

APPROVED
Board of Selectpersons Meeting Minutes
May 7, 2025 at 6:30pm
Town Hall Large Conference Room, 400 Main Street
Please note – these minutes are not verbatim.

RECEIVED
@ 12:21pm
MAY 28 2025
Jessica E. Green Asst
BY TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE
RIDGEFIELD CT
draft rec'd 5/9/25

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

Absent: Chris Murray

Agenda

1. Public Comment
2. Town of Ridgefield - Employee work schedule (Laurie Fernandez, HR Director)
3. Appointments
 - a. Parks and Rec Comm: Re-Appointments-Philip Kearns
4. Affordable Housing Fund – Reallocation of Grant Dollars
5. 8-24 Referral – 217 Danbury Road (Set PH and STM)
6. Tax Collector Refunds
7. Approval of Meeting Minutes
8. Selectpersons Report

Rudy Marconi called the meeting to order at 6:30pm.

1. Public Comment - None

2. Town of Ridgefield – Employee work schedule

Laurie Fernandez, Director of Human Resources was present and reported on the difficulties recruiting and retaining personnel. They are mainly to do with other job options offering four-day work weeks and flexible work schedules, while we do not. At a recent COMPELRA (Connecticut Employee Relations Personnel Relations Association), meeting, it was a common issue faced by other Connecticut towns. Ms. Fernandez surveyed neighboring towns to find out what they offer to attract and retain employees and learned that they have implemented longer workdays Monday through Thursday, closed Fridays, or half-day Fridays. Employees could have a day off for doctor appointments instead of using sick or vacation time. The public now uses online services much more and has less in-person needs. Ms. Fernandez proposes a longer day with a four-day work week.

Maureen Kozlark expressed concern for shrinking service days in a government-driven service industry. People come into the offices usually to comply with a government requirement and feels that it's unfair to impose day restrictions on that compliance. She also suggested that a day off during the week didn't necessarily have to be a Friday. It could perhaps be a floating day off where all offices stay open five days a week, but different employees get a day off during the week. She believes there are other ways to address the issue instead of the easy solution of closing offices on Fridays.

Rudy Marconi stated that staying open five days a week would increase costs. The issue of filling vacancies without increased staffing costs is critical enough to merit closing offices one day a week.

Sean Connelly stated that after his own studies on engagement and employee satisfaction, and seeing these survey results and comments, he is in full support of closing on Fridays. The added value of Fridays off would increase quality of life beyond just the time off any other day of the week. Also, the predictability of a standard schedule of service is better for the public rather than a floating closed day of the week.

Barbara Manners clarified that the only departments affected would be those in Town Hall and Town Hall Annex. She asked why close on a Friday and not a Monday, but Rudy Marconi said he sees no more activity on one or the other of those days. She recognizes that the vacancy issue is critical enough to justify closing one day a week.

Ms. Fernandez stated that a set four-day week, Town Hall 8am-5:30pm, Annex 7:30am-5pm (or 7am-4:30pm), won't increase costs. However, staffing costs would increase by extending the work-day hours to accommodate a four-day work week but staying open five days a week and rotating staff schedules to accommodate public-serving hours five days a week. If approved, discussions with the union would begin next week for a trial period to run June 16, 2025 through October 15, 2025.

Public comments suggested consideration of closing every other Friday and extending nine work-days by one hour to accommodate that closed Friday. Other comments were in support of the motion. Still others stated that Parks and Recreation Admin employees may pressure administration for the same benefit.

Sean Connelly motioned to approve the trial run from June 16 through October 15, of a four-day work week schedule, 35-hour week (same as current), and Fridays off. Barbara Manners seconded. Motion carried 3-1 (Kozlark opposed).

- 3. Appointments and Reappointments – Philip Kearns – Parks and Recreation Commission Reappointment**
Philip Kearns has been serving on the commission for several years. The greatest improvement is that commission involvement and community engagement are at the highest he has ever seen. The commission is focused on community outreach of members and nonmembers. Barbara Manners commented that there are many programs offered and all seem well-attended. Sean Connelly asked if there is any trend analysis of building use. Mr. Kearns responded that they have three years of software data for program enrollment. Barbara Manners asked if summer camp counselor enrollment is going well and he confirmed that it is. Rudy Marconi asked for status on pickle ball location search. Mr. Kearns shared that the commission is discussing with Inland Wetlands and Planning and Zoning and if results are positive, then they can proceed with applications and noise studies.

