

Commissioners of Ridgely

Minutes October 1, 2007

The Town Meeting was held in the Ridgely House on the above date at 7:00 pm. Nancy Gearhart, President; Chuck Hunter, Commissioner; Linda Epperly-Glover, Commissioner; Joe Mangini, Town Manager; Merl Evans, Chief of Police; Robin Eaton, Director of Public Works; David Crist, Supt. of Water/Wastewater; Missy Vanskiver, Asst. Clerk; Martin Sokolich, P/Z Member; Erik Mangini, Editor of City-State Newspaper; Clay Owens, Times Record; and Carol Balderson, Town Clerk were present. A list of other attendees is attached.

Call to Order – President Gearhart called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence for our service men and women.

President Gearhart introduced Erik Mangini (Joe's son).

Erik said the townspeople have expressed an interest in the return of a local publication. FirsTerm, Inc. (a local government consulting firm) is very interested in helping the community get that started. He has had an opportunity to meet with many business leaders in the community. They have been concerned with whether the newspaper is going to come from the government perspective, the perspective of just one individual, or one committee. The answer is no, this is a community paper. It will have whatever you send to the editor to be printed.

They have secured the services of a local printer and there is no limit on the number of pages. It is planned to be a monthly paper. Local groups will not be obligated to put an article in every month.

Erik read an introductory letter that will be printed in the first issue.

President Gearhart asked where the funding for this is going to come from.

Erik said local support and advertising.

Commissioner Epperly-Glover asked where the office is; and Erik responded at the Henry House.

Someone asked how the paper would be distributed, and Erik responded it will be mailed to the 21660 zip code area.

Erik said the first issue is to come out in October. The deadline for articles will be the 10th of each month.

President Gearhart asked if there was going to be an editorial page.

Erik said there will be an editorial page, and there will be reports from the town. What it will feature regularly will depend on what the readers want. It will be reader driven.

Someone asked if articles would be subject to censorship.

Erik said there is an editorial board, but, pretty much anything will be published as long as it is not anonymous.

Approval of the Minutes – Commissioner Epperly-Glover made a motion to approve the minutes of the Sept. 10 regular meeting and Executive Session.

President Gearhart read an addition to the minutes of Sept. 10 submitted by Toby Gearhart. She read, "The minutes of Sept. 10, 2007 Commissioner's Meeting quote

Commissioner Chuck Hunter as saying I changed my blog about issues regarding Joe's contract. There are serious issues regarding this contract as evident in the July Work Session minutes. However, I did not change my blog. In fact, I added even more reasons why the direction that the town is going in is a problem. I also added (per a telephone conversation with Commissioner Hunter) a clarification about the fact that nothing had been voted on and that Joe's requests were only proposed."

"Generally a Town Manager's security is in the quality of his work, which Joe does fine with. But his work here in Ridgely is being undermined with many because of these new contract requests, and particularly since the first contract has not been honored. For my part, I will continue to do what's needed to keep Ridgely from one man rule."

Commissioner Hunter said his response to that objection was that one thing he left out in the blog was that the contract was not a contract, it was a proposal and the fact that it had never been voted on. He (Toby) suggested that he make an addition to his blog, which he did the next day, stating that this wasn't voted on.

Commissioner Hunter said his point was that it was not a contract, it was a proposal from Joe. His comment at the last meeting was that it was changed and he stands by the fact that the blog was one way and the next day there was that addition with semantics. In no way insinuating that he sided with anything other than the fact that he made an addendum, stating that it was, in fact, not voted on as a contract.

Commissioner Hunter made a motion to accept the amended minutes of Sept. 10, seconded by Commissioner Epperly-Glover. Passed unanimously.

Minutes of Sept. 10 Executive Session – Commissioner Epperly-Glover had already made a motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Hunter. Passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report – Clerk reported a General Fund balance for September of \$64,722.58, Sewer Fund - \$178,666.05, and Water Fund - \$21,760.39.

Bills presented to Commissioners for payment approval.

Police Report – Chief Evans reported the date for police applications has passed. He has one applicant for consideration and he has been scheduled for polygraph, etc.

The SWAT team served 2 warrants on Friday morning at 4:30 am within the town limits and 4 arrests have been made. Both landlords were contacted and evictions are on the way.

