

SPECIAL TOWN MEETING/BOARD of SELECTMEN MEETING

SEPTEMBER 1, 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, D. Masters, J. Plock, P. Yanity

AGENDA

7:30 P.M. – Special Town Meeting to act on the following two fiscal transfers:

1. Capital Bond Projects Close-out and fund transfers of \$176,433 to Debt Service Fund; and
2. Capital Non-Bond Projects Close-out and Fund Transfers to Capital Reserve Fund

Immediately following Special Town Meeting – Board of Selectmen Meeting

1. Deer Committee Interviews: Tom Venus, Helene Daly, Penny Hoffman, Rand Arrowitz, Tammy Conley, Patricia Hutchings Carlson, Lee Pepin, Kelly Davis, Matthew Denesuk
2. Deer Committee Appointments
3. Interviews for Golf Committee Vacancy: Tony Pisano, Ed Tyrrell
4. WPCA Appointment(Amy Siebert, Joe Rabideau)
5. VNA/Alliance Space Utilization
6. Vehicle Use Policy Appeals
7. First Selectman's Report

R. Marconi called the Special Town Meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. Minutes of Special Town Meeting are under separate cover. Following the adjournment of the Special Town Meeting at 7:45. R. Marconi called the Board of Selectmen Meeting to order at 7:45 p.m.

1. Deer Committee Interviews: Tom Venus, Helene Daly, Penny Hoffman, Tim Bunt, Rand Arrowitz, Tammy Conley, Patricia Hutchings Carlson, Lee Pepin, Kelly Davis, Matthew Denesuk

Tom Venus – Mr. Venus came forward and told about himself and his interest in serving on the Deer Committee. He is a life-time resident of Ridgefield. Following a career at IBM, the New York Stock Exchange, and Manufacturers Hanover Trust, Mr. Venus is now a landscape designer. He expressed concern for the deer in their overabundance as their habitat has disappeared. Deer and traffic are a problem. Mr. Venus feels that his business skills of planning and execution can be put to use with regard to the deer problem. He is currently on the Tree Committee and now that he is working locally, is available for meetings whenever. Mr. Venus used to hunt but hasn't done so in 20 years.

Helene Daly – As a public health nurse, Ms. Daly has retired from her position with the Norwalk Health Department. She currently serves as the Health Department’s Grants Manager. Ms. Daly has been a Ridgefield resident for 25 years. Children can no longer play in the woods. She has no qualms about the use of hunting to reduce the deer population. Ms. Daly expressed the need to establish how many deer can safely exist in the Ridgefield area. Other towns have conducted such studies, and Ridgefield can learn from other communities. This needed to be solved with a community-wide solution.

Penny Hoffman – Ms. Hoffman is currently President & CEO of the Ridgefield Chamber of Commerce. She has worked here for 6 ½ years, and moved to Ridgefield two months ago. Her property is adjacent to Silver Spring Country Club and designated open space. She is anxious to listen and learn and make a judgment based on the decision of the committee.

Rand Arrowitz – Not present

Tammy Conley – Not present; said she had a conflict

Patricia Hutchings Carlson – Ms. Carlson is an accountant and has lived in Ridgefield for 30 years. She feels she is proficient in the management of time and funds. Contraception interests her as a solution. She would like to be part of the solution. She has a salt lick and many deer in her yard.

Lee Pepin – Mr. Pepin has his own landscape business. He is a trained landscape designer and is a certified Connecticut landscaper. To him, the deer are a health hazard, as many of his workers have had Lyme Disease. Mr. Pepin is not a hunter.

Kelly Davis – Not present

Matthew Denesuk – R. Marconi read the recently received e-mail from Mr. Denesuk expressing his interest in serving on the Deer Committee. Mr. Denesuk had been a professor in the materials sciences and engineering, specializing in epidemiology analysis. He moved to Ridgefield about a year ago. He currently works for IBM. His approach would be to gather fact-based information and then propose a solution. His background is in research. Mr. Denesuk has never hunted.

Tim Bunt, Silver Spring Road – Mr. Bunt spoke as a property owner. His property is adjacent to Silver Spring Country Club. He has lived in Ridgefield for four years, and is most concerned about the prevalence of Lyme Disease. He feels a solution needs to be reached sooner rather than later.

