

## Commissioners of Ridgely

### Minutes February 2, 2009

The Town Meeting was held in the Ridgely House on the above date at 7:00 pm. Chuck Hunter, President; Linda Epperly-Glover, Commissioner; Kathy Smith, Commissioner; Joe Mangini, Town Manager; Merl Evans, Police Chief; Robin Eaton, Director of Public Works; David Crist, Supt. of Water/Wastewater; (Chuck Creason, Steve Creason, and Kenny Carroll – Police Officers); Dan Divilio-Times Record; and Carol Balderson, Town Clerk; were present.

The following folks were also present: Leo Stepp, Joanne Stepp, Robert Gifford, Dale Mumford, Betty J. Mumford, Steve Tucker, Michelle Tucker, Linda Ross, Robert Nolte, Christine Eckrich, Nancy Gearhart, Jonn Harwood, Susan Harwood, Toni Murray, Cathy Schwab, Rick Schwab, Marla Halaja, Thomas Russell, Nick Stokes, Sharon Adams, TJ Adams, Martin Sokolich, Alfred Kellner, J. Gregory, Al Witkofsky, John Balderson, Charles Bradley, and Edna Bradley.

**Call to Order** – President Hunter opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence.

**Approval of the Minutes** – December 1, 2008 – President Hunter made a motion to approve the minutes as submitted, seconded by Commissioner Epperly-Glover. Unanimously approved.

**Treasurer's Report** – Clerk reported balances as follows for January: General Fund - \$95,619.48 (includes street loan of approx. \$59,680.), Sewer Fund - \$34,266.90, and Water Fund - \$7,556.22.

**Police Report** – Chief Evans reported that January was a fairly slow month other than several burglaries around town, residential as well as business. Information indicates that the same person may be involved in all. Working to develop more evidence.

There were 4 team call outs resulting in 7 arrests. 2 call outs were in town – 2 in Denton. All arrested frequent the Ridgely area.

Completed an audit from the Gov. Office of Crime Control and Prevention in regard to the arrests of juveniles. All in order, no violations. There will be another audit on Feb. 11 from the MSP NCIC.

January stats – 2 adult arrests, 5 traffic citations, 53 traffic warnings, and 115 hrs. of foot patrol

Commissioner Smith asked about the status of a drug dog.

Chief Evans said the dog is young-training off and on. They have received enough money to keep it going through part of next year.

Someone asked what happened to the dog we had.

The Chief said that dog was given to us and trained with one handler. He went with the handler. It's difficult to change handlers after a period of time.

President Hunter presented Chief Evans with a resolution from the Senate – State of Md.

**Public Works Report** – Robin reported on the activities of the Public Works Dept. Robin reported the Tree Commission will be meeting on Feb. 25 to start planning the

Arbor Day event. Joanne Shipley was able to get a grant again this year.

Some discussion on tree plantings and maintenance.

President Hunter asked Robin to report on the snow removal process.

Robin explained that Ridgely does not use salt on the streets. It is expensive, there is no place to store it, and they don't have a spreader. We have plows on 2 pickups and a backhoe. He said they do not plow less than 3 inches of snow. Last week rain followed the snow. Plowing would have created black ice.

Commissioner Smith said she felt at least the intersections should have been plowed; SHA plowed.

Robin reported SHA uses salt, and they pay overtime. The Town does not.

Al Witkofsky said SHA had nothing to plow.

**Water/Sewer Report** – David reported there are 59 days holding capacity in the lagoon, and he is still stream discharging.

The annual water inspection was done last week by MDE; everything okay.

David reported that our water permit expires this year. A lengthy report will have to be done.

There were 5 water line breaks during the cold snap; none were on the Town's side of the meter.

**WWTP Upgrade** – David reported spray zones 3 and 4 are completed except for testing. The piping under the new pump room has been completed, and they are getting ready to start on the last 2 spray zones.

Commissioner Smith asked if 36,000 gals. was available for the Tech Park.

Joe said they requested the allocation from the future expansion of the WWTP, not from the upgrade.

Commissioner Smith asked where the funds for the expansion would come from if not from Ridgely Park.

Joe said the Town could apply to the State for more funding. The Town may be able to apply to the State for grant funds since that expansion would be to create a business environment, or the Town could ask the County Commissioners to fund it.

**Other Board/Commission/Committee Reports** – **EDC** – John Balderson reported they met on Jan. 14. They have been trying to get \$50,000 from DBED. With the economic situation, it looks like that won't happen. They talked about the new businesses. Thanks to Mr. Brodie the restaurant, Batter Up, should be opening Feb. 4. Red Brick Pizza and Queenstown Bank are coming in sometime in March.

**Planning/Zoning Commission** – Martin Sokolich reported the meetings are now starting at 7:00 pm instead of 6:00. They approved a new house for Ridgeway Estates and a demolition permit for a burned house on Caroline Ave.

Public Works is going to help out with the fence between Subway and the cemetery. They will be taking out the old fence.

Steve Horne (Elm Street) was here to discuss the new plans for Ridgely Park. He had some sketches of some houses. It is on the table now.

Discussed meeting of committees on Rails to Trails plan.

