

TOWN of RIDGEFIELD – CITIZENS COMMITTEE MEETING

DECEMBER 14, 2015

TOWN HALL LARGE CONFERENCE ROOM
400 MAIN STREET, RIDGEFIELD, CT 06877 – 7:30 P.M.

AMENDED/APPROVED MINUTES

Present: R. Larson, A. Behymer, D. Daughters, E. Burns, L. Hanley, M. Miller, E. Tyrrell, J. Zawacki

Absent: T. O'Connor

Agenda

1. Call to Order
2. Public Comments
3. Second Survey Discussion
4. Communication for Second Survey
5. Next Steps
6. Adjourn

1. Call to Order – R. Larson called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. T. O'Connor could not attend the meeting but did send in his comments/suggestions.
2. Public Comments – There were no comments from the public.
3. Second Survey Discussion - ;

E. Burns – In the introduction, the public needs to know that this is the “second survey”. The median age in Ridgefield is 43. We hope for participation from a younger group with this survey and a good demographic mix. Rebecca from M&M has indicated that there is usually a lower return on a second survey.

D. Daughters – stated how there is a lot of interest that the Town control the property. On the fiscal background page, there is the possibility of tax revenue of \$950,000/year from the property. This is an important piece of information for the public to know. The \$600,000 in tax revenue from the Schlumberger days is no longer relevant. R. Larson stated how additional revenue from the remaining 12 acres will offset the cost of potential uses of the property,

E. Tyrrell stated how he feels much better about the second survey than he did two meetings ago. D. Daughters stated we need to be consistent with our terminology. The Sky Dome needs to be labeled on the map. One thought is for demolition of the Sky Dome. D. Daughters restated what he had suggested

previously, that an art collector and possibly the Sendak Foundation could use the Sky Dome as an art storage facility. The town could form a group of two to three people who would market the art storage facility to art collectors. A. Behymer indicated that there is definitely a market for art storage. E. Burns responded how it would cost a great deal to climate control the Sky Dome. She would like to see tearing down the Sky Dome as an option.

The Committee then went thru the latest draft of the second survey page-by-page: **The fewer words in the survey, the better! (deleted this)**

Tell Us About Yourself – demographic info should be the last page and not the first.

Citizen's Committee Process – The introductory paragraph to this page should include interest in a return on the initial cost of the property plus the demolition/maintenance costs.

- The third bullet about municipal facilities could read – Concern over “adequacy of current facilities” – this needs to be a stronger statement.
- The fourth bullet about open space could end with (slopes & wetlands).
- The sixth bullet – the wording, “in case needs arise” is too narrow. What about “needs that are not currently identified”?
- The eighth bullet about retail – suggest eliminate “high levels of concern over traffic” and instead state how a retail focus would negatively impact on other retail districts in town.
- The ninth bullet about affordable housing can be eliminated as P&Z is currently working on this issue. The Town is doing an affordable housing study with a Public Hearing scheduled for January 2016. Affordable housing requires higher density than the property could provide. E. Tyrrell stated how affordable housing was in the bottom 10% on the first survey. If this use interests someone, they could mention it in the section for comments.

Background on Property – change the order of the paragraphs. Make the 3rd paragraph be the 2nd paragraph.

Fiscal Background – Put in the higher cost of \$7.6 million as that is the number people remember, with proceeds to date of \$5.6 million. The current shortfall is \$2 million. M. Miller stated how the referendum vote was for the town to get the investment dollars back. We have received \$200,000 in insurance proceeds and grant dollars, and this can also be noted.

- The last sentence can take out the word “site” and add “remaining 12 useable acres”.

- #6, the third option should start out with “Yes”.
- #7 – Eliminate the word “small” in front of hotel and include “Apartments” as an additional option.

Cultural Option –

- The second paragraph should read, “The cultural venues would include use of the Philip Johnson Building, potentially as a museum . . .” and the end of the sentence should insert “music and theatre” before events (and to replace the stage at Ballard Park).
- Some of the on-site parking areas (approximately 300 cars). Include “approximately”.
- The last paragraph should read, “The cost for upgrading/modifying the Philip Johnson Building” – always call it the Philip Johnson Building (all three words).

Municipal Option –

- The first paragraph should read, “This option would create a municipal campus in addition to a possible museum use of the Philip Johnson Building and music use of the auditorium. The site would integrate Police, Fire and possible Town Hall uses in upgraded facilities, making the current Town Hall Annex, and Police Station and Catoonah Street Fire House Station available for possible redevelopment.”
- The second paragraph should end the paragraph with the Philip Johnson Building and auditorium”. (Again, always refer to Philip Johnson Building with all three words.)
- Third paragraph about parking – “two-story parking garage with the first level underground”.
- The bullets under the 5th paragraph – the 2nd one should refer to the “Catoonah Street” Fire Station, and the 4th bullet should read, “Tax revenues from the refurbished properties”.

Land Bank Option –

- The first sentence would read, “This option would include possible museum use in the Philip Johnson Building and community or private use of the auditorium, . . .”
- The questions should be the same for each option.

Preferences –

Suggest rank Preferences 1 to 5.

E-mail – Put in a disclaimer that your email will not be used in any other communication and/or mailing.

The plan is to approve the wording of the second survey at the January 4 meeting.

4. Communication for Second Survey – It was suggested that each Committee member communicate for the second survey in the same way that they did for the first survey. The response for the first survey was excellent. D. Daughters stated how the letter written by R. Larson to introduce the first survey was very good.
5. Next Steps – The next Committee meeting is scheduled for Monday, January 4, at 7:30 p.m. – Town Hall/Large Conference Room. R. Larson is reaching out to both the Police and Fire Departments for their input on a “Municipal Option” for the Schlumberger property.
6. Adjourn – **A. Behymer moved and D. Daughters seconded a motion to adjourn the Citizen’s Committee Meeting at 9:40 p.m. Motion passed by unanimous vote.**

Respectfully submitted,

Janet L. Johnson