



Town of Ridgefield
Board of Selectmen Special Meeting Minutes & Public Hearing
UNAPPROVED
October 6, 2022 at 7:30pm

Please note – these minutes are not verbatim.

Present: Rudy Marconi, Sean Connelly, Bob Hebert, Barbara Manners, Maureen Kozlark

Public Hearing

- 1. A request to Purchase from the Town of Ridgefield by Pyramid Luxury Holmes an unimproved portion of Spectacle Lane to be used for a private driveway.**

Attorney Robert Jewell went over the details of the request from Joe Mira to purchase a portion of Spectacle Lane to be used as a private driveway. J. Mira would like to swap the larger conservation easement for the smaller easement in order to move the approved bridge from the widest portion of the brook to the thinnest portion. There have been conversations with several departments including Planning & Zoning, the Conservation Commission, the Inland/Wetlands Board, and the Town Attorney to be sure the purchase benefits all parties involved. A portion (9,300 sq ft) of the land that J. Mira is purchasing will be deeded to the Conservation Commission as an easement in perpetuity.

The paper road sale is a conveyance and will need to go to a Town Meeting, however there is some question as to whether the easement portion is also a conveyance or a reformation of an easement which would not require a Town Meeting. R. Jewell will connect with the other attorneys involved to clarify.

Jim Coyle, Conservation Commission Chair, spoke in support of the purchase. He explained that the Conservation Commission is very cautious when it comes to swapping easements and open space, however in this scenario the Commission is getting more land than they are giving up and feel comfortable with the deal.

Debbi Thorton, 108 Spectacle Lane, asked for clarification of which portion of Spectacle is being purchased.

Joe Fossi, 174 St. John's Rd, commented that this deal is a benefit to everyone and the Town should support it.

Manoel Silva, 504 Bennetts Farm Rd, asked if Joe Mira is saving money by moving the bridge.

Kate Throckmorton, a partner at Environmental Solutions in Norwalk and Landscape Architect with a specialty in wetland permitting and development, was brought onto the project to review the permit and was the one who suggested moving the bridge.

R. Marconi read a letter of support from Stephanie Labrusciano, 104 Wilton Road East.

R. Jewell submitted a document for the record providing language that he believes provides the clarification that the easement is not a conveyance.

**2. Declaration of Conservation Easement pertaining to a parcel of land (Lot C08-0034), consisting of 27.34 acres on North Salem Road. Town Clerk Map No. 8642
AND**

3. Declaration of Open Space request for various parcels totaling 1,059 acres to be managed under the jurisdiction of the Ridgefield Conservation Commission.

The easement, which is about 27 acres, is the property located directly behind the Scotts Ridge Middle School. The Town would like to keep ownership of the property in case it is needed in the future for the coverage aspect of the addition of a school related facility or field.

J. Coyle talked about the reason for the declaration that covers both the open space and conservation easement. The goal is to add protection to the town owned parcels that are not currently protected as open space in perpetuity.

Ellen Burns, Great Hill Rd, thanked the Commission for their continued efforts to protect the open space in Ridgefield.

John Noonan, 77 Sunset Lane, also commended the Commission for preserving Ridgefield's open space.

AnnMarie Delfranco, 402 North Salem Rd, asked what activities can occur on open space and if hunting is allowed.

Eric Keller, Conservation Commission member, commented that there is a lot of open space tucked in between homes with no direct access, however this does not mean it is unused space. These areas become wildlife habitats that can be maintained by the Commission. J. Coyle commented that the Deer Committee submits their request for properties to hunt on for the season to the Conservation Commission for approval. The properties also require Board of Selectmen approval. The list of properties can be found online on the Conservation Commission page of the Town Website.

The public hearing was closed at 9:17pm.

BOS Special Meeting

1. Public Comment

Debra Franceschini-Gatje, 72 Spire View Rd, shared her support in appointing Kirk Carr to the ECDC and asked about the voting process for appointments. Ellen Burns, Great Hill Rd, asked for an update on the Main Street Project. R. Marconi read a letter from Charles Robins, who has been working with the Selectman's Office on the project, that provided an update on the timeline for the remainder of the project.

Jonathan Winn, 538 Branchville Rd, shared his support of the ARPA allocation to the Arts Council and commented that the ECDC has requested the Board hold off on appointments to the Commission until after all of the candidates have been interviewed.

Kirk Carr, 62 Prospect Ridge, asked the Board to consider interviewing him at the meeting tonight.

2. Appointment – Maurice Kirk Carr to the ECDC

R. Marconi read the letter from the ECDC with the request for the Board to hold off on appointing a new member because the Commission is expecting two more applicants. Traditionally the ECDC interviews candidates, votes and then submits their recommendations to the Board of Selectmen. The Board decided to move forward with interviewing K. Carr, but will hold off on voting.