The investigation of Preston P. D. is complete with no wrongdoing found on their part.

The Md. Chiefs' Assoc. Meeting produced a lot of important information. There are going to be some changes made in the way they do accident reports.

Public Safety Awareness Day by the Fire Dept. is Oct. 7 starting at 1:00 pm in Martin Sutton Park.

Chief Evans said he got some good news today – the grant last year for the County for DWI and speed and aggressive driving was \$30,500, this year with the paperwork turned in it turned out to be \$84,600.

The Chief showed the new hats the officers will be wearing.

Kim Lorence asked if they could move a camera across the street to see who is knocking the mailbox down, and asked if they knew who was doing it.

Chief Evans said most of the time it is a delivery truck, a box truck.

President Gearhart said several people commented after Joe read the police report last month that they liked hearing that. She asked if this report could be put out for the public on the website and in the City-State.

The Chief okayed, except the information on juveniles will be taken off.

Arlene asked if the minutes could be put out to the public before the Commissioners approve them so they aren't so late.

Commissioner Hunter inquired about the cost to videotape these meetings on the website. Arlene said she would check into it.

President Gearhart made a motion that Arlene receive the Police Report from the Chief at the end of each month, and also the unofficial minutes will be submitted by the Town Clerk when they are done before the next meeting.

Rev. Cheek asked what would happen to the corrections.

President Gearhart said the same way last month's minutes will be amended.

Motion approved by all Commissioners.

Public Works Report – Robin reported on the Progress Meeting at the Tech Park; a meeting with URS to go over a lot of projects/updates; and a meeting with Chuck Krockner, Guy Pilli, Joe, and URS reps to go over some issues with Lister Estates. They will be doing a visual inspection Thursday.

He reported he inspected Sunrise Ave. for a storm drain issue. It appears it will be fairly easy to alleviate some of the problems.

Robin reported on street lights – forgot about 4 on Seward Rd.

There was a question about mosquito spray at the last meeting. He called and found out that there is a guy in town who does a mosquito count. That is the number they used to decide if spray is needed.

Bill Moore said there are issues with lights on Seward Rd. They've been out a long time. Robin said he will follow up.

Water/Sewer Report – David reported 103 days of holding capacity.

He reported he took care of Mrs. Diaz's water complaint; flushed hydrant and they said it made a difference.

He said he did a TDS and a hardness test on the 13th of last month. It will be done once a month at 4 or 5 locations. Everything came back fine.

Other Board/Commission/Committee Reports – a) EDC – John Balderson reported they are concerned about the downtown becoming a ghost town and the for sale sign where Mr. Brodie was to put a strip mall. EDC received another resignation and they are down to 2 members.

b) Board of Appeals – Joe read a letter from Chairman Al Witkofsky. On Sept. 19, 2007 the Bd. of Appeals met to consider the appeal of Carlton and Katrina Johnson for a variance of the rear yard setback for an inground pool. The Board unanimously approved the variance.

c) Parks/Recreation – Joe reported they met on Sept. 20. There were only 3 members present. It was decided to move the meetings to the third Tues. of the month at 7:00 pm here at Town Hall. The other item discussed was approval for the POS project in M. S. Park.

d) Planning/Zoning – Joe reported there were several applications: one for a daycare and a home addition that were approved. There was a minor subdivision reference the Ridgely Park project that was approved. Mr. Brodie's shopping center is pending approval. There were plans submitted by Mr. Brodie. He has since brought in additional plans. They are being reviewed and will be presented to Planning/Zoning at their October 24 meeting.

The reason there is a sign on the property is that Mr. Brodie was upset with SHA. There was a glitch in getting his access permit. Joe sent a letter to SHA and that matter has been cleared. His building permit is pending.

President Gearhart said they are still trying to schedule a retreat for P & Z with the Commissioners. October 27 is the date being considered now.

e) Tree Commission – Robin reported they met on Sept. 13th. A meeting was called because of a damaged tree on Md. and Railroad. He has called in experts to decide whether to trim or take it down.

There was a gentleman here from Lane Eng. to discuss with the Tree Commission some of the requirements for Ridgely Park plantings. They can't get all the trees required for reforestation on their property, and they want them in the town.

