

Ridgefield Senior Tax Committee
February 13, 2025- 4:30 pm

Town Hall – Large Conference Room

Minutes

Location: Town Hall Building Ridgefield CT—Large Conference Room

Members Present:

- Leonard Comberiate - Secretary
- Andrew Okrongly
- Joseph Adams, Jr
- Gary Roman - Chair
- Linda Massie – Vice Chair
- Carl Forcheski
- James Bertoluzzi (Via Zoom)

The third meeting was called to order by Chair, Gary Roman, and commenced at 4:30 pm, at which time a motion was made duly seconded. No edits to the minutes of the prior meeting were raised.

Public Comment Period: No comments were received.

The Committee discussed the key questions to be discussed with Anthony Phillips, Director of Ridgefield Social Services. It was agreed to have Mr. Phillips address the committee at the next scheduled meeting of March 6, 2025. The key parameters included the number of senior families age 65 and older; the number that owned real estate in Ridgefield; approximate income levels to gain some insight as to how many seniors may be facing challenges in paying their real estate taxes. It was agreed that Gary Roman would send an email to Mr. Phillips with a request to provide a written response of the desired information at the March 6, 2025, meeting.

Mr. Phillips joined the meeting at approximately 5:00 PM and addressed questions by the Committee members. He agreed to address questions sent to him in the next week and address the Committee on March 6, 2025.

Linda Massie was tasked with requesting Al Garzi, Ridgefield Tax Assessor, to attend the March 6, 2025 meeting and provide the following information; total tax revenue collected by the Town of Ridgefield; a summary of tax assessments related to commercial, industrial, retail businesses and residential property owners and total tax revenue collected on vehicles. In addition, Mr. Garzi will be asked to provide the number of Ridgefield seniors/households qualifying the current senior tax credit; the total expense or the Senior Tax Credit in Ridgefield and the number of town residents availing themselves of elderly deferments and the annual impact on tax revenue. Since the Assessors' Office administers the CT Elderly Homeowners and Renters Programs Programs, Mr. Garzi will be asked to provide data on the State programs. Linda Massie was charged with contacting Mr. Garzi and requesting the latter data and inviting him to the March 6, 2025 of the Senior Tax Committee.

The Committee next reviewed a worksheet of the neighboring towns including Wilton, Westport, Weston, Redding, Bethel, Newtown and New Canaan, The file included current population, median household income, persons above age 65 at the poverty level, number of housing units owned and rented, median value of owner-occupied homes.

The worksheet summarized the number of households receiving tax credits or deferments, or both. The worksheet detailed the criteria for receiving a- credit or a deferral, including age, residency requirements, income levels, asst limitations. The characteristics of each respective program vary, but do comply with CT Statute 12-129n.

Carl J. Forcheski reviewed a summary of the Westport Senior Tax Relief Programs, including Tax Credits and Deferral Programs and their use of CT State Tax Credits. The report summarized the amount of Town credits, Town deferral balance and additional assessment reductions for eligible veterans.

It was noted that Carl Forcheski was to follow up with Newtown and Joe Adams, Jr was to follow up with Bethel to complete the analysis for both towns. Andrew Okrongly will follow-up with the Town of Westport.

Gary Roman distributed the CT Title 12.129n to the committee members and asked them to review the statute with respect to any mention of income limits for senior tax credits embedded in the statute, It was suggested that a review and discussion of the CT Statute 12-129n by the Ridgefield Town Attorney was desired at a later

date along with a review to determine how the current Tax Credit is impacted and if a reduced car tax credit was available for senior citizens and not precluded by the CT Statute.

The final topic discussed was a review of the charge of the Senior Tax Committee.

The charge of the Committee is to:

- Review the current programs for the elderly in terms of their current participation and percentage of eligible residents using the various programs. The committee was encouraged to use all relevant tax assessor, census and town master plan data that is available.
- Evaluate each of the current program results against their initial objectives and determine the program's effectiveness in meeting the needs of the Ridgefield's elderly.
- Recommend any changes in the current programs, elimination of ineffective programs or establishment of new programs which will help the elderly maintain their current residences in Ridgefield while not placing an unfair burden on Ridgefield's other residents.
- Perform a financial analysis of all the costs and benefits of both the current elderly programs as well as any changes the committee recommends over the next five years.
- Report back to the BOS within 60 days.

Given the last requirement of reporting back to the Board of Selectpersons in 60 days, Mr. Roman suggested that he write a report to be delivered to the Board of Selectpersons detailing the progress of the Committee. The report will be sent in the first week of March 2025. The Committee agreed to the sending of that report to the Selectpersons.

No open topics were introduced by the Committee members

Next Meetings

The next two meetings will be held on Thursday at 4:30 pm, as follows:

- March 6, 2025
- March 20, 2025

There being no other business for the Committee, a motion was made and unanimously made to adjourn the meeting of the tax committee at 6:00 pm.

Submitted;

Leonard Comberiate

Secretary

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