



Town of Ridgefield
Board of Selectman Meeting Minutes
APPROVED
January 6th, 2021 at 7.30 pm via Zoom

Present: Rudy Marconi (RM), Bob Hebert (BH), Sean Connelly (SC), Maureen Kozlark (MK), Barbara Manners (BM)

1) Addressing the Community

-Rudy Marconi spoke briefly on the events that happened in Washington DC this past week. R. Marconi hopes that both Republicans and Democrats can stay together within the community and promote what is best for Ridgefield, the state, and the federal government—stating that it is vitally important that people come together now more than ever. That people stay united together.

2) Public Comment

-No Public Comment

3) Appoints to the Board of Ethics Committee

-Rudy Marconi introduced the topic of appointing members to the Board of Ethics Committee. The two members that the Board of Selectman are looking to re-appoint are John Zembron and Robert G. Harrington. R. Marconi stated that both of their terms expired on New Year's Eve. The Board of Ethics consists of five members and one alternate serving four-year terms. R. Marconi stated that all of the terms are staggered, so the Board will have to continue re-appointing or replacing other members as their terms ran out in future years. R. Marconi noted that a letter was sent by John Zembron, which stated he is willing to serve another term on the Board of Ethics Committee. R. Marconi also noted that R. Harrington sent a letter to the Board of Selectman, which stated that he is also willing to once again serve on the Board of Ethics Committee.

- Rudy Marconi introduced John Zembron to the Board of Selectman and asked if he had anything to add to what was written in his letter to the Board. John Zembron stated that it be noted he currently serves as a secretary to the Board of Ethics Committee, which was a role, he took over from Robert G. Harrington to spread out the Board of Ethics work. The Board of Ethics has been well run, and that the Board

of Ethics attendance has been high at meetings. J. Zembron noted that the schedule of the Board of Ethics meetings perfunctory and that it serves to schedule other meetings for the future. J. Zembron stated that the special meeting which the Board of Ethics held is where it serves its primary purpose in looking at matters that come to the Board of Ethics attention. J. Zembron noted that people are available and that members are willing to give their time to the Board of Ethics due to its unpredictable meeting schedule at points. J. Zembron stated that all Board of Ethics members would agree with him when saying that every member on the Board of Ethics has been willing to help and done great work.

- Barbara Manners asked John Zembron if there had been any complaints to the Board of Ethics. J. Zembron stated to his best recall that there had been one complaint around every nine or ten months. J. Zembron stated that at points, it is possible that the Board of Ethics does not have a complaint about a more extended time, and then there could be a complaint in a matter of two or four months. B. Manners asked J. Zembron if there are any matters that the Board of Ethics is undertaking now. J. Zembron said no, there are no current matters that it has been nine to ten months since the last matter.
- Maureen Kozlark asked John Zembron if he felt when a matter comes up that the Board of Ethics can investigate the matter thoroughly and properly to get the answers required to make a judgment. J. Zembron stated that he felt as if this was not a problem and that the Board of Ethics could effectively do its job. Suppose there is anything that needs further consideration. The Board of Ethics is always willing to explore it when making a judgment.
- Sean Connelly asked John Zembron about a possible summary of lessons learned by the Board of Ethics to give to other Boards and committees to be more aware of things to look out for in the Ethics department. J. Zembron stated that due to a lack of commonality in the matters.
- Rudy Marconi noted that the Board of Ethics was extensively involved in the Charter Revision. Specifically, in Article 11, which contains the conflict-of-interest clauses. That the chair of the Board of Ethics participated in several meetings to help move things along.

Barbara Manners moved to re-appoint John Zembron and Geoff Harrington to the Board of Ethics Committee. Bob Hebert seconded the motion. (Motion passes 5-0)

4) Appointments (change in status) to the Conservation Commission

-Rudy Marconi introduced the topic of appointing and changing status to members of the Conservation Committee. The Board of Selectman is looking to re-appoint James Coyle to the Conservation Committee. Then also move Dave Cronin from a full member to an alternate member. Then finally, to appoint both Matthew Sharp and Jean Linville as full members to the Conservation Committee to fill the two vacancies of Eric Beckenstein, who resigned from the Conservation Committee, and Dave Cronin, who is being moved to the alternate role.

