



**Ridgefield
Economic &
Community
Development
Commission**

400 Main Street • Ridgefield, CT 06877
203.546.2547

Arnold Light
Chairman

Robert DeFalco
John Devine, Secretary
Paul Levine
M. Augustus Ryer
Stephany Sanderson
Karen Sulzinsky

Rudy Marconi,
First Selectman
Ridgefielddevelopment.com

Approved RECDC Meeting Minutes

May 8th, 2017 at 6:30 pm.
Small Town Hall Conference Room

Attending: Arnold Light, Chairperson Robert DeFalco, John Devine, Paul Levine, Gus Ryer, Stephany Sanderson, Karen Sulzinsky

Guest – Karen's son – Sam

Arnold Light called the meeting to order. He explained that Gus Ryer, due to illness would teleconference and Paul Levine would be arriving late.

A motion was requested to approve the minutes of the March 6, 2017 meeting. A motion for approval was made by Gus Ryer and seconded by Karen Sulzinsky. Minutes were approved.

Announcements

1. Chairman's Report
 - a. A meeting of the first floor retail task will meet on 5/11 at 4:00 p.m. in the Town Hall Conference Room. Invited attendees include First Selectman Rudy Marconi, the Chair of P&Z, Rebecca Muchetti, the President of Downtown Ridgefield Billy Craig, the Chamber of Commerce, all members of the ECDC and landlords of properties located in the Village District.
 - b. A new website plugin for the ECDC website to facilitate the inclusion of information under the Where to Shop and Where to Dine categories was approved and funded by the town.
 - c. The next meeting with First Selectman Marconi will be on 5/10 @10:15.

General Discussion

1. Bob Defalco presented the month review of the website analytics. Google analytics show that Visits continue to rise significantly per month. Search rankings continue to rise. John Devine noted the low number of visits being driven by event information that had been posted on Hamlet Hub and Patch. We are getting decent traffic referrals from ridgefieldct.org.

2. Senior Gold Book. Bob DeFalco noted that Town Hall had received minimal responses to email request for offers from commercial establishments. During the Battle of Ridgefield he solicited numerous businesses with strong responses. He suggested that the Commissioners divide up the town by location and solicit participation. 15 to 20 merchants per commissioner would be enough to surpass the size of the Gold Book printed in June 2013. It was noted that it would also be a good opportunity for all commissioners to meet business owners. Bob noted that having a copy of the current book when visiting merchants was important and that he had 7 new books printed (by UPS), as well as new printed forms available at Town Hall for use by commissioners. Linda will continue to record new participants on a spreadsheet and publish to all commissioners routinely.

Arnold Light noted that the CEDA Meeting on Economic Development is scheduled for June 13 at 6:30 pm in the Town Hall Conference Room.

2. Personal Property Tax Abatement
 - a. Information from other communities is being sought to benchmark a competitive rate proposal by the ECDC to the BOS
3. Robert DeFalco presented an overview of the ECDC scorecard to date. He also outlined suggested categories that each commissioner could take ownership of for the balance of CT 2017. A copy of that presentation is attached.

Meeting adjourned at 8:38 motion by Paul Levine, second by Bob DeFalco. Motion approved.

5 POINT PLAN

1. **Preserve Ridgefield's Image and Personality:**
 - Safeguard Ridgefield's unique "Norman Rockwell" persona.
 - Promote Ridgefield as a leading Cultural and Arts destination.
2. **Strive for Sustainable Economic Growth:**
 - Identify Internal and External Best Practices that can support existing businesses. All Ridgefield businesses can expect ECDC support, regardless of their Ridgefield address.
 - Secure new tenants to include regional and / or national occupants that would significantly increase foot traffic and contribute meaningful tax revenue.
 - Identify short and long term parking solutions.
3. **Geographic Focus:**
 - Focus **initially** on Main Street, as well as Catoonah, Bailey, Governor & Prospect.
 - Promote & Support the potential Branchville TOD Project.
 - Support the Implementation of an approved Schlumberger Plan.
4. **Innovation & Branding:**
 - Develop Active Marketing, primarily supported by the imminent re-design of our ECDC & Town websites.
5. **Improved Coordination & Communication:**
 - BOS <> State & Federal EDC <> COC <> P & Z <> Parking Authority¹

2017 Objectives, Goals, Strategies & Measures (O.G.S.M.)

Objectives:

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

Goals:

1. Strategically Coordinate town marketing.
2. Hire/assign a part time 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 Ridgefield's low cost commercial office space.
6. Facilitate a *"Make Ridgefield Business Friendly"* strategy.

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GOOD Trying Dead

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Other Meaningful Goals We Need?

1. ECDC sponsored **"Buy Local"** campaigns.
2. ECDC becoming partners in the **Town Procurement** process.
3. Search **adjacent towns** for Ridgefield Merchant candidates.
4. ECDC involvement in **Student Business Career Path** Initiatives.
5. ECDC investigating **State and Federal Incentives** for Small Businesses.
6. ECDC working with local banks to establish **Lower Cost small business Financing.**

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| Governmental | Project | Coordination |
|--------------------|---|---|
| Arnold Light | ECDC Chairman | B.O.S. - CT EDC |
| John Devine | Events / Marketing | DTR – PA - Press |
| Bob DeFalco | Website / S.M. supporting the website | Town IT & Procurement / Arts Council |
| Gus Ryer | Branchville TOD | B. O. Realtors / Banks |
| Karen Sulzinsky | ECDC Sponsored Educational Programs / ECDC Promo campaigns i.e. "Career Path Initiatives " | Library – BOE - Universities |
| Stephany Sanderson | First Floor Retail / ECDC promo campaigns i.e. "Buy Local" Search adjacent towns for new merchants | Chamber / P&Z |
| Paul Levine | Small Business Incentives – | ECDC Council |

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Further Clarification

- 1. All commissioners are expected to assist each other as recommended by the chairman. If you need assistance on your project, the chairman should decide on resource distribution.**
- 2. Each commissioner should contribute to Website Content. Posts, Articles, Commercial Properties, Photos; especially, but not necessarily related to their primary projects. Each commissioner can / will receive “Contributor LOGIN Credentials” for adding Posts and or Properties to the ECDC website. Please consider taking WordPress courses at the library.**
- 3. New projects (not related to the OGSM) should be approved by the commission under Roberts Rules.**