

BOARD OF SELECTEMEN MEETING

DECEMBER 19, 2001

TOWN HALL LOWER LEVEL CONFERENCE ROOM

APPROVED MINUTES

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

Agenda

1. Update on Ten Year Enrollment Projections: Dr. Hyung Chung
2. Project Manager's Report: Nels Berg
3. Discussion of Danbury Airport noise with Ridgebury residents:
Airport Supervisor, Mr. Paul Estafan
4. Finance: Transfer, Ambulance Rates
5. Acceptance of property easement from Michael & Christel Autuori
6. First Selectman's Report
7. Fire Commission approval of vacation time carry-over by Fire Chief.
8. Approval of meeting minutes: November 14, 28, 2001

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

1. Dr. Hyung Chung presented his report entitled, "Ridgefield Public Schools, 10-Year Enrollment Projections, 2002-2011." Dr. Chung did a similar report three years ago. Enrollment projections are the key to building schools and planning education programs. This report reviewed the enrollment growth during the last three years, looked at the accuracy of the previous projections, reviewed the factors which affect public school enrollment and projection assumptions, and updated enrollment projections for the next ten years.

Dr. Chung explained his report. He studied in detail the total numbers and patterns of growth for both the school population as a whole and the different age groups - elementary, middle school and high school. as well as grade-by-grade comparisons. Looking at grades 1-12, actual change in this three-year period was within the historical range. Changes in 2001 in kindergarten were way beyond the historical range. Dr. Chung feels that the smaller than anticipated kindergarten enrollment can be attributed to the growth of independent private/parochial schools (St. Mary's, opened in 1997, and Ridgefield Academy provide full-day kindergarten). By 2003 St. Mary's will offer K-8, adding one additional grade per year. Right now they are at K-5. Enrollment numbers are also very economy-dependent. The economy affects the number of births, the numbers of new-home construction, home turnover numbers and the number of children in private schools. In the past, higher unemployment has a correlation to

fewer births and fewer students paying the cost of private schools. Dr. Chung is not sure whether the economy is going to recover very quickly or not.

In 1999, Ridgefield had 351 births. The average yearly projection is 315-320 births. New home construction starts are up and down - the largest numbers were during the mid-80's; down in 1989; up in 1997 and 1998; and down in 2000 and 2001. In home sale numbers, need to differentiate between single-family homes and multi-family units. A decline in home sales has a direct impact on the immigration of children into the school system. The question is how long will home sales be depressed; the assumption is two years and then back to the long-term average; expecting growth to be very slow for the next 2-3 years and then back to normal numbers. With regard to private school enrollment numbers, data is available only through 2000. The 2001 unemployment rate is up and this may well affect private school numbers. If Ridgefield changes to a full day kindergarten program, then this will affect enrollment numbers. Ridgefield is still growing, but is now fairly built up; growth might not be as fast as has been. Middle and high school numbers can be more accurate as based on school population already enrolled at the elementary level; forecasting only a small increase in the next five years at the high school level and then will flatten out; elementary numbers will get flat; not going to grow as much as previously.

Responses from Board of Selectmen members were as follows:

S. Zemo - Glad invested in the report; looks like we need to "stay the course".

B. Manners - Very comprehensive report; the questions we have are dependent on the economy; if a downtrend continues, we may be overbuilding, but we do not know.

Dr. Yanity asked why Ridgefield projections are usually lower than the state numbers.

J. Plock commented on the need to be attentive to the K-5 level and especially kindergarten numbers and also private school enrollment numbers.

R. Marconi noted the numbers on new housing starts - 75 starts is the number used for planning purposes; can be as many as 90-100 house starts. Absorbing this additional 25% does not have an immediate impact; this impact will be felt 10-12 years out and we will be able to handle it. He asked Dr. Chung if private school impact has been built into his projections and Dr. Chung responded, "Yes"

Mr. Marconi read a letter received from Dr. Wallace stating that having reviewed Dr. Chung's numbers, the current building program is justified. He also read a letter from Linda Bunyan calling for a special meeting of the Board of Education in early January to consider the East Ridge Middle School issue.