- Rudy Marconi introduced James Coyle to the Board of Selectman. James Coyle stated that both Matthew Sharp and Jean Linville were assigned as alternates to the Conservation Commission over a year ago and have been at every meeting since. That with the resignation of Eric Beckenstein and Dave Cronin's movement to alternate, the Commission unanimously agreed that moving J. Linville and M. Sharp to full members is the best move.
- Barbara Manners asked James Coyle about how the Conservation Commission, Wetlands, and Planning/Zoning relationship is going. J. Coyle stated that the relationship is very healthy with wetlands and that they coordinate very well with them. J Coyle stated that the relationship between Planning and Zoning is stable. However, the Conservation Commission and Planning/Zoning have not crossed paths as much over time.
- Maureen Kozlark asked James Coyle what the Conservation Committee have been working on recently. J. Coyle stated that the Committee spends a large portion of their time in open space maintenance. Mckee Farm is the premier facility of the Conservation Commission, and that a lot of work has been into it recently, specifically cleaning it up.

The Board of Selectman accepted the resignation of Eric Beckenstein. Then also accepted the movement of Dave Cronin from full Conservation Committee member to alternate Conservation Committee member. Maureen Kozlark moved to appoint Matthew Sharp and Jean Linville to fill the vacancies created and become full members of the Conservation Commission. Bob Hebert seconds the motion. (Motion carries 5-0)

Maureen Kozlark moved to re-appoint Jim Coyle to the Conservation Committee. Motion seconded by Sean Connelly. (Motion carries 5-0)

5) Appoints to the Tree Commission

-Rudy Marconi introduced the topic of re-appointing Thomas McManus and Anthony Tufariello

to the Tree Commission. Rudy Marconi noted that the Board of Selectman appoints three members to the tree committee, and then the Conservation Committee appoints four members. Rudy Marconi stated that both T. McManus and A. Tufariello had sent letters to the Board of Selectman. Both state they are interested in being re-appointed to the Tree Commission.

-Anthony Tufariello introduced himself to the Board of Selectman. A. Tufariello stated that this year was challenging for the Tree Committee. The dormancy was mostly due to an illness and made the Committee dormant through 2020. However, A. Tufariello stated that the committee stills has initiatives in place. The utmost one is the revision of a booklet that illustrates and speaks on the trees of Ridgefield.

-Thomas McManus stated the revised booklet is the main focus currently. That for one reason or other, trees have slowly started to wither away or become destroyed. The goal of the Tree Commission is to highlight the special trees in Ridgefield and protect them.

-Bob Hebert asked the Tree Committee if they were prioritizing the trees that pose the most danger to the public and how many trees the Committee is taking down per year. Thomas McManus stated that the Tree Warden is responsible for taking care of trees that threaten the public. However, another role the Tree Committee has is to make the public aware of possible threats that trees can pose.

- Maureen Kozlark asked the Tree Committee about the Committee's comments being dormant and the reasoning behind it. Thomas McManus stated that the Committee would once again be resuming. That most recently, they will be apart of the refurbishing of Ridgefield's Main Street.

- Rudy Marconi noted that the town allocated an additional \$100,000 to the Ash Tree issue, which was FEMA reimbursement from the Tornado that previously happened. This year out of around \$230,000, around \$70,000 is spent. R. Marconi also stated it takes around \$2000 and \$2500 to take down an Ash Tree.

Bob Hebert moved to appoint Thomas McManus and Anthony Tufariello to the Tree Committee. Sean Connelly seconds the motion. (Motion carries 5-0)

6) Ridgefield Golf Course- Frank Sergiovanni- Golf Carts Lease

Rudy Marconi introduced the Golf Carts Lease topic and introduced Frank - --- Sergiovanni. R. Marconi noted that he has sent out the information that F. Sergiovanni sent out to him. F. Sergiovanni noted that this number of \$85,000 or \$62,000 is a hard number rather than one that can be changed. R. Marconi noted that this commitment needs to be made by F. Sergiovanni before the budget cycle is approved in May. The cart's main upgrade is the GPS Unit and the Control Unit, which allows the Golf Course to control the carts. The GPS is to limit speed or prohibit going in off-limits zones. These restrictions can be changed at any time. If the course was open, the carts could be taken

out at any time—this, along with the touch screen system that gives distances to enhance the customer experience while playing. F. Sergiovanni stated that this is how technology is headed and that other courses in the area are taking on similar technology.

- R. Marconi stated this is being brought to the Board of Selectman as separate topic from the Budget cycle itself because the BOS can not approve the amount and push it off to the next Budget Cycle. The verdict is required because if that budget fails, the funds required are not in place, and the carts have been ordered. A non-appropriation clause would make it so in the event of a no-vote, there would be obligation or liability that the carts were not funded.
- Bob Hebert asked Frank Serigovanni the difference between upgrading the carts or doing nothing and keeping the same carts. F. Sergiovanni stated that it would cost \$62,000 to keep the carts as is. Then to upgrade the cart, it is around \$85,000.
- Sean Connelly asked Frank Sergiovanni about the increased price of \$17 to \$18/cart. Maybe even pushing the price further higher to even \$19. F. Sergiovanni stated that a dollar is appropriate considering everything, but the Golf Course will likely revisit the cart rental price. Due to the increase in cart rounds over the years and the way the sport is trending, they only expect cart rentals to go up.
- Maureen Kozlark asked Rudy Marconi what the budget will likely end up looking like. R. Marconi responded that departments are submitting their numbers. That these numbers will soon be in before the budget meetings take place. However, the non-appropriation clause protects the town in the case of the golf carts.

