



## TOWN OF RIDGEFIELD

### Planning and Zoning Commission

APPROVED/REVISED  
MINUTES  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON BUSINESS ZONES  
SPECIAL MEETING

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

January 22, 2021

Present: Joe Fossi  
Bob Knight  
Karen Martin, Chair  
Bob Cascella  
Geoffrey Morris  
Susan Buzaid  
Charles Robbins  
Wing Biddle

Also Present:

**I. Call to order**

**II.**

At 9:02 AM, Ms. Martin called the meeting to order.

**II: Introduction**

Ms. Martin gave an overview of a meeting. The Subcommittee will focus on the economic development and impact of COVID on businesses in Town. The subcommittee will focus on a new outlook and how the Planning & Zoning Commission might be able to recommend or bring changes which can be beneficial to the Economic and business models in the Town. This meeting will discuss the objective and mission and talking points. Each member was asked to briefly introduce themselves and any initial thoughts they may have.

Mr. Fossi, Planning & Zoning Commissioner, talked about combining the Business Zones B-2 and B-3, and consolidating the retail area not just on the main street but off shoots like Catoonah and Bailey Avenue. He expressed concerns about possible empty retail and office space.



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Mr. Knight, member of ECDC, informed the subcommittee that ECDC is working for long term recovery for business and jobs with the Office of Emergency management at State level and economic recovery for the large stakeholders.

Mr. Geoffrey Morris, ECDC Chair, informed that ECDC is looking at long term plan and attract more retail to town. He added that the new residents moving to town would give them more options of living in downtown and other cluster areas of Branchville areas.

Mr. Bob Cascella, as a commercial broker, expressed concern about the vacant commercial spaces. He added that currently Ridgefield has approximately 100,000 sq ft of vacant office space.

Ms. Susan Buzaid of Olley Court stated that more companies on the main street will help her business thrive.

Mr. Wing Biddle, CEO of Urstadt Biddle Properties state that during pandemic, he finds the demand of apartment has increased. He said that bringing more apartments will make more vibrant community. He added that Town should have a vision for the town and be more creative.

Mr. Charles Robbins, Vice Chair of Planning & Zoning Commission informed that the Head of the Planning & Zoning Commission of Canton will be attending the Town of Ridgefield Planning & Zoning Commission meeting. He added that Canton has come up with the idea of Form-Based Zoning, keeping the character of the Town. He stated other towns, Manchester and Chappaqua in NY are also thinking of Form Based zoning. He asked the participants to join the meeting on Tuesday January 26, 2021 to listen to Mr. Neil Pade, Planning & Zoning Commission Chair of Canton, CT.

#### **III: Election of Chair**

**Mr. Fossi motioned to elect Ms. Martin as chair of the Subcommittee on Business Zones. Mr. Robbins seconded. Motion carried 7-0-0.**

#### **IV: Discussion**



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Mr. Fossi said that before the next meeting, Ms. Martin will share the Zoning map along with the annotations of the different zones. The members will suggest any zoning changes to the Planning & Zoning Commission.

Mr. Knight talked about New Rochelle, which during development worked with the developer and created more vertical space and attracted lot of investment which in fact helped the municipality.

He added that ECDC is working for creating more density of people and bringing economic development. He shared the survey of the Ridgefield Economic Recovery survey. People are working more remotely. The numbers look stronger than six months ago.

Mr. Biddle commented that daytime population has increased by 5-10 percent. Retail in town is more adapting to internet demands. The occupancy rate is great for retail in his building almost to 93percent. He said as a property owner, he would like to put more multi story structure, that would also give value to the land.

The members scheduled the next meeting on February 05 at 8:30AM. Ms. Martin will share the digital zoning map along with the annotations of the different zones.

#### **V. Adjourn**

Hearing no further Ms. Martin adjourned the meeting at 9:37 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,

Aarti Paranjape