

Economic & Community Development Committee
Approved Minutes
December 5, 2022, at 6:30 pm
Lower Level Conference Room - Town Hall, 400 Main Street

In attendance Chair Glori Norwitt, Commissioners Geoffrey Morris, Jonathan Winn, Sean Dowd, Kay Gelfman, Bob Knight (via telephone), Mark Riser

November minutes approved with one change; Morris motioned, Winn 2nd; all in favor
Next meeting January 9, 2023

Meeting dates for 2023: January 9, February 6, March 6, April 3, May 8, June 5, July 10, August 7, September 11, October 2, November 6, December 4. Morris motioned, Knight 2nd. All in favor

Recap of Events (Norwitt)

- Ridgefield Running Co. named Best Running Store in the U.S. A December 7 celebration will take place and ECDC suggested a proclamation.
- Joann Duncan of Turning Point Reiki contacted ECDC regarding the availability of SBA support or grants. Norwitt replied
- Resident Kirk Carr FOIA Complaint update: Nov 29: Chair Norwitt spoke with the State FOIA Office. Still in Mail Log. If the Complaint is not accepted, Commissioners will not hear back. If accepted, all parties will be notified.
- Resident Kirk Carr new FOIA request re emails about KGelfman comment – Norwitt provided.
- Resident Kirk Carr new FOIA request re Innerbody Research email – Norwitt provided
- Contact from Chris Yake – photo book *The Roads of Ridgefield*. Morris and Norwitt replied to him suggesting he contact the Ridgefield Library and *068* Magazine.
- Commissioner Morris reported on two YouTubers who went through town hall filming employees and instigated an interaction with one town employee that led to that employee hitting the videographer with a file folder. Ridgefield Police responded and offered a summons to the employee.

Chair Norwitt made a motion to move the agenda item regarding the Cultural District Award earlier in the meeting to accommodate guests. Norwitt motion, Morris 2nd, all in favor

Cultural District Award (Morris, Gelfman)

Commissioners Morris and Gelfman had previously discussed the format of the selection process and invited town residents to nominate individuals. ECDC received 27 nominations representing nine individuals. Morris and Gelfman proposed presenting three years' worth of awards to align with the existence of the Cultural District. Since the Cultural District was established in 2021, Commissioner Knight made a motion to vote for an honoree for each year of the designation: 2021, 2022, and 2023. Morris 2nd. All in favor.

The nominees are: Entrepreneur, arts supporter, and Aldrich Museum board member Amy Pal; Ridgefield Conservatory of Dance director Amy Piantaggini; the late philanthropist Elizabeth Biglow Ballard; Selectman and CHIRP founder Barbara Manners; Books on the Common owner Ellen Burns; former State Rep. John Frey; children's book author Maurice Sendak; Ridgefield Playhouse executive director Allison Stockel; Aldrich Museum exhibitions director Richard Klein.

After some debate, a motion was made to alter the above vote to allow for two honorees for 2021, since both proposed recipients were critical in the establishment of the State Cultural District program. Norwitt motioned and Knight 2nd to honor former State Rep. John Frey and Books on the Common owner Ellen Burns with the 2021 Cultural District Award. The vote was 5-1, with Commissioner Morris opposing having two winners.

Next Commissioner Gelfman motioned that we present the 2022 Cultural District Award to Richard Klein, who recently stepped down after 30 years from the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, which shines a national spotlight on the Cultural District, and the 2023 Cultural District Award to Allison Stockel, who for nearly 20 years was

Executive Director of the Ridgefield Playhouse, which has been a major economic driver of the Cultural District. Knight seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

The Cultural District Award will be presented on May 11, 2023, as part of the Ridgefield Art Council's Behind the Scenes ceremony.

Broadband (Morris, Norwitt)

Chair Norwitt reported that the town of Ridgefield has entered into a three-way contract with EntryPoint Networks and The Western Connecticut Council of Governments to create a feasibility study exploring the installation of broadband service throughout the town. Commissioner Knight offered some insights into the process and the potential pitfalls from competitive private forces who are already providing services in the area. Members of the ECDC will take part in weekly planning sessions for the establishment of the study.

Parking (Morris)

Commissioner Morris has been working to secure the now-unused parking area behind the USPS facility on Catoonah Street. Since USPS no longer sorts mail at the facility the delivery trucks begin their day elsewhere so there are now 30 available spots that USPS has agreed to allow the Town of Ridgefield to use. While we are drawing up the formal agreement, Morris had asked his contact at USPS if the town could gain access immediately to expand parking options during the holiday season. The USPS contact Evan Rodgers is exploring the option.

Visitors Bureau (Norwitt)

Chair Norwitt reported that the kiosk in front of Deborah Ann's Sweet Shoppe is up and available for ECDC to place promotional material while we wait for a more permanently installed video monitor. Commissioner Morris has engaged with a designer to create a map of the downtown area that can be placed within the kiosk to show visitors where various shops are.

Budget (Riser, Dowd)

Commissioner Riser reviewed our proposed FY2024 budget with the Commission, highlighting all that we have accomplished over the years and what we would wish to accomplish. The request is for a budget of \$105,000 that would include funding for a part-time business-development person/consultant, marketing support, research into grants, funds for marketing, and more.

Chair Norwitt moved to submit the draft to Town, Commissioner Gelfman 2nd, all in favor, 6-0.

Planning & Zoning (Gelfman)

Commissioner Gelfman reported that the development discussed at the last ECDC meeting—for rezoning to multifamily at the corner of Route 35 and Route 7—is moving along but still not approved. The developer has proposed about 80 units, which Gelfman described as beautifully designed and that make use of the hilly terrain. She is hoping we can propose ideas that would incorporate the design and living facilities into the surrounding communities—such as a park or other public use.

Chair Norwitt adjourned the meeting at 7:59 pm, Morris 2nd, all in favor