



**Town of Ridgefield**  
**Board of Selectman Meeting Minutes**  
**UNAPPROVED**  
**October 21, 2020 at 6:30pm via Zoom**

Please note – these minutes are not verbatim.

**Present:** Rudy Marconi (RM), Bob Hebert (BH), Sean Connelly (SC), Barbara Manners (BM), Maureen Kozlark (MK)

**1. Public comment**

There were no public comments.

**2. Appointments:**

**Bobby Knight – Reappointment to the ECDC**

Mr. Knight is up for his reappointment to the Economic Community and Development Commission and provided the Board of Selectmen with what he has been involved with over the past year. Mr. Knight has been working on the downtown WiFi project which involves providing WiFi as a quality of life amenity to support the businesses in town, particularly Ballard Park. Because of budget restraints, the ECDC decided not to pursue the WiFi project further at this time, but will revisit the idea in the future. Mr. Knight also spearheaded a survey to gather data from the local business community in town to gauge where the needs are during the pandemic. All with the goal of providing advice, marketing and providing the right financial path if needed.

Mr. Knight was asked to expand on the information collected from the pandemic survey and his prior comment about the ECDC evolving beyond a party planning committee. Mr. Knight was also asked what is being done to bring in businesses from outside of Ridgefield. Mr. Hebert commented on the terrific work that the ECDC has done and thanked Mr. Knight for his hard work. Mr. Marconi asked what the ECDC is doing to promote the Shop Local campaign.

**B. Hebert moved and B. Manners seconded the motion to reappoint Bobby Knight for a one year term on the Economic Community and Development Commission. Motion carries 5-0.**

**Kimberly Carone & Tina Malhotra – Appointment to the Prevention Council**

Kimberly Carone started working with the Prevention Council last year through the PTA as

a liaison and really wanted to do more to help take the Prevention Council to the next level. Tina Malhotra has been attending the Prevention Council for the past 3 years and goal is to help be a bridge connecting the community and parents to resources available through the Prevention Council and RCCASA (Ridgefield Community Coalition against Substance Abuse).

Ms. Manners asked if it would make more sense to combine the Prevention Council and RCCASA. R. Marconi commented that this has been a consideration over the years but to remind all that RCCASA was created under the umbrella of Ridgefield to support policies as the RPC focuses on specific individual programs.

All Selectmen expressed their gratitude for these very important missions and appreciate both Ms. Carone and Ms Malhotra giving of their time to these causes.

**M. Connelly moved and B. Manners seconded the motion to appoint Kimberly Carone and Tina Malhotra for a four year term on the Ridgefield Prevention Council. Motion carries 5-0.**

**3. Holiday Village – Request to join “Friends of Ridgefield”**

ECDC member Steve Spivak spoke about the Holiday Village and the idea to expand on the Holiday Stroll in order to help support local merchants over a span of several weekends during December. The ECDC has partnered with the Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Ridgefield to put a focus on businesses, promote the arts and highlight the charm of the Town. COVID safety measures and protocols will be in place. The need right now is to generate the funds for the event. Sponsorships will be sold to local organizations, businesses and individuals. The ECDC is requesting to manage the collection and distribution of the funds through Friends of Ridgefield. By utilizing this entity, the ECDC will not have to set up a separate organization to be able to collect and distribute the funds. Ms. Manners commented that it is a perfect use of the Friends of Ridgefield entity, however expressed concern about the management of the funds and the COVID protocols that they have in place. Mr. Spivak responded that the ECDC’s finance committee will handle the funds and the plan in regards to COVID protocols is a work in progress. Ms. Kozlark asked Mr. Spivak to talk more about the schedule of events. Mr. Connelly asked about the food vendors, expected budget and ROI. Mr. Spivak discussed ideas to help the restaurants in Town to vend during the events. Mr. Hebert asked for more details on the start and end dates and street closures. The ECDC will continue to update the Board on the details of the event.

**M. Kozlark moved and B. Hebert seconded the motion to approve the Holiday Village Committee request to join the Friends for Ridgefield. Motion carries 5-0.**

**4. Expanding Arts Council Member Discussion**

The Board of Selectman has the authority to adjust the size of the Arts Council. Jennifer Rose-DiLaura, Arts Council Chair, answered questions from the Board about the proposed

size increase, majority representation, and the possibility of creating sub-committees within the council to help with efficiency. Ms. Rose-DiLaura talked about the different projects the Arts Council is working on and commented that the members pick what they want to work on based on their skills.

