



**Ridgefield
Economic &
Community
Development
Commission**

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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
June 5, 2023, at 6:30 pm
in-person in Town Hall Large Conference Room**

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

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm

Announcements

Next meeting: July 10, 2023

Approval of May 2023 Minutes

Commissioner Morris motions that we approve the May minutes without changes, Norwitt seconds, all in favor, 7-0.

General Discussion

Public Comment: no comments

Recap of Recent Events/Info

The Town is joining the CT Main Street Center beginning July 1.

Suzanne Brennan, the head of Lounsbury House and longtime Ridgefielder, advocated statewide for the installation of automated external defibrillators (AED) and has since created a map detailing AED placement around town.

Ridgefield Farmers Market is launching on July 15 on the lawn of Jesse Lee Memorial Church. They've been talking to lots of local and out-of-town food startups.

On May 19, the ECDC submitted a CEDAS (CT Economic Dev Association) application for Best Practices in Econ Dev and Land Use Planning. This program is intended to drive communities to pursue excellence in land use and economic development practices and to recognize the communities that have established best practices. In pursuit of these best practices, planners and economic developers can use this program to engage community stakeholders in discussions about achieving higher standards and developing creative, community-specific ways to implement them. By applying, your municipality shows to companies and developers that you are part of Team CT and can meet their informational needs for retention, expansion, or relocation. If awarded, the Town will receive the coveted "CEDAS Best Practices logo" for our website to show that our municipality is an economic development leader in the State. The Town would also receive a "CEDAS Best Practices" trophy at the CEDAS Best Practices Award presentation in October.

The application asked for some items which we do not have including (1) written brand identity and marketing strategy and (2) Formal Business Retention and Expansion plan/program. Norwitt shared a document with the Commissioners from AdvanceCT: Town Profiles: CAFR info sheet: Comprehensive Annual Financial Report.

ECDC ad for Rotary "Citizen of the Year" John Frey event submitted. CHIRP ad was printed.

The first Town e-Newsletter came out on May 21, and the ECDC article about the Cultural District Awards was included. The next edition is Sunday, June 18.

Ridgefield Press: Deadline now is Friday (instead of Monday). No more "Community News."

The Draft "Org Chart" of the ECDC Google document was revised to reflect changes such as Film Commission, Brittny's role with Western CT Tourism District and Town e-Newsletter, etc.

Joe Ternullo, Chair of the Commission on Aging, said that they are doing a comprehensive needs assessment of the senior population in Ridgefield, working with many nonprofits engaged in that community. They are preparing a Survey of Ridgefield Seniors. Commissioners discussed adding a question to the survey.

Carr/Noonan/Tartaglia FOIA Complaint: The hearing officer (from the January hearing) wrote a proposed Final Decision which notes that there was a technical violation of FOIA, but that the mistake was corrected and that the ECDC itself considered its actions null and void. Therefore the Hearing Officer recommends that the FOIC not issue any orders concerning the matter. The FOIC hearing is Wednesday, June 14, in Hartford.

New report: Wellbeing Index 2023 by Fairfield County Community Foundation. Norwitt will forward to all the Commissioners

The State's Legislative Commerce Committee is hosting an Economic Development Forum in order to create an agenda for the next legislative year. The committee hopes to review and discuss entries/barriers to economic development and how the legislature can assist in economic development issues across Connecticut. They would like to know the "concerns in relation to economic development" from Ridgefield's ECDC. The committee hopes to generate several practical, pragmatic ideas and approaches to help our communities thrive in the coming fiscal years.

The home meal delivery service Feast & Fettle is looking to establish an operations center in CT. Norwitt has reached out to the group, through Rob Hendrick.

Thrown Stone will award the Thrown Stone New Connections Award to town historian Kay Ables on July 14.

Meetinghouse broke ground on June 5 for its new coffee shop, community center and is still raising money to complete the project.

Cultural District Sculpture (Morris, Gelfman)

Chris Curnan proposed two ideas of corten-steel, five-foot-tall sculptures, acorn-themed, to represent the cultural district. He estimates it would cost between \$7,500 to \$9,500 plus about \$2,000 for installation. Dowd motioned that we send an RFP for other sculpture estimates, Morris 2nd. All in favor. Gelfman and Gioffre offered to write the RFP.

Cultural District Awards (Morris, Gelfman)

Recap of the event. Press Release sent out with a photo of Award winners.

