



**Ridgefield
Economic &
Community
Development
Commission**

400 Main Street • Ridgefield, CT 06877•203.546.2547

Glori Norwitt - Chair
Geoffrey Morris – Secretary
Sean Dowd
Kay Gelfman
Jennifer Gioffre
Brittney Howell
Bob Knight
Mark Riser
Jonathan Winn

Rudy Marconi, First Selectman

ridgefieldct.com

**Economic & Community Development Committee
Approved Minutes
February 6, 2023, at 6:30 pm
Lower Level Conference Room - Town Hall**

In attendance: Chair Glori Norwitt, Secretary Geoffrey Morris, Commissioners Jonathan Winn, Brittney Howell, Jennifer Gioffre, Mark Riser, Kay Gelfman, and Bob Knight (via phone)

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 pm

The next meeting is Monday, March 6, 6:30 pm, lower level conference room of Town Hall

Kay Gelfman motioned that we approve January minutes, Bob Knight seconded. All in favor.

Public comment

No public comment

Recap of recent events (Norwitt)

Brittney Howell was interviewed and appointed to the Economic & Community Development Commission by the Board of Selectmen in January and sworn in.

Norwitt and Winn were reappointed for a two-year term.

Norwitt talked with new Downtown Ridgefield head Barry London, who is enthusiastic to work with ECDC and the town. DTR is possibly doing sidewalk sales in the summer, which have not taken place in about five years.

Update on Resident Kirk Carr's FOIA Complaint against the ECDC, Norwitt, and Morris: On January 30, Chair Norwitt attended a Freedom of Information hearing in Hartford, Connecticut, with the town attorney, a member of the FOIA commission, a FOIA attorney, and Ridgefield residents John Tartaglia and Kirk Carr. Tartaglia and Carr filed the FOIA suit, alleging that ECDC held an illegal meeting in August. FOIA will hold another hearing to announce the outcome of the case.

Economic Development offices: Chair Norwitt has compiled a list of other town and city economic development commissions, their heads, budgets, and basic missions. New Milford, for example, provides facade programs of \$2500 so the business can spruce up their appearance; the town also once gave microloans. Newtown has a big and active commission, dealing with brownfields grants and cleanup; two full-time employees.

Charter Revision Committee, which meets every five years, meets this year: ECDC needs to revise to be nine commissioners and not seven and two years and not one. Revisions to be discussed at the March meeting.

More Cultural Districts are being named, and the hope is once there is a critical mass, the state will begin to promote them.

Budget Review: preliminary reports are that our budget is being slightly increased. Monday, February 27, at 7 pm, is the budget review, where we learn more.

Downtown beautification: Main Street meeting: the beautification committee is forming plans to make improvements to the downtown area after the state's completion of the Main Street project.

Agenda

Cultural District Award (Gelfman/Morris): The four awards for the years 2021, 2022, and 2023 will be presented at the Ridgefield Arts Council Behind the Scenes ceremony on May 11, 2023. The 2021 winners are former State Rep. John Frey and Books on the Common owner Ellen Burns; the 2022 winner is former Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum curator Richard Klein; and the 2023 honoree is longtime Ridgefield Playhouse executive director Allison Stockel. Commissioners Gelfman and Morris discussed ideas for the physical awards to be handed out, which they hope will mimic a permanent statue that they hope to place in a yet-unknown location in the downtown area. More news at the March meeting.

Broadband study (Morris/Knight): Commissioner Morris and Knight reported on the news from the weekly meetings the ECDC attends as part of the town effort to create a feasibility study to

install a fiber network in town. The feasibility study is being produced by EntryPoint, a Utah-based company, and is being paid for by the Western Connecticut Council of Governments. First Selectman Rudy Marconi, Ridgefield IT head Andrew Nesbitt, facility manager Jake Muller, and WestCOG rep Mike Towle are also part of the committee, which meets via video every Tuesday. One action of the committee was to create and disseminate a survey of Ridgefield residents and businesses about their thoughts and uses on broadband. More than 1,100 people completed the survey. Results are being announced at the February 14 committee meeting. A new website www.ridgefieldfiber.org was created to share information with Town residents about the project and the survey.

Marketing at Deborah Ann's Sweet Shoppe kiosk (Morris): The longtime retail establishment Deborah Ann's, which sells chocolate, ice cream, and more, moved its location to a different part of Main Street. Its new location features a kiosk meant for showcasing information. Deborah Ann's has permitted ECDC to use a portion of the kiosk to display a digital monitor that will share information about town events. Until the monitor can be approved by Planning & Zoning, purchased and installed, ECDC would like to hire the graphic design firm Maida Design to produce a paper 2' x 5' map listing all the businesses in the downtown area and display that map in the kiosk. Commissioner Morris motioned that the commission hires and pay Maida Design \$875 to manage the design of the map and its printing; plus an additional \$250 to create different formats of the map—such as an 8.5" x 11"—for handing out or hanging elsewhere. In addition, ECDC will pay \$250 to a printing company to print the 2' x 5' map to be installed in the kiosk. Chair Norwitt seconded the motion, and all approved; the vote was 8-0.

Update on Planning & Zoning (Gelfman): Discussion was put off until the next meeting as there was nothing to report.

Planning/Projects for 2023 (Norwitt): Chair Norwitt assembled a task list and responsibilities for the commission and kicked off a discussion about who can handle what tasks and when. The commissioners discussed current, past, and possible future activities of ECDC, including but not limited to connecting with current and new town businesses, social media, Tiger-Shark Tank, the broadband feasibility study, the Cultural District Award, downtown beautification, commercial real estate agents, the grand list, and more.

Motion to dismiss by Norwitt, seconded by Gioffre. Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting ends at 8:28pm.