



Town of Ridgefield
Board of Selectpersons Meeting & Public Hearing Minutes
UNAPPROVED

January 22, 2025 at 6:30pm

Please note – these minutes are not verbatim.

Present: Sean Connelly, Maureen Kozlark, Rudy Marconi, Chris Murray

Absent: Barbara Manners

Rudy Marconi requested the Tree Committee be added to the Agenda.

Maureen Kozlark motioned to add the Tree Committee to the Agenda as item 3a, following the Ridgefield 250 Committee Budget Request. Sean Connelly seconded. Motion carried 4-0.

Mr. Marconi requested item 7 (729 North Salem Road Lease – Follow-Up) be moved up in the Agenda.

Maureen Kozlark motioned to move the 729 North Salem Road Lease – Follow-Up as item 3b, following the Tree Committee. Sean Connelly seconded. Motion carried 4-0.

1. Public Comment

Debra Francheschini, 72 Spire View Road, requested Rudy Marconi read her written statement. Ms. Francheschini wrote in support of Andrea Beebe for the Affordable Housing Committee. Ms. Francheschini asked the BOS consider the blight property at 84 Mamasasco Road be used to build Ridgefield's first Habitat for Humanity home. She wrote the current property owner offered to donate the property to the Town to build a park, and, if approved, would result in a loss of real property tax. Ms. Francheschini also requested Ability Beyond transfer their half acre of town-owned land back to the Town for use by adults with disabilities and seniors.

Mr. Marconi shared he asked the current owner of 84 Mamasasco Road if they would consider a Habitat for Humanity home, and they said no, but he will ask again. Mr. Marconi confirmed that process is being managed through the Blight Prevention Board.

Collete Kabasakalian, 2 Washington Avenue, voiced support for Andrea Beebe for the Affordable Housing Committee, sharing she's respectful and thoughtful.

Lori Mazzola, 24 Qunicy Close, voiced, as the Vice Chair of the Affordable Housing Committee, her support for Andrea Beebe to fill the current vacancy. Ms. Mazzola shared Ms. Beebe brings a wealth of experience, has always been a voice of reason, and would be a welcome addition. Ms. Mazzola submitted a copy of her written statement to the BOS.

Michael Raduazzo, 195 Peaceable Street, voiced support for Andrea Beebe for the Affordable Housing Committee, seconding all previous comments made.

Brien Crotty, 77 Ledges Road, voiced support to continue to extend the 729 North Salem Road lease to the current tenant. Mr. Crotty shared having an Officer present across the street from Ridgefield High School, and at the entrance to Richardson Park is appreciated.

Charles Marino, 57 Mimosa Court, voiced support for an Officer to live at 729 North Salem Road, sharing it's a benefit to the community to have a presence at Richardson Park.

Debra Francheschini, 72 Spire View Road, asked about the proposed rent increase for 729 North Salem Road, asking the BOS consider it as the Fair Rent Commission, and that they not consider the proposed increase (from ~\$1500/mo to \$2600/mo + utilities).

2. Affordable Housing Committee Candidate Interview – Andrea Beebe

a. Andrea Beebe was present. Topics discussed included:

- Rudy Marconi asked Ms. Beebe about serving on the Commission on Aging (COA). Ms. Beebe shared she has been a commissioner for two terms, and will be exiting in April 2025, at the end of her current term.
- Mr. Marconi asked why the Affordable Housing Committee (AHC). Ms. Beebe shared through the COA, she recognizes seniors' needs, cost of living challenges, and limited housing availability housing for people with limited income. Ms. Beebe shared she is a former special education teacher, and noted Ridgefield's educational, and employment opportunities for adults with disabilities, but supportive housing is a missing piece. Ms. Beebe shared she has attended many AHC meetings, and has the time and willingness to contribute.
- Chris Murray asked about the scope of the housing need. Ms. Beebe shared, if Transition Programs are extended up to age 26, there will be many young people able to live outside of the home who need support with daily skills, and some who may self-manage in a group home setting. Mr. Marconi shared the Town currently has housing for 12, and Ability Beyond has roughly 60 homes in the area.
- Maureen Kozlark thanked Ms. Beebe for her attendance, comments, and for coming forward, and asked about the interface between AHC and Planning & Zoning (P&Z). Ms. Beebe shared to work with P&Z and be an advisor to the BOS, and both start with a dialog and goal-setting. Ms. Beebe expressed she would like to invite State Representatives bi-monthly or quarterly to AHC and/or BOS meetings to ask questions, give input, and have a two-way conversation.
- Sean Connelly voiced his appreciation for Ms. Beebe's commitment to the Town.
- Mr. Marconi asked Ms. Beebe's thoughts on using the existing PD building for affordable senior or special needs housing. Ms. Beebe shared she's unsure what AHC had previously discussed, if adaptable reuse is possible, it and the existing FD building would both be great, walkable housing locations.
- Ms. Kozlark asked if there is another candidate. Mr. Marconi confirmed, and shared the BOS can either vote on Ms. Beebe or wait until after interviewing the next candidate. Mr. Murray voiced support to vote in favor of Ms. Beebe.

