



**Ridgefield  
Economic &  
Community  
Development  
Commission**

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Geoffrey Morris, Chair  
Glori Norwitt, Secretary  
Christa Carone  
Sean Dowd  
Susan Gessner  
Bob Knight

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

**Economic & Community Development Commission  
Approved Minutes  
December 6, 2021, 6:30 pm in Town Hall Conference Room and via Zoom**

**In Attendance in person:** Chairman Geoffrey Morris; Secretary Glori Norwitt; Commissioner Sean Dowd; Guests Matt Alcuri and Will Meikle from SCORE, and Jonathan Winn

**In Attendance over Zoom:** Commissioners Bob Knight and Christa Carone

Geoffrey Morris called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

Announcements

Next meeting: January 3, 2022

Minutes

**Sean made a motion to approve the November 2021 meeting minutes with no modifications; seconded by Geoffrey. Motion carries unanimously.**

Approval of 2022 Meeting Schedule (Norwitt)

All meetings in 2022 will be on Mondays, at 6:30pm.

January 3  
February 7

March 7  
April 4  
May 9  
June 6  
July 11  
August 1  
September 12  
October 3  
November 7  
December 5

**Glori motions to approve these dates for the 2022 ECDC Calendar; seconded by Sean.  
Motion carries unanimously.**

#### General Discussion

##### 1. Visit from SCORE: Small-Business Mentors (Guests)

Two representatives of SCORE spoke. Matt Alcuri works for Mastercard on the product innovation team, previously on the small business credit and debit process team. He is a Ridgefield resident.

Will Meikle is a Brookfield resident and current chapter chairman of CT SCORE in this region. They seek to reintroduce the public to SCORE which is a nonprofit providing free services to small businesses. Conduct training and mentoring sessions. It targets small business owners, and conducts training and mentoring sessions. This chapter has 40 volunteers which conducts 600 mentoring sessions each year from brand new startup to mature businesses that are looking for additional ideas to grow, start a new business line or product. It works with Price Waterhouse Coopers to rank its mentors/volunteers. SCORE stands for Service Corps of Retired Executives, but no longer is only retirees. It is part of the Small Business Administration and has leverage for training, white papers and more. They have access to SCORE chapters throughout the country if need a network for specific experience (eg agriculture).

SCORE could co-sponsor with ECDC and assist in other ways. If ECDC is sponsoring a workshop, SCORE could supplement and bring resources. Many workshops are online. SCORE partnered with the Ridgefield Library and held a "Simple Steps" workshop there. All workshops are now available online due to Covid, instead of having to go in person. All services are no cost. Website is SCORE.org

SCORE has pre-defined networks such as lawyers, marketers, investment managers/lenders, angel investing, etc. on an "Approved partners" list. The organization has a new advertising campaign to get new clients and also seek new volunteers (particularly bilingual volunteers) in the area.

Christa asked about the revenue model for SCORE: 2/3 funded by SBA, and the rest is funded by donations, many through banks.

SCORE does not have a job board.

## 2. Interview of ECDC Candidate Jonathan Winn

ECDC has two open positions, and several people are interested.

Jonathan Winn attended Theatre school at University of Southern California. After career in digital and graphic design, now the Director of Strategy at Fusion Media, working on design creative services to inbound marketing to user experience design and research, and more. He also runs Thrown Stone Theater Company, a small professional theater in town which premiered three world plays this summer. The company is planning its fifth season this year.

Jonathan is interested in ECDC to support the town, and have a stake in what happens. He would like to serve in a marketing capacity, and greatly respects Susan Gessner and Bob Knight.

Jonathan served on the Cultural District Subcommittee, and subsequently volunteered to design a logo for cultural districts, which was subsequently approved by the State. Glori noted that he was great to work with.

Geoffrey explained the role of an ECDC Commissioner including attending meetings and working on projects throughout the year. There is need for a campaign strategy for marketing. Additionally, we need language behind the town identity. Jonathan noted that he can advise on the strategic side of social media. Discussion of focus groups held for "The Ridge" potential identity. Discussion of conflict of interest policy.

## 3. Cultural District (Norwitt)

Per the Cultural District state rules, we must have two road signs in town to promote the Cultural District. We designed a road sign which would go up at the fountain and north of the Library, but the Department of Transportation has not yet approved the signs after many months. Our State Representative Aimee Berger-Girvalo is assisting so that we can receive a response. The state simply has to approve the signs, so that we can create them (at our cost) and place them.

Glori worked with Susan Gessner and met (over zoom) with the State's Office of Tourism web site administrator Jean Hebert to discuss the State's tourism website CTVisit.com. They provided information, photos and more to create a new "Ridgefield Cultural District" page on the website in order to promote the town. Additionally, Glori contacted some Ridgefield businesses that were not on the state website in order to explain how they could be included, and the steps to take. Glori contacted the Fountain Inn, 109 Cheese, RPAC Art Gallery, Gallo and CHIRP. Some of these businesses have taken the necessary steps to be included on CTVisit.com.

