



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

April 22, 2026 at 5pm

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

Please note – these minutes are not verbatim.

Present: Sean Connelly, Maureen Kozlark, Barbara Manners, Rudy Marconi, Geoffrey Morris

Absent: None.

Others Present: Laurie Fernandez, Ridgefield Human Resources Director; Matt Knickerbocker, Bethel Treasurer; Jon Zagrodsky, Darien First Selectperson.

Rudy Marconi called the meeting to order at 5pm.

1. Town Administrator Discussion

Rudy Marconi opened the meeting stating that the purpose is to discuss the possible future role of a town administrator. Matt Knickerbocker, current treasurer of Bethel, has worked in Wilton in the capacity of administrator and is here to share his experience. Jon Zagrodsky, Darien First Selectperson, will share the Darien experience with a town administrator.

Rudy Marconi also reported that the BOS has funded the role for half of the 2027 fiscal year.

Mr. Zagrodsky shared the history of the town government and the evolution of the town administrator role. He explained that once the town grew and the workload of the first selectperson grew accordingly, there was a need for another professional to serve as a chief operating officer. He shared that it isn't a public facing role. He added that the relationship between the first selectperson and the town administrator is critical to the success of both. He said that the greatest benefit he has enjoyed has been more time for communication with the community.

Mr. Knickerbocker shared that the town meeting form of government is government by volunteers. As people come and go, the challenges of managing a public corporation evolve with turnover. Consistency is lost. There is strong argument in favor of an administrator. There are two factors to consider. The first is that no charter change is necessary if you just create an employee position. But you do want strong support for the role. He is very proud of the work he accomplished as Wilton administrator. He warned that any transition must clearly communicate the description of the role whether there is a new first selectman or a new town administrator.

Mr. Zagrodsky added that you ideally isolate the function of government on the administrative side from changes in the administration.

Rudy Marconi stated that feedback has been that the town doesn't need another person between them and the first selectman. Mr. Zagrodsky suggested that the town administrator be hired by Rudy Marconi's successor. He also encouraged separating the political from the administrative roles.

Sean Connelly asked if the first selectperson is no longer responsible for administrative tasks, how does he shift the responsibility to the administrator? Mr. Zagrodsky explained that he is still the first selectperson and serves as a conduit between the constituent and the administrator. But he doesn't take ownership of the administrative tasks.

They all discussed the benefits of considering all the applicants but found immeasurable value in promoting someone from within the town government who already knew all the stakeholders. The town residents are not familiar with the administrator personally because there is no public interface.

Mr. Knickerbocker added that a town administrator will bring efficiency to town management because that role will be responsible for tasks that an elected official would have to learn, causing an interruption to management flow.

Geoffrey Morris asked if the first selectperson becomes available to pursue income for the town. Mr. Zagrodsky shared that his town doesn't do much grant writing. Mr. Knickerbocker added that a strictly financial return on investment isn't the ideal measure for the benefit a town administrator brings.

Geoffrey Morris also asked if bringing on a town administrator should require a reduction to the full-time work and salary of the first selectperson. Mr. Zagrodsky responded that a freed up first selectperson will be able to do more. Mr. Knickerbocker added that reducing the salary of the first selectperson diminishes the role but doesn't diminish the responsibilities. The role is being created because the workload has evolved to require two people. The workload isn't one full-time load split into two part-time loads.

Ms. Fernandez shared that one concern has been community buy-in if the first selectperson doesn't relinquish administrative tasks to the administrator.

The town administrator must be interested in making the effort to work well with and align with the first selectperson.

Sean Connelly asked how the board of selectpersons interact with the town administrator. Both Mr. Zagrodsky and Mr. Knickerbocker explained that there is minimal contact between them although Mr. Knickerbocker would've liked more communication with his entire BOS regarding budget discussions. They also explained that the role should not be contracted to coincide with BOS elections to ensure the role isn't politicized.

The BOS received copies of Darien's town administrator job description and a draft from Ms. Fernandez.

Rudy Marconi and the BOS expressed their appreciation to both guests for their openness and willingness to share their experiences.

Ms. Fernandez shared that the subgroup proposed two different versions of a job description. She also highlighted that the town charter specifications require certain language and practices. The BOS deliberated over administrative tasks, language, and realistic implementation.

***Maureen Kozlark motioned to adjourn the meeting at 6:24pm. Sean Connelly seconded.
Motion carried 5-0.***