. Heyman felt that Mr. Marconis compromised plan with Eureka, V, LLC gave Ridgefield the north parcel, which consists of 80% of the land. He stated that giving up 20% of the land would yield revenues of approximately \$2.5 million. If the Town purchased the entire parcel of 613 +/- by eminent domain, Mr. Heyman stated, "in real terms, the mill rate would increase approximately 8% and since there is already a 9% increase, he does not believe that an additional 8% increase is fair to the voters.

Ms. Manners responded to Mr. Heymans remarks by stating that if Planning and Zoning approves Eureka's application, it will require a zone change and she believes the whole process is placing too much pressure on Planning and Zoning. She reiterated that the voters need to decide whether or not they want the mill rate to increase, it is not up to the Board of Selectmen alone to decide. She also stated that the building previously occupied by Union Carbide is vacant which could be a potential revenue generator for the Town. She also stated that she is not confident about the revenue possibilities and she believes that developing this land for revenue will cost more in services. She would like to see the Town in control of the entire parcel to do what it sees fit.

Mr. Marconi asked Ms. Manners to revise her proposed resolution in a more abbreviated form so that it may be presented to the Planning and Zoning Commission as an 8-24 referral request.

Ms. Manners revised the request as it reads as follows:

To request an 8-24 referral to the Planning and Zoning Commission for consideration at its next scheduled meeting, the acquisition of the property known as the Bennetts Pond parcel of 613 +/- acres, by purchase, eminent domain or otherwise for municipal purposes.

**Ms. Manners made a motion to 1) approve her amended and revised resolution as an 8-24 referral to Planning and Zoning and 2) to approve the date set for a public hearing for Wednesday, April 11, 2001 at 7:30 PM in the auditorium of East Ridge Middle School,**

**seconded by Mr. Zemo. By a vote of 4-1, with Mr. Heyman against, the motion passed.**

Chief Ligi, Major Roche, Fire Chief Yarrish, Richard Brown, Chair, Police Commission and Charlie Knoche, Chair, Police Commission and A.J. DiMattia, Member, Central Dispatching Commission were present to discuss Central Dispatch. Chief Ligi began by stating that by 2004, all emergency medical dispatchers and police officers must be certified telecommunicators. The plan consists of eight (8) certified dispatchers stationed at the Police Department but due to the needs of the Fire Department, there was a discussion about having four (4) of those dispatchers starting at the Fire Department first. Chief Ligi briefly described the salary structure of the two (2) current dispatchers and how much the six (6) additional dispatchers would cost the Town.

Mr. Brown raised the issue that no matter how the Central Dispatch program is implemented, negotiations will have to be made with the Fire Department employees due to their jobs decreasing if all calls are coming into the Police Department, therefore impacting their work.

Mr. DiMattia stated that the Town is in critical condition and there must be at least two (2) dispatchers working at night. He stated that there is more activity at night and that one dispatcher could be dedicated to resources and the other one to other business.

Mr. Heyman stated that he was in favor of the Central Dispatch and would be in favor of Plan A over Plan B. (*Plan A is to have all eight (8) dispatchers located in the Police Department and Plan B is to have four (4) dispatchers located in the Police Department and the other four (4) at the Fire Department*).

Mr. Zemo asked Chief Yarrish if there were advantages to having four (4) dispatchers at the Fire Department. Chief Yarrish stated that having more dispatchers at the Fire Department would definitely be advantageous due to the lack of personnel at the present time. Chief Yarrish also stated that if personnel were increased, the Fire Department would be better equipped to handle EMS walk-ins which are frequent.

Chief Ligi stated that Plan B is workable but Plan A is ideal. He stated that he is looking for direction from the Board of Selectmen on which plan to proceed with if central dispatch is to be implemented.

Therefore, **Mr. Heyman made a motion that Plan A was best suited to accommodate a Central Dispatch system; Ms. Manners seconded for purposes of discussion. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed to discuss both Plan A and Plan B.**

Mr. Zemo stated that based on a tour of the Police Department building, Plan A has merit.

Chief Ligi stated that Plan B would be best as a first step. His feeling was that the personnel must be hired first. Other pertinent statements made were that it was eighteen (18) months construction time for the additions to be made to the Police Department starting from next July.

Mr. Marconi stated that there should be a continuation of the program of hiring more personnel within a year. Mr. Marconi asked the question, "Do we want to look at hiring part-time employees, if the Board of Finance turns down the request for one additional dispatcher. He also stated that he agreed with the report presented in 1999 by The Central Dispatch Committee and was in favor of adding eight (8) additional dispatchers.

Mr. Brown suggested that if part-time employees were hired, they would not have to be union, they could be paid on an hourly rate, working no more than 29 (twenty-nine) hours per week.

Mr. DiMattia expressed his concerns with regard to the execution of the plan.

Mr. Marconi asked that Mr. DiMattia work closely with Chief Ligi and attend the Police Commission meetings. He also stated that everyone involved in the decision-making process in the central dispatch issue should attend the Board of Finance budget meeting together. **Mr. Zemo made a motion to approve the Town of Ridgefield pursuing central dispatch at the Police**

**Department with the hiring of eight (8) dispatchers and approving the building additions in order to accommodate the Police Departments needs for the next twenty (20) years, seconded by Dr. Yanity. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed unanimously.**

**Dr. Yanity made a motion to reconstitute the Central Dispatch Committee, seconded by Mr. Zemo. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed unanimously.** Mr. DiMattia stated that he will speak with the other current members of the committee, George Kain, Anthony Markert and Michael Venus to inquire as to whether they are interested in continuing their status as a member of the committee.

There was a continuation of the discussion of Mr. Browns proposal of hiring part-time dispatchers in addition to the one (1) full-time dispatcher. Mr. Marconi stated that he will present every option discussed this evening to the Board of Finance and will inform the Board whether the date will be April 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> that those who have an interest in this matter and wish to speak at the Board of Finances next meeting.

**Mr. Heyman made a motion to adjourn the meeting and go into Executive Session to discuss Fire Department personnel; seconded by Mr. Zemo. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed unanimously. The Executive Session began at 9:30 PM.**

**Dr. Yanity made a motion to move out of Executive Session and adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Heyman. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 10:30 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,

Jill Lord  
Recording Secretary