



**Ridgefield  
Economic &  
Community  
Development  
Commission**

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Geoffrey Morris, Chair  
Glori Norwitt, Secretary  
Dee Dee Colabella  
Cameron Cole Carcelén  
Susan Gessner  
Bob Knight  
Steve Spivak

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

**Economic & Community Development Commission  
Approved Minutes  
March 1, 2021, 6:30 pm, via ZOOM Video Conference**

**In Attendance:** Chairman Geoffrey Morris; Secretary Glori Norwitt; Commissioners Dee Dee Colabella, Cameron Carcelén Cole, Susan Gessner, Bob Knight, and Steve Spivak.  
Guests: Sarah Grossman, Ron Herman, Dan O'Brien, Ridgefield Chamber of Commerce; Jennifer DiLaura, Ridgefield Arts Council

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

**Announcements**

Next meeting: April 5, 2021

**Minutes**

**With no modifications, Bob made a motion to approve the February 2021 meeting minutes; seconded by Dee Dee. Motion carries 7-0.**

## General Discussion

### 1. Make Music Day (Geoffrey and Jennifer DiLaura)

MMD receives national attention with events around the country. MMD is Monday June 21 in Ballard Park; the Park is reserved Sunday as well to possibly broaden the scope and have other organizations involved. Possibly partner with merchants for themed sales, eg musically themed cocktails at restaurants. Chalk drawings downtown to advertise the event.

Jennifer proposes creating a group to actively promote MMD. Sarah Grossman, ED of the Chamber of Commerce will meet separately with Jennifer to create a plan. Dee Dee offers to assist with marketing materials if needed.

### 2. Chamber Discussion (Geoffrey, Ron Herman, Sarah Grossman, Dan O'Brien)

Ron Herman, Chair of the Chamber of Commerce, and Sarah Grossman, ED of the Chamber,

The Chamber has worked through some challenges during Covid, but continues to support businesses. Provides a lot of marketing support.

Restaurant Week: The Chamber is proposing Virtual Restaurant Week the last week in March. The goal is to encourage takeout and deliveries (but not through other companies such as DoorDash). Chamber suggests not charging restaurants. In the past, restaurants who made a "special menu" (about 10) were promoted by the ECDC, with another 10 giving discounts. Focused on having non-Ridgefielders come here for dinner.

Dee Dee suggested brief cooking demonstrations in the restaurants (eg how to make guacamole; wine pairings). Sarah will put together notes and talk to restaurants this week to see who will participate. Glori pointed out the importance of marketing broadly across the region.

The Chamber plans on holding its Gala on Thursday, June 10 in front of the Lounsbury House. Focus of the event will be the community, and those businesses who supported the community. Hopefully restaurants will have stations with food. Bob suggested a "resiliency" theme.

### 3. Ridgefield Business Development Initiative: Regional and State (Bob & Glori)

State initiative to create a ten year plan of Economic Development -- infrastructure; broadband; electricity; emerging business; sustainability, and other topics. Bob is now appointed as Deputy Long Term Recovery Coordinator for Ridgefield.

**Education & Technology Subcommittee** will be created.

**Business & Jobs Subcommittee** (Bob): about 30 participants ranging from Boehringer to small businesses. School bus drivers need assistance with renewing or getting their CDL licenses. First Student Bus Company stated that the State is down hundreds of bus drivers; its difficult to retain the current work force and there are more retirements. Seeking Executive Order from the Governor to grant a grace period of 90 days for renewing bus licenses.

**Arts, Culture, Tourism & Recreation Subcommittee** (Glori): This new Subcommittee met for the first time on February 23, 2021 with about 15 of the 20 or so members including the RSO, the Aldrich, the West Lane Inn, the Prospector and the Boys & Girls Club. Current difficulties for these businesses and organizations were discussed including need for rapid testing of performers upon beginning of practices and upon beginning of performances. It would be helpful to receive advance knowledge of any upcoming easing of State Covid restrictions. All would encourage a Town initiative to shop local, particularly for those who have already received a Covid vaccination. Glori will work through the issues that were raised, and speak with our legislators in Hartford about relevant issues.

