



Town of Ridgefield
Board of Selectman Meeting Minutes
UNAPPROVED
September 21, 2022 at 6:30pm

Please note – these minutes are not verbatim.

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

R. Marconi thanked Boy Scout Troop 431 for being at the meeting. The Troop was there to learn more about local Government.

R. Marconi asked for Item 8 to be moved up to Item 2A so that Jim Coyle could get home and attend to a personal matter.

S. Connelly moved to change agenda item 8 to agenda item 2A. B. Manners second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

1. Public Comment

Christine More, 63 Scott Ridge Rd, urged the Board of Selectmen to put the Affordable Housing Plan vote on hold and have another Public Hearing.

2. Proclamation Declaring “Constitution Week” presented to the Daughter’s of the American Revolution Cannon Ridge Chapter

R. Marconi read the proclamation. Andrea Beebe accepted the proclamation on behalf of the Daughter’s of the American Revolution Cannon Ridge Chapter, gave a brief history about DAR and thanked R. Marconi for the recognition.

2A. Conservation Commission – Declaration of Open Space and Conservation Easement & Ridgefield Deer Hunt 2022/2023

Conservation Commission Chair, Jim Coyle, and Vice Chair, Jack Kace appeared before the Board to discuss the Open Space Declaration, Conservation Easement and the list of properties for the 2022/2023 deer hunt season.

There are roughly 1,000 acres of land that the Conservation Commission would like to formally deed as protected open space. There is one 27-acre property at the High School that will be a Conservation Easement. The list of properties can be found on file along with the declaration at the Town Clerk’s Office in Town Hall. Both the Open Space Declaration and Easement will go before a Public Hearing and Town Meeting.

M. Kozlark moved to schedule a Public Hearing on October 6, 2022, followed by a Town Meeting on October 19, 2022 to discuss and vote on the Open Space Declaration and Conservation Easement. S. Connelly second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

S. Connelly moved to amend the original motion to change agenda item 8 to agenda item 2A to include agenda items 7 and 9. B. Manners second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

S. Connelly moved to change agenda items 7, 8, 9 to agenda item 2A. B. Manners second them motion. Motion carries 5-0.

The list of properties for the 2022/2023 deer hunt season require approval from the Board of Selectmen. R. Marconi read the letter from Jim Coyle along with the properties scheduled for this year's hunt.

The Board asked several questions including if the goal initially set been reached, is there still a need for the hunts, and have there been any incidents of injury or disruptions reported. Many of the questions should be answered by the Deer Management Implementation Committee.

Stefano Zandri, Chair of the Deer Management Implementation Committee, arrived late to the meeting and was able to answer questions.

B. Manners asked why the property list is jumping from 5 to 7. S. Zandri responded that adding properties, creates more places for the hunters which will help bring the numbers down.

There was a discussion about the location of the properties and if they interfere with the public's use of open space. The properties that have been selected are not high traffic areas for walking, hiking, etc.

The Deer Hunt property list requires approval from the Board every year.

M. Kozlark moved to approve the list of properties for the Deer Hunt 2022-2023 Season. B. Hebert second the motion. B. Manners abstained. Motion carries 4-0-1.

3. Appointments

a. Kathleen Daughters – Historic District Commission

K. Daughters, who is a tour guide at Keeler Tavern, has requested to move from an alternate member on the Historic District Commission to a full-time member. K. Daughters talked about some of the Historic Home projects that she has worked on with the Commission. The Historic District Commission oversees structural projects on Historic Homes in Ridgefield. The Commission does not get involved with changes to the interior of the house or with the landscaping.

S. Connelly moved to appoint Kathleen Daughters as a full member for a 5-year term to the Historic District Commission. B. Manners second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

b. Sean Dowd – ECDC

Sean Dowd is up for reappointment to the ECDC, however he could not be at the meeting. R. Marconi read a letter from Glori Norwitt, Chair of the ECDC, requesting S. Dowd's reappointment. The letter talked about S. Dowd's accomplishments while working on the Commission which included the idea to bring a "Shark Tank" event to Ridgefield.

Christine More asked how to get details on the Shark Tank event.

Debra Franceschini-Gatje, 72 Spire View Rd, commented that Sean Dowd's personal Gmail account was included in the "send questions to" section instead of his ridgefieldct.org town email account.

B. Hebert moved to reappoint Sean Dowd for a 2-year term to the Economic & Community Development Commission. S. Connelly second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

4. Ridgefield Library Agreement

The agreement between the Library and the Town is coming up on its 10-year mark. Many of the terms in the agreement are outdated. The Library Board would like to update the contract to reflect the Library's current operations. R. Marconi read an example of an outdated item.