S. Zemo moved and P. Yanity seconded a motion to add Item 3A to the meeting's agenda - Update on Bennett's Pond Project. Motion passed 5-0.

2. Project Manager's Report - Nels Berg reviewed the status of all the building projects -

Middle School - 35% complete, holding to budget

Parks & Rec - Confident will meet schedule; swimming pool re-bid and contract has been let.

High School - Final review stage. Project was sent to the School Facilities Unit. Since they cannot complete review within the 60 day level, a Local Review will be performed by Henry Miga of Granby. Will be able to submit project to the State in early January; expect to be on budget; bidding open January 15 and contracts let March 15.

Ridgebury Elementary - Final comments from School Facilities Unit being incorporated; water source has been determined and the flow is adequate; going with Topstone; bidding scheduled for early January; expected to be on budget; contractor interest is extremely high; it appears contractors are anxious to bid work for 2002.

Barlow Mountain - Documents to be submitted on January 8 to the School Facilities Unit; estimate within budget.

East Ridge Middle School - N. Berg presented his East Ridge Middle School Resolution Process and Progress Report, dated December 11, 2001. This is the project he has been working on the most. He has been attempting to define what is part of SLAM's scope and what items can be handled more cost effectively in a different manner--items not requiring architectural design. He has been reviewing all 72 items from the October 23, 2001 list and has not lost track of anything. Anything that has been deleted is because of double counting and more detailed clarification. Definition of cost won't be available until O&G has the design estimate. SLAM should be done the end of February; during March will do the reconciliation; still hope the overage is in the \$1.2-\$2 million range. The Master Building Committee needs to let SLAM proceed on the scope.

J. Plock inquired as to the "item list" - is this the December 5 list? Are all the items on the education spec on this list? Everything on this list has to be included in the project unless the Board of Education agrees to withdraw it.

N. Berg explained further - certain items in the estimate are not necessary for compliance. What the Board of Selectmen is voting on is to give the Master Building Committee the right to have SLAM move ahead on design development. Included in the SLAM scope is \$8.2 million. The Director of the Project Team, SLAM, O&G, and the Master Building Committee need to work together to bring the estimate to as close to \$8.2 million as possible. If the balance is in the neighborhood of \$3 million, then have to try to reduce it to \$1.5 million.

B. Manners inquired as to the percent being paid to SLAM. N. Berg answered - 8% to SLAM and 2% to O&G. If the total cost is reduced, the amount to SLAM and O&G will be reduced also. Items are not being eliminated; just being taken out of SLAM's jurisdiction.

S. Zemo moved and B. Manners seconded a motion to instruct the Master Building Committee to move ahead to the design phase on the East Ridge Middle School Project to secure a more specific estimate of the cost involved.

Frank D'Angelo, Board of Education, spoke up against this motion; feels that the process is being changed; not following the process agreed to on December 5. These 72 items need to be addressed by the Board of Education. The question on December 5 was whether all these 72 items will be in the plan that goes to the State. The answer on December 5 was "No". We must reconcile these items; look at what will be in the budget, and then we will have what we will present to the Master Building Committee at that time. The Board of Education needs to meet with N. Berg and go through this process on all the items before going to the Master Building Committee.

R. Marconi stated that he thinks we are all saying the same thing - only moving ahead with the design phase; everything will be covered; not eliminating any items.

Paul Anderson, Master Building Committee, indicated how this has been the process on all other building projects as well; need to have information on the schematic design development and then can see if need to eliminate items or can add on.

Nancy Fogarty inquired as to site work and mold in the annex; need to get rid of the moisture around the building; the location of the staff work rooms; ventilation/air conditioning issues. There are so many variables. Are we ready for this next step to move to more expensive drawings?

Mary Pat Devine, Board of Education, wants to be sure that SLAM doesn't leave out any of the 72 items. The decision on December 5th was that the sub-committee would include representation from the Board of Education and J. Plock from the Board of Selectmen. R. Marconi inquired as to the purpose of the 12/17/01 meeting. N. Berg replied that it was a "spontaneous meeting", an attempt to get a handle on the process.

