



**Ridgefield
Economic &
Community
Development
Commission**

400 Main Street • Ridgefield, CT 06877
203.546.2547

Arnold Light
Chairman

Robert DeFalco
John Devine, Secretary
Paul Levine
M. Augustus Ryer

Rudy Marconi,
First Selectman
Ridgefielddevelopment.com

Approved RECDC Meeting Minutes

March 6th, 2017 at 6:30 pm.
Small Town Conference Room

Attending: Arnold Light, Bob Defalco, John Devine, Gus Ryer, Paul Levine

Guests: Karen Sulzinsky, Stephany Pound Sanderson

Absent: John Collins **Scribe:** Bob DeFalco

Announcements

1. The next RECDC Meeting will be on Monday, April 3rd, 2017 at 6:30 PM in the Small Conference Room.

2. Approval of February minutes:

Motion to approve – Gus Ryer

2nd – John Devine

3. Arnold Light reported on our last meeting with the First Selectman.

- The ECDC and Arts Council offered a suggestion that these two groups coordinate the Lamp Post Banners as a service to the First Selectman who presently controls their use. The ECDC & AC would like to set clear criteria. The First Selectman will have final say.
- Laurie Hernandez, town HR Director was on hand to contribute to

discussions regarding Linda (Town part time receptionist) who is assisting Bob with Town Calendar entries as well as training to post on the ECDC site. Training cannot be easily accomplished at the reception desk due to normal phone calls and visitor services. The First Selectman and Laurie Hernandez agreed to establish a training location as well as some time away from reception, a lap top computer and a personal town email address. At this writing, these have yet to be provided.

- Parking Authority Discussion - (No SCRE recommendations have been acted upon. The First Selectman is proposing that the PA present to the BOS sometime in the near future.
- Our next Meeting with the First Selectman is scheduled for **March 14th at 2:00 PM in his office.**

P&Z First Floor Retail Meeting, (2/22/17)

- Overall Favorable “first floor retail” audience in attendance.
- Both sides of the debate associated with conflicting issues were well articulated.
- Besides Arnold Light and John Devine, ECDC candidate Stephany Pound also spoke at this meeting offering her opinion that the charm of Ridgefield is eroding, considering the neon looking window signs and banners that are now present, as opposed to the past when she worked on Main Street.
- The P&Z will be scheduling future group meetings with the most important town stake holders.

General Discussion

Karen Sulzinsky was interviewed as a replacement for Alex Karsanidi Sr who recently resigned from the ECDC due to conflicts with his other town responsibilities.

- Resident since 1997. Served on the BOE for 5 years. Owns and runs a small Video and Marketing Co. with her husband involving customers like L’Oreal. No website experience, but believes that she is tech savvy. Karen also believes that she could contribute Journalistic and PR experience to the ECDC.
- All commissioners present had a favorable opinion of Karen.
- Arnold suggested that Karen email the First Selectman to request a meeting for him to vet Karen as a candidate.

Letter to State Finance & Bonding Committee to Improve Danbury Line Service. (Arnold Light)

- Arnold discussed the request from Wilton's EDC, asking the Ridgefield ECDC to support the above subject letter of interest that would increase funding to support a Danbury Rail Line improvement extending service on the line through Wilton, Cannondale and Branchville. Attending commissioners had no concern with adding RECDC signature support for this letter.

Website update (Bob D)

- Web Statistics package distributed representing our 12 month performance through Feb, 2017:
 - Increases in **Unique Visitors** and **Total Visits** were impressive @ 1354 & 1774 respectively. There was a 314% and 234% increase respectively Vs. Feb 2016.
 - **Featured Properties** page led all visited pages in February. (Hard copies distributed)
 - **Calendar Events** and **Town activity** posts were very popular & amongst the top 10 pages visited. (Hard copies distributed)
 - Google Analytics for all States as well as Towns within CT were presented. Danbury, Ridgefield, New Canaan led the list in that order.
 - Google Search - "**Ridgefield CT Business**" – RECDC ranks 3rd & 4th **on page #1** behind the Chamber of Commerce. **Good** for less than 1 year on line.
 - Google Search "**Ridgefield CT**" – RECDC is found on Page #8. **Not good.**
- **HTTPS URL** - Google analytics can be improved by upgrading the website from http to https improving encryption security. Beside better security, Google is likely to improve our future search position if we convert to a HTTPS URL. The Town should probably take this precaution as well. Hostgator should be able to set us up with the **SSL encryption certificate** and Art Schobey can help with any WordPress tweaks that may be needed. Cost should be +/- \$100/year.
 - Most commissioners attending supported the recommendation.
 - Arnold would like to hold until the new budget is approved.
 - Bob D offered to support the HTTPS URL personally if our budget cannot afford the \$100 / year expense.
- Bob D has now established a no frills **ECDC Facebook Page**. We now need someone who fully understands how to maximize its use. Posting

website URLs on Facebook can be very effective for increasing our website viewer traffic.

