



**Ridgefield
Economic &
Community
Development
Commission**

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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

APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

**Town of Ridgefield
Economic & Community Development Commission
Monday, August 6, 2018-6:30 p.m.
Town Hall Small Conference Room**

Members Present:

Arnold Light, Chairman, John Devine, Vice Chair & Secretary, Paul Levine, Geoffrey Morris, M. Augustus Ryer, Karen Sulzinsky

The meeting was called to order at 6:33 p.m. by Chairman Arnold Light

Announcements:

Next meeting September 10, 2018

1. **Re-approval of June email vote on \$500.00 award for Tourist Info Brochure. (FOI does not permit email voting).** Vote can't be done by email for \$500.00 tourist information brochure. All in favor of approving 6-0. Motion by Gus to approve, seconded by Karen.
2. **ECDC 2 years ago gave \$500** to Ridgefield Independent Film Festival. There was a motion to donate \$500 for 2018. by John, seconded by Karen. All in favor 5-0-1. Abstain by Geoffrey Morris.
3. **Public meeting and vote on ordinance change August 8.** Meeting moved to August 13 from August 8, large conference room. Would like as many as possible to attend for support for approval of ordinance for ECDC to collect money managed by the Commission for marketing of events.
4. **InRidgefield campaign update (Geoff).** No money has been raised since the last meeting, two months ago. Rudy is trying to get the town money for social media needs.

5. **RIFF (Geoff)** The event is two months away. About 40 movies have been selected with over 500 submissions which is up from last year. An Emerging Film Maker Award to be given. A 48-hour film making class for students will be available; middle school town residents, limited to 20. Promotion to be done on the CT FB page with a suggestion to put out on the Ridgefield Mom's page.
6. **Jazz Fest (John, Geoff, Karen).** Participants who agreed to have Jazz bands: Bernard's, Village Tavern, Baileys to name a few. Restaurants are to be marketed with \$100.00 from each participating restaurant to go towards marketing. Ads to be placed in 5 magazines by Geoff. The Ridgefield Playhouse is currently selling tickets and have sold 280 to date. The library has 25 sign ups for the Friday event and the Lounsbury house will be participating with high school Jazz Band; outside weather dependent. Town Hall Step Performers needed along with schedule and logistics for performance. Karen working with Belinda Lasky of Lounsbury to set up food for Sunday event. Karen working with Rob Volo of RHS and Lesley Lambton of Ridgefield Library to set up combos for library lawn on Saturday afternoon.
7. **Web Update: Art & Michelle roles (John)** we pay \$570 a quarter to Art Schobey for web maintenance. With Michele Hagerty on board we will now move to hourly for Art. No retainer needed. Looking to get the site SSL certificate for our website; a free service to be handled by Michele.
8. **Office Vacancy Rates (John/Gus)** Public estimates are 14-20% vacancy. Many vacant office spaces in town; non-retail, all office. Office park on Route 7 has availability. There are challenges to be faced that large towns don't encounter such as Stamford. Our prices are lower; offset by higher cost of living. Challenges are getting into/out of town. What can we offer that we're currently not providing? Property tax abatement is an incentive. Small business owners are being sought. Many businesses are looking for short term 1-3-year time frame. Medical business are most in need of office space; dentists, doctors etc. The resolution is on going and will be kept on the agenda. A suggestion was made to form a task force and invite them to attend a future meeting to get feedback/suggestions. Landlords and brokers to be invited. Bob Cascella, Steve Zemo and Wing Biddle along with Gus . Special Meeting set for 9/10. Currently looking for an accurate count of office space.
9. **ECDC opening (all)** Ideas to advertise through FB page. Word put out to contacts.
10. **Hospitality in Ridgefield Update (Arnold)** Looking to develop or bring a small hotel to Ridgefield. P&Z has said in a previous meeting that they would look into providing locations. So far nothing has developed. Possible re-zoning for CBD for potential hospitality venues. 10-12 million estimated to build/renovate a property. Possible locations on Bailey Avenue, the RVNA site, building next to the post office, West Lane Inn, or Stonehendge. Rudy and the P&Z need to be involved. Hospitality would bring businesses to the area. Arnold Light to meet with Jeremy Buffum from New Castle Hotels next Friday to discuss possibility of New Castle involvement
11. **Library-- Business Education Series 2018-19 (Karen)** Will be in touch with Leslie and stay updated.

New Business:

1. **Norwalk River Valley Trail (Ridgefield Ramble) (Paul)** A trail to be built from Norwalk. Good location for pushing strollers, kids on bikes, sitting on a bench, relaxing, walking dogs. Will be an expensive project. Do we proceed? A way to attract and create economic activity. Thought is that afterwards, individuals/families will stop for ice cream, lunch/dinner in town etc. \$200,000 is needed for completion. Trail currently exists from Wilton to Norwalk with a plan to extend into Danbury.
2. **Budget Report.** FY@017-18 concluded and only a few dollars left. For 2018-19, so far we have budgeted for Art 1K, Michelle 5k, 3k digital. Leaves 5k, for other

3. Updates from John Devine:

- Space next to Craig's is under contract.
- 50 Coins is under negotiation
- Possible client for Stonehenge
- Barber shop on Main St. vacant
- Under Ground-new store; boutique clothing store.

Meeting adjourned, 8:20 p.m. Motion by Gus, seconded by Geoff.