Paul Anderson, Master Building Committee, repeated that this back and forth on items is part of the design development process.

Frank D'Angelo, Board of Education, expressed his concern over major cost-over issues - feels this is the real problem.

JoAnn Duncan inquired as to items taken out; how will they be provided for, and what will be the timing.

R. Marconi replied that this is why we need to move forward to the design phase, this will enable us to get a better handle on the numbers, this is a process that has

to take place; we went through these steps with the Parks & Rec project.

Glenn Cordelli, Board of Education, inquired as to the process decided upon on December 5 to form a sub-committee. If we go ahead with design development, what happens to that sub-committee?

S. Zemo amended his motion to include the cost estimate to be based on the items covered in the Education Spec dated September 4, 2001. B. Manners seconded the amended motion. Motion passed 5-0.

3. Discussion of Danbury Airport noise with Ridgebury residents: R. Marconi introduced Paul Estafan, Airport Supervisor. R. Marconi read the petitions submitted regarding Reasonable Noise Abatement and Safety Measures. The concern is over increased use of the airport, safety issues and the recent plane crash, increased use of the runways over housing areas, the multiple take-offs and landings due to flight school training, no restrictions on altitude, and lack of a curfew. Mr. Estafan was asked to clarify these issues.

The airport is open 24 hours/day, the current number of take-offs and landings is 110,000-130,000/year, and the flight schools are very busy. A noise study was done in the 80's. The resulting report was posted and is available in both the Danbury and Ridgefield libraries. A request was made to the FAA for a new noise study but denied as have not exceeded the necessary number of take-offs and landings to prompt such a study.

B. Manners inquired as to the nature of the planes that are taking off and landing. Mr. Estafan replied that the mix has not changed that much - 3 Citation Jets, a Falcon 50 and some turbo-props. The airport was built in 1927.

B. Manners wondered about the curfew option. At night only landing on the E/W runways. N/S cannot be lit as the hill to the south is too high. S. Zemo inquired as to who sets the 24 hour option. How can we address that? Mr. Estafan suggested sending a letter to the Mayor of Danbury asking that the Corporate Council's Office give an opinion. R. Marconi indicated that there are copies of letters going way back on this issue; can we copy anyone at the FAA? Mr. Estafan suggested starting with the Mayor of Danbury, and Mr. Estafan will get for Ridgefield the name of who to address at the FAA in Burlington, MA (the applicable department of the FAA).

Dr. Yanity inquired as to when did the airport get night lighting? 1963

B. Manners inquired as to a way to regulate traffic at the airport. How does one get a take-off and landing time? The pilot calls the Ground Controller, says what he wishes to do and then gets a clearance. The Tower is open from 7 a.m. to 10

p.m. A pilot can land when the tower is closed by turning on the runway lights remotely and then landing.

J. Plock asked if there has been more activity at the airport since September 11. Mr. Estafan replied that the airport was shut down for three days, only authorized aircraft allowed - military, FAA, etc. There may be changes, new FAA requirements - waiting to see what the government is going to do. Now only have to file a flight report in inclement weather, and the plane has to be certified to fly in all kinds of weather. B. Manners inquired as to enforcement. There seems to be a lack of oversight. Mr. Estafan responded that FAA inspection for flights and pilots is headquartered at Bradley Field.

Mike Lorshaw asked if there is a minimum altitude restriction? Runway 26 take-offs affect residents the most. Mr. Estafan responded that instrument approach determines the altitude. The pilot receives ground contact and then proceeds. If they do not see the runway, the control tower will send them back into radar and they go into a holding pattern. More noise from take-offs than landings. There have been studies done on aircraft propellers. The noise is caused by the speed of the propeller blade cutting through the air. What about the traffic count at the airport? Need 150,000 take-offs and landings to do a study. Don't have that, although no count after 10 p.m. and before 7 a.m. There are some charter flight operators and transplant teams that come in and out when the tower is closed.

