First Selectman Rudy Marconi called the October 19, 2022 Special Town Meeting to order at 7:30 pm in the large conference room of Town Hall. Mr. Marconi asked the audience to stand and recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

R. Marconi stated that the first order of business was to appoint a Moderator. Selectwoman Maureen Kozlark moved and Selectwoman Barbara Manners seconded the motion to appoint Ed Tyrrell Moderator for the Special Town Meeting. The “Aye” votes were unanimous and Ed Tyrrell was appointed Moderator.

Moderator Ed Tyrrell called the meeting to order and requested a motion to appoint a secretary. Selectwoman Maureen Kozlark moved and Selectman Sean Connelly seconded the motion to appoint Wendy Gannon Lionetti, Town Clerk, secretary. The “Aye” votes were unanimous and Wendy Gannon Lionetti was appointed secretary.

Moderator Tyrrell read the legal notice of the meeting that appears on page 444.
The Moderator then asked for a motion to approve the first item. Selectwoman Barbara Manners moved and Selectwoman Maureen Kozlark seconded the motion to approve the first item which is a request to Purchase from the Town of Ridgefield by Pyramid Luxury Homes an unimproved portion of Spectacle Lane to be used for a private driveway.

The Moderator then entertained input from the meeting attendees. First Selectman Rudy Marconi provided an overview: Consultant Kate Throckmorton recommended the relocation of the bridge over the Silvermine Brook to a narrower section of the brook thereby minimizing the impact on the wetlands. This portion of Spectacle Lane is a ‘paper road’ and never went through formal acceptance. The sale of this parcel to the builder would be for $10,000. Attorney David Grogins stated that after review, the process by which this portion of the road is being sold is appropriate and legal. Pyramid Luxury Homes owner Joe Mirra stated that because an abutting property owner is currently using part of this road as their driveway, their intention, after purchase of the paper road, is to quit claim to the neighbor at no cost the portion that they are currently using as their driveway to avoid an easement situation.

The Moderator then called for a vote to approve the motion. The “Aye” votes carried, and the motion to approve the request to purchase an unimproved portion of Spectacle Lane from the Town of Ridgefield by Pyramid Luxury Homes (be used for a private driveway) passed.

The Moderator then asked for a motion to approve the second item. Selectman Sean Connelly moved and Selectwoman Maureen Kozlark seconded the motion to approve the Declaration of Conservation Easement pertaining to a parcel of land (Lot C08-0034), consisting of 27.34 acres on North Salem Road. Town Clerk Map No. 8642.
The Moderator then entertained input from the meeting attendees. First Selectman Rudy Marconi stated the parcel is 27 acres adjacent to the Ridgefield High School and behind SRMS. It is owned by the Town and it has never been dedicated as open space in perpetuity under the jurisdiction of the Conservation Commission. The reason for the Conservation easement and not a full transfer of the property to the Conservation Commission, is that we want to be sure that in the event it is ever needed for any possible expansion to the high school such as a field house etc, the acreage can be used as additional square footage of land to allow any building. Mr. Marconi clarified there is no discussion of an expansion to the high school at this time.

-Angela Liptack of Wilton Road East requested a re-reading of the motion; the Moderator complied and read the motion.

The Moderator then called for a vote to approve the motion. The “Aye” votes carried, and the motion to approve the Declaration of Conservation Easement pertaining to a parcel of land (Lot C08-0034), consisting of 27.34 acres on North Salem Road was approved.

The Moderator then asked for a motion to approve the third and final item. Selectman Bob Hebert moved and Selectwoman Maureen Kozlark seconded the motion to approve a Declaration of Open Space request for various parcels totaling 1,059 acres to be managed under the jurisdiction of the Ridgefield Conservation Commission.
The Moderator then entertained input from the meeting attendees.

James Coyle, Conservation Commission Chairman, stated the Conservation Commission has been researching the over 400 parcels of land to determine whether they have open space protection. There are approximately 2,600 acres and of them 1,100 or so acres have no open space purpose—500 acres in Hemlock Hills and Pine Mountain included. To declare them as ‘dedicated open space’ will afford them an extra level of protection.

-Phil Kearns, Parley Road, stated he is an open space user and applauds this action and voiced his strong support.

-Christine Moore, 63 Scott Ridge Road, asked why lot 41 on Prospect Ridge which is shown on the Town website was not listed among the properties to be declared open space? Mr. Coyle responded that the list the Conservation Commission provided to the Board of Selectmen did originally include that parcel on Prospect Ridge as well as another one on East Ridge across the street, but to consider it as open space was a bit of a reach because much of it is used as athletic fields. It was decided to remove it from the list to offer the Town flexibility. It doesn’t mean it won’t change in the future, but we wanted to get the bulk of the parcels declared right now.

-Kirk Carr, 62 Prospect Ridge, asked whether it is too late to amend the motion to add the two parcels? Town Counsel David Grogins replied Yes it is too late because that is a substantive change. The Moderator stated it is possible to change the other parcels in the future.

-Phil Kearns, Parley Road, asked whether the parcels being discussed include the soccer fields behind the rink? Mr. Coyle replied yes. Mr. Kearns stated that is Parks & Recreation property that was purchased through a state grant and there are restrictions stating that it must be used as recreational. Mr. Marconi clarified it is to be used for recreation/open space according to the stipulations in the grant.

-Nick Cerbone, 53 Main Street, asked whether the ‘recreation/open space’ designation is a legal classification of land? Does either take order of preference? Attorney Grogins replied yes, this is a legal classification; neither takes preferential order.

-Rudy Marconi stated that the parcel was purchased with approximately $370,000 of state grant money and can only be used for recreation or open space—not housing, business, etc.

-Greg Kabasakalian, Old Washington Road, stated he supports this motion.
Sean McEvoy, High Ridge Road, asked the Conservation Commissioner what is the current percentage of Town open space? Jim Coyle responded it is 25 percent – slightly below our goal.

Lori Mazzola, One Circle Drive East and Affordable Housing Committee member, asked if that space is only for recreational/open space, why were we given the authority to spend money for a feasibility study to build homes? Moderator Tyrrell stated that question is not relevant to the motion at hand.

Kirk Carr, Prospect Ridge, asked as a point of order---would like Ms. Mazzola’s question being voted on. Moderator Tyrrell stated that is the Moderator’s decision alone.

The Moderator then called for a vote to approve the motion. Although there were a few ‘Nay’ votes, the ‘Aye’ votes carried, and the motion to approve the Declaration of Open Space request for various parcels totaling 1,059 acres to be managed under the jurisdiction of the Ridgefield Conservation Commission was approved.

Selectwoman Maureen Kozlark moved and Selectwoman Barbara Manners seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:31 pm. Motion carried unanimously and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Wendy Gannon Lionetti, Town Clerk