

COMMISSIONERS OF RIDGELY
DECEMBER 2, 2019
TOWN MEETING
AGENDA



7:00 PM OPENING/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

APPROVAL OF THE NOVEMBER 4, 2019 TOWN MEETING MINUTES

STAFF REPORTS

CLERK-TREASURER

- APPROVAL TO PAY BILLS
- TREASURER'S REPORT

DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS

CHIEF OF POLICE

ZONING ADMINISTRATOR

FINANCIAL ASSISTANT

- FY19 AUDIT TGM GROUP, LLC.

STATE'S ATTORNEY

HISTORICAL SOCIETY

OLD BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

- JOHN GOODEN RIDGELY AIRPORT
- ROB CRIMMINS UNITED STATES PARACHUTE ASSOCIATION

PUBLIC COMMENT (LIMITED TO 3 MINUTES)

(I was not representing
the USPA. Whoever
wrote the agenda made
that association, not me.)

The Commissioners & Staff of the Town of Ridgely wish you a safe and happy Holiday Season!

Points to Present to Ridgely Town Council About a Drop Zone at the Airpark

Rob Crimmins (rc@robcrimmins.com)

1. Direct Economic Benefit

The first thing to be said, even though it's obvious, is that a well run Skydiving operation at the Ridgely Airpark will be of economic value. The drop zone will employ at least one person full time and it will provide part time employment for many more.

People from outside of town will come to make tandem skydives and as many or more seasoned skydivers will be regular visitors for years to come.

2. Now is a Good Time

New factors that make the current conditions special could make Ridgely Airparks' next phase the best yet.

2.1 New, fresh ownership

The first factor is the airport's new owner and his goals. John Gooden is a very successful aerial application operator, a farmer and an agricultural entrepreneur and he is making the Ridgely Airpark his corporate home.

2.2 The Change in the Skydiving Landscape

Skydive Delmarva operated on the Laurel Airport in Delaware for decades. For the past couple of years the owner of that drop zone has sought to get out of the business. He owns an agriculture business too and his interest in skydiving has wained. Upon selling his aircraft to a drop zone out West he closed the business.

The management of Skydive Delmarva immediately started looking for a new home. That's where I came in. The first Saturday after the drop zone in Laurel closed my wife and I went there anyway. It was a sad visit. For consolation we went to Ridgely for lunch but first we went to the airport. John's father was there and he talked to us a bit about the airport and his son's business and we told him about the situation in Laurel. I called Mr. Gooden that afternoon. John immediately saw the opportunity. After I called the drop zone manager from Laurel the ball started rolling.

The management and staff that ran Skydive Delmarva are fully credentialed and utterly professional. They are not unique in that respect. Others are interested in reopening a drop zone at Ridgely and they may be just as competent and reliable so another condition that may be at play is simply some healthy competition.

3. Other Benefits to the Community

3.1 An affinity

Skydivers will not only spend money while they're here, many will also develop a profound, permanent fondness for Ridgely. I came to Ridgely in 1975 at the age of 19 to make my first skydive. I came back almost weekly for years thereafter. It was an immensely rich experience for me and I've loved this place ever since. Even when I wasn't skydiving and when there wasn't a drop zone here I'd come just to be in the place that meant so much. A great many people feel the same way.

4. With Rewards Comes Risks

There are benefits for the people who come here to do what they love. There are benefits for the town too but as with most rewards there are risks. Town councils, police departments and others need to know what to expect and how to prepare. Those institutions in Ridgely and Caroline County have the benefit of already having experience with skydiving and other forms of sport aviation. In addition to parachuting centers being here since the 1960's Ridgely Airpark has also been the home for hang gliding and soaring.

4.1 Risk Mitigation

4.1.1 Aviation Operations

Given the right location and conditions these two aviation activities are quite compatible. Typically, FBOs (Fixed Base Operators) prefer not to have skydiving operations on their airports. It complicates aircraft arrivals, landings, departures and movement on the ground, which pretty much covers it all. Aerial applicators (crop dusters) prefer to depart and return to the airport below pattern altitude so normal

airport traffic can complicate their landings and departures. Because Ridgely is a small town with no regular transportation in and out of the airport much, probably most, of the flights into the airport are by aircraft flown by casual travelers out for a ride and student pilots. These aircraft can force the crop duster to operate differently than he'd like to. Over time the costs associated with the minor diversions and course changes the ag pilot has to make can add up. If casual flyers and students avoid Ridgely because there are parachutes directly over the airport Mr. Gooden's operations will be more efficient and safer.

