

Ridgefield Economic & Community Development Commission
(Approved) Minutes - Meeting – March 7, 2022
6:30 pm Lower-Level Conference Room - Town Hall

In attendance: Chair Glori Norwitt, commissioners Geoffrey Morris, Bob Knight, Sean Dowd, Christa Carone, and Jonathan Winn

Guests: Julia Nable, Zoltan Csillag, Dan O'Brien

- Chair Norwitt announced that the next meeting will be April 4, 2022
- February 2022 meeting minutes were unanimously approved without modification after a motion by commissioner Morris and seconded by commissioner Winn

Agenda

1. **Promoting the Town:** ECDC invited Julia Nable and Zoltan Csillag from SandorMax marketing agency, which fully owns and operates inRidgefield.com to see if its online platform is a good fit for ECDC to use to promote town activities. The two gave a slide presentation detailing the site's history, features, and metrics. They said they welcome the opportunity to work with ECDC, having recently confirmed a partnership with the Ridgefield Chamber of Commerce to share platforms, promotions, and communications.
2. **ARPA funds:** Commissioner Geoffrey Morris, who is also on the town working group charged with recommending ARPA funds, reported on the group's first and only meeting to date, which took place immediately before this ECDC meeting. Despite it being the first meeting, Morris reported that the BOS had already earmarked 80% of the more than \$7.5 million in funds the town is to receive from the federal government: \$1.55 million for the general budget; \$1.7 million for a fire truck, snow plow, elevator for the Ridgefield Playhouse, and HVAC system for BMES; \$2.92 million for sewer cost overruns; and \$344,000 for COVID-19 test kits. Disappointment was expressed by commissioners as the first selectmen had charged the commission with finding ways to allocate up to 10% of the funds to support cultural and economic development endeavors and had worked with the arts council and Ridgefield Parks & Recreation to develop and cost such projects.
Budget: Chair Norwitt reported that she had learned that ECDC would not receive an increase in the ECDC budget as requested and that it would likely remain at \$15,000
3. **Parking:** Commissioner Morris reported that conversations with the USPS and the landlord who owns the building that the USPS operates out of 26 Catoonah Street are going well. USPS had agreed to allow the town to use 30 parking spots (leaving 24 for USPS). First Selectman Rudy Marconi instigated, with the parking authority, a plan to reconfigure the property to make the most use of the existing parking and incorporating the contiguous 28 Catoonah Street lot. Meanwhile ECDC is moving forward with plans to gain immediate access to the 30 spaces while that long-term plan is completed and approved.

4. **Digital Marketing:** Commissioner Jonathan Winn presented the results of a working group that brainstormed about how best to move forward with digital marketing. The reports will be submitted separately for full review.
5. **New Residents:** Chair Norwitt reported on her efforts to send a postcard note to all new homeowners in town. The objective is 1) to welcome them, 2) inform them of town services, etc, and 3) learn about what brought them to town, who they are, and how best to contact them in the future. Part of the letter includes a link to a short survey meant to gather this information. The postcard and survey are expected to go out in the next few weeks. ECDC is contacting the first selectman's office to inquire about available funding for the postcard mailing.
6. **Executive Session:** The commission went into executive session at 8:26 p.m. to discuss a human resources matter. Motion by Bob Knight, second Morris, vote unanimous. The commission came out of executive session at 8:39 p.m., motion by Norwitt, second by Morris, unanimous vote.
7. **New Commissioners:** The commission voted unanimously to recommend two new commissioners to the Board of Selectmen for appointment. Mark Riser is an investment advisor and longtime resident, and Kay Gelfman is a bookkeeper born and raised in town. In addition, the commission voted to approve the expansion of ECDC to nine commissioners from the current seven. Chair Norwitt will contact the First Selectman to officially request that the ECDC be expanded from seven commissioners to nine commissioners. The proposed expansion is to add additional Commissioners to handle increased workload because ECDC does not utilize paid staff. The Commission also discussed forming two ECDC working groups, one focused on economic development and one focused on community development.

7-8. _____

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 p.m.