



Town of Ridgefield Board of Selectpersons Budget Meeting Minutes

UNAPPROVED

January 28, 2026 at 7pm

Town Hall – Large Conference Room, 400 Main Street, Ridgefield, CT

Please note – these minutes are not verbatim.

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

Absent: None

Rudy Marconi called the meeting to order at 7pm.

- 1. Library Budget** – Library Board Chair, Gary Rapp, and Library Director, Brenda McKinley, and Paul Hastings, Treasurer presented the proposed library budget and annual report. Brenda gave the library history dating back to 1795. The historical society has the information and the library charter assigned by the state of Connecticut. She also reported that the library enjoys partnerships with community stakeholders to benefit all ages of Ridgefield. Some of those stakeholders are Social Services, arts and cultural organizations, Commission on Aging, ECDC, and Ridgefield Commemorates America at 250 Committee. Syracuse University library labor value calculation of \$7.49 per visit is based on 229,000 visits, circulation of 311,000 items, program attendance up from 18,000 to over 40,000, over 1400 programs, including Wifi usage up 39%.

Library Board Treasurer, Paul Hastings, reported that the board is fiscally conservative. They are very conscientious with all expenses. Some are growing fast such as electricity and HVAC maintenance. Personnel costs are also increasing although they are not adding any staff. They do fundraise to offset some of the costs. They are requesting a town contribution of 72.5% of the overall budget, which mainly covers salaries and employee benefits. The balance of \$41,000 will be funded by library fundraising. In 2024-5, that amount was \$44,000 and in 2025-6 it is \$54,422. The library income sources are donations and investments. The expenses are mostly driven by personnel costs which increased by 10% for an anticipated rise in healthcare costs but were decreased due to a restructuring of staff time eliminating two full-time positions. Buildings are another driver in expenses due to high costs of electricity.

Rudy Marconi asked the Board if there was a day that could be closed if financial constraints required it. The Board responded that they would look to cut back in other areas because demand is high for even more library hours. Sunday, the shortest day, has the most visits.

Sean Connelly asked about the trend in increasing town contributions. Brenda shared a chart depicting the town contribution amount since 1995. The high of 84% was in 2008-9, but the average over 15 years is 74%.

The capital budget request of \$97,000 covers flooring and masonry, HVAC phase monitors, technology updates including computers, and security network servers.

Board Chair, Gary ??, closed by adding that they appreciate the community and board of selectpersons' support.

2. **Fire Department Budget** – Chief Duckworth Presented the draft department budget showing an increase over last year of 1.19%. Sean Connelly noted that there is a significant decrease in firefighter salaries and volunteer training. They explained that the decrease is due to higher paid officers retiring and being replaced with starting pay firefighters as well as a decrease in overtime pay. Firefighter training expenses are budgeted higher than last year due to the needed training and certifications for newly hired firefighters. Building maintenance is up but long overdue. Two new vehicles are proposed for a high-mileage ambulance and a Squad truck. Both will be rotated into service during scheduled maintenance of the other vehicles. They will also be available when a vehicle goes out of service unexpectedly. The BOS asked about vehicle supplies, gear packs, radios, and future capital expenditure scheduling. Rudy Marconi asked if all firefighters are certified to drive all the apparatuses. Ridgefield Fire Department has specific qualifications for probationary firefighters to drive any of the vehicles and DMV also has licensing requirements.
3. **General Budget Discussion** – Rudy Marconi asked Kevin Redmond, Finance Director, to confirm last night's questions regarding Town Clerk staff and Planning and Zoning staff. Mr. Redmond confirmed that there are no town clerk or Planning and Zoning staff increases requested. He presented a revised budget draft showing the \$180,000 salary for a possible town administrator. Maureen Kozlark and Sean Connelly noted the surprise expense for \$40,000 for trails. Mr. Redmond responded that this is actually a good year for operating expenses so it might be more advantageous to fund the \$40,000 rather than spread it over more years. The BOS also discussed the requested ECDC budget being higher than last year. Rudy Marconi will inquire with Bethel regarding the financial benefits brought forward by their ECDC hire.
4. **Possible Capital/Operating Budget Vote** – None

Maureen Kozlark motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:42pm. Geoffrey Morris seconded. Motion carried 5-0.