



Town of Ridgefield
Board of Selectpersons Special Meeting Minutes
UNAPPROVED

September 4, 2024 at 7:30pm

Please note – these minutes are not verbatim.

Present: Maureen Kozlark, Barbara Manners, Rudy Marconi, Chris Murray

Absent: Sean Connelly

1. Public Comment

Donna Lamenzo, 66 Grove Street #A6, shared she's a member of the Treetops HOA and has received emails from residents, and wanted to voice their concerns about the traffic flow within the development and about crossing the Old Quarry/Grove Street intersection safely. Rudy Marconi shared Ms. Lamenzo's concerns will be explored, and the Old Quarry/Grove Street intersection will be one of the first looked at as part of the town-wide safety study.

Ray Arvan, 66 Grove Street #B14, voiced his support for the Alternative High School (A-School), but expressed concerns about the proposed location in terms of traffic congestion, public safety, and other available resources at Ridgefield High School (RHS).

Clemencia Seleeby, 66 Grove Street #C16, asked whether A-School students have individual education plans (IEPs). Dr. Susie Da Silva, Superintendent of Ridgefield Public Schools, answered that the proposed Grove Street location will serve two populations, the A-School students, where some have IEPs and some do not, and the 18-22 program, who typically do have IEPs.

Ms. Saleeby asked whether the A-School students could use any underutilized space at RHS to be in the same environment as their peers. Dr. Da Silva shared A-School students cannot be adequately served at RHS, which is at capacity.

Sarah Sullivan, 56 Branchville Road, asked that the dignity of the students be considered, that all students have the same opportunity for growth and community, and that all students feel they're part of Ridgefield. Ms. Sullivan shared the 18-22 program is currently housed in a trailer behind Veteran's Park Elementary School and the A-School at Ballard Green.

Kirk Carr, 62 Prospect Ridge, shared there are 202 school districts in CT, 146 of those have high schools and 67 offer one or more for alternative education programs, and half of those are off campus. Mr. Carr shared the last facility study (2016) indicated existing capacity at RHS, and shared alternative education programs in a different location denies those students a cafeteria, gym, extracurricular activities, etc.

Andrea Beebe, 378 Main Street, shared she worked as a high school-level special education teacher with students in transition to the workforce. Ms. Beebe expressed it's in Ridgefield's best interest to continue to support the 18-22 program, and the Town's responsibility to provide appropriate education for students to be successful in our community.

2. Fire Department Promotion to "Captain," based on Fire Commission Recommendation

Jerry Myers, Fire Chief, and Michael Grasso, Assistant Chief, were in attendance. Topics discussed included:

- Chief Myers shared Lieutenant C. Alward scored second in a comprehensive assessment program, and the person who scored first (Captain Moore) was promoted. The Fire Department has had a recent retirement, and Chief Myers and the Fire Commission recommend Lt. Alward be appointed to fill the vacancy.
- Rudy Marconi shared the BoS interviewed both Captain Moore and Lieutenant Alward.

Barbara Manners motioned to promote Lieutenant C. Alward to Captain based on the Fire Commission's recommendation. Chris Murray seconded. Motion carried 4-0.

3. 66 Grove Street Lease

- **Acceptance of the Board of Education Request for additional square footage**
- **Request an 8-24 referral**
- **Set Public Hearing and Special Town Meeting**

Dr. Susie Da Silva, Superintendent of Ridgefield Public Schools, and Board of Education Members Christine More and Jonathan Paradiso were in attendance. Topics discussed included:

- Rudy Marconi shared the Town further negotiated with the landlord about parking, and has secured 50 parking spots, up from the previous 34 offered. Mr. Marconi shared 11 parking spots are being reserved for potential future tenants.
- Chris Murray asked about the gross rent figure. Mr. Marconi shared that figure would decrease once the BoS agreed to abate the taxes. Mr. Murray inquired about the cost of snow removal being removed from the commons fees, if the Town does the plowing. Mr. Marconi confirmed it had been brought out of the commons fees at a rate of \$0.40/sq ft.
- Mr. Marconi shared the property received a clean environmental report.

Barbara Manners motioned to set a Public Hearing about the 66 Grove Street Lease for Thursday, September 12, 2024, at 5:00pm. Chris Murray seconded. Motion carried 4-0.

Barbara Manners motioned to set a Special Town Meeting about the 66 Grove Street Lease for Wednesday, September 25, 2024 at 7:30pm. Maureen Kozlark seconded. Motion carried 4-0.

Kirk Carr, 62 Prospect Ridge, asked whether they'd receive the 8-24 before the Town Meeting. Mr. Marconi confirmed they would.