Maureen Kozlark motioned to reappoint and thank Phil Kearns to the Ridgefield Parks and Recreation Commission. Sean Connelly seconded. Motion carried 4-0.

4. Affordable Housing Trust Fund – Reallocation of Grant Funds

Rudy Marconi shared a letter from Town Counsel comparing neighboring towns' ordinances for creating and granting power to a board of trustees. He asked for board review and a meeting to discuss pros and cons of different ordinances. No action was taken.

Barbara Manners motioned to hear Tax Collector Refunds next in the agenda. Sean Connelly seconded. Motion carried 4-0.

a. Tax Collector Refunds

Barbara Manners motioned to approve the Tax Collector refunds totaling \$16,464.74 for car taxes. Maureen Kozlark seconded. Motion carried 4-0.

Rudy Marconi called a meeting recess to go into Public Hearing at 7:30 pm.

***NOTICE OF A PUBLIC HEARING
TOWN OF RIDGEFIELD, CONNECTICUT
WEDNESDAY, MAY 7th, 2025 AT 7:30 PM***

Notice is hereby given that the Board of Selectpersons will hold a Public Hearing for residents on Wednesday, May 7th, 2025, at 7:30 pm in the Town Hall Large Conference Room located at 400 Main Street, Ridgefield, CT 06877 to hear comments on the following item: Proposed Fifteen-Year lease for a section of McKeon Farm to the Connecticut Chapter of American Chestnut Foundation. The Lease and supporting documents can be found on the Town Calendar section of the Town website - www.ridgefieldct.gov.

Rudy Marconi introduced Jim Coyle, Conservation Commission Chairman, who explained that the Town would like to enter into an agreement with the CT Chapter of the American Chestnut Foundation. Jim Coyle from the Conservation Commission gave an overview for the public summarizing that the commission has been in discussions with the group to manage a series of plantings of the chestnut tree species that are more resistant to chestnut tree plagues. The total amount of property involved is 0.6 acres.

Guy Bocchino, 286 Great Hill Road, asked about numbers to be planted and maintenance to be completed by the foundation as well as support for the organization's work. Jim Coyle stated that they will be planted over time--10 or 20 trees and possibly increase over the years and they would be planted in a parcel called the lower meadow. Phil Kearns, Parley Road, asked whether there would be mowing around the trees and in the area? Jim Coyle responded that it will only be mowed in the immediate area around the trees. Ian Dow, 2 Aspen Ledges Road and Tree Committee member, supports the project.

Rudy Marconi mentioned the Special Town meeting for this item is scheduled for May 21 before closing the Public Hearing.

5. 8-24 Referral-217 Danbury Road

Rudy Marconi clarified that a public hearing is required to approve the town's land purchase of a 2.42-acre parcel which is part of map and lot number E12-0078. The property is for sale and is located at the entrance to Parks and Recreation Department. It has surrounding wetlands and has been considered as a viable acquisition for the town. A public hearing would be held on May 21 followed by the requisite Town Meeting on June 11.

Maureen Kozlark motioned to schedule a public hearing on May 21 to consider purchase of 217 Danbury Road and a Town Meeting on June 11 for the vote on the purchase of 217 Danbury Road. Barbara Manners seconded. Motion carried 4-0.

6. Approval of Meeting Minutes

a. April 23, 2025 BOS Meeting

Sean Connelly changed on page 3b line 4, "interphase" to intermediary.

Sean Connelly motioned to approve the minutes from the April 23, 2025 Board of Selectpersons Meeting, as amended. Maureen Kozlark seconded. Motion carried 4-0.

b. April 23, 28, and 30, 2025 Executive Sessions

Sean Connelly motioned to approve the minutes from the April 23, 28, and 30, 2025 executive sessions, as presented. Maureen Kozlark seconded. Motion carried 4-0.

7. Selectpersons Report

Rudy Marconi reported that in a meeting earlier today, the future Fire Chief Rommie Duckworth, and future Assistant Chief Tony Cerulli were introduced to the Fire Department. A retirement party and installation ceremony will be held on June 6th for retiring Chief Meyers (almost 45 years of service) and Assistant Chief Grasso (almost 43 years of service) and the incoming chief and assistant chief.

Rudy Marconi sent to the board the list of state bills being considered for June 4. The board is concerned of the financial pressure these could place on the town if passed.

The next WestCOG meeting will be held at the Town Hall Annex at noon on May 15 and will have guest speakers Betsy Gara, Executive Director of COST, and Joe DeLong, Executive Director of CCM.

Sean Connelly motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:06 pm. Barbara Manners seconded. Motion carried 4-0.