



Town of Ridgefield
Board of Selectmen Special Meeting Minutes
UNAPPROVED
January 18, 2023 at 7.30pm

Please note – these minutes are not verbatim.

Present: Rudy Marconi, Maureen Kozlark, Bob Hebert, Sean Connelly

Absent: Barbara Manners

1. Public Comment

Andrea Beebe, 378 Main Street, asked if there is an update on the Youtubers that have been filming at Town Hall. Rudy Marconi commented that there are State Representatives in northern Connecticut who are looking into creating a Statute that restricts the amount of recording within government buildings.

Kirk Carr, 62 Prospect Ridge Rd, talked about the appointment process and requested that the Board vote on his appointment to the ECDC before interviewing other candidates. Because the meeting is a special meeting, additional items cannot be added to the agenda.

Glori Norwitt, Chair of the ECDC, provided clarification to certain comments made by Kirk Carr.

Richard Phillips and his wife, 12 Wooster Street, asked for an update on the grant proposal for the flood mitigation in his neighborhood. After their house flooded during storm Ida, the Town reviewed the property and feels that given the area of the flood plain it would qualify for the grant. Rudy Marconi commented that he has not received an update, however he will check with Jake Muller, Director of Safety & Purchasing, to find out the status. The Town did put in catch basins; however, they are not enough to keep the flooding at bay. Marconi invited the Phillips to set up a meeting with him to discuss the plans for mitigating future floods.

Because the property is in a Historic District, there may be an additional grant available, which is being explored.

Kirk Carr commented that the ECDC should not allow commissioner candidates to participate in the meetings before they are appointed.

2. **Appointments and Reappointments**

a. **Commission on Aging – Clemencia Saleeby**

Commission on Aging Chair Andrea Beebe and member Carmen Martin attended to show their support for appointing Clemencia Saleeby to the Commission.

Saleeby talked about how her life changed for the better when she moved to Ridgefield in 2021 to be closer to her children. Saleeby takes advantage of the many services that Ridgefield offers its senior citizens including Founders Hall and the Town Bus. Being that she is very social and active in the senior community, Saleeby feels she would be a great asset to the Commission on Aging.

The Board asked about Saleeby's ideas to engage isolated seniors and what she would like to focus on if appointed.

Beebe talked about the outreach program that the Commission is hosting at the library for the first time in three years.

Bob Hebert moved to appoint Clemencia Saleeby for a three-year term on the Commission on Aging. Sean Connelly second the motion. Motion carries 4-0.

b. **ECDC –**

i. **Appointment - Brittny Williams Howell MD**

ECDC Chair Glori Norwitt attended in support of appointing Brittny Williams Howell to the Commission.

Howell talked about her move to Ridgefield 8 years ago and her experiences with owning a business in town.

The Board asked Howell about her career as a Vascular Surgeon, what contributions she would bring if appointed, and what ideas she has for supporting new businesses.

There was a discussion about the process for appointing members to Boards, Committees and Commissions and if there are other candidates that should be interviewed before moving forward with a vote for Howell.

Sean Connelly moved to appoint Brittny Williams Howell for a two-year term on the Economic and Development Commission. Rudy Marconi second the motion. Bob Hebert abstained. Motion carries 3-0-1.

ii. Reappointment – Glori Norwitt & Jonathan Winn

Glori Norwitt and Jonathan Winn are both up for reappointment to the ECDC. Jonathan Winn could not be at the meeting because he is recovering from a bike accident.

Norwitt talked about her move from Secretary to Chair, the many ideas the Commission is working on, and the recent Shark Tank event that was very successful.

There was a discussion about Broadband and the WestCOG's help with the feasibility study. The plan is to have the project shovel ready in time for the State Grant. The ECDC sent out a survey to residents regarding internet use. They have received about 1,000 responses so far and are hoping to get more.

Norwitt commented on a few more ideas the ECDC has which includes seminars for small business owners and a store map at the kiosk in front of Deborah Ann's.

Maureen Kozlark moved to reappoint Glori Norwitt and Jonathan Winn for a two-year term on the Economic and Development Commission. Sean Connelly second the motion. Motion carries 4-0.

c. Graveyard Restoration Committee – Susan Kweskin

Graveyard Restoration Committee Chair Nancy Selander and member Susan Law attended in support of appointing Susan Kweskin to the Committee.

Kweskin talked about being a tombstone tourist, the knowledge she has gained from it, and about familysearch.org.

The Board asked Kweskin what sparked her interest in joining and what other volunteering she has done.

There are no other candidates in line for the Graveyard Restoration Committee.

Sean Connelly moved to appoint Susan Kweskin for a four-year term on the Graveyard Restoration Committee. Bob Hebert second the motion. Motion carries 4-0.

d. Cable Advisory Council – Gary Holland

Gary Holland told the Board about his reasons for wanting to join the Cable Advisory Council. He also talked about his many previous involvements in town which included volunteering on the Boy Scouts, the Tech Advisory Board, the RVNA Board of Directors, the Ridgefield

Symphony Board and working with the Conservation Commission on the first edition of the Walk Book.

