



Town of Ridgefield
Board of Selectman Meeting Minutes
APPROVED
September 2, 2020 at 7.30pm via Zoom

Please note – these minutes are not verbatim.

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

1) Public comment:

There were no public comments.

2) Appointments and Reappointments:

a. Siera Fregosi – Appoint to Prevention Council

Siera graduated from college in May 2020 with Communications as a major. She is a 2016 RHS graduate and she remembers how substance abuse was so prevalent at high school. She is confident she can help reach students and inform them of the work the Prevention Council does. She wants to help parents understand that substance abuse is an issue that is well hidden.

Ms. Kozlark asked if the age at which information about substance abuse is given to students was appropriate. Siera said that teaching a positive image of police officers at an elementary school age would help when the message of drugs and alcohol are added to their knowledge in high school but does not recommend teaching about drugs and related issues until high school.

Ms. Manners asked if giving teenagers more responsibility at a young age would help prevent them getting into drugs and alcohol. Ms. Manners noticed that Siera had CPR on her resume and asked if this training would make teenagers more aware of when this would be needed. Siera agreed.

Mr. Hebert asked what the healthy alternative to drug use would be. Siera said that physical activity was an important factor to increase the dopamine production in the brain and relieve stress in a healthy way.

Mr. Connelly asked how best to get the message to teenagers. Siera said that advertising on the social media platforms that teenagers use would be cheap, and dollars well spent; as well as having multiple speakers talk to the students at school, constantly reminding them of the

message that drugs are dangerous and harmful. Siera discussed the physiological changes occurring in the brain from drug use and the importance for teenagers to look out for each other.

Motion to appoint Siera Fregosi to the Prevention Council.

BM made the motion, BH seconded the motion. Vote: 5-0. Motion carries.

b. Golf Committee:

Ed Tyrell joined the meeting and recommended both candidates.

i. Maurice (Moe) Mancini - Appoint

Mr. Mancini has lived in Ridgefield for 15 years and has played golf in Ridgefield for many years. He has experience in construction. He has also played at other courses in CT, NY, MA and would like to bring positive ideas he has noticed at other courses to Ridgefield Golf Course. Ridgefield is a top 5 public course in Connecticut.

Mr. Connelly asked what Mr. Mancini feels is important to change. He said that updated bathrooms with locker rooms and space to change would improve player experience.

Mr. Hebert asked what needed to be done to take Ridgefield from no 5 to no 1 in the state. Mr. Mancini said the condition of the course is important and he feels that Ridgefield could be improved.

Ms. Manners asked if there was a social structure at the golf course to help people from out of town. Moe said the men's club helps people connect over golf. Mr. Tyrell said that there is a woman's club and a senior's club doing the same thing.

Mr. Marconi asked about the viability of the use of single carts to shorten to the time of a round. Mr. Tyrell said that carts brought in a lot of money. Mr. Mancini suggested that using scooters would speed up rounds.

Motion to appoint Maurice Mancini to the Golf Committee

SC made the motion. MK seconded the motion. Vote: 5-0. Motion carries.

ii. Marc N. Colamaria - Appoint

Mr. Colamaria is a financial advisor. He lives near Ridgefield golf course and plays often. He would like to bring in more young players to increase membership and to ensure the longevity of the club.

Mr. Hebert asked what skill set Mr. Colamaria would bring to the committee. Mr. Colamaria said that collaboration and teamwork were strengths he thinks are important.

Ms. Manners asked what Mr. Colamaria thought needed to be improved. Mr. Colamaria said that the experience at Ridgefield was a great positive for the course, but that he would improve the experience for the youth.

Ms. Kozlark asked what other incentives would attract youth to the golf course. Mr. Colamaria said that family golf days and having teens run a golf cleaning service would get teens more involved.

Motion to appoint Marc Colamaria to the Golf Committee

BH made the motion. MK seconded the motion. Vote: 5-0. Motion carries.

c. Gregory McLaughlin – Reappoint to Board of Ethics

Mr. McLaughlin said he is delighted to serve and would be delighted to be reappointed. He has been on the board for 10 years. Ms. Manners asked how many ethics cases he has dealt with. Mr. McLaughlin said that there has been under one (1) a year. Ms. Kozlark asked how long a complaint takes to resolve. Mr. McLaughlin described the process, which should conclude with a report within 60 days. Mr. Connelly asked what lessons were learned from cases over the last few years to proactively be aware of. Mr. McLaughlin said that familiarity with the charter was important to ensure boards adhere to requirements.

Motion to reappoint Gregory McLaughlin to the Board of Ethics.

BM made the motion BH seconded the motion. Vote: 5-0, all in favor. Motion carries.

3. Storm Update – PURA Legal Review

Mr. Marconi reported that he is still waiting on an estimate of cost for the lawsuit from Jason Bauchsbaum, the attorney from Cohen and Wolf who is on the case. Mr. Marconi also noted that the governor had extended the declaration of emergency in Connecticut to Feb 9, 2021. Mr. Marconi recommends that the BOS renew the declaration of emergency in the town to match the state at the next BOS meeting. Regarding costs, Mr. Marconi said Ridgefield has an agreement with Newtown and New Fairfield that Ridgefield would be liable for 1/3 of the costs. Ridgefield filed a successful motion to participate. The Attorney General (AG) changed the status of the case to “contested”, which allows for penalties and fines to be assessed. Mr. Marconi said that the case was refiled with the AG and we are now official intervenors in the case, together with Redding and Bridgeport. We have sent another draft to the Attorney General's office for another motion to grant immediate relief, causing Eversource to sit down with all towns now to resolve all issues, instead of waiting until July 2021 after the case is concluded. PURA has ordered Eversource to improve the information their liaisons disseminate, and their reparations efforts. Eversource response needs to be improved. Mr. Marconi said that PURA is adding the emails from residents regarding their experience with Eversource storm response to the docket. So far Ridgefield has received 30 reports, and more are needed.

