

Commissioners of Ridgely

Minutes May 5, 2008

The May Town Meeting was held in the Ridgely House on the above date at 7:00 pm. Nancy Gearhart, outgoing President; Chuck Hunter, incoming President; Linda Epperly-Glover, Commissioner; Kathy Smith, incoming Commissioner; Joe Mangini, Town Manager; Merl Evans, Police Chief; and Carol Balderson, Clerk-Treasurer; were present. List attached of others in attendance.

Call to Order – President Gearhart called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence. She asked that folks remember Kim Wold’s cousin who passed away, along with our service men and women.

Comments by Outgoing President Nancy Gearhart – President Gearhart told folks she needed a break to be a mother and a wife. She said she had spent many hours attending meetings, seminars, and workshops and had spent hours at the computer preparing for difficult decisions. Through all this, she has kept in mind that she was a commissioner for the people and represented them at the table.

President Gearhart said she plans to stay involved in the town since there is unfinished business she needs to follow through. She said she would continue to participate in meetings of the various boards and commissions with the help of town, county, and state staff; and would like to return to the Planning Commission when the opportunity arises. President Gearhart went on to thank everyone who helped and supported her from babysitter to advisor.

Comments by Incoming President Chuck Hunter – Chuck expressed the administration’s and staff’s appreciation for Nancy’s service over the last 6 years. He said he has told her he admires her for her tenacity, and the town has been better for having her here.

Swearing-In of Commissioner Kathryn D. Smith – Town Clerk, Carol Balderson, swore Kathryn D. Smith in at this time.

Joe read Resolution No. R-03-08 – A Resolution of the Commissioners of Ridgely to Extend Thanks and Appreciation to Nancy S. Gearhart for Her Many Years of Public Service to the Town of Ridgely – President Hunter made a motion to approve Resolution R-03-08, seconded by Commissioner Epperly-Glover. Unanimously passed.

The Resolution was presented to Nancy.

(5 minute break for refreshments)

Kathy Schwab and Brenda Walls talked about “Ole Time Ridgely Days” in Railroad Memorial Park on May 3. The event was presented by the Ridgely Pharmacy/Brenda Walls and pursued by the Ridgely Historical Society. It was very successful, and they thanked everyone who helped in any way. It will probably become an annual event.

Kathy Schwab left a book at Town Hall for folks to buy minutes for the Town Clock. At this time, with donations still coming in, they made over \$1100.

Joe read Resolution No. R-04-08 – A Resolution of the Commissioners of Ridgely Expressing Thanks and Appreciation to the Ridgely Historical Society and the Ridgely Pharmacy and Ice Cream Parlor for Sponsoring the First “Ole Time Ridgely Days” –

President Hunter made a motion to adopt Resolution No. R-04-08, seconded by Commissioner Epperly-Glover. Unanimously passed.

The Resolution prepared needs a small correction and will be completed and presented to Kathy Schwab and Brenda Walls.

Town Clerk said Mondell Semans attended the “Ole Time Ridgely Days” event and went home and wrote a poem about it. She read it into the record.

Reappointment of Carol A. Balderson as Clerk-Treasurer – President Hunter made a motion to appoint Carol A. Balderson as Clerk-Treasurer, seconded by Commissioner Epperly-Glover. Unanimously passed.

Approval of the Minutes - April 7, 2008 – President Hunter made a motion to approve the April 7, 2008 meeting minutes, seconded by Commissioner Epperly-Glover.

Unanimously passed.

Treasurer’s Report – Clerk reported April balances as follows: General Funds - \$144,196.76, Sewer Funds - \$58,416.96, and Water Fund - \$22,248.90.

Bills have been presented to the Commissioners for payment approval.

Police Report – Chief Evans reported that the Little League Parade went well with the weather holding off at least for the parade.

There is another problem rental house. The landlord has been sent a letter outlining the parameters of our disruptive house ordinance, and has been advised that if we receive another call for service we will post the house and forward the appropriate citations to the landlord for payment.

Foot patrol hours have more than doubled due to our business check policy.

There were 11 arrests, 21 traffic citations, 134 traffic warnings, and 184 hours of foot patrol. Patrol miles are up and officers are not spending any more time than necessary in the office.

Calls for service are down slightly, probably due to arrests over the last couple of months.

Public Works Report – Joe reported that Robin has had his surgery and was in today for a little while. David has been in charge in Robin’s absence, but was unable to be here tonight.

