



**Town of Ridgefield  
Board of Selectpersons Budget Meeting  
Minutes  
UNAPPROVED**

**February 24, 2026 at 7pm**

**Town Hall – Large Conference Room, 400 Main Street, Ridgefield, CT**

Please note – these minutes are not verbatim.

**Present:** Sean Connelly (virtual), Maureen Kozlark, Barbara Manners (virtual), Rudy Marconi, Geoffrey Morris

**Absent:** None

Rudy Marconi called the meeting to order at 7pm.

- 1. ECDC Budget – Chair Bob Knight and Vice Chair Kay Gelfman** – Mr. Knight reported a budget increase request from last year's \$35,000 to \$148,000 for the coming fiscal year. One main driver is the need for a full-time employee. The other is the increase in ECDC duties over the last five years including managing the Cultural District, which is a significant economic driver for the town, and addressing commercial space inquiries. The ECDC objectives are business attraction, business retention, Cultural District, promotion of the town and town events, and administration. The nine commission members balance the increased demands and achieve a moderate level of success. They feel the requested budget is necessary to achieve higher potential success. But they recognize the financial constraints of balancing all the town's needs and request BOS assistance to prioritize objectives and optimize the budget.

Ms. Gelfman reported that they researched the idea of an employee by speaking with the Bethel counterpart who provided reports showing the financial gain in grant funding and administrative support in exchange for that employee cost.

Rudy Marconi commented that a radio station made inquiries at town hall and he asked how an ECDC employee would have handled that inquiry. Mr. Knight explained that the inquiry originally came into the ECDC. They gave the agents a tour of the radio tower and answered their questions about the town and office space. They were referred to town hall with specific leasing questions only after addressing all other questions.

Mr. Knight added that the commissioners are not looking to do less. They have full plates with the reactive work of addressing inbound interest. They feel that an employee would allow the ECDC to be proactive to achieve their goals.

Maureen Kozlark stated that the Board of Finance has given the BOS very tight financial parameters and therefore, this is not the year to add personnel. She added that over the last few years, the ECDC budget has doubled and asked what quantifiable measures they can provide to show the value gained for those past budget increases. Mr. Knight responded that the budget increases have driven advertising and strengthened the economic growth of town festivals and events. They have also powered the Blue Dot Program for merchants, Ridgefield Connect (networking mixer for town business owners), and Tiger Shark Tank.

Rudy Marconi stated that he often asks for the ROI (return on investment) of budget expenditures and programs offered by the town. Mr. Knight explained that other towns quantify the value proposition of their economic development programs in visits to businesses.

Mr. Knight added that with the policy whiplash resulting from federal activity, the ECDC wants to protect and enhance opportunities for local businesses and ensure their connectivity.

Maureen Kozlark added that the duties the ECDC would assign to their employee align with the role of the town administrator or town manager that the BOS is exploring.

Geoffrey Morris commented that it seems that most of the ECDC budget has been spent on Cultural District expenses. He suggested utilizing a specific portion of the budget to fund a short-term or project-specific role. He added that he believes that an employee would bring in the return to more than cover the cost of employment. The budget simply cannot cover that cost at this time.

Maureen Kozlark added that there are several different groups in town that work in the arts and culture space. There is overlap and potentially opportunity for cohesion and cost-sharing.

Sean Connelly stated that he would support the commission's reallocation of the current ECDC budget to hire an economic development agent as an independent contractor and quantifiably demonstrate the value the role would bring.

Mr. Knight closed their presentation stating that they will proceed on that recommendation and return after a few months with metrics to report the ROI of the new position.

2. **Highway and Engineering Budgets – Jake Muller** – Director of Public Works and Facilities, Jacob Muller, and Director of Finance, Kevin Redmond, provided an overview of the current draft budget. They reported no changes in operating since the last budget meeting in January. They provided a capital budget breakdown bringing the original \$15 million down to \$10.087 million to the proposed \$10.972 million. The freightliner dump/plow cut was too steep and had to be brought up. A third loader must be purchased. The tire replacement machine purchase will be moved out to another year. Public Safety Building Committee expense will be split over two years. Communication relocation was pulled from the capital budget. They reviewed approved and pending grant funding for several roads' projects. Mr. Muller stated that the anticipated grant funding is an 80/20 split favoring the town.
3. **PD/FD** – Chief Kreitz (PD) and Chief Duckworth (FD) joined Mr. Muller and Mr. Redmond to discuss the PD and FD budgets. Mr. Muller reported that the initial \$3.2 million budget request covered joint department expenses. Then they broke down the expenses; \$450,000 for the

Public Safety Building Committee was lowered to \$125,000, Cell tower \$990,000, \$95,000 for PD drainage and sump pump, and \$136,000 for new PD showers.

Rudy Marconi asked if any of the proposed shower work will trigger any code compliance work but Mr. Muller doesn't think so. Chief Kreitz summarized that the PD immediate needs are; move stored items from top floor, stop flooding potential in basement, and stop roof leak potential. Rudy Marconi wants to confirm that immediate and urgent needs are addressed to ensure the department is operational during the next three years pending decision, approval, and construction of a public safety building.

Mr. Muller continued his presentation that the PD roof is \$287,000. Mr. Redmond totaled the capital budget proposals at \$11.078 million.

Police Chief Kreitz added that they are in need of one administrator vehicle, \$50,000. They have five administrators sharing two vehicles.

Police Chief Duckworth commented that all their requests have been heard.

4. **General Budget Discussion** – Rudy Marconi reviewed the total budget. Mike Rettger, Chair of the Board of Finance, joined the BOS discussion. The BOS will meet with the BOE the day following the day the BOE approves their budget.

Rudy Marconi reviewed a proposed decrease in the Graveyard Restoration Budget from \$125,000 to \$25,000 allowing for the crypt roof repair not the retaining wall repairs since there are no estimates to support the proposed budget line items.

Sean Connelly mentioned possible cuts in; Parks and Recreation for parking at the rec center, Tiger Hollow bathrooms, and field replacement. Maureen Kozlark mentioned possible cuts for the new truck for Parks and Recreation and allow them to reduce their budget by the truck value of \$135,000. Geoffrey Morris stated that with the pending real estate purchase, there could be a means to address parking. Therefore, at this point, there are too many variables to approve the \$507,000 for rec center parking. Maureen Kozlark added other capital cuts such as sound dampening in the cafeteria, cabinetry, and furniture. Sean Connelly agreed with the cuts except for the furniture.

Maureen Kozlark suggested declining the ECDC increase and leaving it at \$35,000. Barbara Manners agreed.

They continued reviewing line item by line item to prioritize immediate needs.

5. **Possible Capital/Operating Budget Vote** – None

***Sean Connelly motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:45pm. Maureen Kozlark seconded. Motion carried 5-0.***