

TOWN of RIDGEFIELD – BOARD of SELECTMEN MEETING
MARCH 9, 2016 – 7:30 P.M.

TOWN HALL/LARGE CONFERENCE ROOM

REVISED/APPROVED MINUTES

These minutes are a general summary of the meeting and are not intended to be a verbatim transcription.

In attendance: R. Marconi, R. Hebert, M. Kozlark, B. Manners, S. Zemo

Also present: K. Redmond, Director of Finance

Agenda

1. Public Comment
2. Girl Scout Day Proclamation
3. Rail Trail Discussion – Pat Sesto
4. Golf Course Concession Agreement
5. Conservation Commission –
Reappointments: Timothy J. Bishop, Alan L. Pilch, Arin C. (Kitsey) Snow
6. Commission for Disabled – Staggered Terms; Reappointments: Christina Calabro, Donald C. Ciota, William Kenyon, Grace Romero, Sharol Signorelli
7. HART 13b Grant Resolution
8. Approval of Tax Refunds
9. Selectman’s Report
10. Approval of Meeting Minutes: 2/17/16

Board of Selectmen Budget Meeting (*immediately following BOS Meeting*)

1. Highway Department Budget
2. General Budget Discussion
3. Possible Capital/Operating Budget Vote
4. Possible Non-Binding Recommendation on Board of Education Budget to Board of Finance

R. Marconi called the Board of Selectmen Meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

1. Public Comment – There were no comments from the public.

B. Manners moved and M. Kozlark seconded a motion to add two items to the evening’s agenda after #2 – Girl Scout Proclamation.

- 1) Interview Bob DeFalco for a vacancy on the Economic Development Commission (EDC)
- 2) Pension Commission Proposed Policy Change – Dave Campbell

Motion passed 5-0.

2. Girl Scout Day Proclamation – R. Marconi read the “Girl Scout Day Proclamation - A Proclamation Celebrating 104 Years of Girl Scouting” and proclaiming March 12, 2016 as Girl Scout Day in the Town of Ridgefield. The Girl Scouts came forward to receive the Proclamation and to have their picture taken with the Board of Selectmen.

3. Interview Bob DeFalco – Economic Development Commission (EDC)

Bob DeFalco came forward to express his interest in serving on the Economic Development Commission (EDC). Arnold Light, Chairman of the EDC, was also present in support of Mr.

DeFalco's candidacy. R. Marconi asked Mr. DeFalco to tell the BOS about himself. He is 71 years old and is now retired from his career in the petro-chemical business and most recently as President & CEO for 16 years of a world-wide manufacturing business with 25 sites around the world. He has lived in Ridgefield since 2003. He is interested in serving on the EDC. As an engineer, he has built plants world-wide and has worked with many different cultures. B. Manners asked Mr. DeFalco if he has attended a meeting of the EDC. Yes, he attended one meeting for the purpose of an interview. He is very interested in sharing in the dynamics of the EDC. Residents and members of the EDC are concerned about the tax situation in Ridgefield. Everyone has different ideas. M. Kozlark asked Mr. DeFalco if he has any vision in mind for the EDC? He responded – not at this point. It is too soon. M. Kozlark stated the EDC is a small group looking for new people to invigorate the Commission.

R. Hebert stated the EDC is a very important commission. He is personally looking forward to getting to know the members. Thank you to Mr. DeFalco for stepping forward. The EDC can benefit from Mr. DeFalco's many years of experience. S. Zemo stated he was on the EDC twenty years ago. It can be frustrating trying to get changes in place. We welcome challenges you can bring to the BOS when you feel it is important to do so. Focus on how we can help businesses that are already here and how can we best support them.

R. Marconi stated there is much going on in Ridgefield right now – parking issues, working with our retail businesses, development of the Branchville area, non-residential economic development. What local help can we offer corporate companies to come here and to stay here?

M. Kozlark moved and B. Manners seconded a motion to appoint Bob DeFalco to fill a vacancy on the Economic Development Commission for a one-year term. Motion passed 5-0.

