



Town of Ridgefield
Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes Unapproved
November 15, 2023 at 7:30pm
Please note – these minutes are not verbatim

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

Absent: Barbara Manners

1. Public Comments

Mike Blanford (164 Main Street), President of The Great Pond Club Association expressed disapproval of the use of gas-powered boats in the water at Great Pond and expressed concerns about contamination and safety.

James Coyle (Florida Road), Chair of the Conservation Commission expressed disapproval of the use of gas-powered boats in the water at Great Pond. Mr. Coyle expressed concern about contamination and the noise that would result from the use of boats at Great Pond.

Saasha Hogan (63 Benson Road) expressed concerns about the Highland Cell Tower and felt that the visual impact of the tower has been minimized and not taken as seriously as it should be. Mrs. Hogan felt her concerns were dismissed and reiterated her desire for relocation of the Cell Tower.

Carol and Rick Flukes (46 Benson Road) expressed neighborhood concerns about the visual impact of the Cell tower. Mr. and Mrs. Flukes expressed strong desires for consistent communication and information from all parties involved regarding the Cell Tower.

Tammy Connelly (67 Benson Road) expressed concerns about the Cell Tower and inquired about the lease for the Cell tower that the neighborhood was not aware of. Mr. Marconi assured Mrs. Connelly that discussion about the lease was still in the process.

Anna Grapv-Cockerville (523 Ridgebury Road) expressed concerns about the visual impact of the Cell Tower and the effectiveness of certain cell providers throughout Ridgefield.

Kate Loewengart (20 Dalhy Court) expressed concerns about the Cell Tower and urged the Board of Selectmen to advocate for the residents opposed to the Cell Tower.

Joseph Ternullo (66 Grove Street) expressed concern about the Cell Tower on behalf of Ridgefield residents. Mr. Ternullo inquired about communication regarding the Cell Tower and how residents can be more involved and informed. He also expressed similar communication concerns with the proposed public safety facility.

2. Appointments

a. Patricia G. Yaffa – Commission on Aging

Patricia G. Yaffa came before the board to introduce herself and discuss why she felt she was fit to have a position on the Commission on Aging. Mrs. Yaffa shared that she has an extensive history in Ridgefield and thoroughly enjoys being of service to the residents of Ridgefield.

Mrs. Yaffa made the board aware of her prior history in service such as offering help to residents with their mortgages and homes and tending to the needs of local seniors. As stated in the resume Mrs. Yaffa offered the Board, she has experience being a member of Ridgefield Parks and Recreation, being a commissioner on the Youth Commission, a member of the Women's Club, a volunteer at Aldrich Museum, and she participates in the Sisterhood at Temple Shearith Israel. Mrs. Yaffa expressed her desire to give back to her community, especially to the seniors in Ridgefield. Mrs. Yaffa also advocated for better communication and transportation for the seniors in Ridgefield as both of these needs among seniors have not been fulfilled in satisfactory ways.

The board shared their admiration of Mrs. Yaffa and offered their support of Mrs. Yaffa joining the Commission on Aging. The board viewed Mrs. Yaffa, her resume, and her ideas as valuable and agreed to endorse Mrs. Yaffa for the Commission on Aging.

*Maureen Kozlark motioned to approve appointing Mrs. Yaffa to the Commission on Aging; Bob Hebert seconded the motion.
Motion carried 4-0.*

3. Requested Ordinance Review: Chapter 345 of Article II

TriRidgefield founder and directors, Maria, Mike, and Geoffrey, came before the board to discuss their request for a change in the Ordinance. Maria discussed TriRidgefield's priority to keep Triathlon swimmers safe and detailed their safety measures such as having an abundance of life guards, spotters, kayaks, and paddleboards. Maria voiced understanding

for the concerns of other boards such as The Conservation Commission and the Great Pond Association regarding the purity and/or cleanliness of the water. Maria highlighted the importance of this pond as a resource for all residents and expressed openness to come up with solutions for all concerns.

Maureen Kozlark questioned how far research has gone regarding one proposed solution: the use of electric motorboats. Maureen Kozlark also expressed urgent concerns regarding the safety of swimmers and the purity of water.

Mike raised awareness about TriRidgefield's plans to work with the Ridgefield Fire Department in order to receive a grant for the use of electric boats and/or collaborate with Chief Jerry Myers for the use of electric motors on town boats. The board inquired about the cost of electric motors to which Mike replied an estimate of about \$8,000 to \$8,500 for a raft with a motor and the possibilities of their use such as rescue missions during the summer and winter seasons. Jeffrey suggested scenarios in which the electric motors would be extremely valuable. Rudy Marconi expressed support for the use of electric motors on town boats.

Mr. Blandford from the Great Pond Club expressed the need for TriRidgefield and the Board of Selectmen to prioritize and be accountable regarding coming up with alternative solutions and being aware of any and all liabilities.