President Gearhart said they also talked about a stone plaque to be placed by the 5 trees planted at the school.

f) Rails to Trails Advisory Comm. – Met on Sept. 24 – Joe reported they primarily discussed getting the planning and design started immediately. He was to contact a couple of people who did Easton. He has a meeting scheduled with them Oct. 9. Sue Simmons was to get with Queen Annes Co. to see if they could provide some technical help.

g) Ridgely Historical Society – Kathy Schwab reported that there is a hole in Railroad Mem. Park for the bricks. Thanked the town for their help in digging, etc. There are about 1350 bricks that will be dropped near the hole tomorrow. There are 120 engraved bricks that will be moved up there also. It will be a 20 ft. square. Justin Ebling spent considerable time helping with it as well.

Would like to have it done by Friday and would welcome any help to get it done.

Town Manager's Report – Joe reported on the WWTP Sewer Capacity Management Plan. The town has been doing this plan for about the last 3 years. They take state figures that are put out once a year, add in the figures the town has for projects that have been approved, for projects that are pending approval or received preliminary approval, and have reserved an allocation. Figures indicate that we have over 42,000 gals. of allocation left.

The county health officer has refused to sign off on a couple of subdivision plats that have been approved for some time by this town. They are Ridgeway Estates and 128 Walnut Street. A couple of individuals at MDE are questioning our allocation totals. There have been a couple of meetings with them, and we have assured them that we have the allocation. The town has done 5 separate reports; 2 of theirs, ours, and 2 additional reports that David has done going over and above what the state requires. There is

nothing in writing, nothing official, nothing in the guidelines; it is just one or two people at this time that seem to be holding us up. Documentation has been submitted to them and we are waiting for them to come back to us with an answer. He has made several calls to the Deputy Secretary of MDE as well as the Governor's office.

Joe reported that most of the developers working in this town know this by now. There are six projects that cannot move forward until we get an answer.

Municipal Capital Projects – Joe reported some of these may hinge on what kind of an answer we get from MDE. We have begun the upgrade of the wastewater treatment plant. The well project is moving on.

Good news on the water storage tank. The only thing the county has to do is deed the parcel over to the town. Don't need Whitman, Requardt. He will send a letter to the County Administrator.

The Town Commissioners want to save the Hayman House and requested that Joe put out a RFP. A proposal has been received and there are 2 more pending. This would be for a commercial use – bed and breakfast, etc.

Rails to Trails – Joe read an email from DNR that he received today.

The town had requested an easement of the ROW but MTA maintains ownership and has leased the ROW to the Md. DNR. The town's request needs to be for a lease.

Joe will respond with whatever is needed; letter, etc.

They will need specifics on the planning of the trail.

Ridgely 140th Anniversary Celebration – Joe reported he has not heard back from the fireworks folks, so doesn't feel it can happen this fall; maybe spring.

Ridgely EDC Local Revolving Loan Fund – Joe reported that they would like to see us have a program either drafted or in place. He is getting info from Somerset Co. and he will meet with EDC on Oct. 10. He will have the paperwork ready to go then.

President Gearhart asked Robin if they can start the M. S. Park project the third week in October and get it done this fall.

Robin said need to order things.

President Gearhart asked about the meeting with the developers for Lister Est. There is a list of items.

Joe said there is a walk-thru list that Robin is going to go through with our engineers.

We are still holding \$300,000 on them that will not be released until it's all finalized.

There are some funding issues on the Bell Street Pump Station that URS needs to clarify. He said he asked HOA President, Leo Stepp, if they had some folks who would like to go with them.

President Gearhart said Lister Est. residents were told that we would have a public meeting before we signed off on it. She asked that folks with concerns call and talk to Joe about them. After the walk-thru the town will set up a public meeting and go over the list and what is going to be done about it.

Old Business – President Gearhart asked about leave information. Joe is to get it from Missy on a monthly basis and include in packets.

Kathy Smith asked where we stand with the Town Manager's Contract.

President Gearhart said the old contract stands until a new one is completed. The Commissioners have had one meeting with an attorney on this. They will be meeting again on Oct. 15 to go over the details.

Kathy said she doesn't understand why they are looking at a new contract; the issue is he is supposed to live here. She's not sure the Commissioners are taking the ethical issues seriously.