4. Pension Commission Proposed Policy Change – Dave Campbell

Dave Campbell, Chairman of the Pension Commission, and members of the Pension Commission, Ted Siebert and Chris Christiansen, came forward to explain a proposed alternate set-up for management of Ridgefield's pension funds. The members of the Pension Commission have been doing a great job with Ridgefield's fund management for many years. They are now looking ahead, stated they are all getting older, and are suggesting that full responsibility for the management of the funds be given to Vanguard Funds. Dave Campbell stated he has been the trustee who "crunches all the numbers" and will appreciate being relieved of this responsibility. This new set-up will expand Ridgefield's relationship with Vanguard. Vanguard is known for being very responsible and for not being expensive with their charges. Vanguard is a low-cost producer. Members of the Pension Commission have talked to various firms and banks but they feel Vanguard would be the best. Quarterly meetings would still be held as in the past and the Commission will continue to direct the policy. The target date for making this happen would be July 1, 2016, the start date for Ridgefield's new fiscal year.

R. Hebert inquired as to how Ridgefield's investments did for 2015. D. Campbell replied that Ridgefield's fund is conservative with regard to their risk profile. As the fund becomes more mature, it will become more conservative. They were up +17 percent but with the fall of the market in January, they were probably about -5 to -6 percent. They are now up +1 or +2 percent. Mortality in the U.S. is going down. People who can afford to do so are taking better care of themselves and are living longer and into their 90's.

Ridgefield's current costs with Vanguard are \$110,000/year. With the new proposal with complete management of the Fund and less liability to be incurred by the Pension Commission, the cost would be \$185,500/year. If the Pension Commission were to go with a new outside

manager, the cost could well be \$400,000/year plus the costs incurred for converting the assets to the new firm. It was agreed that the Pension Commission will work with Kevin Redmond, Director of Finance, on the details of possibly making this happen. The Pension Commission wants the Board of Selectmen to consider this proposal and think about what they are suggesting.

5. Rail Trail Discussion – Pat Sesto

Pat Sesto and Town Counsel, David Grogins, came forward to discuss the proposed agreement with Eversource. This is a project that has been ongoing for a couple of years and one that Paul Roche, Director of Parks & Recreation, has been working on. The grant dollars will be used to hire experts to add their expertise to what is needed for development of the trail and standards to be put in place.

S. Zemo commented on the recent public hearings and the legal liability that will be incurred by the Town of Ridgefield with the concept of multi-use of the trail. D. Grogins reported on his discussions with Eversource over the past two years and how most of the discussion with them has been over liability issues. The town of Meriden, CT has a similar trail situation. We have looked at their outcome and how they are not particularly happy with it. What is the Town's liability? Connecticut statute states that if we do not charge a fee for recreational purposes and even if we are the leasee, we are basically protected from liability; not liable in the normal sense. The issue that comes up is when the trail was once a railroad and there were pesticides used to control the weeds along the railroad. This caused contamination of the railroad beds and environmental liability. This problem has been addressed by the Department of Environmental Energy through remediation for the arsenic in the railroad bed. They have buried the railroad bed with 1 ½ feet of dirt and gravel. Liability cannot be accepted for any homeowners along the trail. Contamination of the property that may have escaped from under the membrane of the railroad bed cannot cause liability on the part of the Town. D. Grogins stated the only liability now is in the course of use of the trail. We are exempt from any exposure incurred as walkers on the trail. He recommends that it is OK for the Town of Ridgefield to accept the liability for this use of the trail.

Pat Sesto was asked if she is in agreement with David Grogins. She said "yes". Any improvements to the trail by workers will be covered by contracts and their employee insurance.

M. Kozlark inquired about if we agree to allow bikers on the trail, we want to be sure to not accept liability for the trail before the work on the trail is completed. P. Sesto stated she is totally in agreement with this statement. We do not want to have bikes on the trail until it is OK to do so and the repairs to the trail have been made. The design study needs to be completed and then the Town can go back with Eversource and secure a license for use of the trail. D. Grogins stated the first step is to get this engineering study completed. There will be some workers on the trail. R. Marconi stated we are signing the agreement to get the study started and completed. We are not signing the agreement to permit bikes on the trail at this time. Only walkers are to be on the trail until all the work is done and approved by Eversource.

R. Hebert suggested that signs be put up and indicate – No Bikes". If someone bikes on the trail, we are not liable for trespassing. M. Kozlark stated the trail is "so confined" for usage by bikes. There is rock ledge on both sides of the trail, wetlands, etc. The trail is too narrow in places for use by bikes. P. Sesto stated this trail will provide an East/West route in the 102 corridor. The trail was ten feet wide – a maintenance trail for Eversource. We can seek private donations for the trail. We do not know all the problems that will be encountered until the experts do their study. We do not yet know all the modifications to the trail that will need to be done.

