



**Town of Ridgefield
Board of Selectpersons Meeting Minutes
APPROVED**

February 19, 2025 at 6:30pm

Please note – these minutes are not verbatim.

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

Present via Zoom: Barbara Manners

Rudy Marconi called the meeting to order at 6:34pm.

Maureen Kozlark motioned to add Heat Smart Program to the Agenda, after Adopt Community Vision Statement Clean Energy Grant. Chris Murray seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

1. Public Comment

Chris Murray, Ivy Hill Road, read a letter submitted by Mike Raduazzo, 195 Peaceable Street. Mr. Raduazzo expressed concern about absentee ballots not being mailed for the Referendum on February 25, 2025, and that potentially disenfranchising taxpayers unable to pick up and return their ballots to Town Hall.

2. Appointments and Reappointments

a. Denise Santangelo – Prevention Council Appointment

Denise Santangelo was present. Topics discussed included:

- Ms. Santangelo shared she became an attorney, then a clinical mental health therapist, and has dedicated most of her life to mental health advocacy and preventative efforts.
- Sean Connelly asked why the Prevention Council. Ms. Santangelo confirmed she attended a few meetings, and noted she could help with getting information out into the community through her current work.
- Maureen Kozlark asked about conflicts of interest. Ms. Santangelo shared she encounters that daily, as she lives and works in Ridgefield, and expressed the importance of seeking consent to work together in a different capacity.
- Chris Murray asked about non-opioid pain management. Ms. Santangelo noted the importance of medication and pain management, and the role of the Prevention Council to educate families about the importance of proper medication storage and psychoeducation.
- Rudy Marconi noted through the opioid settlement, Connecticut will receive \$600M over 18 years, and has received \$158M so far, but the Governor would like to use the funds for other social services issues. Ms. Santangelo shared

she serves as Chair of the Western Chapter of the Connecticut Counseling Association, and would be happy to get involved through that avenue.

Maureen Kozlark motioned to appoint Denise Santangelo to the Ridgefield Prevention Council. Chris Murray seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

b. Kevin Claesgens – Graveyard Restoration Committee Appointment

Kevin Claesgens, Nancy Selander, Chair, and Tom McManus, Treasurer, were present.

Topics discussed included:

- Mr. Claesgens shared he briefly worked in finance, has been a teacher for about 16 years, and moved to Ridgefield about 3 years ago. Mr. Claesgens shared he has a deep interest in history, particularly Revolutionary War history, which was the impetus behind joining the Graveyard Restoration Committee (GRC).
- Maureen Kozlark noted the GRC doesn't often get the recognition it deserves, preserving history with old gravestones, and working to ensure they're upright and well-maintained. Mr. Claesgens shared they purchased a house overlooking Ridgebury Cemetery.

Sean Connelly motioned to appoint Kevin Claesgens to the Graveyard Restoration Committee. Maureen Kozlark seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

c. Ian Dow (Appointment) & Tom McManus (Reappointment) – Tree Committee

Ian Dow and Tom McManus, Chair, were present. Topics discussed included:

- Mr. Dow shared he is a long-time Ridgefield resident, and served as an Open Space Ranger with the Ridgefield Conservation Commission for 20 years, specifically for a parcel at Ledges, and has a particular interest in local ecology.
- Rudy Marconi asked about his interests. Mr. Dow confirmed he is a long-time advocate for reptiles and amphibians, and the protection of certain species. Mr. Dow confirmed he hasn't yet attended meetings, but participated in the CT DEEP tree inventory a few months ago.
- Sean Connelly asked his opinion on the Native Tree and Plant Policy. Mr. Dow noted it's adequate and wouldn't recommend changes.

Maureen Kozlark motioned to appoint Ian Dow to the Tree Committee. Chris Murray seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

- Mr. Marconi asked about the Main Street project. Mr. McManus confirmed they planted 16 trees along Main Street in June 2024, and Mr. Marconi confirmed Mr. McManus personally watered the trees every other day. Mr. McManus shared they have a lot of interest in planting most trees, and the Rotary Club is doing additional fundraising to plant more trees on Main Street and beyond.
- Mr. McManus noted their annual Arbor Day celebration on the last Saturday in April at Ballard Park. Mr. McManus mentioned the lack of shade at the Ballard Park playground from the CVS parking lot expansion, and suggested a canopy be installed. Mr. Marconi noted that would be passed along to Parks & Rec.

