

Ridgefield Economic & Community Development Commission
May 9, 2022, 6:30 pm, lower level conference room, Town Hall

Approved minutes

Commissioners in attendance: Chair Glori Norwitt, Geoffrey Morris, commissioner elect Kay Gelman; via Zoom: Commissioner Christa Carone, Jonathan Winn, commissioner-elect Mark Riser

Attendees: Andrea Bebee, Lori Mazzola (remote)

The meeting was called to order at 6:37pm

Approval of Minutes Minutes from April 4, 2022 Meeting: motion Morris, 2nd Carone, approved 4-0, as amended

Digital strategy. Chair Norwitt had a conversation with InRidgefield, who had a few suggestions how ECDC and InRidgefield could work together:

- Events: co-promote town events via the InRidgefield platform
- Living here: help populate content about things to do for residents
- Blogging: help populate the blog
- Create online presence
- E-News communications to residents and visitors
- Public relations: promote Ridgefield as a destination
- Social media – promoting Ridgefield

Ridgefieldct.com is outdated and with no funds or staff it's tough to keep it fresh. Commissioner Winn thinks there are certain aspects of the website that can be shared with inRidgefield.com, whereas information that is strictly ECDC should stay on ridgefieldct.com. Really need someone at least partly dedicated to the site. With no funding from BOS, it is difficult to maintain.

A working meeting was arranged to do a website update.

There was a discussion among the group to get all the marketing players in town together. Emily Pambianchi, who handles social media for the town, was not able to make tonight's meeting and we want to talk to her first. Christa suggested that Emily help us get the word out.

ECDC input on 34 Bailey Avenue. Planning & Zoning had asked ECDC to issue an opinion about an application before P&Z to build a mixed-use commercial-residential building at 34 Bailey Avenue. Chair Norwitt read a statement that members of ECDC had drafted. Discussion ensued about whether we should suggest or support affordable housing at this location.

Attendee Andrea Bebee expressed fears of 34 Bailey Avenue that the builder wants to put apartments on the first floor. Some people fear first floor residential.

Lori Mazzola from Ridgefield Voters United is against first floor residential and feels this would lead to precedent to allow first floor residential in other downtown buildings.

Motion to approve the draft letter by Morris, 2nd by Carone, approved 6-0 in favor (Knight and Dowd voted remotely).

The approved letter is included with the minutes. Chair Norwitt will forward the approved letter to P&Z prior to their evening meeting tomorrow on May 10.

ARPA funds: ECDC has asked for \$50,000 in ARPA for a broadband study, and also \$740,000 to the Ridgefield Arts Council. RAC would distribute the funds to deserving non-profits. There is a possibility that funding to RAC would have to include a new stage for Ballard Park. ECDC will present to BOS May 18. The ARPA working group will meet on May 24.

Parking: Still waiting on a license agreement that the town attorney is drafting allowing the landlord and the tenant (US Post Office) to provide the town access to the 30 spots previously discussed behind USPS.

Postcards to residents: 5,000 were printed, 2,000 mailing soon. These are going to new home buyers from June 2020 to May 2022. Going out, with a survey asking about why they moved to Ridgefield, where they came from. Completing the survey will give them access to a page offering info on town services and a one year membership to Keeler Tavern Museum and one week pass to Parks & Recreation. Bob Knight to handle landing page for the benefits that people get from filling out the survey.

Cultural district signs: A discussion about the signs ECDC needs to place at either end of the Cultural District to mark the Cultural District. Still waiting on approval from the Highway Department. One sign would go on a 25 mph sign near Ballard Park, for southbound drivers. Another in front of Keeler Tavern Museum for northbound drivers.

At 8:19pm Commissioner Morris made a motion to go into Executive Session. Winn 2nd. All in favor.

At 8:41pm, the commission exited the executive session and adjourned the meeting. No vote was taken in executive session.