2. Deer Committee Appointments: Mr. Marconi read the proposed make-up of the Deer Committee as written in the May 19, 2004 approved minutes:

“Tom Belote and Pat Sesto came forward to discuss the charge and make-up of the proposed Deer Committee. The Selectmen felt that the charge was well-written. In answer to questions, Ms. Sesto explained that in her experience on other deer committees, the more diverse the opinion the better the end product is. This first committee is a planning entity—not an action group.”

“After much discussion, the Selectmen agreed upon the following committee make-up: Eight positions would include representation by legal, Police, Conservation Commission, Lyme Disease Task Force, First Selectman, animal rights, a physician, gardener/naturalist, and land trust. After advertising and interviewing, the remaining seven positions would be filled by persons at large in the community.

Previously appointed Committee members include: Tom Belote, Pat Sesto, and Douglas Barile (Lyme Disease Task Force Representative). Mrs. O’Regan cannot be a member of the Committee as she is not a US citizen, but she is welcome to participate, but just cannot cast a vote. Police membership should include Major Roche as an ex-officio member, as will be R. Marconi as First Selectman.

B. Manners moved and J. Plock seconded a motion to amend the original charge for the Committee membership to not exceed 19 members, and to appoint as additional Committee Members to the Ridgefield Deer Committee the following applicants: Jack Sanders, tom Castellani, Peter Lyman Keeler, Gwen Thaxter, Andy Bodner, Donald Damoth, Guy Bocchino, John Borger, Raymond Sementini, Sid Kelley (representing the Land Conservancy), Tom Venus, Lee Pepin, Penny Hoffman, Helene Daly, Patricia Hutchings, Matthew Denesuk. Motion passed 5-0.

B. Manners expressed her appreciation and delight that so many residents have come forward to serve on the Deer Committee.

3. Interviews for Golf Committee Vacancy: Tony Pisano, Ed Tyrrell – Mr. Pisano was unable to be present. Mr. Tyrrell suggested that the interviews be placed on the agenda for the September 22, 2004 BOS Meeting.
4. WPCA Appointment: Amy Siebert, Joe Rabideau

Amy Siebert – Ms. Siebert came forward to review her background and express her interest in serving on the Water Pollution Control Authority. Ms. Seibert has an undergraduate degree in environmental technology from Cornell and a dual Masters in environmental engineering and public affairs. She previously was a consultant in the field and is currently Sewer Superintendent for the Town of

Greenwich. Ms. Siebert moved to Ridgefield in 1998. She is most familiar with environmental rules and regulations, the DEP, and the oversight of contracts. B. Manners commented on Ms. Siebert's impressive background and how few women are in this field. Mr. Marconi reviewed the FOG program (fats, oils and greases) and their disposal. He inquired as to Ms. Siebert's views on FOG and whether state or local control is more desirable. She commented that Greenwich has problems in this area as well.

Joe Rabideau – has a long history of service to Ridgefield. He has an engineering and management degree. His stint in the Navy and specifically a submarine project brought him to Connecticut. He worked for CL&P and then had a 29-year career with Perkin-Elmer in plant operations and maintenance. This included the oversight of three private sewage treatment plants, and waste water systems that were used for different processes in Perkin-Elmer's plants. Mr. Rabideau moved to Ridgefield in 1968. He has participated in Ridgefield's energy study and served for 22 years on the Municipal Building Committee. He has also been a member of the East Ridge Middle School Building Committee. Mr. Rabideau is recently retired and now has the time to again participate in town activities. J. Plock commented on how the Municipal Building Committee will be reinstated. It would be wonderful to have Mr. Rabideau again contribute to that Committee. He could be so helpful with the oversight of school maintenance issues.

All the Selectmen are very excited about two such qualified candidates. **B. Manners moved and J. Plock seconded a motion to appoint Amy Siebert to fill the vacancy on the Water Pollution Control Authority. Motion passed 5-0.**

5. VNA/Alliance Space Utilization – R. Marconi read the August 26, 2004 letter received from Kenneth Freeston, Superintendent of Schools, indicating that the School Administration Offices do not have any space available at this time in response to Mr. Marconi's letter requesting such if possible. D. Masters and R. Marconi met with Dr. Freeston and toured the School Administration Offices to see if realignment of existing space was feasible. Their space is poorly designed, but nothing can be done at the present time. With the increased number of students, increased storage for testing materials will be needed as well. While the entire school office building may need to be looked at, there is no available space currently. The Ridgefield Symphony needs to hear immediately as to their possible use of the Alliance space.