Susan Baker, High Ridge Avenue, representing the Conservation Commission, wrote a letter to the press stating there are endangered species that live in the wetlands and areas bordering the trail. She continues to support what she wrote. It is premature at this point to suggest that bikes will be able to use the trail. B. Manners stated there are environmental concerns about this trail. This trail is not necessary for the connection to the trail between the different towns. M. Kozlark stated cyclists have indicated that they do not plan to use the rail trail. P. Sesto stated this trail is not suitable for mountain bikes. It is good for getting children off the roads. M. Kozlark suggested an age restriction and/or for family use for this trail. P. Sesto indicated that she thinks the study will cost about \$20,000 based on her experience. There is a lot to be done. S. Zemo thanked Ms. Sesto for sharing her expertise.

D. Grogins stated it has taken two years to get this agreement ready for signing with Eversource. Tonight's discussion is an info session. The study will come back, then permits will need to be obtained, and then the engineers will need to oversee the trail blazing. R. Hebert inquired about the wetlands permit – what are they going to require? It may be necessary to hold a public hearing again at that time. The Town may hold public information workshops. Having the public as an active part of the process is very important – perhaps neighborhood meetings, direct mailings.

D. Grogins stated nothing happens until the Town of Ridgefield signs the Eversource agreement. R. Marconi stated how then comes the design stage and the permit process. This whole procedure is a “lengthy process”. Right now there is nothing to show the public. When the rail trail was first suggested, people reacted. The responses were very similar to those in other towns – people felt open to vulnerability – people walking/biking close to their yards and looking into their property. When the trail connects to the Branchville Train Station and to the retail businesses in the center of town, people will appreciate the connectivity. The Board of Selectmen will not approve the license agreement nor will it be signed until the BOS has been assured that all the safety measures have been addressed.

6. Golf Course Concession Agreement

Ed Tyrrell, Chairman of the Golf Committee, reflected on the RFP. He stated he is very comfortable with the wording of the RFP. There is nothing different than what has been heard before.

R. Hebert suggested several wording changes –

- #4, 3rd line down – regarding the BOS review process
- #6, Page 3 the last sentence was already stipulated
- E. Tyrrell stated there are several items that are repeated.
- #11, re kitchen equipment. It is not clear whether the equipment is Town-owned or concessionaire-owned. Put in the wording “installed by the Town”
- Last page – regarding possible closing for private parties. No alcohol and/or beer is allowed to be brought in from the outside – alcohol has to be purchased from within. Only the concession permittee is permitted to sell beer and alcohol.

M. Kozlark moved and R. Hebert seconded a motion to approve as amended the Golf Course Concession Agreement for the 2016 Golf Course Season. Motion passed 5-0.

7. Conservation Commission –

Reappointments: Timothy J. Bishop, Alan L. Pilch, Ann C. (Kitsey) Snow

The Conservation Commission is seeking new members – people who are very interested in the trails. The Ranger Program is one means of recruitment. They have partnered with Eagle Scouts

and also try to advertise for new members. Dr. Oko stressed the need for careful studies of the wetlands and environmental issues. It is not that the Conservation Commission is against the rail trail – they just want careful consideration of all the problems and concerns. They continue to do well with donations of open space.

Dr. Oko expressed his interest in being appointed as an Alternate Member of the Conservation Commission. He stated that in this way he steps down to allow two additional candidates to be appointed to the Conservation Commission without leaving the Commission himself. He wants to be allowed to stay on as there are many pending issues.

M. Kozlark moved and R. Hebert seconded a motion to add consideration of Dr. Ben Oko to be appointed as an Alternate to the Conservation Commission as part of Agenda Item #7 – Reappointments to the Conservation Commission. Motion passed 5-0.

B. Manners moved and M. Kozlark seconded a motion to reappoint Timothy J. Bishop, Alan L. Pilch, and Ann C. (Kitsey) Snow for an additional three-year term on the Conservation Commission and Dr. Ben Oko as an Alternate on the Conservation Commission. Motion passed 5-0.