Maureen Kozlark motioned to reappoint Tom McManus to the Tree Committee. Sean Connelly seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

d. Peter Kearney – Economic & Community Development Commission Appointment

Peter Kearney and Sean Dowd, Commissioner, were present. Topics discussed included:

- Mr. Kearney shared he moved to Ridgefield 4 years ago and is very active in the community, champions small businesses through his HR and employee benefit consulting, and discovered ECDC through Tiger Shark Tank.
- Mr. Dowd voiced his excitement for Mr. Kearney volunteering, noting he has attended every event in Town and has a real sense of which residents and businesses are doing things, and sensing potential opportunities.
- Chris Murray asked about ECDC attracting businesses to Town. Mr. Kearney shared their main focus has been supporting businesses once they arrived in Town. Mr. Dowd noted an increasing focus on reaching out to at-home workers, and building a business community that way – ECDC will host quarterly networking events targeting this population.
- Rudy Marconi asked about commercial office space inventory. Mr. Dowd shared that project is easier said than done, and ECDC would have to subscribe to a service to collate and sort the data, but they are exploring alternatives.
- Maureen Kozlark asked about his job. Mr. Kearney confirmed helping small businesses to fully outsource their HR or work in parallel with their HR team, focusing on Fairfield County, specifically the greater Danbury Route 7 corridor.

Chris Murray motioned to appoint Peter Kearney to the Economic & Community Development Commission. Sean Connelly seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

3. Adopt Community Vision Statement – Clean Energy Grant

- a. Rudy Marconi shared this was brought forward by David McFate, Director of Purchasing, who requires BOS approval to participate and receive a Charging Smart designation, which could help the Town qualify for future grants.
- b. Maureen Kozlark read the Statement: *The Town of Ridgefield supports the development, adoption and use of electric vehicles, EVs in our community. We encourage the transition to clean transportation technology in the form of EVs and strive to make Ridgefield a more sustainable municipality. Signed Rudy Marconi, First Selectperson.*

Sean Connelly motioned to adopt the Community Vision Statement for the Clean Energy Grant. Maureen Kozlark seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

4. Heat Smart Program

Roberta Barbieri, Gavin Watson, and Dr. Ben Oko, Ridgefield Action Committee for the Environment (RACE) members. Topics discussed included:

- a. Ms. Barbieri shared a draft letter from RACE with the BOS, and asked for their support to send the letter to a select group of homeowners in Ridgefield about a program offered through the non-profit Heat Smart. Ms. Barbieri confirmed it would be to educate about a home energy efficiency audit offered through the State, and they would target roughly 250 homes with electric baseboard heating.
- b. Mr. Watson shared heat pumps are 3x more efficient than electric baseboard heating, and heating represents roughly 80% of homeowners' electricity costs, so their electricity costs could reduce by 50-60% by installing a heat pump.
- c. Chris Murray asked about the return on investment of a heat pump. Ms. Barbieri shared it depends on the home, but hers paid itself back in less than two years.

- d. Rudy Marconi asked about the home energy efficiency audit. Mr. Watson confirmed it costs \$75 and then interested homeowners are connected with 2-3 folks from Eversource who serve as consultants to help find contractors and go through proposals. Ms. Barbieri confirmed the State has a list of approved contractors, and homeowners must use one of those contractors to be eligible for tax incentives.
- e. Mr. Marconi noted making copies and stuffing envelopes could be completed at Town Hall, and would just need to purchase stamps. Maureen Kozlark confirmed the cost would be roughly \$175.

Sean Connelly motioned in support of the Heat Smart Program letter. Chris Murray seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

5. Approval of Meeting Minutes

a. January 27, 2025 Budget Meeting

Sean Connelly corrected on page 3, in the Fire Department Budget discussion, “confirmed” instead of “conformed.”