4. 1. 2 Skydiving

The USPA (the United States Parachute Association) and the Federal Aviation Administration have jurisdiction over USPA affiliated drop zones and OSHA has authority over all work places. All these organizations are effective, jumpers are aware of the dangers, they're careful, they obey the rules and they only use proven equipment. The result is a simple fact. Skydiving is safe by any measure.

4. 1. 2. 1 Liability

Despite the statistics there is liability. It's everywhere and that's a fact too. Interestingly, the liability associated with parachuting is less than many other activities. It's because courts have consistently recognized that no one is unaware of the dangers and as such people who willingly leave an airplane in flight bear responsibility for what happens. Waivers are effective protections in many situations and the waivers that skydivers sign have been consistently upheld in court even in cases where there was gross negligence.

4. 1. 2. 2 Insurance

All jumpers at USPA affiliated drop zones are USPA members. Membership comes with third-party bodily injury and property damage for claims arising out of a member's recreational skydiving. Landlords, landowners and tenants whose property is used by USPA members are automatically included as additional insured under the policy.

5. The Foundation

So the conditions exist for business success but town councils should consider more than that.

If it's based on a solid foundation of steady productive effort economic growth produces sustainable wealth and better communities. The source of the revenue that will accrue to a town has to be impeccable for the community to truly, morally benefit from it. Luckily, I am able to draw on documented experience to support the proposition that the current skydiving community, specifically the jumpers from Delmarva, will provide that kind of revenue.

Skydivers keep log books. I went through mine last week and listed everyone I jumped with since 2012 and their occupations. It includes 101 names and I was able to determine the occupations of sixty-eight of them.

There are thirteen retired or active US military members, most are officers. Five of them are in the United States Naval Academy. (If Ridgely hosts a drop zone with the proper aircraft and facilities it will be the Naval Academy Skydiving Team's home location.)

Six of the jumpers in my log entries are in foreign military services.

There's an Airline Transport Pilot, an author, (I'm an author too) and IT professionals.

There is an attorney, a medical doctor and two PHDs.

There is a Baltimore firefighter and three scientists.

There are commercial pilots, engineers, business owners, entrepreneurs, restaurateurs, a US State Department senior executive, two SCUBA instructors / dive-masters, a dog trainer, contractors, a biologist, a US Secret Service sniper, a stunt coordinator, a farmer, a dental hygienist, a White House communications technician, professional skydivers, retail managers, registered nurses, a flight instructor, a ballet instructor and a tug boat captain.

Only five of the people I've jumped with at Skydive Delmarva since 2012 are employed in professions other than the ones listed here.

Every one, every single one are people who add richness, color and wealth to the many communities of which

they are a part. If they should come here to skydive Ridgely will become one of their favorite places and it will inevitably benefit in ways that are easy to predict and in manners that may be quite unexpected.

Please welcome them. You will not be sorry.

Who Skydives?

In January 2019, members received the 2018 annual skydiving survey. The results provide a snapshot about who skydives and where they come from. Total number of USPA members at the end of 2018 was 39,827.

USPA DEMOGRAPHIC INFO



Members By Occupation

Age

Age	Domestic	Foreign	Total
≤ 17	0%	0%	0%
18-20	1%	1%	1%
21-29	12%	11%	12%
30-39	25%	34%	26%
40-49	20%	30%	22%
50-59	19%	14%	18%
60+	23%	10%	21%

