



**Town of Ridgefield
Public Hearing Minutes
APPROVED**

December 3, 2025 at 7 PM

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

Please note – these minutes are not verbatim.

BOS Present: Maureen Kozlark, Barbara Manners, Rudy Marconi, Geoffrey Morris

BOS Absent: Sean Connelly

Rudy Marconi called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm. He summarized that there have been several issues with the police and fire department structures including lack of space for all the needs of the police and fire staff and the evolving functions of the two structures. In 2009, the town voted against upgrades to the existing building and feedback was that existing debt should be paid off first. It has since been paid off. Town staff, police and fire department leaders, and consultants assessed current and future safety building needs over several years and proposed the new safety building at cost of \$85 million. The feedback after that failed vote was that the cost was too high and the location was not right. The police and fire staff continued working with the architectural firm and lowered the cost to \$77 million but determined that the location was appropriate. But the voters again disagreed.

The BOS is appointing a special committee of the community members to study the data already gathered and gather new data to formulate a solution that the community can support. The interview process will take time because there are many candidates. Open-mindedness will be a critical requirement because all options should be considered. All interested candidates are encouraged to submit a resume and a statement of interest, 200 words or less, stating the reason for your interest to serve on this committee.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Adam Safir – 547 Main Street – He followed the multiple public hearings and reviewed all data and has a background in police and fire buildings across the country. He is interested in the views of current police and fire chiefs regarding operational capacities. There are standards for EMS, police, and fire departments as well as population forecasting that are fundamental to the discussion. He would invite feedback from non-resident members of the public such as people who come to Ridgefield for work and tourism because Ridgefield is known for its safety. Also key to any discussion is an understanding of the decline in police officers across the country. The focus of this investment should include operational gain for the community. Later he added that when the committee's work begins and charettes are held, he would appreciate hearing directly from the police and fire representatives.

Leo Papadopoulos – 10 Old Stone Court – commented that despite all the signage and meetings, the community still didn't know the full extent of the investment because it was called simply a police department. He suggested that voters need more specificity and clarity describing the investment but also the financial impact to each voter.

Peter Vanderminden – 24 Arrowhead Place – shared that his professional background includes working with a group to assess the city of Atlanta's forecasted safety needs during the Olympics to determine temporary location of structures to meet those needs. He suggested a survey to determine the financial appetite for this investment. He added that existing buildings should be considered for repurposing. His background in mapping leads him to believe that the proposed site location is inappropriate. Later he added that a challenge is no Ridgefield press. The new committee may need a communications budget.

Robert Hendrick – 17 East Ridge Road – shared that his professional background is studying the issues to find the root cause and building a solution to address it. He believes that the public safety building measure failed due to a lack of understanding, communication, and trust in leaders. He suggested a committee of nine persons; four to be appointed by the BOS from the community pool of candidates, and the other five to have specific subject matter expertise and be appointed by other elected bodies such as the Board of Finance, Board of Police Commissioners, Planning and Zoning Commission, Board of Education, and Economic and Community Development Commission. These groups would not appoint from within their groups but rather use their own networks to recruit and nominate candidates. Delegating this task will add integrity to the appointment process and address any implied bias of the BOS appointed group.

William Davidson – 77 Sunset Lane – stated that the existing buildings are grossly inadequate and will be too expensive to maintain. A new building should serve the community for many decades to come. Many people second-guessed the BOS, police, and fire experts. The proposed location was challenged. He suggested that private properties be explored. A video that circulated after the referendum date was set was very convincing, and he suggests sharing it now. Later, he added that the town should recognize that there are costs associated with the latest code requirements and prevailing wage requirements that the town must adhere to.

Alan Rubin – 14 Comstock Court – runs a severe weather emergency response team for a legal firm and has experience running charettes. He suggests that this procedure will serve the community as long as they remove fear, uncertainty, and doubt.

Catherine Daille – 239 Peaceable Street – commented that the town's opinion is clear that the price is too high. She suggested staggering the project by breaking out two or three separate buildings.

Peter Bachman – 88 Cains Hill Road – is a retired architect who has experience with an \$80 million dollar school building in a town where the prior building project was done in 1970's. He is familiar with resistance to such an endeavor. He supports the charettes to address design concepts and suggests a team for communication and consensus building.

Chuck Hancock – 480 North Street – worked against the referendum and believes the BOS is on the right track with the committee and charettes. He found that the opposition was due to location, cost, and single building versus two buildings. Later he added that Ridgefield Press has assigned someone who is anxious to make connections.

Chris Vahlsing – 318 North Street – was engaged throughout attending meetings but felt that there was never a good opportunity to give meaningful input. He suggests that the draft charge for the committee should have a ranking of ideas not tied to actual numbers because costs will fluctuate. Later he added that time is of the essence.

Coco Baron – 15 Prospect Ridge – Fire and police departments are necessary for the safety of the community but perhaps a different location will be better.

Kevin Santoro – 56 Remington Road – He believes voters didn't understand the options but agrees the solution should have longevity. He thinks two buildings are better than one. He felt that the buildings should be more utilitarian with the internal function prioritized over external appeal. He believes the 'No voters' simply don't understand the risk/benefits and need to see all the alternatives.

Unidentified Man - asked if the existing building could be demolished and new utilitarian structures be built on the same site. He felt the proposed building was way over the top and unnecessary.

Josephine Giaimo - 8 Wilton Road E – commented that if the police building could be converted to housing, as rumored, why can't it continue serving as a police building, as long as upgraded.

Roger Kavanaugh – 120 Prospect – suggested that the new committee be charged with utilizing the data gathered thus far before expending town funds on repeating studies and consultations.

Sean McEvoy- 150 High Ridge – expressed concern for looking at this project in a silo. He feels that the town should look at all the public buildings and ensure optimization of each before building more structures when building maintenance is a challenge for Ridgefield.

Nick Cerbone, 53 Main Street – stated that the town's needs should be studied in totality including police, fire, and education, so that there is a more complete view of future expenditures.

Greg Kabasakalian –2 Washington Street – suggested using the tool that models the mill rate and collaborate with the Board of Finance so that the community is informed of the tax impact in understandable terms.

Bob Marinelli – 79 Sunset Lane – believes the proposed location is inappropriate. He agreed that two buildings would better serve the community.

Meeting adjourned at 8:14 pm.