



Town of Ridgefield
Public Hearing Minutes
APPROVED
September 2, 2026 at 7:30PM
Ridgefield Library, Dayton Room, 472 Main Street, Ridgefield, CT

Please note – these minutes are not verbatim.

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

BOS Absent: None

Rudy Marconi called the meeting to order at 7:30pm

Rudy Marconi shared that the purpose of this public hearing is to hear questions on six items; leaf blower ordinance, town administrator position, senior tax credit program changes, change to the pension commission ordinance, the sale of 29 Lakeview Road, and the acceptance of 84 Mamasasco Road as open space.

1. Leaf Blower Ordinance

Geoffrey Morris read aloud the ordinance in its entirety. Sean Connelly stated that a committee was appointed to study this issue and they presented several ideas used to craft this proposal. Allen Hershowitz, 77 Sunset Lane, supports a year-round restriction as an environmental and public health priority. The worst exposure is during spring and fall but this proposal doesn't include those seasons. Amy Zipper, resident and retired acoustics consultant, stated that leaf blowers' original purpose was pesticide application in agricultural settings. Existing ordinance applies no sound restrictions during permitting hours. Anything above 95 decibels is considered dangerous. She suggested two edits; 4.a.b. clarity, duration of time. Second, she suggested adding an enforcement provision. Katherine Daigle, 239 Peaceable Street, asked if non-residents can speak. Phil Delgiudice, 99 North Salem Road, favors no ordinance whatsoever. He feels this is government overreaching. He doesn't see the balance of 411 people driving an ordinance that will affect 25,000 people. Vince Giordano, 28 Fairview Avenue, shared that current law allows all use with no limits or restrictions. He supports the proposed restrictions. He summarized four consensus points from the ad hoc committee that the BOS supported. He suggested three edits. Ben Oko, Mountain Road, is a member of the Ridgefield Action Committee for the Environment which is dedicated to Ridgefield's environment. They are dedicated to lowering the town's carbon footprint. He supports the ordinance. Matt Hicks 77 Bobby's Court, understands that the

purpose of the ordinance is to push Ridgefield landscapers toward battery powered leaf blowers. He described the environmental impact of alternatives landscapers could employ. Alexandra, 56 Manor Road, owner of Greenland Landscaping, shared that to replace all the equipment, would have to make a large financial investment. She asked if the town would offer financial support for the transition? She added that operating battery-powered equipment will require additional manpower for clean-up. She also stated that battery-operated equipment will require increasing prices. She concluded that only a small number of companies will be able to comply, which will limit competition and lead to increased prices as well. Dwayne Escola, 52 Katoonah Street, supports the ordinance because the user benefits, the community enjoys the peaceful environment, and the planet is protected. Matthias Blumrich, 76 Florida Hill Road, questioned the lack of information from the committee to the residents. The committee's report shared that Fairfield County's air pollution ranks in the worst of the nation. He shared statistics about Ridgefield's affluence. He added that the cost for landscapers to transition to battery-powered equipment is estimated by the committee to be manageable. He concluded that the residents who employ landscapers can afford the increased charges from landscapers who comply with the ordinance. Jay D'Orso, 32 Sycamore Lane, medical doctor, has never seen any pathology due to gas-powered equipment reported in medical journals. He has seen issues with waste and debris not being collected such as hantavirus and tick-borne diseases. He opposes any regulation of gas-powered equipment. Carol Mark, 27 Fairview Avenue, shared that leaf blowers are too loud and supports the restrictions. Ron Gustine, 15 Woodcock Lane, believes that excepting the town's facilities from the ordinance sends a negative message. He feels environmental legislation is overreaching. He doesn't support the ordinance. Mike Rettger shared a recording of a leaf blower on the far side of a neighboring property. He took the recording from inside his home. He supports the ordinance. Noah Bronke, 66 Manor Road, commented that this regulation will force landscapers to buy duplicate equipment and continue using gas-powered equipment outside of the restricted period. He believes this is Big Brother type governance. Andrea Beebe, 378 Main Street, felt the enforcement section was unreasonable. She doesn't support the ordinance. Paul cevarelli, 39 Harvey Road, asked why the BOS continued a subject for a petition that was withdrawn. He asked how the thirty minute per acre limit was justified. He doesn't support the ordinance. Sean McEvoy 150 High Ridge Ave, credited the ad hoc committee process as deliberately balanced. However, they concluded that there was no majority overriding consensus. He added that homeowners who have invested in their gas-powered leaf blowers will not be able to use them nor do they get the grace period to rotate them out like the town will have. Susan Betterly, 28 Fairview Avenue, elaborated on the harmful medical aspects of the gas-powered equipment. She named several renown medical organizations that have made statements about the harm of gas-powered equipment. Greg Kabasakalian, 2 Washington Street, stated that he loves his leaf blower. He finds the fine policy unreasonable. The judge, jury, and executioner are the same undefined entity. He can't clean his quarter acre parcel in seven minutes. Richard Steinhart, 49 Country Club Road, feels the golf course exemption is unfair. Susan Betterly, 28 Fairview Ave, stated that the noise is overwhelming at times. He supports the use of gas after Labor Day. He supports planning ahead for contractors who will use the battery-powered equipment. Steve Alderman, North Street, practices radiation oncology. The gas-powered equipment produces carcinogens. Several health organizations have published conclusions that the carcinogens emitted are serious and far-reaching. Mike Anderson, 40 Linden