Joe read the report. (copy attached)

Water/Sewer Report – Joe read the report. (copy attached)

Other Board/Commission/Committee Reports – EDC – John Balderson reported that they are still working to get businesses here.

Parks/Recreation Committee – Joe reported they met on April 22. The big issue is that there is Open Space Funding in the amount of \$75,000 being held for us by the county for the Cowbarn Park. We have to match 25%. Part of that was to come from Ridgely Park. They will be meeting to discuss what to do with the park.

Have not heard back from the soccer grant that Robin put in for (\$100,000).

Nancy said the electric should be out there sometime this summer so that they can get some lights out there.

Nancy said the \$75,000 POS grant was set up to be \$75,000 each year for 4 years. The idea was to take the \$100,000 that Ridgely Park was donating to the park to use as the match for the 4 years.

Planning/Zoning Commission – Martin Sokolich reported that they continued to discuss

the buildings on Railroad Ave. They have talked with Joe and the town attorney about some legislation that would allow for flexible use.

They talked about the Cow Barn property. There is no proposal before them to do anything with that property.

There were building permits for: 14 W. Railroad to demolish and rebuild the back end of the building – approved

203 Sunset Blvd. – Demolition permit (work was already started) – approved

Park Ave. house – Vacant since fire last year – trying to get in touch with owner

Approved the sign for the new restaurant on Central Ave.

Approved plans for model house at Ridgeway Est.

Rails to Trails Advisory Committee – Joe reported that the meeting on April 21 was the presentation of the project to the Town Commissioners. They will present it to the public here at 7:00 pm on Wed., May 7.

Ridgely Tree Commission – Leo Stepp said there was no meeting in April due to Arbor Day plantings. He commended the Public Works Dept. for their preparation for the planting of 17 trees.

Nancy said they have received some requests for some more trees.

President Hunter said he had something to add to the ethics as President of the Commissioners. He said he received several phone calls over the last week concerning our appointed election officials. He said he had calls about one of our election officials campaigning for one of the candidates. He contacted Sandi Logan, Director of Caroline Co. Election Board, and our Town Attorney, Jack Hall, who encouraged him to contact the Ethics Commission members. He called all 3 members.

Nancy said she put a copy of the state law in his box regarding that. It says election judges cannot participate in campaigning on election day, during the election, but other than that it is okay.

Town Manager's Report – Joe reported that Commissioners received his building permit report, the Waste Water Treatment Allocation Capacity Management Plan is still holding at 37,933 ga., Development Escrow Accounts (funds received from the developers – use their money to review their projects), the Town Manager's Monthly Travel Log Report, and the monthly update on town appointments for each commission. As far as the Capacity Management Plan and the Phase I upgrade, he has met with 4 banks and 1 investment firm. All 5 are working hard to come up with a good package for us. At this point it looks like a \$1.5 million loan (interim construction loan) with interest between 3% and 4.5%.

Joe received a call today from MDE; our project is moving forward. Hoping to be able to obtain either a grant or loan funds from them. We will know in June if we made the first cut. Then there would be a public hearing.

Development Projects – Ridgeway Estates – Underway right now, infrastructure is being put in. The model home is under construction. Restrictive Covenants need to be approved by the Commissioners. This has been worked out with the Planning Commission and the town attorney. There is discussion regarding the carriage house removal, what we are going to do about that. The PWA requires us to remove the carriage house by July 31. If we don't move it by then they will have the right to do

away with it. A decision has to be made soon.

Joe reported he met with the State of Md. and Caroline Co. on April 30 reference the Mid Shore Regional Business Technology Park. The discussion was on sewer allocation for the park. He will need to meet with the present commissioners, and some of the former ones soon on this. There will be a letter coming from DBED soon inquiring as to whether the town is going to commit allocation to the park.

Municipal Capital Projects – Ridgely Municipal Public Safety Facility – Joe reported there was a contractor from Pocomoke City here talking to the Fire Dept. This will be used for Fire Dept., Police Dept., and maybe a hall.

Joe reported there is a glitch on the EDC Revolving Loan Fund. The town put in for \$50,000 (which was initially approved). The Secretary of DBED is reviewing all the requests coming in and, instead of grant funds going out to individual EDCs, he is considering everything being held at the state level. This means state money may be held in abeyance, or we'll have to use our money to match state money.

