

Economic & Community Development Committee
Approved Minutes
October 3, 2022, at 6:30 pm
Lower Level Conference Room - Town Hall

In attendance Chair Glori Norwitt, Commissioners Geoffrey Morris, Bob Knight, Jonathan Winn (late arrival), Kay Gelfman, commissioner-elect Mark Riser

Meeting started at 6:32 pm

Next meeting November 7, 2022

Minutes September 12, 2022, meeting minutes approved without revision: Motion by Commissioner Geoffrey Morris, Chair Norwitt seconds. Motion passes unanimously.

Agenda amendment Chair Norwitt added a Public Discussion section and Chair Norwitt wants to provide Updates on Recent Events, plus add an Update on ARPA Requests. Motion by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Gelfman. All in favor.

Discussion

Resident Kirk Carr says he likes public discussion.

Agenda items

1. Recent and Upcoming Events

Chair Norwitt discussed a recent FOIA Complaint filed against her and Commissioner Morris by Kirk Carr. Separately, a new business query was received by a Massachusetts businesswoman who may move to the area. Sean Dowd renewed his position with the ECDC for a two-year term, before the Board of Selectmen. Commissioner-elect Riser will work with the Ridgefield Library and the Chamber of Commerce to possibly create some seminars to assist small local businesses. Chair Norwitt was a speaker during the Urban Land Institute tour of downtown Ridgefield on October 29, and attended the subsequent cocktail gathering.

2. ECDC candidate interview

- Interview with ECDC candidate Kirk Carr

A 24-minute interview with resident Kirk Carr included questions about the candidate's interests, background, recent FOIA Complaint, arrest record, and municipal activity in Clinton, CT, by Commissioners Morris, Norwitt, Knight, and Gelfman.

- Interview with ECDC candidate Jennifer Gioffre

A 14-minute interview with resident Jennifer Gioffre included questions about the candidate's interest, background, and past experience as a small-business owner by Commissioners Morris, Norwitt, Knight, and Gelfman.

3. 2023-24 Budget

A short discussion led to the conclusion that we would seek a 10X increase of our annual budget to submit to the Board of Selectmen by December. The increase from \$15,000 to \$150,000 would include the hiring of administrative support to execute the policies that the commissioners enact but are unable to pursue to completion because of other commitments. In addition, we would ask for additional marketing and website support. A working group will complete the details by the November meeting.

4. Tiger Shark Tank (Riser)

Scheduled for Wednesday, October 26, 7 pm to 9 pm, Ridgefield Library

Confirmed judges: Deborah Ann Backes from Deborah Ann's Sweet Shoppe, former GE CFO Jeff Bornstein, Blue Buffalo co-founder Chris Bishop, Priceline.com founder Jay Walker, and commissioner Sean Dowd.

Two press releases went out with an invitation for people to sign up to pitch, and announcing the Judges. Commissioner Morris will create a flier, Commissioner Gelfman will get a shark outfit and wear it downtown in the days prior to the event to hand out the fliers. Also submitting to Ridgefield business websites and social-media pages. Dowd and Riser to take lead on organizing the event.

5. Downtown Beautification (Norwitt, Gelfman)

Chair Norwitt and Commissioner Gelfman have been appointed by the First Selectman to a working group whose mission is to beautify the downtown, following the completion of the state's Main Street road renovation - by creating a plan for in front of Town Hall, possibly modifying some of the Belgian block planting areas on the sidewalks, possibly adding seating areas in available sidewalk space and improving the look of at least one alleyway, likely between Baja Cocina and Botanika, with a mural, lights, etc.

6. Cultural District Award (Morris and Gelfman)

The Commission in August approved starting a Cultural District Award and in September got verbal approval from the Ridgefield Arts Council to bestow the award at RAC's spring Behind the Scenes event. RAC will vote on the language (below) of the criteria for our award, which differs from its Nancy Comstock Award...

Honorees will have made an extraordinary contribution to the economic development of the town by furthering some aspect of Ridgefield's cultural district. The honoree could be a representative of either a for-profit or non-profit organization. An extraordinary contribution can consist of successfully launching a new enterprise, creating a program that attracts visitors to town, having distinguishingly served an organization, or created funds for the district in general or an organization in particular through philanthropy or other forms.

7. ARPA requests

There is a special Board of Selectmen meeting on October 6 to consider the allocation of American Rescue Plan (ARPA) funds to the arts community and for a broadband study. Both

expenditures have been recommended by the ARPA working group that the First Selectman created but did not gather until most of the ARPA funds had been distributed. The Ridgefield Arts Council has written a letter of support that its chair Colleen Cash asked ECDC to co-sign. Chair Norwitt read the letter (posted with these minutes) and motioned that we co-sign it. Morris seconded and all in favor.

At 8:11 pm Chair Norwitt motioned that we go into executive session to discuss the ECDC candidates interviewed earlier. Knight seconded, all in favor.

In order to invite Commissioner-elect Mark Riser into executive session the commission needed to be in the regular meeting. So Chair Norwitt motioned and Commissioner Knight seconded that we exit the executive session. All in favor. No vote was taken in the executive session.

A motion by Norwitt was seconded by Knight and ECDC voted to invite Commissioner-elect Riser into executive session.

A motion by Commissioner Morris and seconded by Commissioner Knight that we enter executive session. All in favor.

We re-entered executive session at 8:12 pm

No vote was taken in the executive session.

Chair Norwitt motioned and Commissioner Morris seconded that we exit executive session at 8:43 pm

The meeting concluded at 8:44 pm