



Town of Ridgefield
Board of Selectpersons Meeting Minutes
UNAPPROVED

May 8, 2024 at 7:30pm

Please note – these minutes are not verbatim.

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

Rudy Marconi called the meeting to order at 8:18pm, following the Special Town Meeting.

Maureen Kozlark motioned to add “Public Comment” to the beginning of the agenda. Sean Connelly seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

1. Public Comment

Kirk Carr, 62 Prospect Ridge, shared he sent an email to Mr. Marconi regarding attendance records and vacancies within the Boards, Commissions, and Committees, and about ensuring volunteers are made aware their attendance is noted.

2. Affordable Housing Committee – Housing Trust Fund Presentation

Debra Ann Francheschini, Chair, Affordable Housing Committee, was in attendance. Topics discussed included:

- Ms. Francheschini shared the Affordable Housing Committee was working to create a Housing Trust Fund and has researched other town's programs (i.e. Stamford, Greenwich), and such funds can be used to encourage affordable housing, adaptive use of existing housing, and to provide influence over future development projects.
- Ms. Francheschini shared a Housing Trust Fund may be funded through inclusionary zoning fees (which are already established), state grants and private donations.
- Rudy Marconi asked about inclusionary zoning fees. Ms. Francheschini shared they're already in place: if a developer is building a structure with four or more units in Town and doesn't want to add an affordable component, they would pay the fee. Currently those fees go into the general fund, and if the Housing Trust Fund was to be established, the inclusionary zoning fees would be allocated there.
- Mr. Marconi asked about using Area Median Income (AMI) vs. State Median Income (SMI) in terms of rent rates/revenue. Ms. Francheschini stated AMI could help increase access to housing in Ridgefield for teachers, contractors, young people, etc. She shared Greenwich has had successful projects using 80% AMI as an income qualification.
- Ms. Francheschini shared most Housing Trust Funds in other towns have a Board of Trustees appointed by the Board of Selectpersons, then create their own by-laws, term limits, and meeting schedule. She also shared most Housing Trust Funds set a “strike

price” and once achieved, the Housing Trust Fund becomes operational with the distribution of funds determined by the Board of Trustees.

- Maureen Kozlark asked about the Trustees being autonomous vs. reporting to the BoS. Mr. Marconi shared if the Trustees were appointed by the BoS, the Housing Trust Fund would be considered a committee of the BoS and would report to the BoS. However, they could eventually become part of the Charter, like the ECDC.
- Sean Connelly asked about investment of Housing Trust Fund funds until the strike price is reached. Mr. Marconi confirmed there are restrictions on types of accounts or investments a municipality can use. Ms. Francheschini shared the Trustees would manage the funds and would have their own treasurer and accounting system.
- Chris Murray asked about other town’s Housing Trust Fund balances. Ms. Francheschini shared Greenwich started their fund using \$350,000 in ARPA Funds, some towns leverage fees from construction and permit fees, and shared Stamford’s fund has millions of dollars.
- Mr. Murray asked about Housing Trust Fund donors wanting to see their donation immediately used. Ms. Francheschini shared Stamford sat on their fund for three years before reaching their strike price.
- Mr. Marconi asked about next steps. Ms. Francheschini confirmed the Affordable Housing Committee would like to have public education sessions about Housing Trust Funds to receive feedback. She shared their goal would be to have everything established within the year.
- The BoS agreed they’d like to learn more, with Barbara Manners specifically asking about by-laws, Ms. Kozlark about the structure of Board of Trustee groups in different towns, and Mr. Marconi about the rent rate difference using AMI vs. SMI.

Sean Connelly motioned to move “Cultural District – Friends of Ridgefield” to before “Senior Tax Credit Discussion” on the agenda. Maureen Kozlark seconded. Motion carried 5-0. The motion was then withdrawn.

3. Senior Tax Credit Discussion

Debra Ann Francheschini discussed Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) being constructed within the community. Rudy Marconi confirmed if your home is 3,000 sq ft or less, you can build up to a 900 sq ft ADU, and if your home is over 3,000 sq ft, you may construct up to a 1,200 sq ft ADU.