Historical Society – Cathy Schwab reported that Janice White (President), broke her ankle in 3 places and is in the hospital.

They are planning for Old Time Ridgely Days to be held on May 2 from 10 am to 4 pm. Looking for vendors that have an old fashioned theme. Invited participation.

**Town Manager's Report** – Joe reported that a copy of the WWTP Sewer Capacity Management Plan and Allocation Totals has been given to the Commissioners.

The Spray Irrigation Upgrade project is about half completed; still anticipate completion in April. The plant will probably be in operation for a month or two, expect certification from the state in July.

Will be putting in the final request for funding from MDE in the amount of \$1.5 million.

Municipal Capital Projects – Joe reported there is a request to the State for the water storage tank to be part of the stimulus package.

Rails to Trails – A draft ad has been presented to the Commissioners for them to look at to go out for bid. Wants to hold the ad for a couple of days to get some more info from the State before it officially goes out for bid.

Municipal Public Safety Facility – This was also included on the list for the stimulus package.

Municipal Grants – Joe reported that the ESHI Grant for the Telephone Building will be returned to them (\$750 to be returned). Will probably reapply next year.

Still awaiting word from the State on funding for the Railroad Station Renovation Project.

Pending Issues – Vortex Pumps/Lister Estates – Joe reported of the 89 units in Lister Estates, 63 use Vortex (grinder) pumps. They are starting to break down. The Commissioners have to decide how to deal with that. Replacement of these pumps cost about \$1650 with labor at about \$400. The Town has already spent about \$15,000 for this. When Lister Estates was approved, the Town agreed to maintain these pumps. There was a 2-year guarantee and now they are starting to break down.

Each homeowner was sent a packet on how to take care of these pumps. He suggested a special meeting to discuss this.

Commissioner Smith said she understood that the Town was to get 6 pumps from the developer, but we took cash instead.

Joe said we applied that money (about \$9,000) to the Bell Street Pump Station to reduce the cost to the Town.

Robin said if you have extra pumps sitting on the shelf and not being used, gaskets and seals start to shrink.

There were several comments from Lister residents concerning repair of the pumps rather than replacement. Could keep a couple of pumps on hand to be used while pumps are being repaired.

Joe said the other pending issue he had was consideration of the appointment of a member to a 5-year term on the Ridgely Planning/Zoning Commission.

President Hunter said there is a sitting member who is up for reappointment, there is interest by someone who has never served on it, and one who has served and would like to get back on when there is an opening.

President Hunter said the Commissioners have not discussed these folks--should discuss at Work Session.

**Old Business** – R-03-09 - “A Resolution of the Commissioners of Ridgely to Reinstate the Fee for Solid Waste Removal” - \$37.50/qtr. – residential

President Hunter asked if there were any comments.

Nancy Gearhart asked if Missy was working on a sliding scale for this.

President Hunter said Missy used water usage to come up with that, but a lot of folks felt there was not a direct correlation with waste. For example, if 5,000 gals. of water (or less) was used the garbage fee would be \$18.75.

Joe explained that the sanitation costs in the budget is \$151,122. \$37.50/qtr. will generate \$86,400/yr. The balance would be covered with real property taxes.

Al Witkofsky said this was not discussed until the budget came up short...sounds like a way to get additional revenue; maybe we need to cut more expenses.

President Hunter said the Commissioners should not have taken the charge off, and the auditors told them that.

President Hunter said we projected revenues/fees from development that did not occur, spent money that never came in, and we just got a letter cutting our Highway User Fees by \$13,000. There are some budget items we don't control.

A resident asked if everything that is being spent is being looked at for cut backs.

Another resident asked why the \$26. trash fee was taken away.

Joe said it was his recommendation to take the trash fee away based on the increase in tax revenue coming in over the past couple of years, and we had 80 units that had been approved by the Planning Commission that would be coming on line (\$1500-\$2000 general fund revenue per unit). The developments didn't happen. He said he also recommended a reduced tax fee from .53/\$100 to .50/\$100 (Commissioners agreed to .51/\$100).

Joe said we could do away with trash removal (everyone would be responsible for their own). He said from his experience that is a mess.

Joe also said we could cut \$150,000 by eliminating the Police Dept. and go to the County. The police budget is about \$530,000.

Commissioner Smith recommended holding off on this and discussing it further.

She said this didn't happen overnight, this deficit has been allowed to go out of control for the last 3 years. The first year it was \$30,000, the second year it was \$67,000, and this year it went to \$180,000. It is rapidly mounting, and it is not what has just happened in the last 6 months. Part of the problem has been bad management.

Betty J. Mumford asked about the bulk trash pick up – private hauler.

President Hunter said this has been discussed numerous times.

Robin said the town can't haul it for the cost we're paying to have it done.

There were many comments and suggestions as to how to handle the trash situation.

Cathy Schwab suggested folks write their ideas down and get them to the Commissioners so they can make a decision.

President Hunter said they will hold off on a decision until Feb. 23.

Nancy suggested residents with bulk items contact the Town Office so the crew does not have to drive all over town for 2 or 3 stops.

