



Town of Ridgefield Public Hearing Minutes

APPROVED

December 13, 2025 10am

Town Hall – ANNEX, 66 Prospect Street, Ridgefield, CT

Please note – these minutes are not verbatim.

BOS Present: Sean Connelly, Maureen Kozlark, Barbara Manners (arrived after the call to order), Rudy Marconi, Geoffrey Morris

BOS Absent: None

Rudy Marconi called the meeting to order at 10:00 am.

Rudy Marconi shared that the purpose of this public hearing is to gather public input for the direction of the police and fire building upgrades and the special committee charge. The BOS will not opine on public comments because the committee will study all comments and ideas.

Public Comment

Will Garofalo – 11 Grandview Drive – acknowledged that improved facilities are necessary; believes one building is more cost efficient than two because certain facilities can be shared between police and fire such as meeting rooms, wellness, training, etc; the main objection is the \$77 million and believes the site prep cost of \$13 million could be lowered by looking at other sites such as an outdoor soccer field on Ivy Hill Road or Veteran's Park and the school.

Ashley Dougherty – 51 Prospect Ridge – is concerned about site locations and response times to remote locations such as Locust Ridge Road.

Will Vonzehle – 108 Soundview Road – believed the Old Quarry Road location was very dangerous for fire truck and paramedics.

Jonathan Burbank – 98 Rising Ridge Road – stated that one facility makes sense; the reasons to leave the current building are also reasons to not continue using the building so what would happen to the building? Will the town have to incur the cost to upgrade the building for other uses as well?

Cheryl Crowl – 77 Sunset Lane – believed the Old Quarry Road location was not appropriate; doesn't care if one or two buildings are selected; believes the police would still need the existing tower so the town should upgrade the building and even add on to it.

Scott Deyoung - Caudatowa Drive - believes the elaborate electric heating system is not cost-efficient, it should be natural gas heating, electric air conditioning. He recommended steel walls instead of brick, and backup power on propane gas.

Chris Vahlsing – 382 North Street – opposed to declaring East Ridge district historic thereby making it difficult to make changes to existing buildings.

Gary Holland – Old Sib Road – suggests diversity on the special committee to include representation from both political parties, young and old, in favor and opposed.

Melanie Rose – 9 Hawthorne Hill Road – recommended keeping the voters well informed. She couldn't find minutes for discussions of the previous committee. She would like to review each meeting to see progress discussions and assumptions not just the meeting result.

Michael Smith – 44 Crest Road – the problem is that the public isn't getting enough information.

Joe Shapiro – 73 Blackman Road – believes community engagement is most important and the greatest challenge. He hopes the special committee will have members dedicated to community engagement.

Flavio Paparella - 69 South Salem Road – asked if BOS has explored funding sources beyond taxpayer contributions such as leasing town property. Rudy Marconi responded that yes that is standard once the projects are approved. There are several grants available but not guaranteed.

Andy Sternlieb - 62 Ridgecrest – supports the Old Quarry Road location and although the cost is high, two separate locations would cost more; a separate location could require purchase or other site prep. The fire and police provide service to more than the town's population but also the many daily visitors.

Christine Moore – 63 Scott Ridge Road – is concerned about police and fire morale; recommends their participation on the special committee because their voice is paramount to represent their needs.

Chris Nolan - 59 Prospect Street – understands the need for new police and fire stations and combining into one building but opposes the location only due to safety. A communication plan is needed and must be central to this project. There was too much misinformation.

Jennifer Brackenwagen – 96 Pinpac Road – when choosing the committee, also ask for their intentions to broaden communication with the community.

Kenneth Needleman - 372 Bennett's Farms Road - believes communication should be a requirement not a responsibility of the committee.

Jonathan Burbank – 98 Rising Ridge Road - if a committee member is tasked with taking notes, they won't be able to participate in the committee discussion.

Peter Bachman - Cains Hills Road - suggested that the best communication plan includes providing unsolicited information such as via pamphlets. There should be a subcommittee of communication experts.

Chuck Hancock – 40 North Street – recommended marketing skills for the committee including social media skills.

Henry Sagman - 276 Wilton Road West - explained that the community had to seek out information but it wasn't easy to find on the town website.

Coco Barron - thanked first responders. Suggested a return of Channel 24. Suggested the car dealer on the corner of route 7 would be a good location.

Peter Torzilli - 355 Old Sib Road – over 8000 voted, about half of the population. He said costs weren't well informed. The cost and bond were not comprehensive. No operating costs were provided. He asked for the supporting numbers to defend the statement that decontamination units are needed and more fire truck parking space is needed to allow faster response times for fire trucks.

Messina - 16 Mead Ridge Drive – student at Veteran's Park loves her school.

Kirk Carr - Prospect Ridge - town can't spend taxpayer money on advocacy because of election laws. Suggests not appointing friends or supporters to the special committee. Stated that property taxes are a necessary evil but spending on a \$77 million building was unnecessary.

Thomas Collin – South Ridge Court – supports the Ridgefield police and fire and appreciated the BOS providing these public hearings. He suggests that the perspective be changed from two opposing sides to one side solving a problem. The community, fire, police, and residents must cooperate to find the solutions.

Thomas McManus - West Lane – restated the importance of Ridgefield Press and supports that a committee member be dedicated to sharing information on this topic via all existing means of communication in Ridgefield.

Andy Sternlieb - 62 Ridgecrest – only one form of communication is guaranteed, post mail. He suggests that a final committee report be mailed to all owners.

Kenneth Needleman – 372 Bennetts Farm Road – virtually all agree that communication is a problem and supports a separate subcommittee for this purpose. He recommends that the previous building committee not select the new committee.

Peter Bachman - Cains Hills Road- Communication subcommittee should be a professional entity, and a final report will be too late, reports should be provided to the community regularly during the process.

Ian Dow - Aspen Ledged Road supports a combined facility although is open to another location. The committee should include broad expertise of community members. He hopes we tap into local resources like police and fire chiefs.

Gentleman (didn't provide name)- Social media communications should be balanced. Pros and cons should be provided.

Tom McManus - West Lane - suggested a survey to ask why they voted for and against so that future decisions and communications can include the supporting statements addressing the for and against arguments.

Meeting adjourned at 11:30 am.