- Bob D purchased a “BOOST” on Facebook to test its promotional effectiveness using The Battle of Ridgefield event as a test. Results were impressive. The Battle took a very high position on the ECDC website page statistics.
 - We would like to have someone other than Bob D following the ECDC Facebook maintenance. If done well, this would appear to have a major influence on Website traffic.
 - Potential ECDC candidate Stephany Pound Sanderson has business Facebook experience, as well as a keen interest to help improve our ECDC Facebook page.
- **CERC**
 - Arnold mentioned that our CERC Website plugin expense for the ECDC is \$650 / Yr. He questions the need, since we now have installed the Commercial Properties Listings plugin on our website. Our new plugin took the #1 position of pages viewed in February. Why pay for CERC?
 - Bob D and Gus R support continuing with CERC for another year because unlike our new Plugin, CERC is maintained to some extent. So far Gus believes there are no better alternative plugins that would concentrate strictly on Ridgefield. It was further pointed out by Bob D that our featured properties plugin maintenance will become a problem in the future when posted listings change for any reason. How will we know and react to these changes?
 - **Quick Link to Website** - Request from John Devine. (Not an App)
 - Gus offered to show John how this can easily be done on his phone.

Chamber Inaugural Breakfast - 3/10, 7:30 AM – No ticket required!

- Arnold requested strong commissioner attendance.
- The first Selectman will give a State of the Town address.

Chamber Business Expo - 3/16 (Arnold Light)

- Free Admission
- Will be held at the Rec Center from 5:30 PM to 7:30 PM.
- Strong Commissioner attendance requested.
- Gus Ryer will take a table for his business at the Expo.

•
New Business

Digital Marketing Update (John Devine)

- John described our new featured events marketing effort using **Hamlet Hub** who have been extremely cooperative.
- Hamlet Hub offers John the capability to target **15** key geographies.
- John has also approached **Patch**. They are offering free submissions for a few key towns.
- We need more print coverage. (John is looking into using **The Danbury News Times**)

Downtown Ridgefield (John Devine)

- John is now attending the monthly DTR meetings.
- DTR members are now coordinating combined marketing efforts for major events.

College Intern, Village web development (John Devine)

- Primarily targeted to the DTR website that apparently needs a lot of work.
- Bob D is concerned with proposing the use of interns for Website Design. Interns eventually go away. Serious websites often require back end maintenance, as we learned first-hand on the ECDC website on Feb 6 when our site went down due to server issues. An intern will not always be available when issues like this occur.

Main Street State Road Meeting (John Devine)

- Wing Biddle purchased 50 Coins and is pondering the closing of its adjacent alleyway.
- Numerous proposals were discussed re single vs. double lane traffic on specific roads in town.
- The State budget for this project changed from \$2.8 Million to \$2.0 Million based on which design is approved?.
- Nothing even remotely finalized at this meeting. Another meeting will be scheduled to continue the debate.

SCORE (John Devine)

- A SCORE representative will be asked to attend one of our future ECDC meetings to discuss small business support and ECDC will attend Library coordinated meeting with SCORE.

- **Library** – WordPress website classes are now being offered. Check the Library schedule.

Social Services Director Support (John Devine)

- John introduced the Ridgefield Gold Service Card and Pamphlet that he discussed with Tony Phillips, Services Director. The pamphlet is outdated. Tony is asking for assistance to update sponsors and publish a new pamphlet.
- John will assist and work with Squash's to publish a new pamphlet.
- Bob D asked John why this is an ECDC project. Will it be a digital offering?

Paul Levine expressed an interest to teach Small Business Courses from time to time.

Interview - Stephany Pound Sanderson (Interviewed as a future potential candidate for the RECDC.

- Ridgefield resident now and also grew up here working on Main Street through high school.
- Presently runs a small in-house women's apparel business.
- Previous management experience with Bloomingdales.
- Believes that Main Street is losing some quaintness. (Signs and banners)
- Believes that the relationship between the town residents and retailers needs improvement. Retailers should be interviewed to better understand their needs. Bob D pointed out that our **Website Success Stories** demonstrates how we have been responding to this idea.

Motion to adjourn – 8:42 PM – John Devine - 2nd – Gus Ryer