



**Ridgefield
Economic &
Community
Development
Commission**

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Arnold Light
Chairman

Robert DeFalco
John Devine, Secretary
Paul Levine
M. Augustus Ryer

Rudy Marconi,
First Selectman
Ridgefielddevelopment.com

Approved RECDC Meeting Minutes

April 3th, 2017 at 6:30 pm.
Small Town Conference Room

Attending: Arnold Light, Bob Defalco, John Devine, Gus Ryer, Paul Levine

Guests: Karen Sulzinsky, Stephany Pound Sanderson

Absent: John Collins **Scribe:** Gus Ryer

Announcements

1. The next RECDC Meeting will be on Monday, May 8th, 2017 at 6:30 PM in the Small Conference Room.
2. Approval of March minutes:
 - Motion to approve – John Devine
 - 2nd – Bob DeFalco

General Discussion

3. Arnold Light reported on our last meeting with the First Selectman.
 - Took place on March 27th
 - ECDC Budget

- Need to wait until Ridgefield has its budget set before they determine whether they can afford to give ECDC more funds. Most likely to happen after discretionary funds are tied down – May/June
 - Discussed whether ECDC get some funding from the IT budget? A large portion of what the ECDC does is online marketing
 - ADA website Compliance: if there is funding available, the Town of Ridgefield would pay for updates to ECDC website
 - Revisit personal property tax easing for new businesses?
 - Making online permits available is top of Andrew's list
 - Phases 1 & 2 of the technology rollout has been implemented – everyone in the building department is using tablets. ECDC is waiting for Phase 3, which will include online payments
4. Branchville Transit Oriented Development:
- Study is completed
 - Redding is starting to come around, which would theoretically allow Ridgefield to tap into their system, which has surplus capacity
 - Rudy is developing a list of stakeholders who may be interested in being part of the process, including ECDC, and will be sending out an invitation to a meeting
5. CERC has been removed from the ECDC website. A discussion ensued:
- \$600/year fee increased to \$800/year, which is outside the budget
 - We will continue try building our own, but is that a long-term proposition?
 - Gus R. will attempt to reach CERC about lowering the price
 - Should we link to independent brokers, rather than CERC? That would be free, but show many properties outside of Ridgefield
 - Who will maintain the ECDC property database? Is this something Linda could handle?
 - How much traffic is ECDC moving to the town, from both a business and population growth standpoint? It is a difficult metric, as most data are anecdotal. Cannot measure, other than by hits to the website.
6. Chamber Business to Business Expo, April 5th, 5:00 – 8:00 PM at the Ridgefield Rec Center.
7. BOS meeting will also take place April 5th, 7:30 PM
- Karen will be interviewing with the BOS at 7:30 PM

8. Website update:

- In March, the ECDC website saw 4,506 total visits, 3,647 of which were unique
- Ridgefield Town website is our biggest referrer, with much of the traffic coming from the calendar and landing page
- Good bounce rates from the Ridgefield Town site, Hamlet Hub, Patch, and CT Visit
- Highest visited pages include the calendar, commissioner profiles, and event listings
- Ridgefielddevelopment.com is ranked highly in Google when paired with the search terms “Arts & Culture”, “Business”, “Start a Business”, “Town Events”, “Commercial Property”
- Bob: our where-to features (shop, play, learn, etc.) don’t include “where to shop”. We need some kind of plugin that will allow visitors to search. Will cost money, but is this a responsibility of the ECDC? Once the plugin is purchased, there needs to be input. This will then be searchable. Can we tie in with the Gold Card project? A lot of the data would overlap, and may be easily portable. The Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Ridgefield will assist by disseminating information about the Gold Card project. Bob will research plugin costs/options
- Parking Map – how to tie specific organizations’ events parking instructions to Google Maps. Our site may not be the most appropriate – Town Hall is the better place, as that is where the data is entered. Gus R. and Bob D. will look into adding geocoded links that will direct visitors to appropriate parking places

9. Chamber of Commerce Inaugural Address

- Took place at the Silver Spring Country Club
- Rudy was very gracious by including the RECDC in his address

10. Procedure for nominating new ECDC candidates

- i. In the future, candidates will be interviewed by the Commission. They will then be asked to leave the room, while the Commission discusses. The Commission will then give their verdict

11. First Floor Retail:

- 1st Floor Retail: Becky says that there should be a follow-up meeting that includes more landlords, ECDC, P&Z, merchants, etc. Rudy should organize, as that will lend the event more importance
- One option discussed was to give the landlord 6 months to attempt leasing the space to retail, then zoning opens to other uses, such as office

12. Karen's meeting with Rudy took place on the 27th of March
 - 1st floor retail came up as a topic, as did parking – meeting seemed to go well
 - Will go before the BOS on Wednesday
13. Stephanie's Meeting with Rudy took place on the 30th of March
 - Will go Before the BOS on April 19th
 - Was given various reports on the town, including the Branchville TOD study
 - i. Rudy mentioned that he would be meeting with Redding to discuss the sewer line – they're concerned about the Wire Mill, and needing capacity for future development
 - Spoke about P&Z, including 1st floor retail, and parking
5. Our next Meeting with the First Selectman is scheduled for **April 11th at 9:00 PM in his office.**

New Business

1. Should the ECDC tie in with the Ridgefield BNI?
 - a. Some discussion, but determined that commissioners can join on their own, should they desire it
2. Discussion of whether we should support a personal property tax abatement
 - 1.8% of items like computers, machinery, etc.
 - Can Ridgefield offer a temporary abatement of personal property taxes for businesses that choose to move to Ridgefield
 - What other towns are offering a program like this, and have they been successful? Gus R. will check Stamford
3. OGSM review (sub-items are numbered as the OGSM):
 - a. 1st Quarter
 - i. Phase 3 has not been implemented, so we will have to move the digital business application process to second or third quarter
 - ii. We established the practices, implemented by JBD
 - iii. Accomplished. Still waiting on ACT, but have tied in with many other town organizations have
 - iv. In process
 - b. Measure success of marketing placements by ECDC
 - i. Accomplished
 - c. Evaluate metrics of each placement with web analytics

- i. In process
 - d. Monitor percentage of vacant retail
- 4. CEDAS
 - a. Two hour free workshop, designed to answer the following questions:
 - i. What is economic and community development?
 - ii. Who responsible for economic development?
 - iii. What roll does/should the EDC team and community play?
 - iv. How do you convince the residents, businesses of the importance of Economic Development?
 - v. How is the municipal economy impacted by the state, region, and global economy?
 - b. Arnold is going to the various departments within the town, gathering names of those who are willing to attend. Need 20 people for CEDAS to hold the training
 - c. Targeting June 13th at 6:30PM
- 5. John D. Updates:
 - a. Went to Stamford, Harbor Point – met with Commodity, executive suites. May be interested in opening a location in Ridgefield if they can find space

Motion to adjourn – 8:24 PM – John Devine. 2nd – Arnold Light. Motion carries.