Bob Hebert questioned the quantity of boats needed to increase safety and alternative safety measures. Mike raised awareness about equipping all lifeguards with floats that have incident markers. Maria discussed rules and regulations for Triathlons and the specifics of water safety such as a requirement of one lifeguard per 50 swimmers. TriRidgefield has an estimated 400 swimmers in total and 12 lifeguards. However, Maria did express and agree with TriRidgefield's need for improvement. Sean Connelly expressed fondness of the Triathlon, his personal experiences with the Triathlon, and the continued need for extra and effective safety.

Maureen Kozlark expressed disapproval regarding changing the Ordinance at the current. The Board discussed using the balance of ARPA funds to purchase two Zodiac rafts with electric motors that could be used by the Fire Department.

Bob Hebert motioned to approve using up to \$23,000 of the remaining ARPA funds to purchase two zodiac boats with electric motors for the town's use. Sean Connelly seconded the motion. Motion carried 4-0.

4. Renewal of Rental Agreement: 729 North Salem Road (Richardson Park)

The Board reviewed the expired lease for 729 North Salem Road. The lease was brought before the board to approve of a renewal. The terms of the lease have remained the same excluding a change in the dates of the new lease and an increase in the Consumer Price index. The Board agreed that another review of the lease and concrete documentation is needed before finalizing the new lease. Rudy Marconi agreed to gather more information and resend the lease before the Board to review.

5. Land Conservancy – Abatement for Parcels;

- a. H14-008 – 2.01 acre at the corner of Florida Road and Florida Hill Road
- b. D05-0008 – 5.05 acre on Neds Mountain Road

Michael Carpenter, President of the Land Conservancy, came before the Board to discuss his position and job as President and the goal of the Land Conservancy. Mr. Carpenter discussed the need for tax abatement for these two parcels of land. Currently, the Land Conservancy of Ridgefield as a 501c3 does not currently pay real estate taxes on the other 104 Ridgefield properties.

*Sean Connelly motioned to approve the abatement of tax for parcels H14-008 and D05-0008. Bob Hebert seconded the motion.
Motion carried 4-0.*

c. Natural Resource Inventory

Jane and Jim, from the Conservation Commission came before the board to discuss the Natural Resource Inventory Project. Jane informed the board of the project's process and progress over the last couple of years. Jane discussed residents who contributed greatly to their project such as Michael Rubio, a group from WestConn, and students from Ridgefield High School. Jane shared insights that came about from the project including a lack of accessible (digital) maps for residents and the need to have a digital platform. Jane shared the goal of creating cycles regarding maintenance and goals and collaborating with different entities.

Jim reiterated the town goal of having 30% of open space. According to Jim, there is currently 450 acres of undeveloped land in Ridgefield and he proposed ways of acquiring the undeveloped land for use. Jim made the Board aware of the urgent need to protect Ridgefield's wildlife by ensuring safe pathways for wildlife to travel and encouraging Ridgefield residents to contribute to this goal. Jim proposed many ideas including

the Board of Selectmen promoting the Tree Warden, Steve Lavatori, to full time in order to ensure the overseeing and protection of habitats throughout Ridgefield. Jim emphasized his belief in a full time Tree Warden being a significant addition to the town of Ridgefield. Jim suggested hiring a forest manager part time for the town for management of vines and invasive species that threaten vegetation throughout Ridgefield. Jim suggested that increasing diligence and participation from residents to manage and control invasive species on their properties would be extremely beneficial. Jim also suggested educating residents on types of invasive species to increase awareness. Lastly, Jim proposed the town of Ridgefield to figure out effective ways to live among the wildlife in Ridgefield. He discussed the increase in bears traveling to Connecticut and the need to be more proactive about how residents live, the level of awareness of residents, and the need to be mindful about garbage and waste disposal.

6. Approval of Meeting Minutes

The minutes for the October 11, 2023 and October 25, 2023 Board of Selectmen meeting minutes will be redone and postponed for approval until the next Board of Selectman meeting on November 29, 2023.

7. Selectman's Report

The Board discussed a previous petition for a town meeting that will be held in December of 2023. The Board discussed the Holiday Trust Fund and expenses and the renewal of a lease for the Ridgefield library. Maureen Kozlark brought up the opening on the WPCA and a candidate who submitted his resume for the opening. Bob Hebert inquired about the Ligis Way monument in town, Rudy Marconi discussed Jake Muller's present actions regarding Ligis Way and other projects. The Board also discussed monuments being placed around Parks and Recreation and a lack of communication about it.

Maureen Kozlark moved to adjourn the Board of Selectmen meeting, Rudy Marconi seconded the motion. Motion carried 4-0. Meeting adjourned at 10:00 PM.