



Town of Ridgefield
Board of Selectpersons Meeting Minutes
UNAPPROVED

June 12, 2024 at 7:30pm

Please note – these minutes are not verbatim.

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

Sean Connelly motioned to add an item, "Lease for Ridgefield Public School's Rise Program and A-School," to the end of the agenda. Barbara Manners seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

1. Public Comment

Mike Raduazzo, 195 Peaceable Street, voiced support for the Father's Club presentation, and expressed concern over two statements made at the previous Board of Selectpersons meeting and hope for an apology. No comment from the BOS.

2. Town Hall Hours of Operations

Laurie Fernandez, Human Resources Director, was in attendance. Topics discussed included:

- Rudy Marconi shared many communities in our area have moved to a four-day workweek, there has been interest from some Town personnel to move to a four-day workweek but want to ensure services are not reduced for residents and taxpayers.
- Ms. Fernandez distributed copies of the results from a 2022 resident survey about a four-day workweek. Of the residents surveyed, 60% indicated they visit Town Hall less than once per month, 8.5% have never visited, and 3% visit daily. In terms of a four-day workweek, 66% of respondents indicated it would have no impact on their access to Town services, while 30% indicated that it would. Ultimately, 45% of respondents were not in favor of the four-hour workweek, while 55% shared they were in favor.
- Maureen Kozlark asked about survey methodology. Ms. Fernandez confirmed it was made in Survey Monkey and shared on the Town website and via social media.
- Ms. Fernandez distributed copies of an internal survey of Town Hall employees from 2008/9 when Danbury first reduced their hours. Ms. Fernandez shared 78% of those surveyed were supportive of a four-day workweek.
- Ms. Fernandez shared an internal traffic flow survey was just completed in the Town Hall and Town Hall Annex to count early morning and late afternoon visitors Monday-Thursday and total visitors on Fridays, and distributed copies to the BOS.
- Ms. Kozlark asked if this would save the Town money. Ms. Fernandez confirmed modest electricity savings. Ms. Kozlark asked whether the total number of hours would remain the same. Ms. Fernandez confirmed yes, with extended hours on reduced days.

- Sean Connelly asked about running a pilot program. Ms. Fernandez shared some towns have run 6-month pilot programs, and all have maintained those hours at the end.
- Ms. Kozlark asked whether this would extend to Parks & Recreation. Ms. Fernandez confirmed this proposal would only apply to the Town Hall and Town Hall Annex.
- Chris Murray asked whether the day off would need to be a Friday or Monday. Barbara Manners expressed concern about being closed Friday. Ms. Fernandez shared most towns are closed Friday or Monday, which adds value to the employees.
- Ms. Fernandez asked the BOS to consider the proposal and reach out for further discussion. Ms. Kozlark asked the Town send in feedback.
- Mike Raduazzo, 195 Peaceable Street, commented that Ridgefield is a commuter town, with many hybrid employees working from home on Monday and Friday.

3. Intern Evan Honoré Report on Bunker Gear

Evan Honoré, RHS Senior and Town Hall Intern, was in attendance. Topics discussed included:

- Rudy Marconi shared firefighter turnout gear has been a long-standing issue with respect to cancer-causing PFAs. The RFD has asked for approval to purchase additional PFAs-free turnout gear but would not be structure-certified.
- Mr. Honoré shared PFAs are found in the moisture barrier of turnout gear, which gets absorbed through the skin when exposed to high heat and can cause cancer.
- Mr. Honoré shared fire departments in Vancouver, Canada and Concord, NH recently shifted to PFAs-free turnout gear, and he spoke with both to learn more. A PFAs-free product can be woven into moisture barriers instead of existing products, for roughly \$300 more per set. Warranty on PFAs-free product is 3-years, but the product is only 3 years old, and the warranty increases over time as the product continues to be tested.
- Mr. Marconi shared the Fire Chief has limited the amount of time firefighters can wear existing gear and hopes to purchase structurally rated PFAs-free gear in the near future.

4. Intern Kaleigh Olsen Report on Comparative Governments

Kaleigh Olsen, RHS Senior and Town Hall Intern, was in attendance. Topics discussed included:

- Rudy Marconi shared copies of Ms. Olsen's report with the BOS.
- Ms. Olsen shared her research about different types of local municipal governments, focused on 19 towns with similar populations to Ridgefield. Of those, most (11) use a Council-Manager, followed by Selectman-Town Meeting (6), and Representative Town Meeting (2) forms of government.
- Ms. Olsen shared in the Council-Manager form of government, there is a non-political CEO, an elected Mayor/First Selectperson, a Director of Finance, and many volunteer positions. In most towns she interviewed, the Selectperson is a part-time paid position.
- Ms. Olsen shared another option beyond changing form of government is to amend the Town Charter about how Town Meetings run, and what's allowed to pass at Town Meetings, should there be a low resident turnout.

5. Appointments & Reappointments

a. Andrew Okrongly – Pension Commission (Reappointment)

Andrew Okrongly, Pension Commission Member, Christofer Christiansen, Pension Commission Chair, were in attendance. Topics discussed included:

- Mr. Marconi shared Mr. Okrongly also serves on the Board of Finance and his spouse volunteers with the Planning & Zoning Commission.

