



Town of Ridgefield Public Safety Facilities Committee Minutes

UNAPPROVED

February 05, 2026, 7PM

ANNEX, Large conference room, 66 Prospect Street, Ridgefield, CT

Please note – these minutes are not verbatim.

Committee Members Present: David Brickley, Pamela Dunaway, Denis Graves (via telephone), Wally Martinez, Adam Safir, Stephen Scalzo (via telephone), Ed Tyrrell

Committee Members Absent: None

Presenters in Attendance: Chief of Police, Jeff Kreitz; Police Executive Officer Major Nick Fowler; Assistant Fire Chief Tony Cerulli; Volunteer Fire Chief Timothy Pambianci; First Selectperson Rudy Marconi; Director of Public Works, Jacob Muller

Wally Martinez called the meeting to order at 7:07 pm.

David Brickley motioned to switch items one and two. Pamela Dunaway seconded. Motion passed 7-0.

1. **General briefing from Fire and Police** – Police Chief Kreitz reported the impacts of current facilities on police operations and infrastructure needs to fulfill the police mission. There are forty-four sworn staff including three division captains as well as three lieutenants for the three shifts. He shared statistics showing that emergency calls have increased in most categories except for vehicle accidents. This data is available on the police website. Police activity is high. Major Fowler presented logistical data including day shift (7a-3p) staff of twenty-five people occupy the building at one time. The evening shift is about sixteen people. But during holidays or events, most of the staff of forty-four are on site. The report writing room is where officers make calls, write reports, and process evidence. It can only accommodate two workstations that are currently shared among six officers. The interview room is also the conference and meeting room. There are no alternative spaces for these uses. The training room is also the briefing room and storage. It can seat thirty. A department-wide meeting to include the forty-four sworn staff and fourteen civilian staff isn't logically possible. The only space for fingerprinting is in the secure lock-up. Therefore, if a community member needs this service, they must go where arrestees are being held. The police department needs a second non-secure finger-printing area. Currently, there are four holding cells. Nothing is ADA compliant. Wheelchair-bound detainees must be carried out of the chair and into the cell and assisted with bathroom use. Uniform and officer equipment storage is stacked and strewn throughout the building. There are only forty-three non-repairable lockers for the forty-four officers.

The locker room only has one toilet and two urinals. The communal showers can only accommodate one person at a time. The female locker room has only one toilet and one shower. Chief Kreitz added that there is no adequate space for ceremonies. Major Fowler then summarized the infrastructure needs; to maximize operational efficiency and workflow, to ensure safety and compliance to mitigate liability, to meet the current and future needs of staff, to maintain operational readiness at all times with minimal delays, to provide privacy for victims and report filers, to provide a functional training space for officer fitness, to optimize parking for employees and visitors (need fifty-seven to cover all site personnel but only have thirty-one spaces, and to provide covered parking for the fleet (need twenty-seven but have twenty-five total and only ten are covered). Chief Kreitz highlighted need for proper storage and evidence security, ADA compliance and elevator, fire suppression systems, sufficient workspace, building access control, parking lot access separate from public area adequate for prisoner entrance/exit, adequate operational space for emergency services communications which serve all emergency services including police fire, and emergency medical services.

Assistant Fire Chief Tony Cerulli made the fire department presentation. He introduced Volunteer Fire Chief Timothy Pambianci and then shared a video from Fire Chief Rom Duckworth. Ridgefield has thirty-six career firefighters and staff and fifty-five volunteer firefighters. Eight or nine firefighters are on staff at every shift, seven days a week. They had 4596 emergency calls in 2025 and that number increases every year. 75% were EMS related. There are fourteen calls per day on average. Firefighters on site are training and resting in between responding to emergency calls. They need adequate training and rest areas. They also need adequate parking. They only have about twelve spaces. When forty or fifty volunteer firefighters respond to an emergency, they have nowhere to park. They also delay response times because the vehicles are stacked. Oftentimes they must move around vehicles to get the one needed and then park the moved vehicles back inside and jump in the departing vehicle. They also need proper diesel exhaust capture. They currently have all their gear on the apparatus floor. The volunteer firefighters store gear next to moving fire vehicles while inhaling all that exhaust. Current cancer risk mitigation requires showering within one hour of returning from a call. But they don't have enough shower facilities and cannot accommodate the entire crew. The cancer exposure includes the UV light breakdown of some gear components. Therefore, gear should be stored out of direct sunlight. A decontamination area is also needed that can be accessed without crossing by or through clean areas and gear. Suitable training space is needed. Currently, training is conducted outdoors, weather permitting, and depending on site availability and conditions. But training time is reduced by travel time to get to the training site. They need classroom instruction space with audio-visual equipment, daily briefing and pre-incident planning room, fire and EMS simulation room, and a training tower for in-house skills practice. The current dispatch center requires adequate infrastructure to support staffing needs, secured zones with controlled access, backup power, and redundant phone, radio, and data systems.

