



**Ridgefield  
Economic &  
Community  
Development  
Commission**

400 Main Street • Ridgefield, CT 06877  
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**Arnold Light**  
Chairman

**John Devine, Vice Chair, Secretary**  
**Paul Levine**  
**Geoffrey Morris**  
**M. Augustus Ryer**  
**Karen Sulzinsky**

**Rudy Marconi,**  
First Selectman  
[Ridgefielddevelopment.com](http://Ridgefielddevelopment.com)

**Approved RECDC Meeting Minutes**  
**April 2, 2018 at 6:30pm**  
**Small Town Hall Conference Room**

In Attendance: Arnold Light, Paul Levine, M Augustus Ryer, John Devine, Karen Sulzinsky, Geoff Morris

Guests: None

Meeting was called to order at 6:36 pm

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**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

1. Next meeting May 14, 2018, 6:30 pm, small conference room in Town Hall. It was rescheduled to May 14 as the May 7 meeting conflicts with Town Meeting.

2. Approval of January minutes

Motion: Karen S. Second: John D. Unanimous approval.

**GENERAL DISCUSSION.**

1. CT EDC Arts Seminar

John D. attended the State EDC Arts meeting hosted by the state. Good group of presenters, from Mayors to EDC staff, the Governor, etc. The message was that arts and culture is the key economic driver for the state. Transit is also critical for us to improve our economy. There was an interesting proposal from the Commission on Fiscal Stability and Economic Growth's report. Discussion about that presentation. John believes that many of the proposals make sense, but they have a weakness: the plan has to be adopted as a whole, not piecemeal, something that is unlikely. He was also at the League of Women Voters this past

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weekend: John Frey made a comment about toll booths – he says that there are too many exits in CT, and that it will be almost impossible to implement such a plan (in addition to federal restrictions on border tolls). John D. went to the Arts breakout session and met with the leader. He's going to try to schedule her for a Ridgefield meeting – there is grant money available, and the various arts organizations in Ridgefield should be made aware of the offerings. Karen S. asked if there are towns in CT where arts are particularly flourishing, so that we can model their success. He notes that none stood out beyond Ridgefield, but that a lot of development is going on in Bridgeport. During the event presenters suggest that artist studios are places that bring a lot of visitors, and that they can be leveraged for economic growth. Governor Malloy brought up that it's a given that within 3-4 years 50% of all vehicles will be hybrid or electric, something that is already affecting the gas tax revenue. Overall, John D. felt it was very productive.

2. First Floor Retail

We still have \$6,000 tax rebate until June 30<sup>st</sup>.. The restaurant that was considering the space on Main Street is still doing so, and introduced another restaurant group for consideration. John D. and Arnold L. are following up. Moving forward, the BOS approved \$24,000 for FY 2018-19, contingent on the RECDC presenting the program again.

3. Ordinance Change of Funds

Rudy believes that all that is needed in order for the RECDC to collect funds is a code change. That would be voted on by the BOS, and there seems to be support for the proposal.

4. PR Campaign

Geoff M. says that things are moving ahead. Funds have been approved for the website and they continue to raise money. They are starting to look to non-profits for donations, but that has been met with mixed reactions. There is a plan for a public event on May 18<sup>th</sup> at the Ridgefield Conservatory of Dance. It will be open to the public, and there will be remarks by Wayne A. and Howard Turner. They are hoping to put posters in the windows of the Conservatory leading up the reception. The event is meant to be informational but will also look for support (financial and otherwise). They're going to the BOS soon to try tying in with Friends of Ridgefield.

5. RIFF

Geoff M. says that the Jane Goodall movie has been finalized (showing 4/24). The Goodall Institute used to be housed in Ridgefield on Main Street, though now it is in DC. The director will be doing a Q&A after the film, as will the person who ran the Institute while it was in Ridgefield. They're attempting to raise \$100,000. John D. asked about sponsors and how digital marketing is tied together, and there was some discussion on the matter. Geoff M. says that the website has had a robust reception, and their Facebook page is doing exceptionally well. Geoff M. and John D. will speak further about how to tie digital sponsorships together. Karen S. suggests that RIFF reach out to Ridgefield schools in order to promote the event to students (they are planning on giving away 250 tickets).

6. Social Media Protocol

See attached. Discussion. How do we get sponsors? Can we collect money to advertise on behalf of non-profits for a fee? Decided that we would post it for the public. Changes to the plan (marked in red) are attached at the end of this report.

