



Town of Ridgefield
Board of Selectpersons Meeting Minutes
APPROVED

January 27, 2025 at 7:00pm

Please note – these minutes are not verbatim.

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

Absent: Barbara Manners

Rudy Marconi called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

Rudy Marconi invited Kevin Redmond, Finance Director, to provide a budget overview to the BOS. Topics discussed included:

- Mr. Redmond shared Town debt service increased 14% since last year. Mr. Redmond shared the Town has benefitted from decreasing debt service over the last 10 years as the bundle was paid off, and indicated this increase is expected, and non-interest rate-driven, but the nature of off-cycle capital. Chris Murray asked about the borrowing rate. Mr. Redmond estimates ~2.7%.
- Maureen Kozlark asked whether the proposed Public Safety Building (PSB), A-School/Transition Program Building and Roof projects are reflected in the budget, should they pass on February 25, 2025. Mr. Redmond confirmed, based on their bond advisor's feedback, an interest-only payment of ~\$547k is estimated for June 2026, assuming a 3.6% interest rate.
- Mr. Redmond shared non-tax revenue is increasing by \$300k, driven by Parks & Recreation and the Ridgefield Golf Course, as most other revenues are flat.
- Sean Connelly asked about the 7.11% increase in property taxes. Mr. Redmond shared based on the assumptions for revenue, expenses, and fund balance use, it's a balancing act, and that number is likely to decrease should the Board of Finance choose to use the fund balance or cut expenses. Mr. Redmond shared the Grand List is currently estimated at a 0.75% increase.
- Mr. Redmond shared the Fire Department has requested to add 1 full-time role and move 1 part-time to full-time. Mr. Marconi shared central dispatch is looking to hire a supervisor.
- Mr. Redmond shared minimum wage increases and compression have created challenges. Joseph Shapiro, Board of Finance Member, shared the State uses a CPI-type statistic from the Bureau of Labor Statistics that's a national measure more applicable to wages. Mr. Marconi shared part-time seasonal roles (i.e., Golf Course, Parks & Recreation) will be most impacted by minimum wage changes.

1. Police Department Budget

Jeffery Kreitz, Police Chief, Major Nick Fowler, Sharon Dornfeld, Board of Police Commissioners Chair, and Kevin Redmond, Finance Director, were in attendance. Topics discussed included:

- Operating Expenses (2.5% increase overall):
 - o Rudy Marconi asked about police cruisers. Chief Kreitz confirmed they used to lease new vehicles every three years, but determined in 2018 they can keep cruisers longer, and it was more fiscally responsible to buy than lease.
 - o Mr. Redmond noted a 13.82% increase in the Police Headquarters line, primarily driven by building maintenance. Chief Kreitz confirmed year-to-date they are \$12k overbudget and Mr. Redmond anticipates at least \$40k overbudget by the end of the fiscal year, largely due to plumbing issues.
 - o Mr. Marconi noted a 4.98% increase for the Animal Control Officer, Kristopher Zulkowski. Chief Kreitz shared Mr. Zulkowski is a one-person team, trusted by the community, and responsive to after-hours calls. Maureen Kozlark asked about fines. Chief Kreitz confirmed Mr. Zulkowski issues infractions when needed.
 - o Ms. Kozlark asked about public outreach in advance of the February 25, 2025 Referendum. Chief Kreitz shared very few people took the in-person tour, but the video tour was very successful, and a very high average time spent on the website. Mr. Marconi shared they would post informational posters in high-traffic areas. Ms. Kozlark shared the electronic signs were very helpful reminders for previous votes. Chris Murray asked about the percentage of people who voted on the bundle. Mr. Marconi shared he would need to confirm, but remembers it passed by over 1000 votes and had a decent turnout.
 - o Sean Connelly asked about the human capital implication should the proposed PSB not pass. Chief Kreitz shared the RPD has a great culture, but the PSB would make recruitment easier.
- Capital Expenses:
 - o Mr. Marconi shared the largest request is for tasers. Chief Kreitz confirmed their tasers are an integral part of their equipment and part of the body camera system. Major Fowler shared, per State statute, RPD is required to renew their body and car camera contract at the end of this year. Major Fowler confirmed ~50% of current RPD tasers are 7+ years old, and Chief Kreitz shared the current models (Taser 7 and 10) are safer, more capable, versatile, and reduce user error. Major Fowler confirmed adding tasers with the Axon camera system contract will save ~\$200k over the 5-year contract and voiced their satisfaction with the camera system. The BOS discussed splitting the purchase over two years and agreed to put all tasers into this budget year.
 - o Incident Command Vehicle (\$120k): Chief Kreitz shared the RPD has a 30+ year old FD ambulance that is used as a mobile command post at crime scenes and serious accidents, but a new one with increased capabilities (i.e., wifi, tv screens, radio systems, ability to hook into camera systems) could also be used to oversee and better manage large events, and be a command post for mutual aid calls. Mr. Marconi shared Region 5 has a vehicle they're not using, and asked if that could be a solution, Chief Kreitz said he would explore that option.
 - o Recording System (\$24k): Chief Kreitz shared this is a statutory need, the system would record all radio transmission for police, fire, and dispatch, and telephone calls on the routine line and 911.

