

**Town of Ridgefield
Economic Development Commission
Special Meeting held February 5, 2009
Town Hall Large Conference Room**

Approved Revised Minutes

These minutes are a general summary of the meeting and are not intended to be a verbatim transcription.

In attendance: Bob Knight, Paul Levine, Mark Robinson and Bill Markus

The meeting was called to order at 7:07 p.m.

Bob Knight welcomed new member Mark Robinson and new Recording Secretary Jeanne Wolnick.

Board Of Selectmen Budget Presentation

Bob Knight explained, that due to the current economic environment, the EDC will have to fight to keep the unspent \$12,800 from this year's budget and to receive the \$15,000 proposed for the 2009 – 2010 budget. It is very possible these figures may get slashed. The EDC needs \$25,000 – 30,000 to retain a consultant to write the Ridgefield Economic Development Plan. Phase I would be paid for from the current budget and Phase II from next year's budget. The EDC needs to explain to the BOS why it deserves funding more than ever in these tough economic times.

Mark Robinson suggested looking at economic development plans from neighboring towns to see what was in them and if they have accomplished any of the goals.

Paul Levine said Wilton and Redding have plans and Wilton has been very successful. Wilton has increased the tax base with the things it has done.

Bob Knight said the EDC needs to sell a return on investment (ROI) plan for the short and long term. The first step is to educate the BOS on the difference between an economic development plan versus the state mandated 10-year Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) being written by Planning and Zoning for submission July 1, 2009.

Paul Levine said an economic development plan is the key to keeping revenue and value through ratables. An economic development plan will pay for itself in two years.

Mark Robinson said that job creation and taxpayer relief would come through economic development.

Bob Knight attended a meeting with the MTA and it has a massive budget deficit. The EDC cannot plan on any money from the MTA. Bob said he would meet with other agencies in the area. Bob also said Fairfield County is the number three market for

financial services. Ridgefield needs to upgrade its broadband capabilities to capture some of this market.

Bill Markus said he thinks the EDC can still do something of value if the BOS turns the budget request down.

Paul Levine disagrees. The first two years of the EDC were spent developing an EDC philosophy, but little else was accomplished in that time. An economic development plan is a great opportunity to affect this Town's life.

Mark Robinson suggested going to the BOS with a plan for what the EDC can do with the proposed budget and a contrasting plan of what can be done without it.

Bob Knight said the MTA had wanted to put a train station in Georgetown near the wire mill and had considered taking out the Branchville Station.

Paul Levine said Ridgefield would need the plan to convince the MTA to keep the Branchville station. Ridgefield will also need a plan to combat the perception that it is anti-business.

Paul Levine said he likes Bob's idea of telling the BOS that surrounding towns are vying for the same business opportunities as Ridgefield. If the BOS does not fund an economic development plan, the EDC will file a 2-page report with P&Z and no actionable steps will be taken.

Bob Knight thinks the public would approve a plan if the EDC can show a reasonable ROI. The EDC could ask people of influence who have attended round table discussions to attend the budget meeting.

Paul Levine suggested each EDC member call one of the BOS to see how they feel about funding. It was agreed:

Mark Robinson – Rudy Marconi

Bob Knight – Di Masters

Paul Levine – Barbara Manners

Bill Markus – Andy Bodner

Rick O'Brien – Joan Plock

Bill Markus wants to have an EDC conference call to share BOS feedback.

Bob Knight recapped:

1. Lobby Selectmen
2. Broadband follow up
3. Paul Levine – follow up with Al Garzi

Paul Levine said this meeting, and suggestions emailed by other EDC members, has provided good input that needs to be consolidated into one document. Bill Markus was asked to take care of this.

Bob Knight said there should be no more than 5 relevant points, but 3 would be better:

1. Economic planning should not fall under Planning and Zoning
2. Branchville and transit oriented development
3. Tax relief

Mark Robinson said that Ridgefield has done a great job making Ridgefield a great place to live but now is the time to make it a great place to work.

Bill Markus made a motion to approve the 2009 EDC Meeting Schedule. The motion was seconded by Paul Levine and accepted 4-0.

At 8:21 p.m. Paul Levine made a motion to adjourn. Mark Robinson seconded the motion and it was approved 4-0.

The next EDC meeting will be held Monday, February 9, 2009 at 6:30 p.m. in the Town Hall small conference room.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanne Wolnick, Secretary