**New Business:**

7. Cathy Savoca - Hospitality

Cathy Savoca has agreed to be an unofficial consultant to the ECDC on matters relating to hospitality. She attends many of the P&Z meetings and is willing to keep us apprised of developments in that sector. Arnold L. says that there is a lot of resistance in town to Airbnb. However, our population can not support larger hotels, so we need to find another solution, like Airbnb. Gus R. will look into the public hearings that happened at the time, and see where the resistance to the idea was and if the RECDC should get involved.

8. Visitor Info at the Bookstore

Arnold L., John D. and Mary Jones (Downtown Ridgefield Chair) met and Ellen from the bookstore. Ellen says that many people come into the shop on Sunday asking what they can do in Ridgefield. She is building a small corner of her store devoted to tourism, with suggestions on places to visit, eat, etc. (she has free brochures there now). In 2 years we may have a kiosk (when the road work is completed) on Main Street, but this is happening now. She is redesigning a promotional brochure about Ridgefield and will print 5,000 for distribution to area hotels. Geoff M. asks how we can help – John D. and Arnold L. suggest that we can help from a digital perspective, promoting the initiative through our website and social media.

9. Main Street Meeting

A meeting took place on Thursday, Mar 22, about the \$3M from the state for beautification and streamlining of Main Street. John D. wants to send a letter of support in cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce. Karen S. edited the letter and suggests that it will have more weight if the whole ECDC signs. The ECDC read the letter. A discussion of the project followed. Geoff M. suggested that we also reach out to Downtown Ridgefield about signing the letter as well. John D. made a motion to approve the letter as amended, to be signed by the ECDC, and the Chamber and Downtown Ridgefield (if willing). Geoff M. seconded the motion. Discussion about how to involve the Chamber and Downtown Ridgefield within the timeframe. Motion passed unanimously.

10. New Milford Loans

John D. circulated a newspaper article about New Milford's new micro loan program. Arnold L. asked if the town charges interest, as it could be a source of revenue for the town. Bob Hebert has asked that the ECDC find out where the money for these loans is coming from. Arnold L. called the reporter for information and will keep us updated when he knows more.

11. Jazzfest

Geoff M. suggests that we need to decide what our role in the festival is. John D. says that most of the PR has been pushed to the ECDC, with the exception of the main events, which are in charge of their own PR. Discussion about who is in charge of which initiatives (such as a promotional flyer), and whether we will need to raise money beyond what is already available. Stephanie is still designing the web advertisement button to track our impact in marketing. The ECDC will need to reach out to retailers and restaurants for the specific offerings that will be coded into the button. Arnold L. asks if there's a way for RIFF to participate.

Search for a New Commissioner

No progress finding a new commissioner who has aptitude with WordPress. \$30/hour for someone to update the website with content that we send them. Arnold L. will follow up with Birgitta Stone to see if she is interested in getting involved.

A motion was made by Geoff M. to adjourn at 8:04 p.m. and seconded by John D.. Unanimous approval.

## **Ridgefield ECDC**

### **Draft Protocol for Material on the RECDC Social Media Pages and/or Website – all Free Content, not Applicable to Paid/Sponsorships**

04/02/18

**All posts are at the sole and final discretion of the RECDC**

#### *Items that can be posted to the RECDC site:*

- Grand opening announcements/businesses moving to town
- Educational events/seminars (especially those with a business focus) from local organizations and businesses
- Community events
- Arts/culture events, except those limited to a single organization in town
- Accolades and awards with a business/art/culture focus given to local businesses/individuals
- Articles written about Ridgefield in newspapers, magazines, online publications, etc.
- Posts meant to engage the community with the RECDC, including polls (i.e rank the top reasons to own a business in Ridgefield; what kind of business would you like to fill X storefront; etc.)
- Posts that promote the accomplishments of the RECDC
- Posts that encourage civic engagement

#### *Items that should not be posted to the ECDC sites:*

- Advertisements and sale announcements
- Going-out-of-business announcements
- Posts meant to promote a single individual/business, without a clear community focus (i.e open houses)
- **Posts that reference or promote specific political parties/views**

#### **Additional Thoughts:**

- *Content should be derived, at least in part, from residents and businesses*
- *We can set up a schedule of posts*
  - *For example: business profiles throughout town. Brief interview form, post to our webpage. Can link to social media.*