Chris Murray motioned to appoint Andrea Beebe to the Affordable Housing Committee. Maureen Kozlark seconded. Motion carried 4-0.

Charles Marino, 57 Mimosa Court, voiced support for Andrea Beebe's appointment to the AHC.

3. Ridgefield 250 Committee Budget Request

- a. Geoffrey Morris, Co-Chair, Pamela Jones, Co-Chair, and James Carone, Committee Member, were present. Topics discussed included:
- Rudy Marconi distributed copies of the Ridgefield 250 budget request to the BOS.
 - Mr. Morris shared Museum in the Streets is included in this budget, which would be in collaboration with the Historical Society. Mr. Marconi shared some of the signs are badly faded. Mr. Morris confirmed the bases are in good shape, just the tops need to be replaced. Mr. Marconi asked about estimates. Mr. Morris shared he's having difficulty receiving written estimates, but R250 would like to reprint the existing 20 signs and add 5 more. Maureen Kozlark asked who paid for the original signs. Mr. Morris shared the Town. Mr. Marconi shared he would confirm.
 - Maureen Kozlark asked about Independence Hall. Mr. Morris shared R250 would like to recreate the clock tower from Independence Hall and put it on top of Town Hall. Mr. Caroni shared it would be a three-sided, anchored-down, built structure intended to be viewed from all sides.
 - Mr. Marconi shared R250 is requesting \$298,858. Mr. Morris clarified that is R250's full estimated budget, they are not requesting that amount from the Town. Mr. Marconi asked about creating a revenue budget including merchandise sales and estimated ticket sales. Mr. Morris confirmed R250 did that for the Liberty Ball.
 - Chris Murray asked about \$50k for reenactors. Ms. Jones confirmed that would be for quite a few actors, horses, machinery, etc.
 - Mr. Morris indicated they have already raised \$40k from donors, and believe they can raise \$100k from donors and \$50k-75k from sponsors, so they will request \$75k-100k from the Town. Mr. Murray asked about merchandise. Ms. Jones shared their overall goal is to be at least budget-neutral with the Town.
 - Ms. Kozlark asked about donor funds. Mr. Morris shared R250 had planned an event for major donors, but all were out of town and unable to come, but some have already sent donations. Ms. Jones shared the R250 website is almost complete, and they will have pamphlets and social media up and running to begin a formal fundraising campaign.
 - Ms. Kozlark asked about the duration of events. Ms. Jones confirmed from July 4, 2025 through July 4, 2026, kicking off with an expanded version of Keeler Tavern's 4th of July celebration, a Town-wide picnic, and merchandise and house swag available for sale. Mr. Morris shared most events will be May 25, 2026 through July 4th, 2026, including special restaurant menus and an ice cream at Debra Ann's.

3a. Tree Committee

Rudy Marconi shared Ridgefield is no longer designated as a Tree City and must reapply. Mr. Marconi shared Tom McManus, Tree Committee Chair, is going to submit the application, but needs the authority of the BOS. Mr. Marconi confirmed there is no cost.

Sean Connelly motioned to approve that Rudy Marconi sign and submit the resolution for Ridgefield's Tree City designation on behalf of the Board of Selectpersons. Maureen Kozlark seconded. Motion carried 4-0.

