

NEWS

Ridgefield First Selectperson Rudy Marconi violated town charter, ethics board finds



Ridgefield First Selectperson Rudy Marconi at his annual state of the town address at The Lounsbury House on Wednesday, February 28, 2024, Ridgefield, Conn.

H John Voorhees III/Hearst Connecticut Media

By **Sandra Diamond Fox**, Staff Writer

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RIDGEFIELD — First Selectperson Rudy Marconi is defending himself after the Board of Ethics found he violated town rules over conflicts of interest.

On July 1, the Ridgefield Board of Ethics [ruled there was “probable cause”](#) that Marconi violated the town charter by not disclosing at several town meetings that his wife, [Peggy Marconi](#), [serves as a volunteer on the Board of Directors](#) of [A Contemporary Theater of Connecticut](#) in Ridgefield.

The meetings discussed the theater's request for the town being responsible to repair its roof, which, according to ACT, is leaking and in very poor condition. The theater leases its space from the town.

After a resident filed a complaint in late May, the ethics board found Marconi, a [Democrat serving his ninth term in office](#), had an undisclosed "material personal interest" and that he attempted to influence the town to grant a contract and "bestow a financial benefit on ACT."

In response, while Marconi acknowledged he didn't announce his wife's connection to ACT at the meetings, he said he didn't do so intentionally.

"Peggy, my wife has been a member of many, many boards in Ridgefield and it's second nature to me," he said, referring to her involvement on multiple boards. "I did not disclose that Peggy sits on the board. Nor did I disclose it when she sat on the RVNA board, nor did I disclose it when she sat on Ann's Place board, nor did I disclose all the other activities she's been involved with. She's been involved in a multitude of boards in town and it was never an issue before," he said. "I don't think about her involvement, what she does, and I didn't think of it this time."

On April 10, [the Board of Selectpersons unanimously](#) voted to send the topic of the roof to a public hearing and town meeting. Marconi voted along with the board. At a special town meeting on May 8, the town voted to move forward with the allocation of [Local Capital Improvement Program](#) funds to pay for the roof repairs.

The quote for the roof replacement from McCarthy Roofing is \$246,000 for the entire roof, with a 25–30-year warranty, according to the April 24 public hearing minutes. The part of the charter the ethics board said Marconi violated states: "Officials and employees shall not use their office. . . or position in Town, to procure contracts with the Town or other financial benefit for. . . any private organization in which they have a material financial interest or material personal interest. . . . No officials or employee shall attempt to influence anyone concerning the awarding of Town contracts on the basis of their business, family or political relationship with any of the parties involved."

Marconi said he referred the matter to town council.

Ridgefield attorney Robert Jewell said "if the only issue is that Rudy failed to disclose that his wife, Peggy, was on the ACT Board, then I just don't see it as an issue since ACT is a 501c (3) organization and the identity of its Board is public record. ACT brings a lot of financial benefit to the town and it sounds like the filing of this complaint was sour grapes."

The ethics board said it would be up to the Board of Selectpersons to determine the next steps on the town being responsible for the roof, and to decide if ACT's amended lease is voidable.

Marconi said he doesn't believe the Board of Ethics or the Board of Selectpeople "or anyone else could overturn a vote of a town meeting unless it was something grossly in error."

He added it's "kind of upsetting, after 30-plus years of service to this community, that a technicality like this would be used to try and discredit someone who has given so much time to the town."

Board's reaction

Ridgefield Republican Selectperson Chris Murray said he didn't know Marconi's wife was on the board of ACT at the time of the discussion. While he said he's not too concerned about that, he said he'd like to "vacate the lease and start over and say to ACT, 'I want to see all of your financials.'"

He added he would like to see the roof topic as an agenda item on the next Board of Selectpersons meeting, on July 17.

Democratic Selectperson Sean Connelly said he doesn't think there are conflicts of interest with Peggy Marconi and also, he doesn't think it's necessary to have the town revote on the lease with ACT.

"I have great confidence in Rudy Marconi and hope Ridgefield appreciates all he has done in his many years to support our community," Connelly said. "We often say how our town runs on volunteers and we should celebrate all those who contribute to making our town a better place."

Selectperson Maureen Kozlark agreed with Connelly, saying it's "unfortunate that an inadvertent failure" to disclose a spouse who was serving as one of 18 board of directors to ACT has resulted in the finding of a "technical violation."

She added having served with Marconi on the Board of Selectpersons for almost 15 years, she observe him to be "an incredibly hard working public servant" who "consistently displays the highest integrity and ethics in all matters affecting the town of Ridgefield.

She also said there should be a conversation as to whether the roof decision should be voided — with Marconi recusing himself from the discussion.

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EDITOR

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