

**Ridgefield Senior Tax Committee
May 29, 2025, 4:00 pm**

Town Hall – Large Conference Room

Minutes

Location: Town Hall Building Ridgefield CT—Large Conference Room

Members Present:

- Leonard Comberiate - Secretary
- Joseph Adams, Jr (via Zoom)
- Gary Roman - Chair
- Linda Massie – Vice Chair
- Carl Forcheski
- James Bertoluzzi
- Andrew Okrongly

The ninth Senior Tax Committee (STC) meeting was called to order by Chair Gary Roman and commenced at 4:00 pm. Mr. Roman made a motion to accept the Minutes from May 8, 2025, meeting, and the motion was seconded by Carl Forcheski. The Minutes were ratified with no changes.

Public Comment Period:

No public attendees were present.

Review of Research done on Historical Minutes of Previous Boards of Selectmen and Senior Tax Relief Committees back to its Origins

Carl Forcheski and James Bertoluzzi distributed a detailed summary of their findings and spent a significant amount of time and effort reviewing the historical minutes from Town records that pertained to the inception of the Senior tax credit in 1976, and subsequent meetings which were held in 1982, 1984, 1988, 1996 and most recently 2019. Several interesting facts were discovered including proposals to add an income limit to the senior tax credit, thoughts to end the senior tax credit

program in 1988 and surveying adjacent towns to determine what senior tax credit programs were in place including the frequency of tested limits and dollar limits on the senior tax credits available in other towns.

In summary, it was interesting to read about public comments, for and against the idea of tax relief for seniors. After initial approval in 1976, the senior tax credit programs with no income limits were seriously threatened to be reduced and possibly eliminated in 1988 by the tax relief committee of the day, but then First Selectman Sue Manning and the rest of the Board decided otherwise, not wanting to rescind an already established program, fundamentally keeping intact the program that remains to this day. Other than that, in the intervening years there were a few tweaks to income limits that pertain to the tax deferral programs and increases in the general tax credit for seniors over age 65, most recently in the early 2000's.

Completion of the Worksheet Comparing the six topics being considered by the STC and their prospective financial impact on Town Budget and the Mill Rate for subsequent years

- 1) Updated property tax credit to reflect the CPI adjustments since the \$1,048 was last increased in 2008 and indexing the amount on an annual basis thereafter.
- 2) Proposal to Increase the income limit for the Ridgefield property tax deferral program from the current \$65,000 to a higher income limit.
- 3) Propose a new income based supplemental tax credit program targeted at senior households with income below \$65k.
- 4) Adopt a freeze on property tax increases for seniors with an AGI of \$65,000 or less.
- 5) Adopt a provision for tax relief for senior renters based on the CT automobile tax which applies to homeowners and renters
- 6) Adopt a new program to provide an additional senior tax credit based targeted at seniors that have resided in the town for over 25 years.

Andrew Okrongly, a member of the Town's Board of Finance and the STC, prepared an interactive financial model to evaluate the top three proposals considered by the STC to evaluate the financial impact on the Town's annual budget and mill rate for FY 2027 and subsequent years. After a rigorous discussion among the STC members, the three proposals that were elevated for consideration by the STC and evaluated included:

1. Increasing the current \$1,048 senior tax credit to \$1,200 on FY27, and \$1,400 on FY28 impacting an estimated 1,892 seniors
2. Introduce a new supplemental tax credit program for seniors with income below \$65k of \$400 on FY 27 and \$600 on FY28 impacting an estimated 275 seniors
3. Introducing a new supplemental longevity credit for Ridgefield homeowners who have resided for 25 or more years in the amount of \$100 in FY27 and \$200 in FY28 impacting an estimated 757 seniors.

It was possible to use the interactive financial tool to estimate the proposed financial impact as well as the impact of each proposal on the percentage of the town's total budget as well as the impact on future mill rates.

-With respect to proposal number 2 -increasing the annual income for the property tax deferral from \$65,000, Gary Roman and Andrew Okrongly were tasked with seeking additional information from the Town Assessor before estimating the number of seniors that would be eligible for the revised tax deferral program. In addition, it was suggested by Carl Forcheski that the Ridgefield Tax Collector be contacted to determine if any proposed additions and changes to the programs could cause any undue administrative tasks or issues.

Additional Topics:

Chairman Roman discussed the development of several slides to present the findings and recommendations of the STC to the BoS and the Ridgefield Board of Finance. In addition, Andrew Okrongly would have a preliminary discussion with the Board of Finance Chair on the impact of program changes being considered by the STC.

No other open topics were introduced by the Committee members in attendance.

Next Meeting:

The next committee meetings will be held as follows:

- June 12, 2025, at 7 pm at the Town Hall Annex.

There being no other business for the Committee, a motion was made and unanimously passed to adjourn the meeting of the tax committee at 5:52 pm.

Submitted.

Leonard Comberiate

Secretary