Another resident suggested looking at other things to cut. Doesn't feel we need 7 police officers. Shouldn't have take-home vehicle unless they live here.

**New Business** – **Ordinance No. 319** – “An Ordinance of the Commissioners of Ridgely to Enter the Employees Contributory Pension System (ECPS) and the Alternate Contributory Pension Selection Plan (ACPS) of the State of Maryland” - Jack Hall said he doesn't attend all the meetings, but Joe sends him packets. He doesn't always go through them when he gets them. He was going through some things and came across the paperwork for the Town to join the State Retirement System. He was concerned with the procedure in the way it had been approved. There is a difference in this state between a resolution and an ordinance. This was done by resolution; he is convinced it needs to be done by ordinance to be done properly.

President Hunter made a motion to adopt Ordinance No. 319, seconded by Commissioner Epperly-Glover. Unanimously passed.

**Ordinance No. 320** – Joe read, “An Ordinance of the Commissioners of Ridgely Accepting As Public Streets, and Assuming Responsibility for the Maintenance of, Portions of County Roads Located Within An Area Which Has Been Annexed To The Town of Ridgely” – He said the Caroline County Commissioners have already approved a resolution transferring Seward Rd., Hog Lot Road, and Race Track Road over to the Town. These roads are primarily in the Tech Park area. The Town has to adopt an ordinance accepting these.

Commissioner Smith asked if that road would need to be widened when the Tech Park comes in.

Robin said there has been discussion, everyone knows what has to be done, and they will do that.

A resident asked if something (in writing) has been put in place to make sure that in absorbing these roads that it's not incurring costs to the Town. Has the research been done?

Joe said the Highway User Fees the Town gets from the State is to take care of road maintenance.

Robin said this is almost a formality now. The Town agreed to an annexation of these properties to go along with the Tech Park in 2004. The agreement was made then that the Town would take those roads once the Tech Park was built out.

Jack Hall said there are no guarantees. Businesses pay more than their share, they subsidize residences. It is easier for the Town to take care of a business park than it is to take care of the people in Town.

Nancy asked if Ordinance No. 320 had been out at all for public review.

Joe said it has not.

President Hunter said it would be held over until the next meeting.

**Ordinance No. 321** – Joe read, “An Ordinance of the Commissioners of Ridgely Accepting As Public Streets of the Town, And Assuming Responsibility For The

Maintenance Of Lister Lane, And Robin's Court, And That Portion of Carroll Lane Lying Between Lister Lane And Walnut Street In Lister Estates" – Joe reported that these streets have been in the developer's hands and are now being turned over to the Town. He recommended that this ordinance also be held over until March 2. This will be put on the web site along with Ord. No. 320.

Some questions as to why these streets are coming on late.

Joe said Walnut Street was already a Town street. These are streets the developer put in. The project is completed now.

Commissioner Smith asked if any streets were paved last year with the \$153,000 received in HUR.

Joe said Third St. was done at a cost of about \$160,000.

A resident asked why the top part of Walnut St. has not been done.

Joe reported there is no money in the budget now to do that part. This can be looked at later.

Joe said he was not here when this was decided on. He said the Town should not have agreed to pay the developer for Walnut St. The developer should have been made to do Walnut St. himself.

One resident said there should be standard operating procedures, the Town shouldn't be making "knee jerk decisions".

President Hunter said this was a learning experience.

Ordinance No. 322 – "An Ordinance of the Commissioners of Ridgely To Approve the Deed of Façade Easement For the Preservation of Ridgely Landmark Historic Sites and Structures" – Jack Hall said there are some changes that should be made, most of them are minor but important.

**Town Commissioners Comments** – Commissioner Smith said the first meeting with the Chief of Police Search Committee will be Wednesday, Feb. 4. There are 13 resumes. She read the list of committee members. They will be putting together some questions and concerns, reviewing resumes, and begin scheduling interviews.

**Public Comments** – President Hunter said probably most of the Lister Estates residents who are here are concerned about the Vortex pump issue. There are 63 properties who have these pumps. The Town did enter into an agreement where they would take them over after 2 years. Now people are having problems with the pumps. Robin and Vortex people are looking at some ways to better serve the people and take care of the equipment that is in the ground. No decisions have been made. The Town needs to do more investigation into the company itself. The Town is looking at options like training our people to change them in and out, maintenance contracts (very expensive), alternative pumps (even more expensive), etc.

President Hunter said the Town is in the process of preparing a packet for every home that has one of these pumps. There will be a sign off sheet. Sometimes they just break down and sometimes they are being abused.

Robin said the warranty on the pumps was for 2 years.

Jack Hall will review the Public Works Agreement.

There was much discussion on the pumps.

There were some comments from Lister Estates residents that they were not being accepted in Ridgely. Everytime they have problems they come here and get smacked in the face.

Commissioner Smith said she did not know where the division came from. She moved here 7-1/2 years ago and found this to be a welcoming town. She said the citizens were told this development would not cost them anything, but it has.

President Hunter said a community meeting will be scheduled to discuss the Vortex pumps.

Commissioner Epperly-Glover made a motion to pay the bills as submitted, seconded by President Hunter. Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 9:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol A. Balderson  
Clerk