Motion by Morris, seconded by Gelfman, to reimburse an additional \$100 of food/drinks to cover additional costs for the event. Morris moves, Gelfman 2nd, all in favor. Gelfman suggested holding the awards every three years, but ultimately the group decided to stay with one year.

Cultural District (Norwitt, Morris)

The Cultural District Subcommittee met to create a Strategic Plan for our Cultural District, including a Vision and Mission. The group will meet again on June 13. ECDC will identify three members of the subcommittee to lead three efforts: data management, marketing, and fund-raising. Ridgefield Library has agreed to handle data management.

Business Connections (Gioffre)

Reached out to Chamber. 14 businesses are interested in doing Ridgefield Business Share Group. Community engagement, launching new ventures, encouraging local shopping, updating town buying, making use of industrial space, and other ideas. Most people feel 9 am to 10 am Tuesdays. July 18 is likely the first meeting.

Business Programs (Riser)

The Ridgefield Library's former Business Skill Lunchbox series (6 weekly gatherings in the past) will be started again—with Library, Chamber, SCORE, and ECDC working together. The ECDC will create/finalize documents to explain/detail how to 1) form a for-profit or nonprofit business in the state, and 2) how to navigate that business formation (including permitting) in town.

Other possibilities include holding a breakfast/lunch/cocktails for professionals in town, particularly newcomers and work-from-home professionals.

Business Supports the Arts Nomination(s) (Norwitt)

Deadline to nominate is June 30. Awardees will be honored at the 15th Annual Business Supports the Arts Breakfast Thursday, October 12th. The Business Supports the Arts Awards are designed to put a spotlight on businesses small, medium, and large who support the arts in a big way! We also look to acknowledge individuals for their exceptional volunteerism for the arts.

Norwitt motions that we nominate DeeDee Colabella for one of the above-mentioned awards. Morris 2nd. All in favor. Jonathan Winn motioned that we nominate The West Lane Inn for one of the above awards, Gelfman 2nd, all in favor.

Broadband Feasibility Study (Knight, Morris)

Update from the latest meetings and the group is exploring getting an engineering study done to get the real costs so that we have real numbers. The current estimate from the feasibility study is approximately \$30 million. The group meets June 6 to identify potential companies to seek out for the engineering study. Community outreach will begin once more detailed estimates exist.

Updates from Planning & Zoning (Gelfman)

Kay Gelfman provided an update on latest project at P&Z. Gelfman wrote and ECDC approved a letter generally in favor of Pond's Edge residential development. P&Z did not invite ECDC to write an opinion on the Abbott Street development plan.

Marketing (Gioffre, Howell, Morris)

Brittny assigned as represent Ridgefield at Western CT Tourism District.

The Town e-Newsletter began in May. The next one is June 18.

Morris provided an estimate for a local photographer Scott Mullin to take quarterly photos of the Town. ECDC will vote at a special meeting to take place later in June.

Updates to Website (Norwitt, Winn)

A contract was executed to hire Sarah Ford as a consultant to assist with updates to the ridgefieldct.com website. She has completed an audit of the website, which Norwitt and Morris are reviewing.

We will simplify the website, have links to other sources such as inRidgefield.com and Town page. We will add a page for (1) Film Commission (2) Cultural District (3) Downtown map. We will have photos from local business owners instead of stock photos.

All Commissioners should email a headshot and brief bio to Glori.

Tiger-Shark Tank (Dowd, Riser)

Tiger-Shark Tank will be on Tuesday, October 24, 2023, at the Ridgefield Playhouse. There will be time for networking at the event.

Applications are being accepted now, and should be sent to ecdc.sean@gmail.com by early October. Jeff Bornstein and Jay Walker have agreed to judge the event again. Discussion of additional judges. Discussion of marketing the event.

Jobs Board on Facebook (Norwitt, Morris)

Moved this agenda item to July meeting.

Budget

Discussion of charges to ECDC budget this fiscal year. Norwitt is working with the Comptroller on some charges that are questionable. Our Accurate Answer answering service will be discontinued; the Town Info desk will answer phone calls to ECDC.

Norwitt suggested a special meeting on June 27 to finalize monies remaining in budget.

Morris motioned that adjourn the meeting, 2nd by Dowd, all in favor, meeting ended at 9:06 pm.