3b. 729 North Salem Road Lease – Follow-Up

- a. Dave DuBord, RPD Officer/Detective, was present. Topics discussed included:
- Rudy Marconi shared he spoke with Mr. DuBord after the last BOS meeting, and he requested the opportunity to meet with the BOS. Mr. Marconi shared he received a letter from the Jeffery Kreitz, Chief of Police, in support of Mr. DuBord. Chris Murray shared he received a call from Wayne Floegel, Republican Registrar of Voters, in support of Mr. DuBord. Maureen Kozlark confirmed the BOS is renewing Mr. DuBord's lease, and are not asking him to leave.
 - Mr. DuBord shared he has been with RPD for 19 years, and moved into 729 North Salem Road in 2016, with rent set at \$1300/mo including utilities. Mr. DuBord clarified the house is 2-bedroom 1.5-bathroom, 1435sqft, and built in 1900.
 - Mr. DuBord shared he completed a lot of work when he first moved in, including to the living room, dining room, upstairs bathroom, exterior floodlights, and updated all light fixtures. Mr. DuBord shared there is no insulation in the house, and still has original wiring, but he updated the electrical outlets. Ms. Kozlark asked about the electrical box. Mr. DuBord confirmed he has a regular panel, not an original panel.

Rudy Marconi called the Public Hearing for the Fair Rent Commission to order at 7:30pm.

Debra Francheschini, 72 Spire View Road, asked whether Ridgefield needs a Fair Rent Commission due to the population requirement of 25,000. Mr. Marconi shared Ridgefield is on the cusp, the Department of Public Health and Office of Policy and Management both said Ridgefield has a population over 25,000.

Mr. Marconi shared the initial proposal was for the BOS to serve as the Fair Rent Commission, but an ordinance must still be passed to be in compliance with State statute. Mr. Marconi shared he would like to involve local experts, such as the Planning & Zoning Director, Fire Marshal, and Building Official, to do an initial review to ensure landlord compliance. If the landlords are found not in compliance, the case would pass to the Fair Rent Commission.

Charles Marino, 57 Mimosa Court, asked what the ordinance would be. Wendy Lionetti, Town Clerk, distributed copies of the proposed ordinance to Mr. Marino and other attendees.

Scott DeYoung, 51 Caudatowa Drive, asked about the definition of a minority. Mr. Marconi confirmed that no Board, Committee, or Commission, can have any more than 2/3 of its members be from one of the two of the majority parties. So, on a 5-member Commission, there can be no more than 3 Ds or 3 Rs, but could all be Us.

Rudy Marconi closed the Public Hearing at 7:38pm, and immediately proceeded with the Special Town Meeting.

The meeting was returned to the BOS at 7:43pm.

3b. 729 North Salem Road Lease – Follow-Up – Continued

- a. Dave DuBord, RPD Officer/Detective, was present. Topics discussed included:
- Sean Connelly asked if Mr. DuBord has a list of completed improvements. Mr. DuBord shared his list with the BOS, indicating he's spent about \$2,000, mostly sweat equity, and spent ~100-150 hours improving the property.
 - Chris Murray asked whether the home is in good shape. Mr. DuBord agreed, but hasn't had any major updates, with the newest items being kitchen appliances from the 1990s. Mr. DuBord indicated plans to renovate the kitchen.
 - Maureen Kozlark shared with the previous tenant, Paul Roach, the house was part of his compensation package. Ms. Kozlark indicated interest in continuing to rent to Mr. DuBord, but with bringing the rent a little closer to a standalone rental rate. Sean Connelly shared the BOS needs to demonstrate financial responsibility.
 - Mr. DuBord voiced the proposed \$1100/mo rent is unjustified and unreasonable. Mr. Murray shared utilities should be at Mr. DuBord's expense, but is willing to negotiate on rental rate. Mr. Murray asked Mr. DuBord to propose a rate. Mr. DuBord proposed a gradual move, since he's unsure of utility costs. Rudy Marconi proposed walking it up. Ms. Kozlark expressed it can't take 5-10 years, the BOS have a fiduciary responsibility to spend taxpayer money wisely.
 - Mr. Murray proposed \$1800/mo + utilities with CPI (consumer price index). Ms. Kozlark expressed the BOS previously negotiated and feels \$2600/mo is a fair rent. Mr. DuBord shared he was willing to spend \$25k to install a new kitchen. Sean Connelly expressed agreement with \$1800/mo + utilities with CPI, with the stipulation to redo the kitchen. Mr. Marconi proposed a 5-year rental agreement.
 - Ms. Kozlark proposed \$2,000/mo + utilities with CPI for a 5-year lease, and with the kitchen renovation in the next year. Mr. DuBord asked about utilities. Mr. Marconi confirmed he would reimburse the Town directly.

Scott DeYoung, 51 Caudatowa Drive, asked about whether they could inject foam insulation. Mr. Marconi shared they would include the kitchen now, and would look at insulation in the future.