Other Pending Issues – 1) Letter from Cahall Requesting Increase in Fuel

Surcharge/Trash Removal Contract – Joe reported that we had agreed to \$40/mo. He has asked for \$100/mo. additional. He spoke with Cahall about this and he told him that Denton has agreed to \$125, Centreville - \$75, and Greensboro - \$100. Joe recommends increasing ours to \$125/mo. which includes the \$40 we already pay, an increase of \$85/mo.

2) Cell Tower Lease – Joe will prepare a draft MOU between RVFD and the town to address the circumstances of how those funds will be distributed. He would like to make a recommendation to the Commissioners that we begin the procedure and make an approval for the permanent lease request which would bring another \$27,600 to the town. Presently we have a 37-year lease in place with Global Signal.

4) Draft Lease Agreement w/DNR on “Rails to Trails” Project – Joe reported that they have addressed most of the issues. At the last meeting, the Commissioners approved the draft lease. The only glitch is that it only addresses the portion of the project presently in the town. The town is considering annexing the WWTP which would take us down to Crouse Mill. 80% of the treatment plant is not in the town limits. He requested to draft a clause in the lease that would address any annexation done by the town. They covered more than he requested. The goal is to eventually get to Adkins Arboretum.

President Hunter said several years ago there was a move to get this going and people objected and it didn't happen. Interested folks should come Wed. night to support.

President Hunter made a motion to compensate Cahall for fuel by adding \$85./mo.

Nancy said Joe had said that Denton agreed to pay \$125. It is on their agenda tonight; it has not been decided on yet. She said that is only \$40 difference and Denton is much larger; also Centreville is only paying \$75.

President Hunter said, after talking to some other folks, he feels this is fair and made a motion to increase by \$85., seconded by Commissioner Epperly-Glover. Unanimously passed.

President Hunter made a motion to start the process on the cell tower lease, pending an MOU with RVFD, seconded by Commissioner Epperly-Glover.

Commissioner Smith said she did not receive a packet on Friday and was not able to

review these items. She understands that there are some issues with RVFD and opposes this.

Nancy said she feels the MOU needs to be worked out first.

President Hunter repeated his motion and it was unanimously passed.

Joe apologized to Commissioner Smith regarding her packet; she should have received one.

Old Business – **Ordinance No. 309** – deferred. President Hunter said they are waiting to finalize for loan information on the upgrade of the WWTP. He said he has gone on record at town meetings stating that he would not sign anything that will increase the fees for people who live here. He read from the April 7 meeting minutes after Mr. Hege asked how much sewer bills would go up, “Commissioner Hunter said that’s what this process is all about, we will know before any loan is approved. Now it looks like it won’t effect town fees at all”.

President Hunter said people called him last week telling him that people were being told that he and Commissioner Epperly-Glover agreed that water/sewer bills were going to go up \$75./qtr. That was never said here. There was a newspaper article regarding Budget Announcement Without Cause Stirs Among Ridgely Officials.

President Hunter said he asked Joe if he was proposing any increase in fees in the budget for next year, and Joe told him he was not. He clearly states in this press release that the proposal would “soon be presented to the Commissioners of Ridgely with no increase in the town’s property tax rate and more importantly, no increase in the water and sewer rates”. This was emailed out to the 3 Commissioners asking if they would be interested in having that in the paper to clear up the concerns of the people who were told rates were going to go up \$75./qtr. This was emailed to the paper. Nancy called the editor and said she didn’t feel comfortable with that and the editor refused to print it.

President Hunter went on to say that the Town Clerk emailed it to Arlene to be put on the web site Thursday and it didn’t appear until Monday. He said some people don’t like the facts to get out.

Nancy said the email she got indicated it had already been sent to the paper and did not ask for approval.

Joe said Commissioner Hunter and Commissioner Epperly-Glover approved it, and all 3 Commissioners got the same email. The press release clearly indicates that the Town Manager in his proposed budget is not recommending an increase in the property tax, nor an increase in the water and sewer. That is the town administration’s responsibility and the town administration can certainly do that. What happens after that is entirely in the hands of the Commissioners. He said he feels very strongly that the people should know what the administration is recommending. They have been in meetings where a government agency has said we should increase our rates. He thinks the figure of \$75 came out of that meeting. There is an amount of \$340 that the people of Ridgely are paying; that federal agency recommended that it be \$500. He does not feel that is right or fair, and feels we can accommodate our goals without an increase in the water and sewer rates. He spoke with a banker today; they went back and forth and he told him if they can’t do this without an increase in water/sewer rates, then we can’t do business. There are 2 banks who have already approved a loan without an increase.