8. Commission for Disabled – Staggered Terms; Reappointments: Christina Calabro, Donald C. Ciota, William Kenyon, Grace Romero, Sharol Signorelli

Don Ciota, Chairman of the Commission for Disabled, gave a report on what the Commission is doing. He stated it is a great Commission – the members are very interested in their mission to help the Disabled in Ridgefield. They are striving to be of assistance to the Town. They have met with the Superintendent of Schools and consider themselves to serve as an Advisory Board to the BOS. When they met with Dr. Baldwin, they understand that they are in agreement for maintenance issues – the Town of Ridgefield is responsible for the outside of the building and the BOE takes care of the inside of the building. The Department of Education is responsible for the assessments. Jerry Gay is their Safety Meeting Coordinator. The first step is the assessment – inside or outside? Next is the need to prioritize what needs to be done. Who is going to be in charge and how to make sure the project is completed. The Parks & Recreation Department is no longer responsible for upgrades and ADA compliance of the playgrounds.

M. Kozlark moved and B. Manners seconded a motion to reappoint Christina Joan Calabro, Donald C. Ciota, and William Kenyon for an additional staggered two-year term on the Commission for the Disabled. Motion passed 5-0.

9. HART 13b Grant Resolution

A letter was received from Richard A. Schreiner, Director of Service Development of HARTransit, indicating that the DOT has just released the GY 2017 application materials for the elderly and disabled municipal dial-a-ride grant program. This is a state program that has been in place for several years to provide matching funds for municipal dial-a-ride services. Applications are due to WestCOG by March 24.

B. Manners moved and M. Kozlark seconded a motion to approve the Town of Ridgefield's submission of this year's application, HART 13b Grant Resolution, to the State of Connecticut DOT (Department of Transportation) for the elderly and disabled municipal dial-a-ride grant program. Motion passed 5-0.

10. Approval of Tax Refunds

B. Manners moved and M. Kozlark seconded a motion to approve the request submitted in her memo dated March 3, 2016 by Tax Collector, Jane Berendsen-Hill for tax refunds totaling \$5,996.16. Motion passed 5-0.

11. Selectman's Report

- R. Marconi indicated the Town went ahead with the modification of the liability process on credit card numbers, golf accounts, on all records. The cost is \$3700/year - \$1500 for the balance of this year. B. Manners stated we need to look at our insurance policy regarding this issue. R. Marconi responded how Risk Management looks at this and our attorney reviews our policy as well. We have gone ahead and booked this service for next year as well.
- Contract for appraisal and re-valuation - \$15,000. This includes all pictures to be taken. This is the same as last year. Each year we put dollars into this fund. Re-appraisals are done every five years.
- R. Marconi went to Hartford to testify on the bill for tax credit – wants it put back as it was before. Toni Boucher commented on the impact that tax credit has on the local community. Once the funds are taken away from the local community, they are lost forever. Some of these funds are used for building economic development at the local level – they should not be used just to bail out a city. R. Marconi stated that elected officials get to speak first – first are senators and representatives and then people from each district. It is a lengthy process.
- M. Kozlark inquired as to where are we with vendor permits? This topic will be put again on the Agenda for an upcoming BOS meeting.

12. Approval of Meeting Minutes: 2/17/16

M. Kozlark moved and R. Hebert seconded a motion to approve as amended the minutes of the February 17, 2016, Public Hearing & Board of Selectmen Meeting. Motion passed 4-0. B. Manners abstained as she was not present at the February 17 meeting.

Board of Selectmen Budget Meeting (*immediately following BOS Meeting*)

1. Highway Department Budget

Peter Hill, Director of the Highway Department, and Kevin Redmond, Director of Finance, came forward to discuss the budget requests for the Highway Department. P. Hill indicated that he has his “wish list” of the roads that he wants to repave this year. Many roads were severely damaged during the winter of 2014-15. He still has \$700,000 available for this that has not yet been used. This project will be addressed this Spring.

Phase 2 consists of about 4 ½ miles of roads that will be repaved this Spring for a cost of about \$900,000. P. Hill started out with a request for \$2,300,000 which included money for drainage repairs, but is now down to \$1,800,000. He stated we are paving roads which are judged to be 59 or below on the rating scale. We even have some roads which are rated in the 40's.

This has been a mild winter with about \$400,000 in account for plowing which it looks like will not be needed. They have a huge pile of salt in the barn that can be kept until next year. Already on order is a salt delivery scheduled for August 2016 at a cost of \$190,000 and another order scheduled for February 2017 for an additional \$190,000. Dollars have been saved this winter on plowing costs, salt, overtime, and contract labor. We will know on April 1st how this winter has gone. Last year we spent about \$1 million on snow removal.