Dr. DaSilva expressed there have been some misunderstandings about the A-School and 18-22 program and welcomed the public to speak with the Board of Education (90 East Ridge Road) about programming. Mr. Marconi shared the A-School has had great success in Ridgefield, with graduates attending colleges and trade schools, and having meaningful careers.

Barbara Manners motioned to request an 8-24 referral from Planning & Zoning for 66 Grove Street. Chris Murray seconded. Motion carried 4-0.

4. Old Branchville School House Lease – Set Public Hearing and Special Town Meeting

Stephen Bartkus, Executive Director of the Ridgefield Historical Society, Tracy Seem, Board of Directors President of the Ridgefield Historical Society, and Officer Raymond Murphy were in attendance. Topics discussed included:

- Ms. Seem shared they have received an anonymous donation to complete most of the restoration. Mr. Marconi shared the Town will not be asked to fund any restoration work.
- Maureen Kozlark asked about utilities, specifically electricity, once the restoration project is complete, and the usage of the space. Mr. Bartkus shared it will be used as meeting and exhibition space on a regular basis, starting with a weekend day and gradually increasing over time as different historical exhibits are developed.
- Mr. Marconi asked about air conditioning. Ms. Seem confirmed yes, a museum-quality climate control system will be installed to preserve the artifacts.
- Chris Murray asked about ongoing costs. Mr. Marconi shared Eversource charges \$44/month for Peter Parley, which has very low energy usage, and no water bill, and Parks & Rec maintains the lawn.
- Ms. Kozlark suggested adding a clause to review the energy usage every two years to assess who is responsible for paying ongoing electricity costs.
- Ms. Kozlark asked about the Town being responsible for replacing glass. Mr. Bartkus shared once the School House is fully restored and a window broke in the future, then the Town would be responsible as the landlord. Mr. Murray asked whether it would require a specialized glass replacement. Ms. Seem confirmed it would be modern, tempered glass that's up to code.

Barbara Manners motioned to set a Public Hearing about the Old Branchville School House Lease for Thursday, September 12, 2024, at 5:00pm and a Special Town Meeting for Wednesday, September 25, 2024, at 7:30pm. Chris Murray seconded. Motion carried 4-0.

5. ECDC – Establish the “Cultural District” as an Advisory Group

Glori Norwitt, ECDC Chair, was in attendance. Topics discussed included:

- Ms. Norwitt shared the Cultural District is currently a subcommittee of the ECDC, which limits members to residents, and there are some folks who have been actively involved, but no longer live or work in Town. Ms. Norwitt would like to invite anyone in the Cultural District who is interested in being involved whether they are a resident or not.

Barbara Manners motioned to recognize the Cultural District as advisors to the many organizations in Town, fulfilling the requirements of the State of Connecticut Cultural District designation. Maureen Kozlark seconded. Motion carried 4-0.

Kirk Carr, 62 Prospect Ridge, asked whether the BoS would appoint folks to the Cultural District. Rudy Marconi said no. Mr. Carr asked whether the Cultural District would be FOIA-able and post agendas, motions, and minutes. Mr. Marconi confirmed the BoS is not appointing anyone to the Cultural District, part of the State requirements is to have a working group, which is this advisory group. Mr. Marconi shared he would speak with Liz Shapiro in the Department of Economic and Community Development and contact the Freedom of Information Commission for an opinion.

6. Acceptance of Ketcham Road Open Space – Set Public Hearing & Special Town Meeting

Rudy Marconi shared a resident wished to donate an additional 1.03 acres of open space to the Town. Mr. Marconi spoke with Conservation Commission Chair Jim Coyle, who is in support of this donation, and property on Ketcham Road connects with existing Open Space.

Mr. Marconi shared Jacob Muller, Director of Public Works & Facilities, is conducting a Phase 1 (environmental contamination) test on the property.

Barbara Manners motioned to set a Public Hearing about the Open Space on Ketcham Road for Thursday, September 12, 2024, at 5:00pm and a Special Town Meeting for Wednesday, September 25, 2024, at 7:30pm. Chris Murray seconded. Motion carried 4-0.

7. 2024-2025 Ridgefield Deer Hunt Properties

Stefano Zandri, Huntmaster, and Paul Payne, Deer Management Implementation Committee Member, were in attendance. Topics discussed included:

- Mr. Zandri shared the properties were approved by the Conservation Commission, and the Golf Course will require separate permission from Mr. Sergiovanni. This is the last year for these properties and will be discussed again next year.
- Rudy Marconi shared the deer hunt has managed the size of the herd and reduced the number of car-deer accidents (Ridgefield used to be at the top of the state for incidents).
- Mr. Zandri shared some portions of the State's Deer Summary Report, specifically that there have been no previous incidents between hunters and adjoining property owners, and last year, the deer hunt took 36 deer, up from 34 the previous year. Mr. Zandri shared the State believes the deer population is stable (~110,000) and healthy.

