



**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, October 1, 2018-6:30 p.m.
Town Hall Large Conference Room**

Members Present:

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

Guests: Mark Meacham, Chair Arts Council, Jennifer DiLaura, Arts Council, Pam Stoddart, Director, Guild Of Artist, Mary Harold, Guild of Artists, Amanda Duff, Nicholas Ktorides

The meeting was called to order at 6:28 p.m. by Chairman Arnold Light

Motion to approved the minutes from the September 10, 2018 was made by Karen Sulzinsky and seconded by Geoff Morris. Minutes were approved 6-0.

Announcements:

Next meeting November 5, 2018

- 1.) The commission and invited guests from the art community discussed the feasibility of developing space in Ridgefield that could be used as studio space for local artists. There has been discussion about such a need for several years and the ECDC invited leaders of the arts organizations to provide information and input.

Pam Stoddart provided a review of spaces being utilized in surrounding communities including Bridgeport, Norwalk and Stamford. She noted that it difficult to get very detailed information on

monthly rents. Average studio space was ~250 sq.ft and would be dedicated to an individual and must be secured when not occupied.

Arnold speculated that monthly rent in Ridgefield would be about \$300-400. Gus noted that current space rents at about \$20.00/sq. ft. He also noted that the building would require someone to act as the manager of the facility.

John suggested that an “anchor tenant” – either an established organization or group may help to facilitate the project development and other space could be dedicated to individuals.

Jennifer, noted that some performing arts groups such as Thrown Stone and the Chorale may be interested in dedicated space.

The group decided that as a next step the Arts Council will develop a survey that will be sent to all of the arts organizations that are members of the Arts Executive Roundtable to determine level of interest.

- 2.) Karen has met with members of the school system (principals at RHS and ERMS) to discuss space needs and utilizations of the school auditoriums for arts organizations. The lighting issue and the noise from the server box at ERMS has been an ongoing issue and makes the stage non-functional.. She felt that with a new principal at ERMS there is a new opportunity to solve the problem.

- 3.) Geoff provided an update on the upcoming RIFF event. He noted that over 100 films will be shown and numerous venues in the Village. The program book has been finished. Total Mortgage on Catoona will serve as the event HQT for the week. The middle school children completed the two weekends of writing movie scripts, filming with phone cameras, and editing. He noted that the finished productions were very good.

RIFF needs volunteers for the events. Karen suggested that Geoff contacts the RHS and offer a short internship. She noted that the DTC recently offered a program and got a good response.

- 4.) John provided an update on the Jazz, Funk and Blues weekend. He noted that all of the events had excellent attendance, The library room was full for the Cuban Jazz performance, the Playhouse sold out, the Aldrich lobby was full to capacity and the Lounsbury Jazz Café on the lawn was well attended. He noted that the absence of music on the steps of Town Hall did not create a festive environment in the Village but numerous retailers reported strong sales during the weekend.
- 5.) John reported that he has been having a problem with one of the paid web resources who has been difficult to reach and is late on assignments. He is investigating other options. The Face Book ad advertising for town events is reaching a much larger audience than previous years when the ECDC did not have a budget. He noted that for the Jazz Weekend he reached over 65,000 viewers in Fairfield and Westchester Counties with 29,000 clicking on the 1 minute video for information. He noted that the ECDC will be responsible for the marketing of the upcoming Downtown Ridgefield Fall In Love weekend and will coordinate with RIFF.
- 6.) Arnold provided a brief update on the project to develop a boutique inn in the village for overnight guests. Both Arnold and John met with a Jeremy Buffam on New Castle Hotels and Resorts. New Castle is a company that builds and develops and manages hotel properties. The management of New Castle lives in Ridgefield and they are interested in a pursuing a project in

Ridgefield. Arnold mentioned a few locations that are under consideration and asked the members of the commission to keep the locations confidential.

7.) InRidgefield. No report

8.) Gus provided an update on the commercial vacancy project. John asked Gus which of the commercial listing services he would recommend. Gus recommended either CERC or CTList. The latter is a new and developing listing site. He noted that he could negotiate a rate for the ECDC with CERC.

John recommended that the ECDC site add a page that has link to all of the residential brokers – eg. Coldwell Banker, Neuman, etc so that there are links for prospective home buyers. Gus will discuss the opportunity with Laura Rubinfeld, Director of the Ridgefield Board of Realtors. The association will be asked for a financial contribution to develop and maintain the real estate section of the ECDC site. John requested that each realtors site must include the ECDC site link so that anyone that navigates off the ECDC site to a realtors site can navigate back.

9.) Geoff represents the ECDC on the new Energy Task Force that is chaired by Dr. Ben Oko. The task force's initial focus is on the installation of solar panels on schools and other municipal buildings to reduce operational costs through the generation of electricity. In some instances there may be the possibility to also generate enough excess power to sell unused energy back to the power grid.

Current status is:

Installed: 17kw on REC Center and 136kw on Farmingville School.

Installation beginning soon: 130kw on Barlow Mt. School and 130kw on Scotts Ridge School. Funding approved: 130kw for Scotland, 130kw for Ridgebury and 139kw for Veteran's Park. Application to be submitted this week: 300kw for the High School

Geoff stated that the Task Force will begin to explore the opportunity for solar installations on commercial buildings. Gus inquired if the program is tied into CPACE? And how it can be funded through a tax bill?

10.) The Commission interviewed two candidates for one vacancy Amanda Duff and Nick Ktorides.

11.) The Commission adjourned into Executive Session at 7:24 p.m. Karen made the motion to adjourn to Executive Session, Geoff seconded, passed 6-0.

Executive Session: Personnel

The commission returned to public session at 7:45 PM. John Devine made a motion to accept Amanda Duff as the new commissioner and it was seconded by Arnold Light. Motion carried unanimously.

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.