Grove, explained the technical inefficiencies of battery-powered equipment. Sharon Dornfeld read a statement from Bill Dornfeld supported the ordinance generally but requested reconsideration of the excessive fine schedule, confusing appeals language to match the noise ordinance. Matt Lang, contractor from Redding, is neither in support nor opposition, but stated that technology is not there yet. He is equipped with solar yet his batteries can't keep up with the need. Nick Palazzo of Palazzo Landscaping of Ridgefield, broke down his required investment of \$102,000 for two-year life equipment. He added that the fires caused by these batteries require special firefighting technology and storage. He doesn't want the exposure of storing these batteries nor transporting them. He suggests that owners who prefer these to be used, also accept the risk of storing them for their landscaper's use. He opposes the ordinance. Tom McManus, 310 West Lane, stated that grass clippings don't need to be blown and private lawns don't need to be maintained like golf courses. Carson Fincham 125 Florida Road, task force member, stated the current leaf blower definition could include lawn mowers as well. He requested clarification with the word 'primarily'. After 18 months on the task force, he is still not convinced that gas leaf blowers are louder. The BOS selected the least favored option of about 16 solutions considered by the task force. Macklin Reed, 132 Great Hill Road, supports the ordinance but suggested changes to the allowed times. Scott Deyoung, 51 Caudatowa Drive, prefers no regulation than overregulation. He proposes that if the problem is noise, use a better noise ordinance. Michael Autuori, 197 Florida Road, commented that two medical doctors spoke and the educated community of Ridgefield can consult the internet to learn the harms to their own health. He suggests that Ridgefield suffers more from light pollution. He believes this ordinance may not address the issue well enough to correct the sensory pollution but he will likely vote in favor. Donald Hulnick, 72 Golf Lane, retired physician, also served on the Task Force and supports the ordinance.

Geoffrey Morris reminded the guests to arrive early at the town meeting in two weeks to line up for the registrar check-in.

Rudy Marconi announced that the town meeting will be held at East Ridge Middle School in two weeks.