Ronald Bossio, Pleasant Drive, complimented the draftees of the petition letter. The altitude issue is the main problem. He has lived here since 1983. The windows of his house shake. Encourage letter writing from the Board of Selectmen and also copy to our Congressman.

Peggy Lemnick, former Air Traffic Controller and pilot in New Jersey, commented that uncontrolled air fields are very standard. There are many rules that the pilot must follow; FAA sets the rules; flight plans do not have to be filed. The report will show where the noise monitors were placed? What decibel ratings were used. Why can't we implement a voluntary curfew? Corporations and others do abide by such a ruling. Does Danbury's airport have radar equipment that determines altitude? Mr. Estafan responded that the measurement only goes to 1200 feet because of the equipment.

Julia Vaughn, Fischer Lane, went into her yard and listed the times of plane traffic between 3:05 and 3:36 in the afternoon - 20 flights. How much does it cost to do a noise study? Can we as residents sponsor it ourselves? Mr. Estafan responded that the cost of the one did in the 80's was between \$150,000 to \$170,000. Ms. Vaughn suggests speaking to our Congressman to help us get the FAA to free up the dollars for such a study.

Jeff Shaw, George Washington Highway, lives right at the curve where the planes turn and bank to the left, and expressed concern at the extreme noise level.

R. Marconi assured attendees that there will be follow-up. We will get more information and there will be more meetings.

John Katz, Ridgebury Road, feels that writing the Mayor of Danbury is not going to work. The changes need to come through Mr. Estafan, "He is our man, not the FAA nor the Mayor." Is there an oversight committee. Mr. Estafan responded that there is an Airport Oversight Committee and Mr. Estafan is the Secretary of the Committee.

John Storie, Stoneridge Estates, asked if there is anything the airport can do to enforce altitude? Can you measure altitude, more than just by visual sight. Can you have the airplanes adhere to a propeller standard? Mr. Estafan answered, "No". B. Manners asked how much enforcement can this Airport Committee really do? Can report problems, but is that where it ends? Which is the most used runway? 70-80% use is over Ridgebury.

Debbie Trinker, Stoneridge Estates, feels that things can be done - knot standard, room to use other runways, Board of Selectmen should not delegate to P. Estafan but instead take it out of the airport and have a study done, and address safety issues.

Tom Doherty, Old Mill Rd., has noted recent construction. Is an expansion going on? Mr. Estafan responded that a hanger is going up which will house aircraft and redo of an existing taxiway. We cannot expand the runways, cannot go beyond current boundaries.

David Hewitt wanted to know if Mr. Estafan was willing to consider and/or endorse items covered in the petition letter. Mr. Estafan indicated he will seriously evaluate the letter and needs to consult with the Mayor. The Aviation Committee makes the rules and the Mayor appoints the Committee. R. Marconi indicated that the Town of Ridgefield and the Board of Selectmen will be following up. Mr. Marconi asked if the traffic count is public record? The answer is yes. Robinson Van Buren runs the control tower and they have a contract to do so with the FAA. Mr. Estafan will provide the Board of Selectmen with a copy of that contract. Mr. Hewitt commented on three crashes off the west end of the runway within one year. Were any changes initiated as a result of these crashes? Mr. Estafan responded that the National Transportation Safety Board is the only one who can investigate crashes and he hasn't received the reports back yet.

Bob Keith, Briarwood Drive, asked about pilot responses when Mr. Estafan and/or the Aviation Committee files a report or speaks to them. What can we do proactively? Mr. Estafan indicated that the airport sponsors a Pilot's Seminar once a month. The Control Tower Chief is there also. At these classes, Mr. Estafan brings up safety issues and reminds the pilots to be a "good neighbor".

Most pilots are very receptive. Those that are arrogant, he can forward their names on to the Flight Safety District.

B. Manners inquired as to how the flight schools get leases? The City of Danbury gives them a lease and the leases are for 20 years. The Airport Commission gives them a permit to operate and the flight school pays a fee for the term of the lease.