In summary, the fire department needs are in three categories. One is mandatory for legal compliance including building codes, essential facilities standards, fire and life safety codes, mechanical codes (diesel exhaust systems), and ADA accessibility standards. The second category is safety standards to protect firefighter health and avoid liability which are set by NFPA for firefighter safety, infection control, cancer prevention protocols, hot/warm/cold zone separation, and USFA facility design guidance. The third category is operational requirements to eliminate delays, support

the mission, and serve the town's needs today and into the future. They include a facility that accommodates proper parking and maneuvering vehicles without stacking them, adequate training, and longevity to support the town's needs for more than the next fifty years.

Adam Safir asked the police and fire representatives to provide pros and cons to co-location of the police and fire facilities. Major Fowler explained that one significant advantage to co-location would be training conducted for both departments on a daily basis without large scale training planning. He added that there is also a benefit to sharing certain facilities like a fitness center and mechanical features such as HVAC, elevators, generators, and IT infrastructure. Working in proximity will also make responding to critical incidents more efficient. The major disadvantage is the size required for a facility that would accommodate both departments. Adam Safir also asked if they preferred site location. Chief Kreitz would like to be in sector one, downtown off the main streets because they patrol the community. Assistant Chief Cirulli said near center of town would make the most sense for their current operations.

Pamela Dunaway asked if there was an inherent complication by the police needing a special area to bring detainees but they responded that the facility design could address that need. Then she asked if there were any factors affecting the inter- and intradepartmental teamwork and comradery positively or negatively. Major Fowler explained that the inadequacy of facilities negatively impacts morale.

David Brickley asked if any components of operations could be moved to a separate facility such as training or administration. Assistant Chief Cirulli responded that a separate training facility could work if it could accommodate all the apparatus. Chief Kreitz added that police administration personnel and classroom training should be on site with the officers unless it's offsite somewhere larger and accommodating both departments.

Stephen Scalzo asked where training is currently conducted. Assistant Chief Cirulli explained that they go to different areas of town including different school locations.

Adam Safir motioned to allow public comment including public questions for the police and fire representatives. Wally Martinez seconded. Motion carried 7-0.

2. **Public Comment** – Chuck Hancock thanked the police and fire departments for their work. Isabel Caporale stated her support for this facility. A volunteer firefighter asked for clarification of the location of Sector One, for the public's information. It is a triangle area with corners at Fairfield County Bank, Pamby's Shell, and Stop n Shop. Ken Olson, 77 Sunset Lane, suggested that the committee connect with the HOA presidents for a direct line to owners. He offered the phone lists, but the committee prefers meeting with the groups and getting the owners engaged with their email addresses. Chuck Hancock added that the homeowner associations were very receptive to him and would be interested to hear the committee members.
3. **Briefing on town budget and finances** – First Selectperson Rudy Marconi and Public Works Director Jacob Muller reported. Mr. Marconi expressed the importance of addressing this critical need