New Business – a) Ridgely Application for 2008 Coastal Communities Grant for Planning/Zoning Expenses (\$5,000) - Joe said Shane Johnston, who is our oncall planner, has filed an application with the Coastal Communities Grant for Planning/Zoning for \$5,000. He is projecting that in order for us to finish up our work, it is going to cost about \$10,000 and it looks pretty good that we could get \$5,000 in grants.

b) ESHI Grant Award for Old Telephone Building Project (\$1,500) – Joe said Commissioner Gearhart worked very hard on this and thanked her for that. A letter was received informing of this award. He said there is \$1,800 that the Town will be committing in cash, and another about \$3,000 for in-kind services. That award was supposed to be presented tonight, but will have to be done on June 2. Asked that Commissioner Gearhart be here to accept that presentation.

Nancy said those figures for the match are not correct.

Public Comments – Mrs. Mumford referred back to the discussion of the article of Apr. 30 in the Times Record. She said the fact that 2 Commissioners approved this, sounds like a policy decision that was not made in a public meeting.

Joe said the approval was for the press release to go out. It was regarding his recommendation as the Town Manager.

President Hunter reiterated the fact that they only agreed to the press release. He said he talked to Mr. Divilio (newspaper reporter) about the headline being wrong. We're not talking about a budget.

Dan Divilio said he did not write the headline. He thought he made it clear throughout the article that this was strictly his recommendations that the Town Commissioners will see when it is time to make the budget proposal. The 2 out of 3 Commissioner approval was simply for the release of the statement.

Kathy Schwab thanked Janice White, Nancy Gearhart, Elsie Ebling, Jerry Sutton, and Rodney Dobson for their help with the Ole Time Ridgely Days.

They did not have a lot of cleanup to do afterward.

Kathy also asked about the stormwater management pond right in front of the Lister house.

Joe said that is to be a public area with landscaping.

Kathy said it throws off the entrance to the town.

Joe said the Planning Commission wrestled with that (where to put the pond).

Kathy asked if town residents could find out about these things before they actually see it happening.

Commissioner Epperly-Glover said there is one in Easton that looked like that when they started; by the time it was done people wanted their homes close to it. It looks nice now. Janice White said the Historical Society meetings are not on the agenda. They are the first Thursday of the month.

Nancy questioned covenants for Ridgeway Estates being approved by Planning/Zoning and referred to Commissioners.

Joe said they should have been approved before settlement. The main thing deals with where the trees will go, and that the SWM pond would be the town's.

Rev. Cheek asked about the status of the new restaurant. Joe said a couple of weeks.

Mason Shehan said he wished there was something that could be done with these

developments so that they don't all look alike.

Kevin Thomas asked about the development next to Chuck Emerson's property-still going? Also asked what the status is of the Garrett house on Walnut St.

Joe said the development is coming along. They will probably start in the next year or two.

Joe will contact the Garretts concerning their plans for that property.

Rev. Cheek said he spent 15 years on the Town Council in Federalsburg and appreciates the way this council operates, letting everyone speak.

President Hunter said that means a lot coming from him.

Nancy said she should have gotten a packet last Friday as well.

Town Commissioners Comments – Commissioner Smith thanked everyone for coming out tonight; for voting for her and having faith in her. She hopes she can make everyone proud and that the Commissioners can work together and move Ridgely forward. Hopes everyone is pleased with the progress we end up with.

Commissioner Epperly-Glover said there were a lot of people here from Easton on Saturday. Heard a lot of good comments.

She said the election is over with and we need to get together, work together, to go forward. Need to put aside some differences and hard feelings and work for the greater good. That's why they are here. She said they may not always do as the people wish, but they are trying to serve everyone. Likes to think all 3 of the Commissioners are the voices of the people. Always glad to talk with people. Just because they have a difference of opinion does not mean they hate each other and they will be mean and ugly.

President Hunter said May is a big month for Ridgely – Strawberry Festival. Reviewed list of upcoming events/meetings.

President Hunter made a motion to pay the bills, seconded by Commissioner Epperly-Glover. Unanimously passed.

Meeting adjourned at 8:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol A. Balderson
Clerk