It costs \$9,000 to rent a screener. We do not need to bid on a screener because we are renting one instead. It costs about \$40,000 to purchase a screener.

We are saving about \$70,000-\$80,000/year because of recycling.

Attempting to set up a meeting with the gas company. We want them to dig a trench. It will then be filled, compacted with three inches of fill, and then milled. Calls have been made to the gas company for the past two weeks.

Federal roads qualify for grants. The Federal list is from FEMA. We want to be sure that we get the grant money that is available for these roads.

Farmingville Road did not hold up well. Need up-to-date copy of the PCI. Every year we have bought the package so we can have the report every year. The software package for this project costs \$50,000. The BOS wants to know the status of all of Ridgefield Town roads and not just the status of those scheduled for repairs and paving that particular year.

M. Kozlark moved and B. Manners seconded a motion to approve \$1,875,000 for Roads/ADA Infrastructure for the 2016-2017 Budget. Motion passed 5-0.

2. General Budget Discussion

Debt Service - R. Marconi indicated how he has met with David Ulmer of the BOF regarding a reduction of debt service with a contribution from Capital Close-Out.

M. Kozlark moved and S. Zemo seconded a motion to approve \$12,060,320 for Debt Service, which includes \$155,406 for contribution from Capital Close-Out, for the 2016-2017 Budget. Motion passed 5-0.

M. Kozlark brought up the subject of the RVNA request for \$50,000. How about if we were to give them one year to “get their feet on the ground” in their new location – see how they are doing. They have a revenue stream coming in with their Home Health Care services. We need to redo the Venus Building to accommodate Chef’s Warehouse. Need to determine their square footage needs and rent charges accordingly. For the RVNA we collected \$114,000 and gave back the abatement of \$42,500. Chef’s Warehouse rental of \$20 per sq. ft. will probably end up fairly comparable to what was collected from RVNA.

\$6,000 for Lake Mamasasco is included in the budget numbers. Based on the shore line footage owned by the Town of Ridgefield, the Town’s portion should be about \$6,000.

M. Kozlark suggested \$25,000 to the Library for their Search Committee. The Barn is trying to catch up on their deficit. The cuts for Community Grants total \$69,407.

R. Marconi stressed the need for the proposed budget to be acceptable to the citizens of Ridgefield. He does not want the budget to be turned down and then sent to the Board of Finance for their input. If the BOF cuts the budget, it does result in cuts to the BOS budget as well.

S. Zemo brought up the subject of the salary of the First Selectman. R. Marconi removed himself from the meeting and left the room. Human Resource Director Laurie Fernandez put together some numbers for the Board to review. R. Marconi supervises four employees who earn more than he does. Some communities such as Darien and Weston have a Town Manager in addition to

a First Selectman. B. Manners stated R. Marconi puts in many, many hours/week. He loves what he does and is happy to be doing so. An increase of approximately twenty percent would be appropriate. M. Kozlark expressed agreement but stated the BOS needs to be careful with the amount of the percent. Ridgefield is still averaging about two foreclosures/month. R. Hebert expressed support for the idea but also expressed concern about a possible 20 to 25 percent increase. What about an agreement which outlines steps of salary increases over a period of time? S. Zemo suggested an increase to a salary of \$145,000, which is more in line with Ridgefield's highest paid employee. M. Kozlark suggested some other part of a compensation package rather than salary. B. Manners stated she liked R. Hebert's suggestion for raises in steps. No one was arguing the merits of this proposal. If the Town needed to advertise for someone to fill Rudy's position, what would the compensation be? Should there be something for longevity? R. Marconi has been First Selectman for the past sixteen years.

S. Zemo moved and B. Manners seconded a motion to approve a salary increase for First Selectman, Rudy Marconi, of \$500 for each year of sixteen (16) years as First Selectman which totals \$8,000 for Fiscal Year 2016-2017. Motion passed 3-0-2. R. Hebert abstained and R. Marconi removed himself from the meeting.

B. Manners moved and M. Kozlark seconded a motion to accept the final number of \$34,743,538 for Town expenditures for the 2016-2017 Budget. Motion passed 5-0.

R. Marconi moved and S. Zemo seconded a motion to adjourn the Board of Selectmen Meeting & BOS Budget Meeting at 11:25 p.m. Motion passed 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,
Janet L. Johnson