- Retired-11.18%
- Skydiving-7.65%
- Engineering-7.31%
- Military-6.85%
- Other (please specify)-6.62%
- Self-Employed-6.33%
- Health and Medicine-6.18%
- Aviation-4.7%
- Management-4.49%
- Information Technology-4.32%
- Business and Finance-4.22%
- Government-4.03%
- Sales/Marketing-3.8%
- Building Trades-3.51%
- Computer and Mathematical-2.84%
- Education-2.34%
- Production-2.09%
- Student-2.07%
- Law Enforcement-1.69%
- Automotive-1.44%
- Installation and Maintenance-1.44%
- Entertainment-1.33%
- Hospitality-1.12%
- Legal-0.98%
- Science-0.92%
- Indoor Skydiving-0.41%

Incidents And Accidents

There were approximately 4,277 reserve rides in the U.S. in 2018. (0.13% of all jumps, or 1 reserve ride in every 771 skydives)

There were approximately 2,147 injuries in the U.S. in 2018. (0.07% of all jumps, or 1 injury in every 1,536 skydives)

There were 13 skydiving fatalities in the U.S. in 2018. (0.0004% of all jumps, or 1 fatality in every 253,669 skydives)



in your words

HOW SKYDIVING CHANGED MY LIFE

Do you have a story about how skydiving has changed your life that you would like considered for publication? If so, visit the Submissions tab at parachutistonline.com. Pieces should be 500 to 700 words in length and accompanied by two to four photos.



I first learned of skydiving in 1961 at the age of 8. The television show "Ripcord," about two guys who provided almost entirely fictitious parachuting services, aired that year. My older brother and I didn't mind the implausible events, because we didn't watch for the stories. We wanted to see the show's stars in freefall, and those scenes were all real, taken with helmet cameras and from airplanes.

Until I grew to a size that made it consistently painful, I jumped off things. We lived on the water in Hampton, Virginia. The seawall stood four to six feet over beach sand, so that was a good spot. In the woods, we could leap from trees into nets formed of vines 10 or 20 feet below. That was risky, and there were times when I fell through to the ground, but

I was never injured. We'd leap from the tops of the channel markers in the Chesapeake Bay, too. That venue allowed us to compound the fun, because another compulsion some of us had was to reach the bottom of every body of water we swam in, even when it was impossibly deep.

While attending the University of Delaware, I discovered the skydiving club and that it only cost \$35 to go through the one-day training course and jump. To my surprise, my brother didn't want to do it. In fact, he thought it was a foolish idea, so I asked my best friend if he'd like to go. He and I were on our high school wrestling team; we'd worked together as highrise-window cleaners; and we'd spent a lot of time doing things that teenagers do, so it didn't surprise me when he said, "Yes." On September 21, 1975, we went to Ridgely, Maryland, to a grass-strip airport called Pelicanland, the name of which derived from the club that owned the drop zone, the Pelican Skydivers.

The ride from campus took about 90 minutes. If my brother's reaction had come to mind, I might have turned back after seeing the place. The farmhouse that was there the previous summer had burned down, replaced by a trailer, so there were no permanent structures, and the number of crashed airplanes (two) equaled those that were airworthy. It wasn't like the airport in the "Ripcord" TV series, but the university club and the Army ROTC sponsor deemed it safe, so I assumed I was in good hands. As it turned out, I was.

I was on the last load of the day. After the static line pulled the sleeve and parachute from the container and I found myself under a round parachute that could only drift, I was in utterly still air. Nineteen years old, suspended 2,000 feet above the world in a slow descent at sunset, I was filled with awe, a sense of accomplishment and the thrill of freedom. Hanging there like that—motionless, quiet and safe after all the noise and anxiety—was wonderful. I knew that the short freefall and canopy ride were a taste of what was still to come.

My skydiving career has been spotty. I made a couple hundred jumps in the rest of the '70s and only a couple hundred more in the '80s and early '90s. In 2012, after 17 years without a jump, what I was missing struck me. I had continued to have adventures like hang gliding, catamaran sailing and flying sailplanes when my rig was collecting dust. I'd lived around the country, had scores of cool jobs and even gone to war. Four years ago, at the age of 57, shortly after AARP eligibility, skydiving once again became a breath that sustains the glow.

Because it's there, those who would do it will. We leap through airplane doors into the sky because we can, and to live without doing it would be to live less. It isn't that skydiving changes such a life. It's perhaps the greatest of the many things that make it so continuously rich to live.

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