



**Ridgefield
Economic &
Community
Development
Commission**

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Arnold Light
Chairman

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

Rudy Marconi,
First Selectman
Ridgefielddevelopment.com

**Approved RECDC Meeting Minutes
September 11, 2017 at 7:00pm
Town Hall Small Conference Room**

**Attending: Arnold Light, Bob Defalco, John Devine, Paul Levine,
Karen Sulzinsky, Stephany Sanderson**

Absent: Gus Ryer Scribe: Stephany Sanderson

Arnold Light called the meeting to order at 6:35 PM

Announcements

1. The next RECDC meeting will be on Monday, October 2, 2017 at 6:30pm in the small conference room.
2. Approval of August meeting minutes have been approved,
3. Arnold Light reported on last meeting with First Selectman Rudy Marconi that took place on September 5.

Pertaining to the PR task force and committee, it has been decided that the ECDC is responsible for the finances of the committee and no money can be spent without ECDC approval. The ECDC takes on the role of the advisory board.

In regards to the First Floor Retail Proposal. We felt trying to change state statute in order to go forward with the proposal will be very difficult and therefore we would propose to the BOS a fund of \$25k to \$40k to put into a reserve in order for the town to fund the tax incentives. This number was estimated using the turnover of five stores per year at \$2.50/\$4.00 a square foot at an estimated 1,000 square feet of retail space. There was concern over whether incentive should go to the retailer or the landlord in order to incentivize the landlord to find a retailer. Next BOS selectman meeting will be on September 27

General Discussion

PR Campaign

John Devine has been named chairman of the Ridgefield PR Campaign put together by Wayne Addressi. John has put together a committee, Wayne has agreed to the committee and the next meeting will take place within the next two weeks, on Monday September 18, 2017 or Monday September 25, 2017. John will follow up on the date.

Senior Gold Book

Bob Defalco presented the completion of the Senior Gold Book. 250 books have been currently printed with the hopes of printing a 1000 total, the book contains 118 local businesses willing to participate. Copies can be found at Social Services, and will be provide through the Men's Club of Ridgefield, as well as it can be found on the town website, and Founders Hall website. Looking at providing Senior Gold Book information through the RVNA and Ridgefield Crossings. Some retailers would like to provide the Senior Gold books through their locations. Window clings will be finished soon and provided to participating retailers. Price of putting the book together went from \$1500 in black and white to \$2500 in color. Seniors can obtain the Senior Gold Card by signing up at the town hall information office. SPIFF will be asking the press to cover their next meeting to promote the book as well as John Devine will provide a press release to Hamlet Hub.

Jazz Fest

No date has been set for Jazz fest as we are waiting on Allison Stockel to secure and schedule the acts. After performers are scheduled we can lock down a weekend. Bob Defalco suggested that we look to September as many people are away during the summer. Bob also suggested that we sponsor the event as it would

be good visibility for the ECDC and we will be organizing the event in the village. John Devine agreed that if we are organizing the event we should brand it.

Bob Defalco went on to suggest on another note that we talk to the organizer of the car show in town and maybe add the car show to the Spring Stroll or at least invite him in to talk to the ECDC about where the car show would be successful as it attracts many visitors to town.

Website Update

Bob Defalco presented data for the ECDC website. The town calendar has been a popular page with good returns.

He asked that we think about new Google search phrases that pertain to our town in order to track our search performance. We have good Google search performance as it pertains to the phrase Ridgefield CT, Business on page 1 with positions 2,3,4 and phrase Ridgefield CT, Start a Business on page 1 with position 2,3,4,6. Bob would like to be able to research other search phrases.

Next Bob went through the Google Analytics and User Stats, those most interested in the website. The peak month for the ECDC website was in May which coincided with the Battle of Ridgefield. Bob encouraged us to help get the URL onto other websites in order to drive traffic back to the ECDC site.

New Business

Lamp Post Wifi

Arnold Light talked about how the lamp posts in town could house signal boosters and provide wifi for visitors and residents. Phone companies can buy the boosters. More on this in a future meeting.

CEDC WESTCOG Economic Plan

Arnold Light sent out the Western Connecticut Council of Governments Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy on August 28, 2017. It has been decided that the plan will be discussed at the October 2, 2017 meeting.

Discussion About the Direction of the ECDC

Bob Defalco asked that we discuss what role the ECDC should be taking on and what we have really accomplished as a commission. He voiced his concern that we weren't doing enough to visit businesses outside of town and try and convince them to open in Ridgefield.

Arnold Light responded by saying we have hopes of promoting Ridgefield in a different light through the creation of the First Floor Retail package.

John Devine asked if we are doing enough to help homegrown talent in Ridgefield and that we don't necessarily need to look outside Ridgefield to open the right stores and cultivate new businesses.

Paul Levine expressed how Ridgefield has many things to offer visitors but that we needed to attract the visitors through PR, example a NY Times article. He proposed that he would write a two to three page paper that would outline all of the aspects Ridgefield has to offer that would attract and appeal to outside visitors.

Meeting adjourned at 8:41 pm. Motion by Paul Levine and seconded by Karen Sulzinsky Unanimously approved.