Maureen Kozlark motioned to approve the 2024-2025 deer hunt properties in Ridgefield, as presented. Chris Murray seconded. Motion carried 3-0-1. Barbara Manners abstained.

8. Senior Tax Credits Discussion

Mr. Marconi shared a list of six residents interested in participating in the Senior Tax Credit Committee. Barbara Manners shared it should be advertised in the press to recruit additional participants. Maureen Kozlark recommended setting up interviews as interested folks apply.

9. Draft an Ordinance – Line of Duty Death Determinations (Public Act 24-16)

Mr. Marconi shared, effective October 1, 2024, if Ridgefield does not pass a local ordinance declaring who makes the determination on a line of duty death, it is up to the respective Police or Fire Department Chief to decide. Barbara Manners asked whether this would apply to other departments. Mr. Marconi confirmed this ordinance would apply to fire, police, and other emergency medical personnel.

Mr. Marconi shared he feels it's a tough call for a single individual to make, and proposed it be determined by the "Human Resources Director, in consultation with the respective Chief."

Barbara Manners motioned to set a Public Hearing and Town Meeting for the purposes of adopting an ordinance for Line of Duty Death Determinations for Thursday, September 12, 2024, at 5:00pm. Chris Murray seconded. Motion carried 4-0.

10. 76 East Ridge – Overlay Zone & Amendment Change: Request 8-24 referral

Rudy Marconi shared the Town needed to ask for an 8-24 referral for 76 East Ridge (Police Department) to be part of the proposed floating overlay zone.

Barbara Manners motioned to request an 8-24 referral from Planning & Zoning for 76 Grove Street. Chris Murray seconded. Motion was then withdrawn.

Mr. Marconi expressed concern about this floating overlay zone creeping throughout town and increasing density. Maureen Kozlark shared she agreed, but the BoS voiced its support at their previous meeting on August 14, 2024.

Colette Kabasakalian, 22 Washington Avenue, asked whether the antenna at the Police Department needs to stay on the building, and whether it would be appropriate for seniors to live under it. Mr. Marconi shared the PD has been there for 70+ years. Ms. Kabasakalian asked whether that space could be used for the new proposed public safety building. Mr. Marconi shared that was explored in 2008/9 and was voted down.

Andrea Beebe, 378 Main Street, shared she was at the Planning & Zoning Meeting when they discussed the proposed overlay zone and someone had expressed concerns about East Ridge and High Ridge becoming high-density housing.

11. Approval of Meeting Minutes

a. August 14, 2024 Special Meeting

Barbara Manners motioned to approve the minutes from the August 14, 2024 Board of Selectpersons Special Meeting. Chris Murray seconded. Motion carried 4-0.

b. August 14, 2024

Barbara Manners motioned to approve the minutes from August 14, 2024 Board of Selectpersons Meeting. Chris Murray seconded. Motion carried 4-0.

12. Selectperson's Report

Rudy Marconi shared the September 11 Memorial will be at Parks & Rec at 6:30pm.

Mr. Marconi shared the Form of Government Task Force requested to be recognized as a Committee. They selected a Chair and will submit agendas, motions and minutes, and abide by FOIA requirements. Mr. Marconi shared the political affiliations was not a concern when building the Task Force, but it is now that it will be a Committee. Currently, there are 3 Unaffiliated and 6 Democrats, so they are not in violation of minority representation requirements. Mr. Marconi and Maureen Kozlark expressed the BoS should go back and review applicants for potential additional Republican members. The BoS will discuss further at their next meeting.

Mr. Marconi shared he and Jacob Muller, Director of Public Works & Facilities, toured some properties in Town with flood mitigation plans (e.g. Gilbert Street, Wooster Street, Casagmo).

Mr. Marconi shared Veteran's Park Elementary School was going to paint their auditorium but have put a hold on the project now that the school will be placed on the National Historic Register because the architect who designed VP has been recognized as significant. The BoS will have a meeting about how to move forward and preserve it.

Mr. Marconi shared the Town will be adding more formal signage at the Venus Building, removing the banners and cleaning the area around Governor Street and Prospect Ridge.

Mr. Marconi shared an update on 145 Highridge: Tighe & Bond has requested to do additional work, and Mr. Marconi has asked to use an additional \$4,000 for costs associated with additional testing along Highridge from the contingency fund.

Barbara Manners motioned to adjourn the meeting at 10:09pm. Chris Murray seconded. Motion carried 4-0.