Bob Hebert moved to let Frank Sergiovanni go forward with the \$85,000 proposed lease contract for the golf carts at the Ridgefield Golf Course. Motion seconded by Sean Connelly. (Motion carries 5-0)

7) Friends of Ridgefield- Ridgefield Restaurant Community Support Fund

- Rudy Marconi introduces the topic of Ridgefield Restaurant Community Support Fund. R. Marconi stated that Bob Hebert requested to have this item on the agenda. Bob Hebert asked that the Board of Selectman approve the Ridgefield Restaurant Community Support Fund be approved as a 501C3 that exists under the Friends of Ridgefield program. B. Hebert stated that Covid has affected the Restaurant industry in Ridgefield and that this crisis might cause some locations to shut down. B. Hebert stated that people move to Ridgefield for not only the schools and culture. These restaurants are a crucial part of Ridgefield. That business lost during over Covid and the Holidays is impacting them on a large scale. B. Hebert stated he went around and spoke to business and that he generally found that business was down around 75 percent what it was pre-covid. A local stimulus plan is much needed right now to help

the struggling restaurant in Ridgefield. The plan would be mostly through donations to the program to help the fund. Those ideas range from mobilizing meals on wheels to help pay for meals for the homeless and needy to creating gift cards for first responders to spend on dinner. That there are even more ideas in place that might be created, like doubling gift certificates. A board of trustees and review board will be put into place to help businesses stay open that this is not a one-time donation but a process to create a plan with these businesses to help them long term. Twenty people have already offered their skills and talents. Also, money has already been donated for this fund. This initiative creates a source of revenue to help struggling businesses.

- Barbara Manners noted that Friends of Ridgefield is in itself a 501C3 and that the organizations under the Friends of Ridgefield use that 501C3 will be applying for one. Bob Hebert stated that the application for a 501C3 would be submitted; however, this is hopefully more of a short term problem.
- Maureen Kozlark asked Bob Hebert how each business or restaurant is going to be selected. B. Hebert responded by saying that this will be kept simple and as many people as possible. However, the reality is that there are limited resources. The first of that being it has to be a Ridgefield Business. The restaurants will request resources, and a Board of Directors will look over that request and a review board.
- Rudy Marconi asked about the other business like the Theater Barn, the playhouse, and similar businesses. Bob Hebert stated that the goal is to help as many businesses as possible and plan with these businesses to help them stay open. That not only financially will this happen but also through marketing and advertisement. The key is to balance donations and commitments to restaurants and businesses to ensure the best process possible.
- Bob Hebert stated that a check for donations was given to the Friends of Ridgefield and that they are waiting to be deposited pending the Board of Selectman's approval.
- Barabara Manner asked Bob Hebert if the size of the organization applying to the program matters. B. Hebert replied to a firm limit on size has been established. The goal, however, to help local businesses, not chains or franchises. The goal is to provide meaningful financial support and other types of support to Ridgefield Businesses.

**Maureen Kozlark moved to allow the Ridgefield Restaurant Community Support Fund to be under Friends of Ridgefield to exist as 501C3. Sean Connelly seconds the motion.
(Motion Carries 5-0)**

8) Pura Investigation

- Rudy Marconi stated the hearing has concluded, and the final briefs are soon due. The current expense is at \$18,500, bringing things to the \$28,000 mark. Barbara Manners stated briefs should be the end of the trial and that the trial's set-aside budget should be alright. Once the briefs are received, they will be circulated to the Board of Selectman

9) Selectman's Report

- The Solar Bids for Solar RFPs are due back January 28th
- Highway plows and Parks/Rec maintenance are due back January 14th
- Governor Street Parking expansion is due back on February 14th
- Venus building renovations are moving along
- ADA ramp has been approved and awarded for front of Rec. Center
- The Town Hall Eagle has been maintained for wood rot
- Super structure for flag
- A grant application has been started for a CMAC grant. This is for electric cars and chargers.
- \$138,000 to centralize dispatch will be reviewed during a budget cycle if it will be implemented

**Barbara Manners moved to adjourn at 9:56 pm. Maureen Kozlark seconds the motion.
(Motion carries 5-0)**