



**Town of Ridgefield
Board of Selectpersons Meeting
Minutes
APPROVED**

March 18, 2026 at 6:30pm

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 6:30 pm. The BOS moved item 7 to item 1a.

1. Public Comment

Ashley Dougherty requested BOS endorsement of a Ridgefield Housing Authority policy change.

- a. **Veterans Exemption** – Ridgefield Tax Assessor, Al Garzi was in attendance. He explained that state statute requires the 100% service-connected disability (as rated by the Department of Veterans Affairs) exemption applied only to the home value and had a cost of about \$172,000 annually. There are fourteen veterans receiving this benefit. The BOS may choose to expand the exemption to include the land value which would cost the town an additional \$100,000. Town Legal Counsel informed the BOS that the approval could be done by Town Meeting or by BOS approval. Town Counsel also clarified that the exemption can only be additionally applied to the land value up to two acres. If approved, it will take effect July 1. It doesn't affect the expense side of the budget, only the revenue side.

Maureen Kozlark motioned to approve the inclusion of up to two acres of land value in the Veterans Exemption tax assessment value. Barbara Manners seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

2. Appointments and Reappointments

- a. **Peter Nichols – Parks and Recreation Commission (reappointment)**

Mr. Nichols shared that he serves on the Facilities and Grounds Committee working on the project to install the pickle ball courts. He also maintains the Rail Trail and clears the trail benches of weeds and shrub overgrowth. He enjoys making this contribution to the town.

Sean Connelly motioned to reappoint Peter Nichols to the Ridgefield Parks and Recreation Commission. Maureen Kozlark seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

b. Al Wakin, Jim Yavenditti, Denise Qualey, and Tina Malhotra – Youth Commission (reappointments)

Ms. Qualey reported that the commission recently completed its annual webinar. The youth hosted four guest speakers in a presentation called, "Discussion Without Division." Three seniors on the commission are graduating. Mr. Wakin added that the discussion included overcoming challenges in political debates. The commission also worked heavily on mental health education. Mr. Yavenditti shared that the annual webinars have been very successful because the youth create and organize the event. They are engaged from the early stages. Sean Connelly asked how the commission engages the community youth. Ms. Qualey explained that the webinar recordings are shared via email and accessible on the You Tube channel. It's posted on the Kids in Crisis website and the Helping Kids Thrive webinar series. The group's activities change year to year depending on the youth's interests. The adult involvement has expanded to include another youth resource officer. The commission meets once a month with a break two months and two months are virtual. The group has grown this year to include many new non-voting members. Public Comment: Unknow man Asked how many students are on the commission. Ms. Qualey reported there are 16 voting members total of which six are students. (Tina Malhotra was absent but was reappointed)

Maureen Kozlark motioned to reappoint Al Wakin, Jim Yavenitti, Denise Qualey, and Tina Malhotra to the Youth Commission. Geoffrey Morris seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

3. WREF's Lease – Tower on South Street assignment

Andy Gladding Of WAXB has met with the ECDC, who supports this endeavor to allow WAXB to lease the WREF tower. He explained that he is Vice President at Hudson Valley Public Radio. He holds a doctorate in Community Radio and Management and teaches at Hofstra University. He states that local radio stations serve the local community and engage with the community. Barbara Manners asked if his radio stations invite local speakers. Mr. Gladding responded that the vision for the station is that it's an opportunity for the community to have access to the airwaves and share community activities and discussions. Maureen Kozlark asked how will this operate. Mr. Gladding replied that they will hire an operations manager and set up office space in town. But the community collaboration is critical. Geoffrey Morris asked when it would go live. Mr. Gladding anticipates that with no challenges, the station could be live in one month. It's set up as a non-profit and even the station name is part of the community collaboration. Maureen Kozlark asked what would happen if the venture doesn't go successfully. Mr. Gladding explained that they would return it to the town because they have no other vision for a local am radio station. There will be a community advisory board and ECDC involvement. A contract for speakers will provide speaker guidelines. Public Comment: unknown man Asked what the annual operating expense will be.

