



## **Town of Ridgefield**

### **Form of Government Committee Meeting and Public Hearing Approved Minutes**

Thursday, January 23, 2025

#### **1. Call to order**

The Form of Government Committee meeting convened at 7:00 PM on Thursday, January 23, 2025 in the Town Hall Main Conference Room.

Members present: Laurie Christiansen, Michael Rettger, Jonathan Seem, Robert Hendrick, Todd Zagorec, Rachel Sondheimer, Steve Zemo, Dennis Tracey

Members absent: Charles Robbins

Others Participating: None

#### **2. Public Comments**

Mr. Zagorec made a brief overview presentation on the purpose and goals of the Committee, and responded to questions from the audience.

The following comments were made in the Public Hearing portion of the meeting:

Mr. Zagorec read for the record a letter from Andrea Beebe, Main Street, asking the committee to consider recommending alternatives to the traditional Town Meeting voting methods of voice vote and hand raising, to provide accommodation to persons with disabilities and to provide more anonymity when voting.

Chris Vahlsing, North Street, commented on the positive aspects of having a Town Meeting form of government. He also noted challenges he has found with finding information about how the town government works and about the timing and nature of board and committee meetings.

Hariklia Koundourakis, Chestnut Hill Road, expressed strong support for the Town Meeting form of government, but is concerned about the fact of generally low turnout for most Town Meetings. She offered suggestions for things the town could do to better educate new residents on the operation of town government and on the schedule and nature of board and committee meetings.

Sean Connelly, Barrack Hill Road, commented on the positive aspects of the Town Meeting form of government, as well as the potential advantages of the town developing a town administrator position, which would benefit the town in operational scope and continuity over time. In response to some of the prior comments, he noted the challenges of trying to provide useful information across broad audiences, particularly in the absence of a strong accepted common communication vehicle like a town newspaper. He noted that the town hall newsletter that has been developed is a partial effort to address these challenges.

Ben Oko, Barlow Mountain Road, noted that the Ridgefield Press used to produce an annual supplement about the working and operation of the town, and wondered if and how that might be replicated. He also encouraged continued development of the town hall newsletter as a communication vehicle.

Llewellyn Cheng, Still Road, offered several suggestions for improving communication about town board and committee meetings via social media.

Interspersed with and following public comments, there was a general discussion among the committee members and the hearing attendees on the various comments and suggestions that had been offered.

There being no further comment from the public, at 8:35 it was

**Moved** to continued the Public Hearing portion of the meeting to the next scheduled meeting of the Committee on January 25 at 10:30. Moved by Mr. Seem, seconded by Mr. Zemo. All in favor.

### **3. Meeting Minutes**

**Motion** to approve the minutes of the January 6, 2025 meeting by Ms. Christiansen, seconded by Mr. Hendrick . All in favor, with Mr. Zemo and Mr. Tracey abstaining, having not been present for the meeting.

### **4. Work Plan**

Mr. Zagorec provided an update on the interview schedule. As he has been unable to arrange with Matt Knickerbocker to attend a full committee meeting, it was agreed that the work team assigned to the Wilton research should conduct the interview with Mr. Knickerbocker and include that information in their later town interview report.

Mr. Zagorec also reported that he has gotten confirmation from 4 of the 5 Selectpersons that they will be able to attend the committee's February 3 meeting.

The committee discussed the town interview report template drafted by Mr. Zagorec. It was agreed to follow that template, supplemented by a standard checklist to document the separation of legislative powers among charter entities, with that information to be provided by Mr. Hendrick from his "level-set" research and then confirmed by teams in their respective town interviews.

Mr. Hendrick reported he is progressing on the level-set research but has nothing specific to discuss at this meeting.

### **5. Communications**

The Women's Club has provided a speaking slot for the committee at its February 6 meeting. Ms. Christiansen offered to make that presentation. Mr. Seem is attempting to reschedule a time with the Rotary, which was previously postponed.

Mr. Seem displayed his proposal for spreadsheet template to document and track resolution of communications received by the Committee. Members agreed with the overall format and offered some suggestions for further content.

### **6. Adjournment**

**Motion** to adjourn at 9:05pm by Mr. Zemo , seconded by Mr. Zagorec . All in favor.

Next meeting January 25, 2025, 10:30 am.

Submitted by  
Michael Rettger