



**Ridgefield
Economic &
Community
Development
Commission**

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203.546.2547

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
October 2, 2017 at 6:30pm
Small Town Hall Conference Room

Attending: Arnold Light, Bob DeFalco, John Devine, Gus Ryer, Paul Levine,
Stephany Sanderson

Absent: Karen Sulzinsky

Guest: Rudy Marconi

Meeting called to order at 7:08 PM

Announcements

1. Next RECDC meeting will be on Monday November 6, 2017. Small Conference meeting room
2. Approval of September minutes by Paul Levine and John Devine

General Discussion

1. First Floor Retail Design of Proposal to BOS

Rudy Marconi attended this meeting to help formulate a First Floor Retail proposal with a tax incentive for first floor retail on Main Street.

A written plan will be presented to the BOS. The incentive will provide a tax incentive that will come out of a fund held in reserve by the town. Discussion resumes on whether 20k is enough to put into a reserve, and if the landlord or tenant should be incentivized by the tax break, or maybe a 50/50 proposition where the landlord and new tenant get the tax incentive. With the 20k we can incentivize landlords to lease sooner rather than later before the incentive money runs out.

Discussion amongst the ECDC commissioners then went back to whether this incentive will be enough to prevent more service retailers on Main Street and Bob Falco suggested that only a zoning ordinance can ensure first floor retail. John Devine stated that people are not happy with new services going into the vacant spaces and we cannot fill the vacancies with more hair salons. Rudy Marconi stated his concern with shopping areas of town not being part of the tax incentive and the fund.

Bob DeFalco went on to state his position that we are losing the battle on first floor retail and we don't know the face of the town. Gus Ryer stated that he believes incentivizing is the way to go. We are here to help the town and we shouldn't shut out certain businesses. We are here to promote first floor retail not dictate it. He suggests that the carrot approach is better than the stick and if we pass P&Z regulation the town will be stuck with that in years to come. John Devine talked about the idea of Planning and Zoning not wanting to entertain a regulation but if we decide to go that route it has to be put on an agenda. Are we all willing to take the position that regulation is the way we want to handle the first floor retail problem?

Stephany Sanderson suggested that we know the direction the citizens of the town would lean through a survey before we put an agenda in front of Planning and Zoning. Rudy Marconi stated that we have approached Planning and Zoning twice with first floor regulation but to no avail. He agreed a survey is an influential driver in making decisions (especially with his approach to the Schlumberger property). John Devine suggested we stay the course on our incentive approach and Gus Ryer stated that hopefully in a few months we can have an idea if the incentive package is working.

John Devine is concerned with our incentive approach that the BOS will not want the landlords to receive the tax incentive and that it should go to the tenant. Bob Defalco is worried that existing retailers will be upset about the tax incentives as it is for new tenants going forward for three years. Rudy Marconi asked is the face of Main Street is really changing, is the percentage

of first floor retail really different that it has been in the past. The ECDC has no way of gaging that percentage. Stephany Sanderson suggested that too many retail buildings have been built in other parts of town with lower rents and is there a way to incentivize the boutiques to move onto Main Street?

Rudy Marconi said Main Street is a hot issue and maybe the ECDC needs to go back to the task force to discuss what else can be done. After much discussion the ECDC will go forward with its proposal to the BOS on 10/25/17 with the tax incentive program.

2. Town Charter Commision

Karen Sulzinsky a commissioner with the ECDC will apply to the BOS to help with the charter revision commission.

3. PR Campaign

Report from John Devine. First meeting for the PR campaign was held on September 25th and there were representatives from Hamlet Hub, Grey Advertising, The Chamber of Commerce, The Ridgefield Playhouse, Wayne Addessi and the Arts Council. It has been decided that there will be a video element of the PR campaign along with a PR agency to promote advertising and marketing. October 18 might be date of next meeting. To date there is close to 30k from private stakeholders to fund the campaign.

4. Jazz Fest

Allison Stockel would like ECDC support for this event. What is our role? Arnold will shoot Allison an email or call to see what our role is and how we can help.

5. Senior Gold Card

Bob DeFalco reported:

- 750 Books printed to date, 250 remaining on the Squash's print contract.
- Approximately 400 distributed to: Town Hall, Founders Hall & RVNA.
- Founders Hall is moving a lot of books. Can't keep them stocked easily.
- He met with the Ridgefield Crossings management & Residents Council. He will be receiving 2 dates to sign residents up for Gold Cards. They estimate needing 100+ books.
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- He will be distributing books to the RMC in Mid-October and signing up new Gold Card recipients.
- Invoice (\$2750) given to Town social Services today for:
 - First 1000 printed books
 - 500 New Gold Cards – due in tomorrow.
 - 200 Window Clings – due in soon.
- Ridgefield press article was pretty accurate and has generated some more interest.
- Rec Center has asked for our URL Gold Program for their website.

6. Website

Per Bob DeFalco .Refer to attachment

New Business

1. Paul Levine gave the ECDC his Presentation From A Different Angle No discussion followed. To be read and discussed at a later point. **Here is the presentation:**

PAUL M. LEVINE & ASSOCIATES, INC.

466 Ridgebury Road
Ridgefield, Connecticut 06877
(203) 431-6169 fax (203) 431-0192
Email: levassoc@aol.com

PRESENTATION FROM A DIFFERENT ANGLE

We all agree on the definition of success is creating greater recognition in our Ridgefield.

We have made, with Wayne Addressi, a start in the collating money for action.

The question is how and when we should choose to proceed.

For a small town, we have a plethora of arts and culture, landscapes and open space, and a high ratio of people with ample material possessions and of established intellect and spirited residents, though the commercial aspect has not greatly improved.

Okay, how might the balance be established to what it should be?

Firstly, we require an established group which has the ability to initiate and then participate in implementation and continuity, and we do seem to have found this in support by our Wayne Addressi and ECDC.

The general ideas need to be as to what and how can be projected to achievement of our brighter future.

Therefore, before having a PR plan or making investment for specific projects, what is initially required is to put together a package with “Title” and “Why” Ridgefield is a unique product now and in the future, both as content and method of creative excitement in those who would be wishing to visit Ridgefield.

Now, let us just postulate some – but no final ideas – as to why we are, for example, the “Cultured Pearl of Connecticut” to be used as an identity to develop appropriate mediums to introduce both by contact and means of conveying our message.

For example, to provide all interested with: a passport, tickets, strips or coupon grants, stability dressed up, with minimums or costs for interested parties to experience the culture, entertainment and cuisine -

and open space

and meeting key people

or commentary as to -

why Ridgefield is rewarded as the “best town” of similar to our size towns

or dividing dates from geography, for example, the Annual Snowshoe Contest

or special treatment such as, providing shuttles -

or specific entertainment and get togetherness –

or Founders Hall -

and realize communications reinforcing all of the above.

Remember the object / success is the greater interest in our town and the effort will be attention and activities with regard to Ridgefield. Our Task Forces are headed by John and with apparent said interest it becomes more feasible to do all other involvements and therefore

other desires

longer visits

spending money

partner development

And would promote our prestigious and pride and our guidance of what else would then be effective and possible.

Paul

PML:g

9/26/17

2. Boys and Girls Club Expansion and Impact on Parking. The ECDC will defer to the parking authority on this matter.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:42.