Sean Connelly motioned to approve the minutes from the January 27, 2025 Board of Selectpersons Budget Meeting, as amended. Maureen Kozlark seconded. Motion carried 4-0-1, with Barbara Manners abstaining.

b. January 28, 2025 Budget Meeting

Sean Connelly noted page 2, in the Parks & Recreation Budget discussion, to add “for revenue” after “exceed this year’s budget.”

Sean Connelly motioned to approve the minutes from the January 28, 2025 Board of Selectpersons Budget Meeting, as amended. Maureen Kozlark seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

c. January 29, 2025 Budget Meeting

Sean Connelly noted on page 2, under AV Equipment Upgrade discussion, that the AV equipment was installed when the Library was renovated, not built.
Mr. Connelly noted on page 3, under the ECDC discussion, “the landlord has agreed.”
Mr. Connelly also noted on page 3, the alley “south of Botanika Café and Baja Cucina.”

Sean Connelly motioned to approve the minutes from the January 29, 2025 Board of Selectpersons Budget Meeting, as amended. Maureen Kozlark seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

d. January 30, 2025 Budget Meeting

Sean Connelly corrected on page 3, “Mr. Connelly asked about the traffic light.”
Mr. Connelly noted, under General Budget Discussion, “1% of fund balance is 1% of our budget.”

Sean Connelly motioned to approve the minutes from the January 30, 2025 Board of Selectpersons Budget Meeting, as amended. Maureen Kozlark seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

e. **February 5, 2025**

Sean Connelly motioned to approve the minutes from the February 5, 2025 Board of Selectpersons Meeting. Maureen Kozlark seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

f. **February 5, 2025 Public Hearing**

Sean Connelly corrected on page 3, "Mr. Mueller confirmed the \$85M estimate includes" not "represents."

Maureen Kozlark motioned to approve the minutes from the February 5, 2025 Public Hearing, as amended. Sean Connelly seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

6. Selectpersons Report

Rudy Marconi shared work continues on budgets, and the BOS will have to make tough decisions to get the proposed budget under 4%. Mr. Marconi shared the proposed BOE budget currently at 4.4% and the Town at 3.58%, with no use of fund balance, it would be an almost 6% increase, which he noted was unacceptable. Mr. Marconi shared Mike Rettger noted at the Tri-Board Meeting that the BOE budget being over 4% every year is unsustainable. Mr. Marconi shared the Grand List shows 0.73% growth, and Mr. Redmond is proposing using \$1M from fund balance. Sean Connelly noted he attended the BOE meeting on February 18, 2025, and noted their proposed 4.4% increase does not include the potential \$1M if the A-School isn't ready.

Mr. Marconi noted DOT 5310 grant funds used to operate the bus for seniors and adults with special needs, and the Town will apply for the full amount for the bus, which will reduce capital.

Mr. Marconi shared he received a letter from the DOT stating the Town must remove the paw prints on 116 (in front of Ridgefield High School), noting illegal encroachment in violation of CT General Statute 13a-247. Maureen Kozlark noted the State will commence billing for each response required to address this illegal encroachment after 30 days, at \$2k per occurrence.

Mr. Marconi shared the Mamasasco Road property owned by Barbara Tansky is in poor condition, and the family wants to donate it to the Town to become the Tansky Family Park.

Mr. Marconi noted a number of items from the State, and shared on Saturday, February 22, 2025, State Senators, Representatives, and Jason Rojas, Majority Caucus Chair of the Housing Roundtable are hosting an event at the Library.

Mr. Marconi noted the Governor is coming out with a bill that will have more opportunity for points under 8-30G. The BOS discussed the importance of having local control rather than State mandates for affordable housing development.

Ms. Kozlark asked about needing a Public Hearing and Special Town Meeting for the North Salem Road lease. Mr. Marconi confirmed those are not necessary, as it wasn't a substantive change.

Sean Connelly motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:38pm. Maureen Kozlark seconded. Motion carried 5-0.