Maureen Kozlark moved to appoint Gary Holland for four-year term on the Cable TV Advisory Council. Bob Hebert second the motion. Motion carries 4-0.

e. **Tree Committee – Robert Roth (reappointment)**

Robert Roth is up for reappointment to the Tree Committee.

Roth talked about the struggle with budgetary restrictions, the replanting program the Committee is trying to implement and the focus to inventory and catalog the trees along Main Street.

There was a discussion about the Native Plant Policy's role in replanting and what will be included in the upcoming budget request.

Maureen Kozlark moved to reappoint Robert Roth for a three-year term on the Tree Committee. Sean Connelly second the motion. Motion carries 4-0.

f. **Historic District Commission Alternate – Michael Mitchell**

Historic District Commission Chair Dan O'Brien attended in support of appointing Michael Mitchell to the Commission. Rudy Marconi read O'Brien's letter of support.

Mitchell told the Board about his professional experience as a landscape architect, his love for Ridgefield and his interest in becoming more involved in the community.

Maureen Kozlark asked Mitchell to expand on how landscaping architecture can play a role within the Commission.

There are no other candidates in line for the Historic District Commission.

Maureen Kozlark moved to appoint Michael Mitchell for a five-year term on the Historic District Commission. Bob Hebert second the motion. Motion carries 4-0.

3. **American Legion Post no. 78 – Lease renewal**

George Bessie from the American Legion appeared before the Board to request a renewal of the 10-year lease between the Town of Ridgefield and the American Legion Post no. 78. The American Legion has been leasing the property since 1948. During this time, they have done an excellent job maintaining the property & structure and have never defaulted on a payment.

The Board will review the lease and vote on it at the February 1st Board of Selectmen Meeting.

4. **Charter Revision Commission Formation**

After interviewing 17 applicants for the Charter Revision Commission, The Board of Selectmen have selected 9 candidates to appoint. The purpose of the Commission is to review and amend the current Charter to reflect the best practices of today.

Jonathan Seem, who was the previous Chair for the Commission, will meet with the new members to discuss the changes that were made during his term and the reasons behind them.

Bob Hebert mentioned there is a High School student who is interested in sitting in on the meetings to learn about the process and the Charter. Marconi commented that these meetings are public and all are welcome to attend.

Sean Connelly moved to appoint Bob Cascella, Kimberly Welton, Michael Lordi, Todd Zagorec, Laurie Christansen, Michael Rettger, Derick Schirm, Tom Lansen and Rebecca Mucchetti to the 2023 Charter Revision Commission. Maureen Kozlark second the motion. Motion carries 4-0.

5. **Ponds Edge Property**

There is an application in to Planning & Zoning for a 100-unit (with 20 affordable) apartment building off Route 7.

Before moving forward with the drawings and planning, the buyers would like to have an agreement with the Town in place. There will be a Town Meeting scheduled so the public can vote.

There was a discussion about the WPCA project and if this agreement will have any affect on it.

Bob Hebert asked about remediation costs and who will pay for it. He also asked for confirmation that the \$441,000 from the sale will go back into the ARPA funds as originally intended.

6. **Tax Collector Refunds**

The final dollar amount was left off the Tax Collector Refund request so the Board held off on approving it.

7. **Approval of Meeting Minutes**

Bob Hebert moved to approve the January 4, 2023 Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes as amended. Maureen Kozlark second the motion. Motion carries 4-0.

8. **Selectman's Report**

A transformer on Halpin Lane blew over the weekend, causing loss of power to the Playhouse and Annex building. Eversource did not communicate this to the

Town which is a problem. The loss of power was discovered on Monday because there was a Martin Luther King Jr. Day celebration at the Playhouse. Rudy Marconi will be meeting with Eversource to discuss this and the Rail Trail, which has become overgrown.

The Eversource liaisons for the Town have been great. The problem is that the liaisons are not receiving communication from their operations department.

During the last storm, the Rec Center had a generator malfunction and could not be used as a shelter for people in need. Yanity Gym cannot be used as a shelter until the windows are replaced with storm ready windows, which have been ordered but have not yet arrived.

Budget discussions are coming up this month. The Board can expect a lot of requests for additional employees.

Moody's, the Town's bond credit rating service, recently dropped the Town's credit score down from a triple A due to a low fund balance. There was a discussion about why the fund balance is low and how to build it up again. Sean Connelly commented that it seems Moody's has changed their formula because the Town has not changed anything. Rudy Marconi added that Kevin Redmond, Director Finance, suggested changing credit score companies.

Maureen Kozlark had a meeting with the Board of Education regarding the Energy Task Force. The Board of Education has assigned Jill Brown and Sean Macvoy to be their liaisons to the Energy Task Force.

Sean Connelly moved to adjourn the Board of Selectmen meeting at 10:25pm. Bob Hebert second the motion. Motion carries 4-0.