Maureen Kozlark motioned to approve the lease with the provisions discussed at the table regarding community engagement guidelines to be approved at the April 15th BOS meeting. Sean Connelly seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

4. Vendor Permit Renewal – Michael Principi, owner of Chez Lenard Sidewalk Cafe and Catering

Mr. Principi has been a vendor permit holder for many years. He owns four carts. Sean Connelly asked if there are any issues hiring. He responded that the challenge is finding kids motivated to work but he finds them.

Barbara Manners motioned to approve the Chez Lenard Sidewalk Cafe and Catering vendor permit renewal. Sean Connelly seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

5. 8-24 Referral – Danbury Road sidewalk from Parks and Rec to Copps Hill

The BOS must refer the project to Planning and Zoning Commission to ensure compliance with the town's Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD).

Sean Connelly motioned to approve the 8-24 referral to the Planning and Zoning Commission to ensure the Danbury Road sidewalk from Parks and Rec to Copps Hill complies with the POCD. Maureen Kozlark seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

6. Town Van - Barbara Manners motioned to add to this agenda the sale of the town van to the Boys and Girls Club. Maureen Kozlark seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

Boys and Girls Club President Don Romoser and President & CEO Requested approval to purchase the town's 20 passenger van with access for mobility challenge members and spaces on board for two wheelchairs. They negotiated a suggested price of \$4500, but they asked the BOS to consider donating the van to the town. They explained that they are a non-profit relying on donations and fundraising to serve the town's youth. They don't turn away any applicants who can't afford the tuition and fees. They serve Ridgefield families providing what many children call their second home. The Boys and Girls Club is an asset to the community.

Maureen Kozlark motioned to gift the Boys and Girls Club, the town van as is, upon receipt of the new town van. Barbara Manners seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

7. BOS approval of Fire Department mission/vision statement

Rudy Marconi read the statement written by Chief Duckworth.

Geoffrey Morris motioned to approve the Ridgefield Fire Department mission and vision statement contingent on approval by the Fire Commission. Barbara Manners seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

8. Approval of Meeting Minutes

a. January 28, 2026 BOS Budget Meeting

Maureen Kozlark submitted a name missing from public comment.

Sean Connelly motioned to approve the minutes from the January 28, 2026 Board of Selectpersons Budget Meeting, as amended. Maureen Kozlark seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

b. January 29, 2026 BOS Budget Meeting

Barbara Manners submitted one change.

Maureen Kozlark motioned to approve the minutes from the January 29, 2026 Board of Selectpersons Meeting, as amended. Geoffrey Morris seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

c. February 24, 2026 BOS Budget Meeting

Sean Connelly, Maureen Kozlark, and Barbara Manners submitted changes.

Sean Connelly motioned to approve the minutes from the February 24, 2026 Board of Selectpersons Budget Meeting, as amended. Geoffrey Morris seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

d. March 2, 2026 BOS Budget Meeting

Maureen Kozlark submitted two changes.

Geoffrey Morris motioned to approve the minutes from the March 2, 2026 Board of Selectpersons Budget Meeting, as amended. Maureen Kozlark seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

e. March 4, 2026 BOS Meeting

Geoffrey Morris, Maureen Kozlark, and Sean Connelly submitted changes.

Maureen Kozlark motioned to approve the minutes from the March 4, 2026 Board of Selectpersons meeting, as amended. Geoffrey Morris seconded. Motion carried 4-0-1 (Connelly abstained).

9. Selectpersons Report

Rudy Marconi shared the snow clearing budget. It is about \$200,000 to \$300,000 over budget. It will be drawn from T.A.R. (Town Aid Road) money rather than request an appropriation.

Rudy Marconi shared a notice that the New York border town of Lewisboro, New York, passed a change to their local law #8 of 2025, amending their zoning chapter 20 prohibiting airfields. The amendment now allows that any properties greater than 50 acres can have a heliport with an approach over Ridgefield. Town Counsel will be asked to prepare a notice to the town of Lewisboro because they didn't send any notice to the town of Ridgefield.

Budget Public Hearing is set for Monday, March 23rd at 7pm. Tuesday night there will be a meeting between the BOS and BOF. Wednesday, March 25th is the BOF with BOS and BOE. April 1 BOS falls at the start of Passover, so it will be moved to April 8th. Then, the BOS April 15 meeting will be moved to April 22nd.

Maureen Kozlark motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:07pm. Sean Connelly seconded. Motion carried 5-0.