Mr. Marconi thanked all participants for coming. Additional residents signed the letter/petition.

- 3a. Update on Bennett's Pond Project - David Grogins and Monte Frank reported on the Environmental Phase I Study which has just been received. No serious environmental problem. The study has come back and referenced prior studies done by the Federal Government and the EPA. There were four areas of concern where possible dumping had occurred. LBG, a well-known firm, was hired, brought in a backhoe, and did geo-physical probes to make sure no significant contamination existed--which would be our problem once we assumed ownership of the property. No barrels were found and only low levels of pesticide in these areas. Their recommendation is that we go ahead with the purchase

R. Marconi commented on the need to involve the DEP in the process. They are satisfied that the EPA has studied the property in the past, but still some limited areas of concern - former nursery area where there may be residual pesticides, and a few trash dump issues that need to be cleaned up. Cost involved is probably quite minimal.

B. Manners indicated a desire to move ahead on Bennett's Pond if all set with environmental concerns. S. Zemo inquired as to the timeline for closure? The attorneys indicated that the closing could happen before the end of the year.

4. **S. Zemo moved and J. Plock seconded a motion to move \$50,000 from the General Contingency Fund to the Professional Service Fund to cover costs incurred for the purpose of defending the various pending law suits. Motion passed 5-0.**

P. Yanity moved and J. Plock seconded a motion setting the ambulance rates for 2002 at the state-wide recommended rate. Motion passed 4-1-0 with B. Manners opposed.

5. **B. Manners moved and J. Plock seconded a motion for the Town of Ridgefield to accept the donation of the property from Michael & Christel Autuori. Motion passed 5-0.**

6. First Selectman's Report –
R. Marconi read the following resolution:

“WHEREAS, Federal monies are available under the Connecticut Small Cities Community Development Block Grant Program, administered by the State of Connecticut, Department of Economic and Community Development pursuant to Public Law 93-383, as amended; and,

WHEREAS, pursuant to Chapter 127c, and Part VI of Chapter 130 of the Connecticut General Statutes, the Commissioner of Economic and Community Development is authorized to disburse such Federal monies to local municipalities; and,

WHEREAS, it is desirable and in the public interest that the Town of Ridgefield make application to the State not to exceed \$500,000 in order to undertake a Small Cities Community Development Program and to execute an Assistance Agreement therefore, should be one offered.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN:

1. That it is cognizant of the conditions and prerequisites for State Assistance imposed by Part VI of Chapter 130 of the Connecticut General Statutes; and
2. That the filing of an application by the Town of Ridgefield in an amount not to exceed \$500,000 is hereby approved, and that the First Selectman is hereby authorized and directed to file such application with the Commissioner of the Department of Economic and Community Development, to provide such additional information, to execute such other documents as may be required by the Commissioner, to execute and Assistance Agreement with the State of Connecticut for State financial assistance if such and Agreement is offered, to execute any amendments, recessions, and revisions thereto, to implement project activities, if approved, and to act as the authorized representative of the Town of Ridgefield.

The resolution is for the Town of Ridgefield to file with the State to secure funds for the Meals-on-Wheels remodeling project. Mr. Marconi asked for a vote on formal application. **J. Plock moved and P. Yanity seconded a motion to pass the resolution and that the Town of Ridgefield file with the State of Connecticut the formal application to secure funds for the Meals-on-Wheels remodeling project. Motion passed 5-0.**

Ridgefield is hosting the First Selectman's Luncheon for other First Selectmen from Fairfield County on December 20 at noon at Bernard's. Mr. Marconi invited the other Selectmen to attend if their schedule permits.

7. **S. Zemo moved and J. Plock seconded a motion that Fire Chief Louis J. Yarrish be allowed to carry over five days of unused vacation for the duration of his contract. Motion passed 5-0.**
8. Approval of meeting minutes: November 14, 28, 2001 was tabled until the next meeting due to the lateness of the hour.

B. Manners moved and S. Zemo seconded a motion to close the meeting at 12:15 a.m., December 20, 2001. Motion passed 5-0.