<u>**Approved Meeting Minutes**</u>
February 6, 2017
Ridgefield Economic & Community Development Commission
Library Board Room
6:00 p.m.

Present: Arnold Light (Chair), Robert DeFalco, John Devine, Paul Levine, Gus Ryer

Guests: Dick Larson, Schulberger Committee Chair
            Nelson Merchan, CT SBDC
            Jennifer Zinzi, Executive Director Chamber of Commerce
            Jason Peck, Jonathan Winn: Thrown Stone
            Louisa Percundani, RIFF
            Dr. Andrew Frishman

Chairman Arnold Light called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

A motion was requested to approve the January 9, 2017 minutes. Motion was made by John Devine and seconded by Gus Ryer.

Mr. Light reviewed the joint meeting with the Planning and Zoning Commission and the constructive dialogue. It was agreed that it was an opportunity for both commissions to work together to facilitate business applications and approvals.

Mr. Light informed the commission of upcoming events. The Chamber of Commerce Business Expo on 3/16 from 5-8 p.m. at the Rec Center. He said that the Chamber charges $100 for a full table and $50 for a half table. It was decided that the ECDC would not purchase a table but that all members should try to attend and represent the commission. The commission was also informed of the Chamber's Annual Breakfast Meeting on 3/10 at Silver Spring Country Club. First Selectman Rudy Marconi will deliver the State of the Town address and awards will be presented to volunteers in the community.

Mr. Light reviewed the FY 16/17 budget and noted that all funds have been committed and that there are no additional funds available for the balance of the FY.

Mr. DeFalco provided an update on the shared town resource that works the afternoon shift as the Town Hall receptionist, Linda Andrews. He has spent a small amount of time with her and noted that she is eager to learn and be trained on administrative support for the ECDC. However, she is also unable to dedicate uninterrupted time for the training and has also been asked by the town to work on the Blighted Property file. Without an opportunity to train her on a computer outside of her dedicated space her on boarding is being hindered. Bob will also meet with Alison Greely of the Arts Council to discuss.

Mr. Larson presented an update in the Schulumberger property. Two buildings have leases negotiated. The Phillips Johnson building lease is with BassamFellows a custom furniture company. The auditorium is with ACT a non-profit theater group. The first public hearing is on 2/8 and the Town Meeting for the leases is on 2/22.

Jonathan Winter and Jason Peck presented the Thrown Stone theater company plans for the staging of MILK at the Dance Conservatory with performances scheduled from 7/14 – 7/31. The company stages black box theater of original productions. The organization is a non=profit and is in the fundraising stages for the production. The group will need several permits to use the space within the Conservatory and the ECDC offered to advise and facilitate.

Nelson Merchan from the CT Small Business Development Center presented programs that the group offers for small business development. The CT SBDC offers FREE business development plans and counsel for small businesses and helps merchants secure financing and grants. The information on the SBDC is available on the ECDC web site.

Dr. Andrew Frishman presented a report on the opportunities for fostering business development with entrepreneurs. The commission agreed that it was an opportunity

that had been discussed. The challenge is finding the seed money to establish a location that allows entrepreneurs to work in a common environment and collaborate. It was noted that many are using the library facilities and the free small private office spaces for meetings.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Ridgefield Economic & Community Development Commission

RECDC 2017 OGSM

Objective

To improve the commercial tax base with economic development focused on an inclusive and coordinated digital strategy that leverages the ECDC website.

Goals

1. Strategically Coordinate town marketing
2. Hire/assign PT resource skilled in WordPress to manage ECDC web content
3. Create economic growth with new strategic retailers to enhance the business community
4. Build awareness of ridgefielddevelopment.com through coordinated digital marketing
5. Drive entrepreneurs and businesses to lease low cost commercial office spaces
6. Facilitate a "Make Ridgefield Business Friendly" strategy

Strategies

1. Coordination of all Events
    i. Downtown Association President, Chamber Director & President and Arts Council Leadership attend an ECDC meeting once per Quarter.
    ii. Partner with the Arts Council, Downtown Ridgefield, Chamber and other civic organizations to insure Town events calendar is populated to coordinate event marketing with broader reach within Fairfield and Westchester counties. Insure information is populated on Town Events calendar on ridgefieldct.org.
    iii. Utilized PT resource trained in WordPress to facilitate all marketing press releases and to add weekly web updates with marketing content to drive ECDC site traffic and build awareness
    iv. Offer PT resource under the management of the ECDC to Downtown Ridgefield and the Arts Council members to incent coordination and maximize marketing effectiveness and number of website visits.
    v. Monthly review of web analytics to refine and maximize and adjust marketing efforts to maximize site visits.
2. Strengthen P&Z Linkages
    i. Make Ridgefield Biz Friendly - digital P&Z applications and payments
    ii. ECDC Notification of interested parties by Town Planners and referrals to ECDC site
    iii. ECDC POV to P&Z when applicable during application review
    iv. ECDC counseling for small businesses
    v. Proactively Market and Fill Vacancies with STRATEGIC businesses
    vi. Participate with P&Z on first floor retail zoning evaluation
    vii. Provide free listings on ECDC site for Ridgefield only businesses