D. Masters feels that "less desirable rental space" should be located and then given to the various arts organizations free of charge. She is of the opinion that if the Alliance space is split up, then the remaining space is not as marketable.

R. Marconi pointed out that one problem of the space is the lack of an entrance of its own – access is thru the VNA space. This makes the space not very rentable.

Marty Carr, Lawson Lane – inquired as to the feasibility of moving some of the walls within the space to make it more rentable. The response is that this could be done but not easily nor inexpensively.

Dom D’Addario, Tanton Hill Rd. – inquired as to how long the space had been unoccupied. The answer is for four years. Dom thinks it is time to rent the space.

One suggestion from the Playhouse is that they use the space until the Town is able to rent the space at the fair market value. The Playhouse would then move to a different space. The Town would not lose income with such an arrangement. B. Manners commented that if such an arrangement was provided to the Playhouse, the same would have to be offered to the Symphony.

R. Marconi pointed out that the VNA want to redo their lease. The August 3, 2004 letter received from the VNA indicated their desire to have the Town take back some of the VNA space, since their new lease is not yet set.

Barbara Dobbin, Danbury Rd. – inquired that if the Playhouse wanted to rent 412 sq.ft., they could have the space for \$9.12/sq.ft.? That is correct.

B. Manners moved and J. Plock seconded a motion for the Town of Ridgefield to rent to the Ridgefield Symphony Orchestra the VNA/Alliance space they have requested – 962 sq. ft. on the west side of the hallway, at the current VNA rental rate of \$9.12/sq. ft. for a period of five years, and to hold a Town Meeting to approve such on September 22, 2004. Motion passed 4-0-1. D. Masters abstained.

6. Vehicle Use Policy Appeals – The Vehicle Use Policy was voted upon several weeks ago to go into effect September 1, 2004. Several appeal letters have been received stating that those individuals who are on call for emergency response, should not be charged mileage on their Town-owned vehicles. These individuals have not been charged the IRS fringe benefit expense in the past, which would indicate that these vehicles were previously designated as emergency call vehicles. R. Marconi indicated that these individuals are all non-union and are most concerned over the recent 4% increase in health insurance and now the mileage charge on their vehicles. The reason the Vehicle Use Policy was reviewed and changes made was in response to resident requests. This subject has been a struggle for the past three years. The consensus was that the Policy should not go into effect on September 1st. Additional time needs to be available for further review of these appeals and review of the 1998 policy which has surfaced since the previous vote. It was suggested that the Vehicle Use Policy be placed on the agenda for the October 1 BOS Meeting with discussion as to the definition of an emergency employee. In the interim, information will be obtained from other towns on this subject.

J. Plock moved and B. Manners seconded a motion to defer implementation of the Town Vehicle Use Policy until January 1, 2005 for the purpose of further review. Motion passed 5-0.

7. First Selectman's Report –

- Currently working on the policy for use of the Emergency Telephone System; soliciting input from others.
- Auditor's Report has been received – Fund balance at the close of the fiscal year shows a surplus of \$1.3 million. Funds borrowed from the Self-Insurance Fund are to be replaced.
- Currently working on the Preservation Ordinance, demolition process for historical structures. This will be on the BOS agenda at the end of September. Gary Singer and Keith Jones are working on the project. Over 600 homes are on the historical list; this includes properties in both the historic and non-historic districts. This applies only to building permits. The Preservation Committee will attend the next BOS Meeting to answer questions.
- Northeast Utilities is doing an audit of Town lights. Currently being billed for about 40 lights that have been removed. This should result in a 6 year refund of approximately \$43,000.
- Eureka Decision – The Town is to pay an additional \$3 million plus an interest rate of 5%/annum. The Town has 20 days to appeal, which would be September 15. Legal counsel is currently assessing the decision and no decision has been made as to future course of action. The Board of Finance is looking at possible ways to finance this charge – Bond, take out of surplus, or a combination of the two.

J. Plock moved and B. Manners seconded a motion to adjourn the Board of Selectmen Meeting at 10:00 p.m. Motion passed 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Janet L. Johnson