**S. Connelly moved and M. Kozlark seconded the motion to increase the Arts Council from 11 members to 15 members. Motion carries 5-0.**

**M. Kozlark moved and B. Manners seconded the motion to appoint Dr. Rajender Kaur and Joseph Collins to the Ridgefield Prevention Council. Motion carries 5-0.**

#### **5. Prospect Ridge Expansion Presentation**

Dave Goldenberg, Chair of the Affordable Housing Committee, shared a presentation on the Prospect Ridge Expansion project, which provided the reasons for the expansion and the layout of the proposed expansion area. The proposed expansion requires a land swap with Parks and Rec, which they are on board with. Ms. Kozlark commented on the added cost that could come from adding an additional pump line and requested to see a proposed budget. Mr. Goldenberg talked about the points that would be received for each unit based on the type of tenant. There was a discussion about what the Town contribution would be and which approvals will be needed. Mr. Hebert expressed concern about the amount of affordable housing that Ridgefield could ultimately end up with and commented that the Town should take a deeper look in to the recent bill that has been proposed.

There was a discussion about the finances regarding the project and the economic effects. The Affordable Housing Committee is asking the Board for approval to submit a grant for a feasibility study. The Board wants to be clear that approving the grant for the feasibility study does not guarantee they will vote to move forward with the project.

**S. Connelly moved and B. Manners seconded the motion to approve the submission of an application for a grant for the Department of Housing to conduct a feasibility study. Motion carries 4-1.**

#### **6. Main Street Landscape Architecture Project**

Planning and Zoning Commission member Charles Robbins gave an overview of the project details. The sub-committee for the project feels that it is important for the Town to be represented in the overall landscaping discussion involving the plantings and landscaping changes. Two bids for the project were received. Jane Didona, an architect that has worked with the Town for many years was asked to assist with the preliminary design. Ms. Didona put together a proposal that outlines the responsibilities throughout the project, post project maintenance guide and the cost to the Town. Construction is scheduled to begin in 2022.

#### **7. PURA Investigation Update**

Bethel, who has joined Ridgefield's case, has agreed to pay its fair share as discussed. The Town had a meeting with Eversouce to discuss the issues with their voice recording

system, the liaison program, and the implementation of make safe protocol. The voice recording system will be completed next year and Eversource has not committed to a make safe protocol. There is new legislation from the state that has a lot of new requirements regarding accountability.

#### **8. Paper Road Discontinuance Discussion**

There are 30 Paper Roads that have been reviewed with the Highway Department and Assessor's office. Discontinuing these roads would take a lot of work. It would be more efficient to designate these roads as open space and allow for homeowners to put in a driveway if needed. There is still a lot of research that needs to be done before the Board takes a vote.

#### **9. Review Draft of Guidelines for Boards, Committees and Commissions**

Mr. Marconi provided a draft of the Guidelines for Boards, Committee and Commissions for review. If any of the Board members have questions or comments, they should send them to Mr. Maroni.

#### **10. Selectman's Report**

COVID Update: Areas of the State are seeing spikes in COVID cases. Mr. Marconi provided a report that focuses on Ridgefield. Relative to the other towns in the State, Ridgefield is doing very well in terms of cases. The Town needs to consider Holiday events and how to proceed as cases spike. An executive order was issued that states that Municipalities must find a way to allow people to vote electronically if a Town Meeting is being held. Mr. Marconi is working with several other departments to get this done.

The Board of Finance has requested a breakdown of the anticipated additional costs for the election due to COVID. The net increase is \$12,182. Revenues in the Town Clerk's office are way up due to an increase in house sales, however other areas of Town revenue are down.

According to a recent report, the Ridgefield Response Rental Assistance Program had 412 cases. It was a successful program which ended in August.

There is no cross walk at the 116, Main Street and Danbury Rd intersection. It is very dangerous intersection for pedestrians. Mr. Hebert asked if adding a cross walk was looked at with the Main Street project. The Police Commission will have to asses and determine if this can be done.

#### **11. Minutes Approval – 10.7.2020**

There was a discussion about the Fire Truck that went out for a new engine.

**B. Hebert moved and M. Kozlark seconded the motion to approve the 10/7/20 meeting minutes. Motion carries 5-0.**

**12. Executive Session – Pending Litigation**

**B. Hebert moved and M. Kozlark seconded the motion to enter into an executive session at 10:08pm. Motion carries 5-0.**