K. Carr talked about the importance of having someone on the Commission that holds a different opinion than the current members. There was a discussion about K. Carr's stand on the Cannabis Ordinance and how the ECDC is fair in their member recommendations to the Board of Selectmen.

K. Carr talked about the great job that was done with the cultural district and why realtors should promote the schools in Ridgefield.

K. Carr was asked to give details on his arrest in Clinton regarding stolen petitions.

B. Manners asked why K. Carr continues to report false information about affordable housing when he attends all the Board of Selectmen meetings and gathers the correct information.

3. Workgroup Recommended Allocation of ARPA

R. Marconi read a letter from Arts Council Chair Colleen Cash and ECDC Chair Glori Norwitt referencing an article about the Town of New Canaan's recent allocation of ARPA fund money to their Arts Council. The letter also gave reasons why the Town of Ridgefield should honor the Ridgefield Arts Council's request for funds.

Geoffrey Morris, ECDC member, shared the reasons why the ECDC supports this allocation. Joe Colin, Arts Council member, also showed support of the request.

There was a discussion about the process for deciding on the amount of funds each of the organizations will receive and if outside grants were considered during this process.

R. Marconi gave a brief breakdown of the allocated ARPA funds to date and read the names of 16 people who sent letters of support.

S. Connelly moved to approve the ARPA fund allocation of \$665,539 to the Arts Council for the support of future growth. M. Kozlark second the motion. B. Manners abstained. Motion carries 4-0-1.

4. Scenic Roads Request

There is a request for several private roads to be designated by the Town as Scenic Roads. These roads include: Madeline Rd, Lookout Drive, Rita Road, Water's Edge Way and Lakeview Drive. The Scenic Road Ordinance protects the roads in their current state allowing alterations only for safety reasons. The Town adopts private roads in order to be able to maintain and protect them from major alterations. Currently, the Town takes care of some maintenance of these private roads to keep them safe, however they are not a priority. Adopting the roads under the Scenic Road Ordinance will put them on the schedule for paving and maintenance. A Public Hearing and Town Meeting need to be scheduled for a discussion and vote.

B. Manners moved set a Public Hearing for November 2, 2022 and a Town Meeting for November 16, 2022 for the discussion and vote on the Scenic Roads request. S. Connelly second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

5. Ridgefield Housing Authority Update

The Ridgefield Housing Authority has hired a new management team, Connecticut Housing Partners. Chair Vincent Liscio went over the reasons for the Authorities decision to hire this organization. The Connecticut Housing Partners are local, community based and mission driven, and are able to provide a qualified on site manager as well as two assistant managers in training. In addition, their bid was the lowest, however cost was not the deciding factor. V. Liscio also talked about the new software system that the Authority will be purchasing. The Board asked questions about the contract term and fees. Frank Coyle, Vice Chair, provided an overview of the financial status of the Housing Authority and the differences between the Meadows and LP units. Currently, the Authority is breaking even with the LP units. There was a

discussion about the financial burdens associated with the Meadows and how to address them.

6. New Parking Fine – Suggested Increase

The Parking Authority appeared before the Board to discuss new and increased fees for parking violations. Parking Officer Lou Yarrish talked about the violations he has seen that are causing safety issues for pedestrians. Some of those violations include parking on crosswalks and in no parking zones, and blocking sidewalks by pulling to close to the curb. The harsher fines are designed to deter motorists from these types of illegal parking.

B. Manners moved to approve the new and increased parking fines as presented by the Parking Authority. M. Kozlark second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

7. Approval of Meeting Minutes

M. Kozlark moved to approve the September 21, 2022 Board of Selectmen meeting minutes as amended. S. Connelly second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

8. Selectman’s Report

The Town is working on an agreement with Postal Holdings and the Post Office for the sublease of the unused parking lot behind the Post Office.

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There was a merger between T-Mobile and Sprint causing Sprint to pull the position from the cell phone tower in Town. This means the Town will lose that revenue; however, Dish is in line to take the spot.

There have been discussions about a redesign for the front of Town Hall and if it makes sense to do it during the current construction. Several ideas have been suggested on ways to hang the large American Flag that used to hang on the trees in front of Town Hall. Since the removal of the trees, there has been no way to hang the flag.

A grant was submitted for the bridge work and culverts. Another was submitted for the CT Community Challenge Grant for upgrades to the Venus Building. M. Kozlark suggested looking at the budget to see if there is room to hire a professional grant writer.

There is a contract for the purchase of the old gas station on route 33. A variance was given a few years ago for a country store, however no one wanted to take on the cleanup. Whitney Freeman is moving forward with the purchase and is doing

research on grants to help with the cleanup. The Town will work to help her move forward, but is not going to assume any liability.

B. Manners moved to adjourn the October 6, 2022 Special Board of Selectmen meeting at 10:14 pm. B. Hebert second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.