



Town of Ridgefield Board of Selectpersons Meeting Minutes

APPROVED

January 29, 2025 at 7:00pm

Please note – these minutes are not verbatim.

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

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

1. Library Budget

Gary Rapp, Library Board Chair and Interim Treasurer, Brenda McKnight, Library Director, and Kevin Redmond, Finance Director, were in attendance. Topics discussed included:

- Ms. McKnight distributed copies of their presentation to the BOS, along with bookmarks.
- Ms. McKnight shared, per the Syracuse University Library Value Calculator, for every \$1 of tax support last fiscal year, the library delivered \$6.90 in value (ex. materials borrowed, room use, computer use, WIFI use, programs delivered, program attendance, etc.). Ms. McKnight shared programming increased over 5%, attendance increased over 8%, and digital checkouts increased 26.7%.
- Rudy Marconi asked about the digital checkout increase and cybersecurity. Ms. McKnight confirmed the library has cybersecurity insurance and protocols in place.
- Mr. Rapp shared their overall budget request (\$2.43M) represents a 3.5% increase (\$82k) over the current fiscal year. Mr. Rapp indicated the library builds an income challenge into the budget which the Library covers through drawing down their investment account and fundraising (\$50k, ~15% increase over current fiscal year).
- Operating:
 - o Personnel (3% increase): Mr. Rapp confirmed this is not a headcount increase, but adjusting salaries to remain competitive with surrounding libraries.
 - o Health Insurance (2.9% increase): Mr. Rapp confirmed this is largely driven by the mix between single, couple, and family households. Ms. McKnight shared there are currently four eligible, full-time employees who opt out.
 - o Building & Utilities: Mr. Rapp shared their HVAC system has been troublesome and presents maintenance issues each year.
 - o Collections & Programming and Technology: Mr. Rapp indicated a 2% increase for each.
- Capital (\$94.3k):
 - o Accessible Parking Spaces (\$19k): Ms. McKnight shared, to be ADA compliant, the Library must regrade, repave, and reline the 4 accessible parking spaces.

- Masonry: Ms. McKnight confirmed this covers three projects: 1. Blue slate outside the sliding glass doors, 2. A cracked granite step outside the Morris Building, and 3. Cracked steps on the cement staircase. Ms. McKnight shared the blue slate and granite steps both present tripping hazards, and the staircase is more of a stability concern. Mr. Marconi suggested, should the library install new railings, the base be sleeved to protect from salt.
- Backflow Valve: Ms. McKnight confirmed the library has a main backflow valve in the fire pump room, but Aquarion found the library failed its inspection and says they need an additional backflow valve for redundancy. Mr. Marconi recommended they reach out to Jason Celestino, Building Inspector.
- Program Room AV Equipment Upgrade: Mr. Rapp confirmed this equipment was installed when the library was renovated, and needs to be replaced.
- Mr. Rapp noted there are no major projects forecast into the future budget years, but the Library Building Committee may determine the HVAC must be replaced, and the library will share the details as soon as possible.
- Mr. Marconi asked about federal grants. Ms. McKnight shared they receive a little (~\$7k), passed through by the Institute of Museums and Library Services.
- Maureen Kozlark asked about fines. Ms. McKnight confirmed the library is now fine-free, and added a new income stream by offering passport services, and two employees are licensed passport agents. Ms. McKnight shared they did 759 passports last year.

2. Arts Council Budget

Colleen Cash, Co-Chairperson, Jennifer Dineen, Co-Chairperson, and Kevin Redmond, Finance Director, were in attendance. Topics discussed included:

- Ms. Cash shared the Arts Council's mission is to amplify and support other organizations but does have its own roster of programs and events. Ms. Cash shared they request \$9.4k total (2x previous budget) and are keen to build their scope in a stable way.
- Ms. Dineen shared Make Music Day is their cornerstone event (over 30% of their annual budget) and is a worldwide celebration of music held annually on June 21. Ms. Dineen confirmed last year, there were 71 performances across 15 venues, and the event is a real draw to the Town, especially as this year's event will be on a Saturday. Ms. Dineen shared they require additional funding for adequate sound systems at all venues.
- Ms. Cash shared their other two largest expenses are repairs for the lamppost banners, which were originally donated, and to restart their quarterly brochures detailing the arts and culture events taking place in Town.
- Rudy Marconi asked about federal funding. Ms. Dineen shared they did receive the CT Humanities Grant, which has since been phased out. Ms. Cash confirmed they're ineligible for most grants since they're a different type of group.
- Ms. Cash shared, should the full budget request not be approved, they would have to continue the pause on their brochure program, likely pause their Our Artist, Our Schools program, which brings working artists to schools to spend time with students, and cut back on membership dues (i.e. Cultural Alliance of Western Connecticut, FCC, Chamber of Commerce).

3. Economic and Community Development (ECDC) Budget

Glori Norwitt, ECDC Chair, Geoffrey Morris, ECDC Secretary, Kay Gelfman, Commissioner, and Kevin Redmond, Finance Director, were in attendance. Topics discussed included:

- Mr. Morris and Ms. Norwitt both expressed gratitude for their commissioners, and the growing number of events that have taken hold in the community. Mr. Morris specifically highlighted Tiger Shark Tank (great networking and business-building opportunity), the Cultural District (which ECDC oversees), and Downtown Parking (Rudy Marconi shared Senator Blumenthal has moved the conversation with the USPS forward, and the landlord has agreed for the Town to take over the parking lot behind USPS).
- Ms. Norwitt shared they would like to hire a part-time project management consultant to push projects forward and represent the ECDC. Ms. Norwitt shared they plan to hire a contractor to complete an inventory of light industrial businesses and available space (\$5k) and have just hired part-time assistance to build out ECDC's email list.
- Ms. Norwitt confirmed ECDC's budget request is \$111k.
- Mr. Marconi asked about the Cultural District sculpture. Ms. Norwitt confirmed the sculpture has been designed, the leasing agreement provided to the Town attorney, and plans for it to be placed in the grass strip on Main Street near Prime Burger.
- Ms. Norwitt shared ECDC intends to have a speaker series that includes networking opportunities and would like to continue the beautification project of the alley south of Botanika Café and Baja Cucina, which is currently pedestrian-only.
- Ms. Norwitt shared the ECDC submitted an opinion to the Planning & Zoning Commission unanimously against the moratorium, since 8-30g projects will still proceed, as local policies cannot supersede State statute.
- Chris Murray expressed support for ECDC's work but questioned whether it is their role to create and manage a business inventory. Sean Connelly shared the ECDC may wish to review their charter during Charter Review to ensure it is reflective of their work.

4. General Budget Discussion

Kevin Redmond, Finance Director, were in attendance. Topics discussed included:

- Maureen Kozlark requested the following items be added to the next round of budget meetings: Senior Bus (\$160k), Tee Boxes at the Golf Course (\$375k), Ridgefield Commemorates America at 250 (not currently in the budget book), and that the lease at Richardson Park be updated in the budget book.
- Rudy Marconi indicated the Senior Bus request is to replace the existing town bus, which is older and requires the driver to have a CDL, where the proposed new bus would be a shorter, single-axle bus that would not require a CDL.
- Kevin Redmond indicated there is a specific formula based on the number of rounds played and the size of the tee boxes.
- Mr. Marconi mentioned the proposed BOE budget (\$115M) represents a 4.8% increase.

5. Possible Capital/Operating Budget Vote

There were no votes.

Maureen Kozlark motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:28pm. Chris Murray seconded. Motion carried 5-0.