Sean Connelly motioned to approve the lease at 729 North Salem Road for \$2,000 per month rent plus utilities with annual CPI increases, for a 5-year lease term. Chris Murray seconded. Motion carried 4-0.

4. Proposed Flag Ordinance Petition

- a. **Acceptance of the Re-Submitted Petition**
b. **Set a Special Town Meeting**

Rudy Marconi shared the petition was resubmitted and have received an objection from Mr. Wecking, which Sean Connelly read. Mr. Connelly read that the signature collectors signed and dated for dates June-August, advising the petition not be certified by the BOS as signatures cannot be older than six months old. Mr. Marconi shared the resubmitted petition went to counsel for review. Maureen Kozlark indicated 515 signatures were submitted and 457 were verified, which meets the 2% threshold. Mr. Marconi shared they will postpone this item until their February 5, 2025 meeting, assuming the BOS has received clarification from counsel.

Michael Raduazzo, 195 Peaceable Street, shared many signatures may have been collected the first weekend in June, during Pride in the Park.

5. **Set a Public Hearing for February 5, 2025 at 7:30pm, East Ridge Middle School Auditorium & a Referendum for February 25, 2025 at 7:30pm, Yanity Gym for: Roofs, AHS/Transition Program Building, Public Safety Building**

Sean Connelly motioned to set a Public Hearing for February 5, 2025 at 7:30pm in the East Ridge Middle School Auditorium for Roofs, Alternative High School & Transition Program Building and the Public Safety Building. Chris Murray seconded. Motion carried 4-0.

Rudy Marconi read the three questions, and voiced the importance for the public to understand the necessity of the projects. Mr. Marconi shared they each have different values, but are of equal importance, and that the proposed PSB would house the FD, PD, dispatch and emergency management, and has been designed to meet the needs of the future.

Susan Margolis, 51 Caudatowa Drive, asked whether Branchville is served by the Georgetown FD. Mr. Marconi confirmed no, Ridgefield does, but they do have a mutual aid agreement with Georgetown and they would be called right away to respond in a major emergency.

Michael Raduazzo, 195 Peaceable Street, asked about the \$12M for roofs and whether the facilities can be indicated in the resolution question. Mr. Marconi confirmed it's for Scotland, Veteran's Park and Ridgebury Elementary Schools, and partial roofs at East Ridge Middle School and Ridgefield High School, and shared he would ask bond counsel about specifying the schools in the question. Maureen Kozlark asked about what happens should a school need a roof that's not on the list. Mr. Marconi shared that's one reason why the resolution question is not site-specific.

Michael Raduazzo, 195 Peaceable Street, asked about whether the \$3.997M for the A-School/Transition Program Building includes the previously-approved \$275k. Mr. Marconi indicated no, and whatever is left over from the \$275k would be used toward the project.

Sean Connelly motioned to set a Public Hearing for February 5, 2025 at 7:30pm in the East Ridge Middle School Auditorium for Roofs, Alternative High School & Transition Program Building and the Public Safety Building. Chris Murray seconded. Motion carried 4-0.

Sean Connelly motioned to approve a Referendum to be set for February 25, 2025 from 6:00am-8:00pm at Yanity Gym for Roofs, Alternative High School & Transition Program Building and the Public Safety Building. Chris Murray seconded. Motion carried 4-0.

Mr. Marconi shared if the Referendum doesn't pass, the Town will still need to spend to update the FD and PD, and the \$85M proposal is an all-in figure to suit the future needs of the Town.

6. **Resolution – NRVV Construction and Maintenance Agreement**

Rudy Marconi read the resolution. Mr. Marconi shared this project received a grant from the Council of Governments (COG) for ~\$3.7M for necessary studies and engineering, and hope to raise the necessary funds to complete construction.

Maureen Kozlark motioned to accept the resolution for the Norwalk River Valley Trail Construction and Maintenance Agreement, as written. Sean Connelly seconded. Motion carried 4-0.

7. Approval of Meeting Minutes

a. January 6, 2025 Special Meeting

Sean Connelly asked, on page 2, paragraph 4, “on average” be added after “\$400-\$500/household.”

Rudy Marconi shared the Board of Finance (BOF) is specifying the cost per household, based on the whole Referendum, and have calculated roughly \$553 per household, on average. Mr. Connelly clarified if someone owns a \$700k house, \$553 is the average of what will be paid over 20 years, depending on the bonding process and debt service. Mr. Marconi shared the BOF is going to create something to share with the public.