because it affects the health and wellness of the two departments. The starting budget five years ago for the research going into this project was \$420,000. \$42,923 remains available for this committee. The June 1, 2026-7 budget allocates \$125,000. Mr. Muller suggested the committee meet with the architects, KBA, who worked on this project. They performed feasibility studies, site selection process, and planning. They could walk the committee through the research and design process. Adam Safir asked how this project fits into the town's overall capital projects. Mr. Marconi shared that each fire department apparatus is over \$500,000 and they require replacement every so many years. Ball fields are slated for synthetic turf replacement. Open space needs maintenance. Board of Education expenses are coming **in at upwards of \$20 million**. The state is beginning to impose affordable housing mandates. The town is debating over waiting for state mandates or being proactive. The Ttown's operating budget increase is about 3%, schools are at about 4.62%. There are expenses on the horizon, but none can be considered in silos. Each expenditure is important to the town regardless of the demographic directly served by the expenditure. Adam Safir asked if there is anything transformative in the town's anticipated growth or infrastructure that could impact the determination of optimal site location for the safety facilities. Mr. Marconi stated that his best guess would be to expect more development in Branchville. Pamela Dunaway asked for cost analyses for the different site locations considered. Mr. Muller explained that financial research for each site wasn't feasible. Instead, they studied the feasibility of the site that satisfied the building design which addressed the needs. David Brickley asked for the history of the 2008 declination of the referendum for a new police department. Mr. Marconi responded that at that time, the recession and existing debt service concerned the town, so the BOS recognized the need to postpone this project. David Brickley asked if there is a debt service threshold that the town would accept. But all concluded that debt service changes often enough that a threshold cannot be logically determined. In fact, the newest referendum would have raised the debt service to below the amount the town had previously accepted. Selectperson Sean Connelly added that in discussion with Finance Director Redmond, asked for the debt service as a percentage of the total budget and it showed the town in a strong position. Denis Graves asked if there were grants available for this project. Mr. Muller explained that there were grants and earmarks. But projects must be shovel-ready to be considered.

4. **General discussion** – Ed Tyrrell asked how soon the architects can be invited to a meeting. Mr. Muller will ask KBA for their availability on any future Thursday evening. Adam Safir asked that KBA be informed of this committee's charge to understand the underlying assumptions and models. The committee is seeking discoveries not explanations of conclusions previously reached. Pamela Dunaway shared that the KBA meeting occur after the presentation from the opposition group so the committee can formulate questions for KBA based on the opposition presentation.

Wally Martinez suggested the committee create working groups and develop a due diligence plan per working group that will be reviewed and approved by the committee to ensure efforts aren't duplicated. He added that the straw man method could be implemented, and the working groups could be needs assessment and site evaluation (Adam Safir, David Brickley), financial analysis (Stephen Scalzo, Denis Graves, David Brickley), and community engagement (Pamela Dunaway, Ed Tyrrell). He asked that the groups bring their due diligence tasks for committee approval next week.

David Brickley motioned to create the three working groups and assign committee members as follows; needs assessment and site evaluation (Adam Safir, David Brickley), financial analysis (Stephen Scalzo, Denis Graves, David Brickley), and community engagement (Pamela Dunaway, Ed Tyrrell). Each group will draft a due diligence list for committee approval next week. Ed Tyrrell seconded. Motion carried 7-0.

5. **Committee engagement working group discussion** – Pamela Dunaway presented an outline to the committee for community engagement at every step of this process. The objective is to course correct as needed before arriving at the referendum. The goals are based on the committee charge. She summarized assumptions and committee expectations. She listed different communications options available. She provided statistics on subscribers. A kick-off meeting is anticipated for mid-March. She is researching costs for an initial comprehensive survey but hopes to send out smaller surveys in-house throughout the process. Adam Safir stated that the outline well supports the committee's charge. He is concerned that a survey will only reach the same people who usually participate in surveys but how will they reach the rest. Pamela Dunaway responded that she hopes to get community support for online survey takers because printed surveys received very little response. This community support will be available at different locations such as Founders Hall and the library.

She also reported that the town website, www.RidgefieldCT.gov, has a bright green banner across the top just below the page tabs for people to subscribe to the Public Safety Facilities Committee alerts. You provide your name and email address to receive committee updates, which the committee hopes to send out weekly following the meeting. Please subscribe.

She also asked if the committee supports an expenditure of \$1500.00 for survey distribution, administration, and data analysis. She will craft the questionnaire for committee approval. It will be focused on the failed referendum.

David Brickley motioned to adopt this outline as the Committee Engagement Plan. Ed Tyrrell seconded. Motion carried 7-0.

Wally Martinez motioned to approve up to \$1750.00 for Pamela Dunaway to contract for the survey service. Ed Tyrrell seconded. Motion carried 7-0.

6. **Acceptance of Minutes** – Pamela Dunaway motioned to approve the minutes as presented for the January 29, 2026, meeting. David Brickley seconded. Motion carried 7-0.

Ed Tyrrell motioned to adjourn the Public Safety Facilities Commission meeting at 9:30 PM. David Brickley seconded. Motion carried 7-0.

Respectfully submitted by,
Etna Monsalve