Ms. Francheschini asked whether seniors could leverage tax savings from one of the deferment programs offered by the Tax Assessor’s office to fund the construction of an ADU. Mr. Marconi confirmed they could, but that the deferment programs were designed more for residents who needed additional funds for medical bills, etc.

4. Cultural District – Friends of Ridgefield

Glori Norwitt, ECDC Chair, and Geoffrey Morris, Secretary, were in attendance. Topics discussed included:

- Ms. Norwitt shared the Cultural District has established a separate sub-committee within the ECDC and distributed copies of their last meeting’s minutes with the BoS.
- Sean Connelly asked about whether the State Statute indicated who needs to be on the committee. Ms. Norwitt confirmed it does and they specifically sought out those individuals, meeting every six weeks as the Cultural District.

- Mr. Marconi voiced there has been discussion about structure to be considered under the Friends of Ridgefield. Ms. Norwitt confirmed a Chair, Vice Chair and Treasurer had been elected for the Cultural District of Ridgefield.

Sean Connelly motioned to recommend to the Board of Directors of the Friends of Ridgefield to recognize the Cultural District of Ridgefield as a listed entity of the Friends of Ridgefield. Chris Murray seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

5. Approval of Meeting Minutes

a. April 24, 2024

Sean Connelly noted a redundancy in the second paragraph about EV parking violations, leading to a further discussion amongst the BoS and Mr. Connelly redacting his edit.

The BoS then further discussed EV parking violations, with Rudy Marconi recommending the charging cords be shortened so they can't reach adjacent parking spots. Mr. Marconi voiced the EV parking violation enforcement would be a trial period, and Maureen Kozlark confirmed the BoS could change the policy at the end of the trial.

Ms. Kozlark noted the motion to adjourn was missing due to the Executive Session at the end of the meeting.

Mr. Connelly clarified the celebration dates noted to be July 4, 2025-July 4, 2026.

Sean Connelly motioned to approve the minutes from the April 24, 2024 Board of Selectpersons Meeting, as amended. Maureen Kozlark seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

b. April 24, 2024 – Public Hearing

Maureen Kozlark motioned to approve the minutes from the April 24, 2024 Public Hearing. Sean Connelly seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

c. April 15, 2024

Maureen Kozlark motioned to approve the minutes from the April 15, 2024 Board of Selectpersons Meeting. Barbara Manners seconded. Motion carried 3-0-2.

6. Selectperson's Report

Rudy Marconi shared an update from the revenue meeting: the Town is on target for a surplus; last month house sales were low, but inventory is low; Parks & Recreation is on target for a \$300,000 surplus above forecast; and shared the possibility of a tax freeze for seniors, but that would be left to the Senior Tax Credit Committee should it be formed.

Mr. Marconi shared the Board of Assessment Appeals has 2 vacancies, but currently only has 1 member, so he's unable to appoint replacements. Per the Charter, after the 30-days without the appointment of a replacement, the BoS will be able to interview and appoint members. The replacement members must be the same party as those who vacated.

Mr. Marconi shared the BoS was invited to attend the Citizen of the Year awards, they could purchase a table or an ad for the event. It was decided they'd purchase an ad due to a conflict with their previously scheduled BoS meeting.

Mr. Marconi shared an update from the Insurance Risk Management Committee: Andrew Neblett, IT Director, has provided answers to their questions about the cyberattack on August 5, and they feel satisfied with the resolution.

Mr. Marconi distributed copies of a confidential document to the BoS about 145 Highridge Avenue and potential contamination on the property. Mr. Marconi shared the neighborhood is concerned about further property contamination, discussed the potential to test the wells located in the public right-of-way (which would cost \$12,500), and requested they enter an executive session.

Chris Murray motioned to enter an executive session. Sean Connelly seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

The Board of Selectpersons returned to public at 10:28pm. There was no vote.

Sean Connelly motioned to adjourn the meeting at 10:38pm. Maureen Kozlark seconded. Motion carried 5-0.