Sean Connelly motioned to approve the minutes from January 6, 2025 Board of Selectpersons Special Meeting, as amended. Maureen Kozlark seconded. Motion carried 4-0.

b. January 8, 2025

Sean Connelly asked, on page 1, “returns” be added for “maximizing returns.”

Mr. Connelly corrected, on page 2, “resident or owner.”

Mr. Connelly corrected, on page 3, to “we may want to consider.”

Mr. Connelly corrected, in the Selectpersons Report, the MLK Day Ceremony at the Ridgefield Playhouse on January 20, 2025 be noted, and that the “expected Grand List growth be about 0.75.”

Maureen Kozlark motioned to approve the minutes from the January 8, 2025 Board of Selectpersons Meeting, as modified. Sean Connelly seconded. Motion carried 4-0.

8. Selectpersons Report

Rudy Marconi shared that Sean Connelly, Maureen Kozlark, and Chris Murray attended the Planning & Zoning Public Hearing at East Ridge Middle School, which was continued to their next regular meeting. Chris Murray expressed concern about the potential of lawsuits. Mr. Marconi shared the Charter indicates the Town must defend itself if it gets sued, but if the Town is knowingly taking action to create litigation, is there a need for an appropriation or discussion about the potential costs. Mr. Murray asked whether the BOS should say to not proceed with a moratorium. Maureen Kozlark shared if people want to maximize what they can do with their property, they may be driven to over-maximize due to 8-30g, and have to believe there are folks whose hands will be forced in that direction due to a moratorium. Sean Connelly shared the Town’s moratorium cannot override 8-30g, and it has not been tested in courts, but feels they would immediately be sued. Ms. Kozlark shared the Planning & Zoning Commission had asked for feedback, and the BOS hasn’t provided any yet, but maybe they should. Mr. Marconi shared the BOS could submit it to the Public Hearing.

Scott DeYoung, 51 Caudatowa Drive, asked whether sewage capacity could be allocated to the existing properties in the areas served, so the person putting in X 8-30g units couldn’t due to their allocation. Mr. Marconi confirmed that is a possibility, but the properties in question are all part of the oldest, deepest lines and the WPCA would need to camera them before expanding.

Susan Margolis, 51 Caudatowa Drive, asked if the 200’ extension would extend the whole sewer line for the next 200’, and where did the moratorium come from. Mr. Marconi indicated the first

is a Planning & Zoning Commission (PZC) question, and the second, the elected PZC has the authority to regulate land use in a town. Mr. Marconi shared a number of towns have enacted moratoriums, but they're all very specific.

Ms. Kozlark asked about next steps. Mr. Marconi confirmed he would discuss with Barbara Manners and ask their legal counsel to draft a memo.

Mr. Marconi asked the BOS to consider a Municipal Building Committee with professionals, experts, and general citizens to oversee current and future projects. Mr. Marconi shared the committee would provide a clean opinion, as architects, project managers and construction managers get percentages of change order fees. The BOS agreed they would brainstorm.

Mr. Marconi shared the owner of 29 Lakeview filed another bankruptcy in Danbury Court last week, and the lawyer showed up but the owner did not, so it was continued another week.

Ms. Kozlark asked about 84 Manasco Road. Mr. Marconi confirmed it's owned by Dr. Barbara Tansky, and is currently in disrepair, but she doesn't want to sell, but wants to build a park, at the Town's expense. Mr. Marconi confirmed she is not interested in a Habitat for Humanity project.

Mr. Marconi shared the Historic District is coming to the BOS to discuss 11 Barlow Mountain Road. Mr. Marconi shared the house is an antique, and the Historic District will ask to form a single house historic district to preserve that house.

Mr. Connelly shared there is a petition circulating to have Ridgefield decertified from the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM). Ms. Kozlark shared there are 143 signatures on the CCM petition and 1000 on the Red Rooster petition. Mr. Marconi shared every municipality in the state of Connecticut are CCM members, and shared they provide a lot of labor statistics for HR. Mr. Murray shared he doesn't support the petition. Mr. Connelly shared his view from the petition was CCM wasn't fighting hard enough for us, but we do get a lot of value. Mr. Marconi shared no one is fighting hard enough until we have control.

Ms. Kozlark suggested the BOS invite Aimee Berger-Girvalo, Ceci Maher, and Julie Kushner, one at a time to meet with the BOS and answer questions. Mr. Connelly voiced support for hearing what's going on, coming up, and how they are representing our Town.

Maureen Kozlark motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:33pm. Sean Connelly seconded. Motion carried 4-0.