Possible new “Equitable Access to Broadband Bill”: Hartford legislative committee is receiving comments soon. Important to support an at-home workforce. Bob will draft a letter to be sent with ECDC letterhead. Ron Herman pointed out that strong broadband is a catalyst to bring new residents and businesses to town. Bob noted that the first step is a feasibility study, and suggests encouraging the Board of Selectmen to make this a priority. Query: is this a public sector or private sector issue? Bob said that there are successful models for both, and also public-private models. The State Broadband Office says that anyone household served by Frontier could be categorized as not having broadband service (which equates to approximately 35% of Ridgefield households). Ron Herman complained that the current internet service in town is both slow and unreliable. Bob and Cameron discussed moving this forward with the BOS, and possibly present to them soon. Bob suggests creating a committee of community members which will make recommendations to the BOS.

#### 4. Branding Initiative (Susan)

Formalizing a branding process in order to attract businesses to town, and also create more of a destination here. The team includes Cameron, Dee Dee, Steve and Susan. They have analyzed the town’s strengths to create the following Brand Positioning Statement. This statement will guide future marketing materials.

*As a premier town in Connecticut, Ridgefield offers businesses a place to flourish with a professional workforce, strategic location, modern infrastructure and a commitment to sustainability. It’s an ideal environment for families to thrive with high performing schools, robust arts and culture, renowned restaurants, distinctive shops, a beautiful historic downtown, and an abundance of open recreation. Ridgefield is community-oriented with a strong loyalty to local businesses.*

The team is continuing to interview successful business owners to garner testimonials for the ECDC website and an overall presentation aimed at attracting new businesses.

5. Consumer Confidence Campaign (Bob)

Due to the ongoing pandemic, many local businesses would like to have a consumer confidence campaign for two main reasons: (1) Changing Covid regulations/restrictions are difficult to follow, and (2) instill confidence in the community to shop/dine/go out safely.

“Covid-safe” designation is being established by the Town; the Town will determine the application process. In anticipation of a sticker being created for businesses/organizations to put in their window or on their door, Dee Dee is willing to assist with creating the look of a sticker. She has seen elements of a national campaign for this and will research it further.

6. Cultural District Update and Video (Glori)

On March 31, the State and our DRSO Cultural Alliance of Western CT will virtually visit Ridgefield to review and discuss our Application for a Cultural District designation. The virtual visit will include a meeting with our First Selectman, a virtual (video) Walking Tour of the entire Cultural District, and a meeting with the Cultural District Subcommittee. The video (shared with the other Commissioners previously) can be viewed at <https://vimeo.com/509357299>. Glori received indications that the Cultural District designation will be given by the State. If so, Glori has requested to the Cultural Alliance that the State then provide a (brief if needed) press release indicating such, so that Ridgefield can then market our new Cultural District designation.

7. Green Energy Update (Cameron)

Jake submitted requests to CPAC for 6 new electrical vehicles and 8 charging stations including installation costs. The Route 7 corridor designation is under review.

The Energy Task Force established a relationship with the Hartford delegation regarding how the state can support our effort to wean the Town off fossil fuels. Next time the Town renegotiates for a school bus contract, there will be a push to choose a company that has an electric fleet.

State Senator Will Haskell is on the Environment Committee and strongly supports green energy. Creating lists of requests such as electrification to the extent possible in Town buildings.

Want to bring Ridgefield’s goals for energy conversion in line with the State of CT to target aggressive emissions reductions.

Bob stated that when installing such infrastructure, jobs are created, and set us up for recovery. He also noted that this issue could be discussed in the Long-Term Recovery committees, particularly in the Education & Tech Subcommittee.

8. Community Data Platform Survey Collaboration (Geoffrey)

Tabled.

9. Plan of Conservation and Development (Susan)

The Planning & Zoning Department works with consultants every 10 years to develop a Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD). The most recent study was published on June 27, 2020. Karen Martin, Town Planner, has organized the Action items in this Plan in order to begin the implementation phase. She reached out to Geoffrey and other organizations to have a representative from each group to monitor these action items; Susan will represent the ECDC. Several chapters in the Plan relate directly to ECDC work. Bob notes that the POCD calls for broadband deployment.

10. Other

Bob noted that he has proactively reached out to the Town's Board of Ethics to obtain an advisory opinion on his potential conflict of interest between his work/business interests and his Town volunteer duties on the ECDC and in his new role as the Deputy Long Term Recovery Coordinator in Ridgefield. He noted that he will recuse himself from any matter that comes before the ECDC which may be a conflict of interest, and not be involved in any related RFP process or provide vendor recommendations on matters where he may have a conflict.

process.

**Susan motioned to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Cameron. Motion carries 6-0. The meeting concluded at 8:04 p.m.**

Respectfully Submitted by:  
Glori Norwitt, ECDC Secretary