- License Plate Readers (\$16,400): Chief Kreitz shared RPD purchased 2 fixed LPRs last year, which provide live alerts about stolen vehicles, warrants, and traffic violations, and are useful in investigations. Chief Kreitz shared this would purchase four additional LPRs to cover other points in Town. Mr. Marconi asked whether Region 5 would have funding for this kind of project. Chief Kreitz shared RPD wanted to request Region 5 for pedestrian control barricades.

2. Fire Department Budget

Jerry Myers, Fire Chief, Michael Grasso, Assistant Fire Chief, Timothy Limbos, Deputy Fire Marshal, and Kevin Redmond, Finance Director, were in attendance. Topics discussed included:

- Operating Expenses
 - Personnel (3% increase): Mr. Grasso confirmed there are currently 2 Deputy Fire Marshals who work overtime each week, and Mr. Redmond confirmed that instead, they will hire one full-time Deputy Fire Marshal. Mr. Redmond noted the RFD has also requested to add 1 full-time Firefighter and move the part-time admin role to full-time.
 - OSHA Maintenance: Chief Myers confirmed this is for rescue rope, Engine 1, Engine 2, and Rescue 7 each carry a variety of kinds depending on the situation. Chief Myers confirmed if a rescue rope (or lifeline)
 - Training, Tuition & Supplies (\$68k): Mr. Redmond indicated this is reflective of least year's initial request. Chief Myers confirmed it costs \$10k per officer for the Fire Academy, and is budgeting for three trainees per year.
 - Vehicle Fuel (\$21k): Mr. Redmond shared they have broken out the fuel line into separate diesel and gasoline lines to determine the appropriate budget mix.
 - Community Grants and Volunteers (\$25k): Rudy Marconi indicated this is an annual payment into the Volunteer Fire Department's investment account. Chief Myers confirmed it's a merit-based system, and volunteers must meet certain criteria each year to be eligible. Mr. Marconi asked about volunteer tax-breaks. Mr. Limbos confirmed yes, per State statute, and based on performance.
- Capital Expenses
 - Fire Protective Gear: Chief Myers confirmed, per NFPA and OSHA, gear has a 10-year useful life, and these are replacements for old gear – which will be used for training at the academy.
 - Jaws of Life: Chief Myers indicated their existing 3 sets are old (Engine 1's is 7-8 years old, Engine 2 is 10 years old, and Rescue 7's is 10+ years old) and require custom replacement parts and long downtimes when damaged.
 - Fire Hose (\$13k): Biannual replacement based on annual hose inspection results.
 - Cancer Prevention Equipment (\$12.6k): Chief Myers confirmed this is non-structural gear to complete the fit-out for all firefighters. Chief Myers confirmed if a call reports smoke, the RFD will gear up before arriving, but if no smoke, RFD will wait to gear up until onsite, if necessary, to reduce wearing time.
 - Bottles and Masks (\$13k): Chief Myers indicated the bottles have a 15-year lifespan, and this will replace those that will expire.
 - Replacement Cardiac Monitor: Chief Myers shared they are replaced every 2-3 years, depending on how they operate. Chief Myers confirmed they currently operate 6 monitors, and when the equipment goes out of service it's no longer under contract, and they are not user-serviceable.

- Medical Dispatch Software (\$15k): Chief Myers confirmed this would be for Central Dispatch to replace the current index card methodology of asking 911 callers questions to make decisions, and is the industry-standard. Chris Murray asked about ongoing fees. Chief Myers confirmed \$2k/year for the lifetime of the contract.

3. General Budget Discussion

There was no further general discussion.

4. Possible Capital/Operating Budget Vote

There were no votes.

Sean Connelly motioned to adjourn the meeting at 10:03pm. Chris Murray seconded. Motion carried 4-0.