New Business – 1) Consideration of Request to Support Soccer Grant – Robin said the grant is through USA Soccer Foundation. He was told about it and went to the web site and filled out the majority of the grant. It is due by October 15. Permission is needed for lighting (for 10 years) from the Town Commissioners. It's a \$100,000 grant that includes field preparation, fencing, bleachers, etc. There is no match by the town. On the back side of the grant there is maintenance equipment, etc. that can be purchased at half the cost.

President Gearhart made a motion to support the idea and allow lighting on the soccer field at the Cow Barn Athletic Park for 10 years, seconded by Commissioner Hunter. Passed unanimously.

President Gearhart made a motion to adjourn to Executive Session at 8:30 pm. All in favor.

President Gearhart made a motion to go back into Open Session at approx. 8:45 pm.

Clay Owens asked for a report on the Executive Session.

President Gearhart said they discussed the slates for EDC and Ethics Commissions.

2) Consideration of Appointment of Members to the Ridgely EDC – President Gearhart said there are 3 empty slots. There are 2 nominees. She thanked Woody Woodworth and John Guthrie for serving. Unfortunately, their schedules conflict with the meetings so they are stepping down. Portia Dunst is also stepping down.

President Gearhart nominated Kelly Hayman and Leo Stepp; Kelly to replace Woody Woodworth and Leo to replace John Guthrie on the EDC. Commissioner Hunter seconded the nomination. Unanimously approved.

3) Consideration of Appointment of Members to the Ridgely Ethics Commission – President Gearhart said they had a number of nominees for this commission. The slate the Commissioners came up with was Rev. Denzil Cheek (3 yrs.), Shirley Hunter (2 yrs.), and Herman Dunst (1 yr.). Commissioner Epperly-Glover made a motion to accept the slate as read.

President Gearhart asked for further discussion, and said the other nominees for these positions were Kathy Smith, Betty J. Mumford, and Kim Wold.

Motion carried unanimously.

President Gearhart said they have a contract for the new webmaster position.

Commissioner Hunter made a motion to accept the submission from Arlene B. Hege as the Ridgely Md. Website Master at a fee of \$100/mo. for the first 6 months and \$250/mo. after that. Commissioner Epperly-Glover seconded the motion. Passed unanimously.

President Gearhart said the Tech Park has 3 interior streets. P & Z can make recommendations, but the Commissioners will make the final decision on names. Will need suggestions by Oct. 25.

President Gearhart said Ridgely Park needs street names. She wants to refer that to the Tree Commission to present to P & Z because the suggestions are all names of trees and they would like to plant those trees on those streets.

President Gearhart said we have an ad on the MML web site for a Capital Projects Manager. We have had about a half dozen applicants, but she feels they are looking for more. She suggested that some of that should be reworded because it doesn't seem like they are getting the response with the type of experience they are looking for.

Joe said the Commissioners can submit what they want in the ad to him and he will redo it and send it back to them.

Joe said he needs to get the Commissioners together soon for a Work Session to go over a lot of stuff.

Public Comments – Cecilia Acocella said that one of the things she likes about Ridgely is that she can walk her children to school. It is a problem when she gets to the intersection of Walnut St. and Central Ave. It is a dangerous intersection in the mornings and afternoons with a lot of children and traffic turning on and off of Walnut. Requested more police presence during those times.

Rev. Cheek agreed that people come off of Central very fast. It seems to be excessive speed.

Chief Evans and Robin will take a look at it and check with SHA to see what could be done.

Kathy Smith said Sunrise Ave. is a pass-thru since there is only 1 stop sign. Need a police officer there between 3:30 and 5:00 pm. People are barreling through.

Announcements – Halloween will be observed on October 31 with Trick or Treat from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm.

Joe asked if it would be okay for someone to pass out candy in front of Town Hall. OK President Gearhart announced that The Lions Club Christmas Parade and Open House will be on Dec.1 this year.

There will be a COG Meeting on Oct. 9. Joe will go.

President Gearhart made a motion to pay the bills, seconded by Commissioner Epperly-Glover. Passed unanimously.

Clay Owens – Times Record – said this is probably his last meeting with us since he is going to the Star Democrat.

President Gearhart made a motion to adjourn at 9:10 pm, seconded by Commissioner Epperly-Glover.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol A. Balderson
Clerk