- Mr. Christiansen shared Mr. Okrongly is a tremendous asset to the Town. Maureen Kozlark thanked him for his work, especially his charts and reports, and asked whether he has time for both the BOF and Pension Commission. Mr. Okrongly confirmed he does, and suggested it be added into the Town Charter there always be a Pension Commission member on the Board of Finance.
- Sean Connelly and Barbara Manners expressed support for Mr. Okrongly.
- Mr. Marconi asked about errors in last round of Vanguard cheques. Mr. Christiansen shared Vanguard experienced a computer glitch that caused incorrect withholding for people across CT, and Vanguard is working on it.

Sean Connelly motioned to reappoint Andrew Okrongly to the Pension Commission. Barbara Manners seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

b. Ridgefield Commemorates America at 250 – Appointment

Co-Chairs Geoffrey Morris and Pamme Jones, and Committee Members James Carone, Sara Champion, Louzette Doucaras, Elizabeth Ellis, Dawn Fawcett, Deborah Rundlett, and Daniela Sikora were in attendance. Topics discussed included:

- Mr. Morris shared the BOS formed a committee to celebrate America's 250th anniversary, and there was a lot of interest in joining the committee. He shared the committee plans to meet monthly to plan for events from July 2025-July 2026 and create a budget.
- Maureen Kozlark asked about engaging with applicants who weren't selected. Ms. Jones shared they sought specific skills on the larger committee and would reach out to other applicants to participate in different ways.

Maureen Kozlark motioned to appoint the Ridgefield Commemorates America at 250 Committee, as listed. Barbara Manners seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

6. Father's Club – Discussion of Clubhouse

Brian Armstrong, Father's Club Executive Director, was in attendance. Topics discussed included:

- Mr. Armstrong shared the Father's Club was founded in 2018, has 300 members, and is a 501(c)3 non-profit supporting youth, seniors, and underprivileged families through volunteer work, grants (\$175,000 total by end of year), the Ridgefield Grinch, etc.
- Mr. Armstrong shared they'd like to establish an operations center to meet, a logistics headquarters for the Grinch, and serve as a community resource. He proposes they build a prefabricated structure by the previously proposed pickleball court which would include a public-facing restroom. He distributed copies of the proposed site to the BOS.
- Maureen Kozlark asked about the building dimensions. Mr. Armstrong shared about 30'x30' (approximately 1,000 sq ft). Ms. Kozlark asked about the bathrooms. Mr. Armstrong shared they would have an interior-facing restroom for the Father's Club and an exterior-facing one for the public, and the Father's Club would maintain both.
- Sean Connelly asked about their budget. Mr. Armstrong shared approximately \$100,000, and confirmed they have the funds in-hand.
- The BOS agreed to a site visit, and this discussion will be continued on a future agenda.

7. Lease for Ridgefield Public School's Rise Program and A-School (66 Grove Street)

Joe Morits, Director of Facilities for Ridgefield Public Schools, Jake Muller, Superintendent, were in attendance. Topics discussed included:

- Rudy Marconi shared RPS has immediate space needs for the upcoming school year for the RISE program (currently for 18-22 year olds, but expected to extend to 26 to align with insurance eligibility) and the Alternative High School, which has reached its space limit in the existing Ballard Green Space (\$275,000 approved for an addition to the existing A-School space has been requested to transfer to this project).
- Mr. Marconi shared St. Andrew's Church offered a building for possible community use but would require work to bring up to code for an education building and make ADA compliant. Mr. Morits shared that space would have been financially prohibitive.
- Mr. Morits shared the 66 Grove Street property offers roughly 19,000 sq ft, it's an open space and could be designed with room to grow in the future. They have started work with a local architect, funded by the Board of Education.
- Chris Murray recommended they have a third party verify the dimensions of the space. Mr. Muller confirmed they would, and that the architects will take measurements, too.
- Barbara Manners asked about estimated enrolment for both programs. Mr. Morits shared he'd need to request that data.
- Maureen Kozlark asked about having build-out cost information available for a Town Meeting and Public Hearing. Mr. Muller confirmed they could likely have that information in 2-4 weeks. Mr. Marconi shared the Public Hearing could be in July and Town Meeting in August.
- The BOS is in agreement to move forward with discussions about leasing 66 Grove St.

8. Approval of Meeting Minutes

a. May 22, 2024

Sean Connelly corrected a statement about Vanguard discussion about the sale of the business that covers municipal retirement services.

Mr. Connelly also suggested (page 5) updating to "contradiction" from "contraction."

Sean Connelly motioned to approve the minutes from the May 22, 2024 Board of Selectpersons Meeting, as amended. Chris Murray seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

9. Selectperson's Report

Rudy Marconi shared Friday, June 21 is Make Music Day in Ridgefield.

Mr. Marconi shared a state legislation update, that there was a proposed plan to eliminate car tax for individuals and fold it in with property tax, but that did not proceed. Chris Murray asked about the newly proposed car tax assessment method to use straight-line depreciation instead of Kelley Blue Book values. Mr. Marconi shared he'd discuss with Al Garzi, Assessor.

Barbara Manners motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:20pm. Sean Connelly seconded. Motion carried 5-0.