2. Town Administrator

Leonard Comberiate 6 Ascot Way asked what the salary is. Rudy Marconi explained that the budget includes \$90,000 for the second half of the fiscal year; new hire to begin in January. Linda Masey, Fox Hill, asked why we need a town administrator. Geoffrey Morris responded that the current town administrator duties are being completed by the first selectperson but the role has grown immensely over the last 25 years and future first selectpersons will not have the experience or knowledge to support Ridgefield at the same level. The objective with a town administrator is to have continuity across elections. Katherine Daigle, 239 Peaceable Street, stated that the incumbent first selectperson should complete a debrief with any newly elected first selectperson. She doesn't believe the expense is justified and she doesn't believe the town should go from zero to \$180,000 in one step without an understanding of what the role entails. Sean Connelly responded that there was a task force to study the most advantageous form of government for Ridgefield. Scott Deyoung, 51 Caudatowa Drive, reviewed the flowchart for this

role and it isn't clear to him that the administrator would be managing everything. Chris Nolan, 59 Prospect Street, supports a town administrator with knowledge in public policy because it protects a town from liabilities. Mike Rettger stated that he served on the task force and explained the work they completed, which concluded that the best form of government is the town meeting. The greatest disadvantage is the turnover which would be remedied by hiring a town administrator that would contain the institutional knowledge and experience from the first selectperson to the next first selectperson. In Ridgefield, Tedd Zagorec first selectperson serves as the chief executive officer as well as the chief operating officer. No corporation the size of Ridgefield would allow that. During this current first selectperson's tenure, Ridgefield has grown beyond the capacity of a first selectperson to complete all the duties of both a CEO and a COO. A professional town administrator protects Ridgefield. It provides workload balance, continuity, and expertise.

3. Senior Tax Credit Program

a. Amendment to Senior Tax Credit (Chptr 317, Art I, Code of Ordinances)

b. Amendment to Tax Deferment for the Elderly (Chptr 317, Art IV, Code of Ordinances) to increase income limit to \$100,000

Leonard Comberiate Senior Tax Committee secretary, stated that their objective was retaining and attracting retirees to Ridgefield by revising the tax credits. He believes that this tax credit plan doesn't meet the needs of the Ridgefield seniors. Chuck Hancock stated that he believes the tax credits should all be based on a means test. Andrea Beebe, 378 Main Street, agrees with means testing but disagrees with being disqualified for any tax credit because she isn't a homeowner. A car tax credit would be a good alternative. Carl Forcheski 12 Revere Drive served on the Senior Tax Committee and supports the tax credits but is disappointed that the BOS disregarded the bulk of the committee's recommendations. Scott Deyoung, 51 Caudatowa Drive, stated that there are over 300 programs to benefit the residents. He questions the wisdom of a small town engaging in such financial programs. He doesn't support the tax credit but he will claim it if he qualifies. Sharon Dornfeld, agreed with Chuck Hancock. She believes the deferment program increase is fair but there should be more criteria than just age for the other benefits. Mike Payne, 40 Ledges Road, supports the tax credit for longtime residents of Ridgefield, not automatically for anyone over 65.

4. Amendment to Pension Commission Ordinance (Chptr 19, Art II, Code of Ordinances)

Chris Christiansen stated that this commission would benefit from adding two alternates to allow them to achieve quorum at each meeting and conduct business. The alternates would also be ready to fill vacancies.

5. Sale of 29 Lakeview Drive – which is town-owned

Evan Carston, 3 Lookout Drive, represents a group of people exposed to this situation long before it became a blight. He corrected the street name to 29 Lakeview Drive. It has been a blight since 2018. He gave a history of the issues at the property. He described that the sale price should be listed. A stone wall should be addressed. Buyer due diligence should be done to ensure the buyer has the means to build nothing larger than a two-bedroom structure with an above ground septic system.

6. 84 Mamanasco Road – acceptance of open space

Rudy Marconi explained that this lot is near 12th Lane. The owners will transfer it to the town if they also take a second lot which would require probate to get clear title. The family will donate both lots if used as a park. The cost to the town is the cost to demolish the house, any legal expense, and the lost property tax revenue.

The public hearing was adjourned at 9:55pm.