## 4. Broadband Initiative (Knight)

In addition to federal ARPA funds, an historic amount of federal money has been allocated for broadband: \$65 billion in the Infrastructure Bill, including \$42 billion for broadband access and the balance for digital literacy and other wrap-around services.

The next step in town is to arrange meetings with community stakeholders re: expanding broadband to unserved areas of town and improve broadband service in underserved portions of town. Should the private sector deploy fiber, or should it be a public/private partnership? Based on a recent survey, 94% of the community noted that they would like the BOS to explore a fiber network. First Selectman Rudy Marconi has spoken with Crown Castle and Frontier and

perhaps Comcast. The ECDC should meet with the BOS sometime soon. Sean Dowd asked who would oversee this project/installation, because having a point person helps to move a project forward. Perhaps the Town IT Director or Head of Facilities Jake Muller would be the point person.

#### 5. Parking Update (Morris & Dowd)

Parking in the downtown area has been a problem for numerous years. Sean and Geoffrey have spoken with Ellen Burns and Jessica Wilmot of the Parking Authority. The new parking lot by Boys & Girls Club has additional 30 spots. The post office parking spaces in the back are now unused. However the town cannot have a conversation with the post office without the landlord's approval, and that approval took approximately 6 weeks. Geoffrey spoke with a Washington DC post office representative and the landlord. It seems that the town may be granted approval to use some spots.

Geoffrey will present the Parking Authority's plan (BOS likely needs to approve the Parking Authority plan) at the next meeting with the USPS representative, which likely won't happen for a month. The landlord is eager to assist because other tenants are complaining of parking problems. It would be very helpful if all store and restaurant employees parked in outer edges instead of near businesses.

St. Stephens looking to monetize their parking lot which has 90 spots, but they may not open all of those spots to the public. Perhaps they would create an annual permit. One idea is the "park mobile" app could be used in that lot. This could also be a potential in downtown. Glori noted that a large lot behind downtown New Canaan uses an app for collecting parking fees. Town permit is \$70 for 6 months, Geoffrey believes.

#### 6. Other (Knight)

Bob asked about permits to allow restaurants to continue their expansive outdoor dining areas in town, due to the Covid19 pandemic. Restaurant owners are looking for clarity. Glori volunteers to contact the Planning & Zoning Commission to determine who is the decisionmaker in relation to these permits, and what the plans are.

#### 7. Survey: Community Data Platform (Morris)

Survey results are slow coming in; so far we have received a few hundred responses. The survey was posted on social media, and sent to 5,000 email contacts. Also Geoffrey contacted the Town of Fairfield to send as well, and asked Rudy to send it out.

#### 8. Other: Tax base (Knight)

Bob will invite Al Garzi, Town Tax Assessor, to speak at an upcoming ECDC meeting re: which commercial tax sectors generate more revenue than others. Does the town receive higher collections from corporate businesses? Where is there potential? How does inventory effect it? We could be more effective and strategic.

#### 9. ECDC Candidates

Allison Stockel was interested in serving on the Commission, but because she no longer lives in Ridgefield she is ineligible unfortunately.

Mark Riser may be interested. He was a family wealth advisor. He is married to Harriet Hanlon.

Kay Gelfman is interested. She is an accountant and involved in numerous organizations in town.

Mike Santini is interested. He is the Executive Director at the Prospector Theater, and serves on the Arts, Culture, Tourism & Recreation subcommittee.

Bob suggests conducting a needs assessment. Geoffrey asks that we have an executive session to discuss.

#### 10. Election of Chair

Geoffrey will remain on the ECDC but is stepping down as Chair due to the demands of his new job. **Geoffrey nominates Glori as Chair of the ECDC; Sean seconds. No more nominations. Motion passes unanimously.**

The Commissioners thanked Geoffrey for his time as Chair.

**Glori nominates Geoffrey to serve as Secretary of the ECDC; Sean seconds. No more nominations. Motion passes unanimously.**

#### 11. Executive Session

Bob motions to go into Executive Session to discuss ECDC HR matters. Christa seconds. Motion passes unanimously.

The ECDC returned to public session at 8:05pm. **Geoffrey made a motion to nominate Jonathan Winn as a new ECDC Commissioner; Glori seconds. Motion passes unanimously.** Geoffrey will contact Jonathan and First Selectman Marconi to inform them, and to schedule Jonathan's interview with the BOS.

Meeting adjourned at 8:06pm.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Glori Norwitt, ECDC Secretary