B. Hebert asked if there will be any financial impact in the revisions. Brenda McKinley, Library Director, replied that they do not anticipate any major financial changes.

There was a discussion about the approval process for the Library Board members that are appointed by the First Selectman.

B. Manners, Brenda McKinley and Library Board Chair Kerry Wells will work on a new draft that will be reviewed by the Board of Selectmen.

5. Demolition Delay Ordinance – Proposed Amendment

Dan O'Brien and Betsy Reed asked if the Demolition Delay Ordinance could be delayed until after the Town Meeting.

6. Native Plant Policy

Kitsy Snow and Barbara Hartman have been working on a Native Plant Policy for the Town of Ridgefield. R. Marconi read through the revisions that have been made since the last review of the document.

S. Connelly asked to clarify the time frame of evolutionary time referenced in the policy.

R. Marconi asked if noninvasive, nonnative plants would be ok to plant to which K.

Snow replied, not on Town property.

The pollinator pathway website and the Conservation Commission both have the list of plants that are native.

Town Attorney Jason Buchsbaum has reviewed the policy.

M. Kozlark moved to accept the Native Plant Policy. S. Connelly second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

The Town Meeting began at 7:30pm and ended at 7:47pm.

5. Demolition Delay Ordinance – Proposed Amendment

The Historic District Commission and the Historical Society have been working on an amendment to the Demolition Ordinance. They reviewed ordinances from surrounding towns and worked with Building Inspector Jason Celestino to come up with a draft to present to the Board of Selectmen.

There were three key points to address which included strengthening the penalty provisions, clarifying the delay process and improving the notification provision. D. O'Brien went over the details of the key points with the Board.

Some of the points that were discussed included adding social media notifications in addition to the one in the newspaper, posting signs on the property, and using the date of publication as the date certain start date to be more transparent.

D. O'Brien talked about what constitutes historic for the purposes of the demolition delay provision. Betsy Reid, from the Historical Society, read a letter from Historical Society members Phil Esser and Melanie Marks urging the Board of Selectmen to approve the language designating that anything built prior to 50 years ago as historic. R. Marconi commented that we should also look at houses that have unique architecture that might be younger than 50 years old.

There are two penalties proposed in the amendment that are in addition to state statute. The additional penalties will need to be reviewed by council to be sure they are allowed without enabling legislation.

The Board reviewed the entire ordinance in more detail and asked questions. There were discussions about which departments should be notified of a delay, if citizens should be allowed to submit objections, and if the violation regarding denial of permits should be restricted to only the subject property or open to all properties.

The Historic District Commission and the Historical Society will work on revisions, which will be reviewed again by the Board of Selectmen and town council.

7. Affordable Housing Plan Discussion

R. Marconi summarized the steps that have been taken so far in regards to revisions of the plan. There have been some requests for another Public Hearing. Several Public Hearings have already been held so the residents of Ridgefield could have a chance to voice their opinions.

R. Marconi read the State Statute which says that if another Public Hearing is held it will need to be scheduled at least 35 days from the day the revised plan is made public.

Town Attorneys Jason Buchsbaum and Pat Sullivan have reviewed the plan and both feel that it meets the requirements of the statute.

B. Hebert shared his concerns that some of the language in the plan could inadvertently commit the Town to something they don't want.

M. Kozlark and B. Manners both commented that there should be another Public Hearing so the public can review the revised plan.

S. Connelly agreed that the plan should be made public, however did not feel there

needs to be another Public Hearing and suggested listening to feedback at a regular Board of Selectmen meeting.

The Board discussed at length the pros and cons of holding another Public Hearing vs allowing for feedback through a different forum.

The Affordable Housing Plan will be made available to the public and questions can be submitted to the Board of Selectmen.

The Board will put the plan on the October 19th meeting agenda for a possible vote.

8. Meeting Minutes

S. Connelly moved to approve the September 7, 2022 Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes as amended. M. Kozlark second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

9. Selectman's Report

There have been 4 recent resignations:

- Karen Ogden – resigned from the Board of Finance
- Pat Sesto - resigned from the Inland/Wetlands Board – effective 9/30
- Bart Van de Weghe – resigned from the Boar of Ethics
- Christa Carone – resigned from the ECDC – In her letter of resignation, C. Carone commented on her frustrations with the lack of resources afforded the ECDC and the lack of support from elected officials.

The Chamber of Commerce is putting out a new website which was announced in a press release. Rich Pozana will be working with Dan O'Brien and the rest of the Chamber to create a Restaurant Association.

The Board discussed Christa Carone's letter of resignation and will look into how to make the ECDC feel better supported.

B. Manners moved to adjourn the Board of Selectmen meeting. S. Connelly second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.