

Ridgefield Housing Authority
Ridgefield, CT 06877

RHA Special Meeting Minutes (Approved)
Wednesday, August 30, 2023

In-person meeting at Ballard Green
25 Gilbert Street, Ridgefield, CT 06877

Commissioners Present: Vincent Liscio, Paul Janerico, Jan Hebert, John Burke

Commissioner Not Present: Ed Baird

REM Staff: Wade Rockwood

RHA Residents: Nancy Higgins, Barbara Beaulieu, Susan Proctor, Phyllis Llorca, Cathleen Savery, Marshall Ballou, Jeanne Konecny

Non-Residents: Susie Da Silva, Joe Morits

A motion was made to adjourn the RHA meeting by Ms. Hebert and seconded by Mr. Janerico-all present approved.

Mr. Liscio called to order the in-person meeting of the Ridgefield Housing Authority @ 4:36pm. The purpose of this meeting is to present to the Board and residents of Ballard Green, the proposed building modifications that the Department of Education in Ridgefield would like to have made to the Alternative High School, housed on Ballard Green property.

Ms. Da Silva, Superintendent of Schools, began by explaining the types of students needing this type of non-traditional building environment and the accommodations that are necessary to best support their needs. She also explained future plans for another specialized group of students that could easily be moved into this location when the Alternate High School students are moved to another, larger location.

Mr. Morits then spoke of the building plans given to attendees at this meeting, and how they might enhance the school efficacy while perhaps not impacting the comfort of the BG residents.

Public Session

All Board Members and every resident in attendance was invited to ask any questions they had and each question was answered completely by Ms. Da Silva and Mr. Morits. Ms. Hebert initially rejected plan due to being too close to the “wall” that would be built to enclose the present patio, for our residents, while using the Pavilion. Discussion ensued showing how the wall could be advantageous to Pavilion. No students would visible to the residents, a decorative wall mural might be considered. Extra pedestrian traffic would be eliminated. Mr. Liscio noted that the residents and their comfort was the main focus for any alterations being considered. Contractors would not start working before 8am, heating and cooling equipment would be placed far from the living quarters of the residents. Ms. DaSilva stated more than a few times that the comfort of the Ballard Green residents was primary and if this project was approved, a simple phone call or complaint/concern would be immediately addressed. There was a comfortable flow of information throughout the presentation.

Some comments/questions from residents are listed below:

Phyllis Llorca – Will you look to change the floorplan going forward if these changes are made? No, once this project is completed, allowing the school to add two new privacy classrooms to accommodate meetings with counselors, the new adaptation would suit the 18–22-year-old students with disabilities that is considered the best choice to utilize this location when a new location is identified for the Alternative HS.

Cathleen Savery – How long would it take for the pre-work, permits, bids and construction to take before the project was completed. Probably next summer would be reasonable. Ms. Savery commented that it's about time the students get a nicer place to attend classes.

Nancy Higgins – Ridgefield students very respectful and she credits the teachers. She has traffic and parking concerns. Ms. DaSilva noted that we are obligated to provide transportation for students up to the age of 22. If there are any issues, she will make the students aware and direct them appropriately. Nancy has the feeling that the Ballard Green property is being pushed inward on all sides.

Susan Proctor – Recent construction experiences have made her question “promises”, so she is not happy about this project.

Barbara Beaulieu – Suggest a look be given to other side of building where sheds are located as a potential location for extension. Mention made of a water issue that could present terrible problems during heavy rainfalls. However, that will be pursued. Barbara also asked about the age of the building and whether there might be “age” conditions that might appear causing problems with folks experiencing respiratory issues. Guaranteed that any potential pollution issues will be addressed appropriately.

Marshall Ballou – Understands the additional rooms to work one on one, but why can't you build on other side of the building? Use existing space – terrace; maintain footprint. Would lose parking spaces by using front side of building. Can Ballard Green use space as apartments in the future? No, BG has reached legal capacity.

Joanne Konecny – There will be an impact on treasured trees that Mr. Ballard planted many years ago. What would be done to preserve/replace mature plantings? There is also the feeling of being closed in, and, there are no sidewalks and no room to install sidewalks. Back door is a must as an emergency exit. How many additional students are you expecting – None. The drawing is conceptual. Is there any way you can move the Alternative HS onto the Ridgefield HS campus? Some of our students suffer from school avoidance.

A Motion to adjourn the Meeting was made at 5:43PM.

RHA Minutes Respectfully submitted by Patricia Harney, Recording Secretary.

Next Meeting **September 20**, 2023 at 7PM

Minutes available in Hardcopy at REM Office, Gilbert Street, or outside REM Office at Prospect Ridge, or with this link on Town site:

<https://www.ridgefieldct.org/housing-authority>