



Town of Ridgefield BOF Unapproved Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, January 20, 2026

Draft Final Revised

I. Call to order

Mike Rettger called the Board of Finance meeting to order at 7:00 PM on Tuesday, January 20, 2026 in the Town Hall Large Conference Room. Board Members Mike Rettger, Dave Ulmer, Greg Kabasakalian and Joe Shapiro present. Andrew Okrongly participated by phone at the start, then joined the meeting in person at approximately 7:20 PM.

Others Present: Kevin Redmond, Controller; Rudy Marconi, First Selectperson; Rommie Duckworth, Fire Chief; Anthony Cerulli, Assistant Fire Chief; Jane Berendsen-Hill, Tax Collector; and, via telephone, Dr. Susie Da Silva, Superintendent of Schools; Jill Browne, RPS Director of Finance; and Kathryn Graf, Chair of the BOE Budget, Finance and Operations Committee.

II. Comments from Public

None

III. Approval of Minutes

Motion by Mr. Shapiro, seconded by Mr. Rettger to approve the minutes of the December 16, 2025 meeting. Vote 4-0 in favor. Mr. Ulmer abstained, having not been present for the December 16 meeting.

IV. Election of Officers

Motion by Mr. Shapiro, seconded by Mr. Ulmer to nominate Mr. Rettger as Chair. There were no other nominations. Vote 4-0 in favor of the election of Mr. Rettger. Mr. Kabasakalian abstained.

Motion by Mr. Rettger, seconded by Mr. Okrongly to nominate Mr. Ulmer as Vice Chair. There were no other nominations. Vote 4-0 in favor of the election of Mr. Ulmer. Mr. Kabasakalian abstained.

V. OT Fire Department Budget and Long Range Capital Needs

Mr. Duckworth and Mr. Cerulli discussed the drivers of overtime at the Fire Department over the past two years, which include several unfilled firefighter positions and a civilian dispatch staffing issue. To improve this, hiring and training timelines have been reduced to 3-6 months, lateral transfers have been approved, recruitment and retention efforts have stabilized staffing, so that fire department and civilian dispatch overtime has been mostly eliminated at this point. Moving forward, it is expected that vacancies will continue to decline through 2026 and overtime is expected to normalize. Mr. Duckworth stated that during this period of staffing shortages, public safety was not compromised.

Mr. Marconi stated that he had asked for time on the agenda so he could inform the BOF of anticipated long range capital needs, for its consideration in the planning the coming and future budgets. Major capital projects foreseen include work needed at several schools for roof replacement and other critical maintenance, Conservation Commission proposals for additional open space acquisition, housing affordability and diversity of housing, athletic field improvements and enhancements, recreation site expansions, and communications/radio equipment for the fire and police departments. Mr. Marconi discussed long term and short term priorities and he addressed BOF members' questions.

VI. BOE Financial Report

Dr. Da Silva and Ms. Browne discussed the budget status update report through December 31, 2025** that was provided prior to the meeting. As of that date, the District has expended or obligated 96.7% of their approved \$119.8 million budget, reflecting normal expenditure patterns. Overall budget performance remains stable. Special Education costs increased during December due to professional service expenses. Other major cost centers are generally in line with expectations. The District will receive a minimum of \$1.22 million in Excess Cost Reimbursement from the State, which will partially offset eligible Special Education expenditures, which are currently well in excess of the budget. The budgeted amount for ECR was \$900,000. Areas of focus continue to be medical benefits, athletic revenues, special education costs, and anticipated ECR.

Mr. Rettger, with the concurrence of several BOF members, requested from RPS a letter summarizing how medical benefits expenditures are reported in the budget, as the current model of apparent deficit balances which diminish over the year seems confusing when judging the overall status of the BOE budget. There was also brief discussion about the updated bank account balance summary provided by RPS.

Mr. Rettger noted that when the 2025 fiscal year budget was approved, the BOF conceptually allocated \$400,000 to the BOE budget to make up for the \$400,000 expected ECR shortfall that was due to a reduction in the level of state ECR reimbursement. Accordingly, Mr. Rettger stated that it is his view that if the roughly \$200,000 current expected deficit in special education spending should happen to turn into a surplus, any surplus of up to \$400,000 in that portion of the budget should be returned to the Town as a BOE budget surplus at fiscal year-end rather than

be reallocated to other RPS costs that are in deficit. Ms. Browne noted Mr. Rettger's expressed view. Dr. Da Silva said she needed to refresh her recollection and process Mr. Rettger's request.

VII. Treasurer's Report

The BOF members reviewed the Treasurer's Report as of December 31, 2025**. Mr. Rettger reported that he had spoken with Ms. McGeehin recently to review the report. For the maturity schedule, \$4 million in cash is to be moved out to August and October maturity time frames. Another \$3.2 million in principal, coming due early to mid February, will be invested in maturities 11 to 13 months out.

VIII. Tax Collector's Report

The BOF members reviewed and discussed the Tax Collector's Report through December 31, 2025** that Ms. Berendsen-Hill had provided. Ms. Berendsen-Hill noted that everything looks good and is trending positively. December was light due to timing of some tax payments.

IX. Controller's Report

The BOF members reviewed and discussed the Controller's Report for the period ending December 31, 2025**. Mr. Redmond reviewed the revenues and expenses. The forecast on revenue looks strong. The Rec Center and golf are both showing net positive revenue figures. Conveyance revenue in December was slow due to low sales and volume. Mr. Redmond reported that the current report reflected an estimated increase of \$250,000 in projected investment income, relative to budget.

A special meeting for discussion with the auditors needs to be scheduled, as the auditors were unavailable to attend this meeting. To facilitate arrangements in a timely manner, it was proposed that the meeting be held as a hybrid session via Zoom. Time and date will be determined. Mr. Redmond will get alternative dates from the auditors and report back to Mr. Rettger, who will organize the selection of a meeting date and time.

X. Old Business

Mr. Rettger noted that the video quality of the Zoom broadcast of the December 16, 2025 BOF meeting was satisfactory, however, the audio was very poor. An external microphone is in use for the current BOF meeting. He requested that members review the current recorded version of today's meeting to judge whether this has addressed the problem. He stated that the Zoom link for the current meeting should be shown at the end of the minutes. It was requested that the link for the Zoom recording also be made available through the Meeting Video section of the Town website.

XI. New Business

Mr. Rettger noted that the next Charter Revision process will occur in 2027. He suggested that BOF members find time in the coming months to review the BOF-related sections of the Charter, particularly Article X, to identify sections they think require possible modification. Mr. Rettger will add an agenda item to a future BOF meeting, likely in mid-2026, to have an initial discussion of any suggestions members may have.

XII. Communications & Correspondence

It was noted that BOS and BOF members received a letter from Richard Fasanelli of Gay Road expressing concerns about the rate of increase in the mill rate and offering suggestions for reducing future mill rate increases.

XIII. Review of Calendar

BOF members reviewed/discussed meeting calendar. There is a planned a pension discussion at the March 17, 2026 meeting. Also, it was noted that at the February meeting the BOF needs to decide the order and schedule of budget topics for the budget meetings in late March, in order to convey that schedule to the other participants.

XIV. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 8:45 PM by Mr. Ulmer, seconded by Mr. Okrongly. All in favor.

Next BOF meeting February 17, 2026.

Respectfully Submitted by,
Mia Belanger

** Materials that were distributed to BOF members in advance of the meeting are maintained on file in the Controller's office.