



Ridgefield Economic & Community Development Commission

400 Main Street • Ridgefield, CT 06877 • 203.546.2547

Geoffrey Morris, Chair

Rudy Marconi, First Selectman

Dee Dee Colabella
Cameron Cole Carcelén
Susan Gessner
Bob Knight
Glori Norwitt
Steve Spivak

ridgefieldct.com

Economic & Community Development Commission Approved Minutes October 5, 2020, 6:30 pm, via ZOOM Video Conference

In Attendance: Geoffrey Morris, Dee Dee Colabella, Cameron Cole Carcelen, Susan Gessner, Glori Norwitt, Steve Spivak

Geoffrey Morris called the meeting to order at 6:33 pm.

Announcements

Next meeting: November 2, 2020

Approval of Minutes without amendment. Motion by Glori Norwitt. Second by Susan Gessner.

Unanimous approval 6-0.

General Discussion

1. Budget: Holiday Village spending, 2021 spending items
 - Motion by Geoffrey to allocate \$2,500 for Holiday Village; \$2,500 for events Jan - June 2021, and \$1,000 for website work. Second by Dee Dee. Unanimous approval.
 - Discussion of the Holiday Village initiative overall and spending.
 - Dee Dee offered to create a Holiday Village logo.

- Steve reported on the HV planning meeting last week with businesses, stakeholders. Attempts to reach all businesses were wide-reaching, yet there may still be businesses that haven't been aware or weren't able to participate. There are people concerned about COVID, and Steve emphasized that HV planning committees are "addressing those concerns first and foremost". Safety is at the core of HV planning. The concept is to do HV in lieu of the Holiday Stroll, so it's more spread out.
 - Glori added RHV is in partnership with DT Ridgefield and Chamber of Commerce.
 - Geoffrey reported Rudy is in support and is looking carefully at COVID compliance.
 - People are needed for the Fundraising Committee. Holiday Stroll has traditionally been organized by merchants, for merchants. This year is different because businesses and Downtown Ridgefield are strapped due to the pandemic. There is a need for private donors. Steve asked about a GoFundMe to support. Discussion of asking for donations for the event. Susan suggested preparing and providing talking points for volunteers who will be soliciting donations/sponsorship; Geoffrey agreed.
 - Discussion of Ridgefield Independent Film Festival (RIFF)
 - Geoffrey reported RIFF is in 5th year and will be held Oct 14-18. Growth has been substantial over the past 4 years, with people visiting from 15 countries. This year will be different. Rather than multiple venues, as is typical, everything this year will be at Theater Barn and virtual. Theater Barn is well prepared with COVID safety measures and capped capacity. Only 1 visiting filmmaker this year.
 - ECDC will give some financial support, and also word of mouth. Some of the money allocated for the end of 2020 will go toward RIFF. \$300 - \$500.
 - Geoffrey mentioned there has been nothing said about Fall in Love with Ridgefield; Dee Dee pointed out that the Scarecrows are there - discussion about Scarecrows as an attraction drawing people to Downtown.
 - Geoffrey reported Halloween Walk is not happening this year due to COVID safety concerns.
2. Roundtable discussions: recap of marketing panel, plans for next topic (Gessner, Norwitt)
- Susan reported on the previous marketing roundtable. Very successful thanks to the great team (Bob, Dee Dee, Steve with Geoffrey as moderator) with about 35 attendees who asked questions and participated.
 - Next round table will be Oct 14, 3 pm. "Selling Online, Locally." Geared for local businesses who need to either start or beef up their online presence.
 - Panelists include Justin Loeber, Fractional CIO and E-commerce consultant; Megan Searfoss, Owner of Ridgefield Running Co.; Richard Pereira, ReserveBar.com.
 - Geoffrey to moderate.
 - Geoffrey has made a graphic flyer, will send to email distribution list; Hamlet Hub; Ridgefield Press; Cameron to promote on facebook; Bob to create press release.
 - Susan has made a very helpful checklist for organizing roundtables.
3. Shop Local initiative: how to promote in addition to Holiday Market initiative (Morris)
- Holiday Village emerged from ongoing efforts to promote Shop Local.
 - Ridgefield needs a "Shop Local" (dine local, drink local, donate local, support local) campaign. Discussion of various approaches - incentives - rewards - gift certificates. Geoffrey is open to input about what this campaign should be.
 - Steve reported he has spoken with one business owner about the concept of "value add" (rather than discount) approach. Steve suggested an "opt-in" mechanism. Steve suggested "Amaz-OFF".

- Dee Dee suggested a pop-up gift-wrapping station in an available downtown storefront for those who provide a receipt from local merchants.
 - Geoffrey will reach out to a landlord to ask about space for gift-wrapping service.
 - Dee Dee offered to create graphics. Steve offered to recruit businesses to participate. Cameron to post on Social Media.
 - Discussion of existing Chamber gift certificate program. Next step is for Steve to find out whether they're still running that program, and logistics.
 - Geoffrey indicated ECDC can use some of the earmarked Holiday promotion funds towards Shop Local initiative.
4. Solar and Electric Vehicles (Carcelen)
- Cameron reported having attended a Live Green CT EV Readiness module. The module focused on building a team of people interested in EV school bus initiative at the local level. Cameron reported Ridgefield is well poised with the existing Energy Task Force, which has members from various agencies and organizations in town, and a high level of buy-in for EVs.
 - Geoffrey led a general discussion of the Energy Task Force and its work pushing solar at schools, and EV chargers in town.
5. Election of ECDC Secretary
- Secretary is an official position that needs to be filled, following departure of Amanda Duff from the Commission. Role includes submitting minutes to the Town.
 - Geoffrey nominated Glori. Second by Steve. Unanimous approval.
6. General discussion of business recovery in Ridgefield. Steve suggested reaching out to restaurant owners, inviting them to a conversation about how to cope with weather getting colder, restricted capacity.

Movement to adjourn by Glori. Second by Steve. Unanimous approval. Geoffrey adjourned the meeting at 7:36 pm.