



**Ridgefield  
Economic &  
Community  
Development  
Commission**

**400 Main Street • Ridgefield, CT 06877 • 203.431.2700**

Glori Norwitt - Chair  
Geoffrey Morris – Secretary  
Sean Dowd  
Kay Gelfman  
Jennifer Gioffre  
Brittney Howell  
Bob Knight  
Mark Riser  
Jonathan Winn

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

**Economic & Community Development Commission  
Approved Minutes  
July 10, 2023, at 6:30 pm  
in-person in Town Hall Large Conference Room**

Meeting called to order at 6:35 pm

**In attendance:** Chair Glori Norwitt, Secretary Geoffrey Morris, Commissioners Sean Dowd, Jenn Gioffre, Kay Gelfman, and Mark Riser

**Announcements**

Next meeting: August 7, 2023

Norwitt moves that we approve the June 5, 2023, minutes without modification. Gioffre 2nd, all in favor 5-0.

Morris moves that we approve the June 27, 2023, Special-Meeting Minutes without modification. Gelfman 2nd, all in favor 5-0.

**General Discussion**

No Public Comment

**Recap of Recent Events**

Congratulations to Commissioners Morris and Gelfman; the BOS renewed their appointments for an additional two-year term.

The Town changed its website from ridgefieldct.org to ridgefieldct.gov.

The Affordable Housing Commission is looking into the HART Transit bus system, the location of bus stops in town, the frequency and timing of buses, the information on the above, and is questioning if there is demand for more buses. Norwitt offered that the ECDC could become involved in any workgroup that may form to review this issue.

The ECDC was contacted by two people considering creating a platform to connect small businesses with their customers, called “Mom & Pop Up,” and they plan to join Tiger-Shark Tank.

At the request of the CT Legislative Commerce Committee, Norwitt provided testimony on how the legislature can assist in economic development issues across the State with practical ideas and approaches. Norwitt gathered Commissioners’ suggestions and proposed (1) fund and install high speed internet, and support all models of Broadband deployment including municipally-owned (2) support the Norwalk River Valley trail (3) provide tax and permit incentives build-out of research and development labs (4) increase arts and culture funding.

The ECDC received an email from resident Lynne Noyes. She suggests that the Town create a Master Plan or POCD Implementation task force.

Ellen Burns is updating her map of Ridgefield.

On behalf of the ECDC, Norwitt nominated DeeDee Colabella for an “Arts Impact Life Award” in the “Business Supports the Arts” Cultural Alliance event.

The Ridgefield Farmers Market is beginning this Saturday, July 15, from 10am to 2pm on the front lawn of Jesse Lee Church.

The FOIA Complaint filed by Kirk Carr and 2 others was heard by the Freedom of Information Commission in Hartford in June. Previously, the Hearing Officer had found that there was a technical violation of FOIA, but also that the mistake was corrected and that the ECDC itself considered its actions null and void. As a result, the Hearing Officer recommended that the FOIC not issue any orders concerning the matter. On June 14, the FOIC approved the Hearing Officer’s decision with one minor edit. The matter is now concluded at the FOIC level. The statutes allow for an appeal within 45 days.

## **AGENDA**

### **Tiger-Shark Tank** (Dowd, Riser)

Call for submissions was released via email and social media in late June, with an October 1 deadline for submissions of businesses that want to present at the October 24 event at the Ridgefield Playhouse. The Ridgefield Playhouse will help promote the event on its social-media campaigns. It was posted on Ridgefield CT and the ECDC Facebook pages, and the Press Release was picked up by Hamlet Hub and others. Some 40 people have signed up with the Playhouse to be spectators, and there are three pitch proposals submitted so far. Commissioner Riser brought Commissioner Gelfman a shark outfit to wear to events to help promote it.

### **Business Connections** (Gioffre)

Commissioner Gioffre will hold the first meeting (over Zoom) of local businesses on Tuesday, July 18, at 9 am. There are 14 businesses signed up. The forum will create a connection for local businesses to discuss first-hand of opportunities for and barriers to success, and hopefully identify opportunities for growth and develop solutions that benefit everyone. No specific agenda but an open share group.

### **Business Programs** (Riser)

There are 200-300 New Business Registrations each year in Ridgefield. Mark Riser met with the Ridgefield Library leadership about helping put together a networking group from people who work from home and helping organize programs with the Library, ECDC, the Chamber, and other business groups. ECDC is putting together a new business tool kit: a document that would give people a list of things to do before starting a business. And Riser is working with the Commission on Aging to help see what the needs of seniors are.

### **Broadband Feasibility Study** (Knight, Morris)

Commissioner Morris reported that the working group is issuing an RFP for an engineering study to get an exact cost for a fiber broadband build-out in town. The feasibility study, sponsored by the Western CT Council of Governments, outlined a rough plan and rough cost but this engineering study will get more specific—particularly when comparing the cost between bearing the fiber underground and placing it on poles. We learned that the state is receiving about \$100 million for broadband infrastructure build-out from the federal infrastructure bill, so it's unlikely the town will receive more than a small percentage. Other sources include bonding or private investments.

### **Updates from Planning & Zoning** (Gelfman)

This topic was tabled until next month.

### **Marketing** (Gioffre, Howell, Morris)

Norwitt attended a Zoom meeting of State Cultural Districts, and DECD Chief Marketing Officer Anthony Anthony (not a typo) joined in. They are looking for content from Towns. Last year the State tourism website CTVisit.com had 7.2 million visitors, and this year is outpacing it by 150%. The website promotes the state overall. Any Ridgefield businesses related to tourism (such as restaurants and entertainment) should be sure to create a profile on CTVisits.com.

### **Updates to Website** (Norwitt, Winn)

Sarah Ford has been working on revisions to the ridgefieldct.com website. There are now links to other active sites such as Town Hall, Ridgefield Parks & Recreation, the Town Open Space Catalogue, and inRidgefield.com for suggestions for dining, accommodations, events, and more. We anticipate that Sarah's modifications will be complete by the end of August. Norwitt requests that the Commissioners review the site and provide any additional suggestions to her.

Note that phone calls to the ECDC are no longer answered by the outside company Accurate Answer. Now the Town Hall info desk answers calls to the ECDC; the ECDC phone number has been revised on both the Town website ridgefieldct.gov and the ECDC website ridgefieldct.com. This resulted in savings of approximately \$960 annually.

**Possible Cultural District Sculpture** (Morris, Gelfman)

Norwitt noted that First Selectman Marconi stated that sculptors would be considered a “specialty trade,” which would fall outside of the need for a formal Town RFP. Thus, the ECDC does not need to conduct a formal Town RFP and does not need to involve Town Director of Facilities and Purchasing. An RFP was made public and to date ECDC has received three proposals for the creation of a sculpture that will highlight the Cultural District and the honorees of the Cultural District Award.

In relation to Cultural Districts state-wide, Norwitt reported that on Tuesday, September 19, the Ridgefield ECDC will host other Cultural Districts in the state. Details are not yet finalized, but we will give a walking tour of our Cultural District and then have lunch with everyone downtown. All ECDC Commissioners are invited.

Dowd moves that we adjourn, Morris 2nd, all in favor 5-0. Meeting adjourns at 7:32 pm.