There is more awareness of PURA's investigation needed and residents' involvement in the form of emails regarding Eversource experience is important. The board agreed that another article would go out to make residents aware.

The board discusses concerns over cost of litigation. They agreed that litigation costs should not exceed estimated costs without prior board approval. The BOS asked to have the agreement among the participating towns codified so all participants understand the parameters of the contracting attorney and the division of costs. Mr. Marconi said that other towns are wanting to join the suit, which would spread the cost over more participants.

4. Tax Collector's Report

The Board of Selectman must vote to approve the Tax Refund amount of \$9,999.95 for this past month.

Motion to approve tax refunds for the month to the value of \$ 9,999.95.

BH made the motion, MK seconded the motion. Vote: 5-0, all in favor. Motion carries.

Jane Behrendsen-Hill reported on the tax deferral program at the FY2020 year end. To date 60% of deferral candidates have already paid. August results look good at \$41.9 million dollars. Conveyancing is strong. Normal conveyancing would be around 30-35 recordings per month, but July was a record month with around 150 real estate recordings and August is high too. The volume of house sales in Ridgefield is at a level not seen since 2005. Conveyance has been round \$75 million, which is double what we normally see.

5. License Agreement - Damima Ridgefield Associates LLC

This item was added to the agenda and sent to the board electronically on Monday August 31. The board asked to have more time to review the agreement before discussing. This item will be postponed and will be on the agenda of the September 16 meeting.

6. Selectman's Report

Isias report and the declaration - the details of this report are scheduled for the September 16 meeting.

A member of the public who requested, via messaged, to speak at the BOS meeting is scheduled for the September 16 meeting.

Cracks in the sidewalk in front of Casagmo were brought to the attention of the BOS via a complaint from them. There is 812 feet of sidewalk there which must be maintained. The town is aware and it is on the schedule. Main Rd W was done as well as the center of town in front of Town hall and down Governor Street. This section in front of Casagmo will be marked as urgent and sent to Jake Muller, Safety and Purchasing Director, to address next.

The Depot Road Bridge project report has been received. The existing bridge over the Norwalk River at Depot Road has been declared unusable for vehicular traffic and the recommendation is to keep it closed.

A new Police Accountability Bill was passed in the State of Connecticut, which require all police officers to wear body cameras. The Police Department investigated systems available and visited Wilton PD to see their system in action. Both body cameras and dash cameras are needed, as well as the software to run the system. This is a 6-figure investment. The Police Commission are looking at getting 3 quotes for consideration. There is a state grant available, but it is only \$500,000 for all towns in the state, after \$1 million of the funds were redirected to federal programs. A 50% rebate on Body Camera systems is available from the state until June 30, 2021. Chief Kreitz would like the system installed sooner rather than later. The question is whether the BOS asks the Board of Finance for a special appropriation of funds to cover this purchase, or to hold off and include the system in the FY2022 capital budget cycle. The difference in timeframe would be 5 months. Further discussion with the Police Commission and the Board of Finance is required.

The Turner Hill project manager wants to start their construction project. Dave Grogins, the town attorney, has sent a letter to them clearly stating that until the Fire Marshall signs off on the project and until they are in compliance with the code, they may not begin work. The issue is that our Town Ordinance states a maximum grade of 12%, but the Turner Hill developers want a 14% grade on the access road. This issue remains unresolved.

There has been vandalism in Ballard Park. Mr. Marconi said he would speak to the Police Chief about it and have it addressed.

Covid Update

- The website www.data.ct.gov has up to date Covid stats for each town. Over the past two weeks Ridgefield has had another 5 cases, and two weeks prior to that there were 6 cases. Most of the new cases are in the younger age groups, between late teen and early twenties. Ridgefield is at 1.02% infection rate. There have been no further Covid deaths recorded in Ridgefield.
- Town Hall has reopened to the public with restrictions. Limited number of people in the building at one time, questions are asked regarding Covid symptoms and exposure and peoples' name and contact number taken for contact tracing.
- The Department of Public Health is offering a \$83,000 grant to begin contact tracing. On Thursday Sept 3, a Contact Tracing meeting will take place to review the program with Health Director Ed Briggs. Mr. Marconi has contacted 4 people so far who expressed the wish to be involved - a Doctor, a registered nurse, and someone who has done the 8-hour Contact Tracing Course through Johns Hopkins University. Any further volunteers can contact the First Selectman's office.

7. Minutes Approval

Motion to approve the minutes of the Special Town Meeting on August 12, 2020.

SC made the motion, BH seconded the motion. Vote: 5-0, motion carries.

Motion to approve the minutes of the Public Hearing and Regular BOS meeting on August 12, 2020 with modifications (Check the spelling of the name Geoffrey/Jeffrey on page 3 and on page 5 - the spelling of routes 7 to be Rt 7)

MK made the motion, BM seconded the motion. Vote: 5-0, motion carries.

Motion to adjourn. MK made the motion, BM seconded the motion. Vote: 5-0, motion carries.

The meeting adjourned at 9:56pm