



**Town of Ridgefield
Public Safety Facilities Committee
Minutes
UNAPPROVED**

March 19, 2026, at 7PM

ANNEX, Large conference room, 66 Prospect Street, Ridgefield, CT

Please note – these minutes are not verbatim.

Committee Members Present: David Brickley, Pamela Dunaway, Wally Martinez, Adam Safir, Stephen Scalzo, Ed Tyrrell

Committee Members Absent: Denis Graves

Presenters in Attendance: Board of Finance (BOF) Chair Mike Rettger; Board of Police Commissioners Chair Sharon Dornfeld and Commissioner John Frey.

Wally Martinez called the meeting to order at 7 pm.

1. **Public Comment** – Kirk Carr, 62 Prospect Ridge, suggested the committee defer agenda item 6, the where, until after the committee has determined the what and the why. Chair Martinez clarified that agenda six is to discuss criteria for selection of viable sites, not sites.

2. Due Diligence Working Group Progress reports

Needs Assessments and Facilities (Safir, Brickley, Dunaway) - The committee charge describes the task this group is addressing. They published a Due Diligence List of questions crafted by consulting several different stakeholders. The group studied thoroughly the operations of police, fire, and emergency medical responders. They are confident in the vast foundational knowledge being acquired. They are categorizing must haves, good to haves, wants, and future proofing. They met with KBA and requested a breakdown of the square footage of their proposal by facilities components. Then they will categorize each component and corresponding square footage according to the must haves, good to haves, wants, and futureproofing.

Community Engagement (Dunaway, Tyrrell) - The committee has received almost 900 survey responses. There is a disproportionate number of older respondents; more than the Ridgefield senior population and more than voted in the last election. Notwithstanding the

weighting of the votes, 60% said no to the proposal because of the cost and location. The forward-looking survey question to measure current openness to a new project received 22% no votes. Survey results will be compiled and presented in two weeks. The safety newsletter will start going out on a regular schedule.

Finance (Scalzo, Brickley) - They have worked to understand the costing of the previous proposal in hopes of updating and utilizing any applicable data as building blocks for future analysis. They met with Nasco, the estimating firm hired to perform a budget for the last scenario. They studied the data and asked that it be broken down into a few potential scenarios such as separate buildings, and renovation of an existing building. They believe the cost of preparing the land for construction will be a separate cost unique to that site, but the cost of the construction will be the same.

Wally Martinez suggested for committee consideration but no discussion today, in adherence to the committee charge, the idea of committee breakout groups of tiger teams to take the working group results and analyze a committee-determined list of potential scenarios.

3. **Briefing from Board of Finance (BOF) Chair Mike Rettger and/or Director of Finance/Controller** – Mike Rettger was in attendance and asked what questions they have for BOF and the controller. Wally Martinez asked what other significant projects are on the horizon that will be bond issues. Mr. Rettger explained that the BOF has developed a capital projection model that extrapolates assumptions to 25 or 30 years to project overall debt levels and service costs. Built within that is a regular capital budget and special projects. The major parameters are overall capital levels in absolute terms, capital relative to budget, debt service cost relative to budget, and overall debt level of the town relative to the grand list. The committee can use that model when the financial projections for this project are completed. David Brickley asked if the decision is to use private land, how should the loss of tax revenue be incorporated into the project cost. Mr. Rettger said that the BOF can help with the calculation. Adam Safir asked how to translate the project cost into an individual taxpayer tax bill. Mr. Rettger responded that they have a model that was used for the last project, and they can help with the calculation for this committee's project. He explained that there are different methods for demonstrating the financial costs. But the committee will have to decide if they want precision or understandability. He provided detailed information about bond service and concluded that the budget is essentially three components: town budget, schools budget, and debt service with discussion to explain it.
4. **Briefing by Board of Police Commissioners** – Chair Sharon Dornfeld and Commissioner John Frey presented a description of their board's objective to serve as a civilian police department oversight body charged with administration and budgetary management and control of police apparatus, equipment, and building. They set policies, rules, and

regulations for the police department and they handle hirings and promotions of the chief and officers. They are also the town's traffic authority for local roads. Next, Pamela Dunaway asked the commissioners to describe the existing challenges or anticipated liabilities with the current building. Ms. Dornfeld explained that the building is a house that was a residence originally. It became the police department when they had police officers who lived and operated from there. It is not up to code for OSHA or ADA. She also explained that the space isn't sufficient for officers to perform their work. Wally Martinez asked for a description of the information technology infrastructure. He explained that he saw it is unsecured and not contained in an appropriate space. Mr. Frey added that the cells are inadequate for today's needs of various level offenders. He explained that there is no privacy for handling private and sensitive matters. Adam Safir stated that the committee received a presentation from the police department and is developing a needs assessment. He asked if the commissioners could describe what a good solution would look like. Ms. Dornfeld explained that they aren't looking for state-of-the-art updates. But their current cells are from Andy Griffith's Mayberry. They are supposed to have separate cells that are like rooms, not just bars, to separate males and females, and juveniles from adults. The dispatch area is so small that they can hear discussions in the lobby and conference room. Pamela Dunaway asked how to measure the cost of doing nothing. Ridgefield is the safest town because of its vigilance. But if nothing is done for the officers, how long can Ridgefield enjoy being the safest town. Mr. Frey and Ms. Dornfeld shared examples of people they wanted to hire or promote who declined the opportunity once they saw the facilities. Mr. Frey added that the officers face high stress and high-pressure situations that influence physical and mental health. They need a safe space to depressurize from that volatility. Adam Safir asked if the commission has any substantive guidance regarding sites or co-location. Ms. Dornfeld shared that she originally favored a separate building but was swayed to the colocation scenario by cost effectiveness. Mr. Frey added that separate facilities may open new site options. Ed Tyrrell asked why the commissioners think the second referendum failed. Mr. Frey believes voters defaulted to a no vote for lack of information. Then, Ed Tyrrell asked to what degree the first referendum scenario satisfied the police department's needs. They responded, on a scale of 0 to 10, that police half of the collocated scenario was about an 8.

5. **Discussion re: March 31 update due to BOS** – Wally Martinez will draft a high-level report for the BOS and share and request input from each committee member individually. The committee reviewed the committee's charge.
6. **Discussion re: Criteria of selection of potential public safety facilities sites** – Tiger teams will be set up. Steve Scalzo will request town guidance in commercial broker selection to review commercial sites.
7. **Discussion re: Methods of receiving public input through collaborative engagement** – The Community engagement working group is asked to present ideas for community salons.

Three committee members will join each salon, and a trained moderator could lead the group. Pamela Dunaway will also develop the idea of larger community meetings throughout town.

8. **Set next agenda** – Adam Safir reported that Planning and Zoning will be providing resources. They are updating the current town development plan which addresses traffic. Since traffic is a major concern with any public safety facilities site, they will have critical information. They will be invited to the next meeting. The insurance and risk management representative will also be invited to the next meeting or the one following.

9. **Adoption of meeting minutes** – *Steve Scalzo motioned to approve the March 12, 2026, meeting minutes as amended. Adam Safir seconded. The motion carried 6-0 (Graves absent).*

David Brickley motioned to adjourn the Public Safety Facilities Commission meeting at 8:52 PM. Ed Tyrrell seconded. Motion carried 6-0 (Graves absent).

Respectfully submitted by,
Etna Monsalve