



**Ridgefield
Economic &
Community
Development
Commission**

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Arnold Light
Chairman

Rudy Marconi,
First Selectman
Ridgefielddevelopment.com

Robert DeFalco
John Devine, Vice Chair, Secretary
Paul Levine
Geoffrey Morris
M. Augustus Ryer
Karen Sulzinsky

Approved Special RECDC Meeting Minutes
March 5, 2018 at 5:30pm
Small Town Hall Conference Room

In Attendance: Arnold Light, Paul Levine, M Augustus Ryer, John Devine, Karen Sulzinsky, Geoff Morris, Robert DeFalco

Guests: Stephany Pound Sanderson, Jim Shrage, Wayne Addressi

Meeting was called to order at 6:35 pm

ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. Next meeting April 2, 2018, 6:30 pm, small conference room in Town Hall. May meeting is rescheduled to May 14 as the May 7 meeting conflicts with Town Meeting

2. Approval of January minutes

Motion: Karen. Second: Gus. Unanimous approval.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

1. Private Sector PR and Marketing Campaign Update – Wayne Addressi

The Addressi led program is comprised of a group of interested volunteers who are developing a marketing strategy to utilize corporate and private donations. The group requested the BOS to allow them to utilize the Friends of Ridgefield Fund in order to secure non-profit status. They were advised to work with counsel to create

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a non-profit structure and to consider forming their own entity. They are currently working with Robert Jewell, ESQ and Dave Grogins (Town Counsel).

The fund currently has about \$45,000 in committed money and a \$30,000 cash balance. \$7,000 has been spent for a short video (\$2K) and a \$5K commitment to SandorMax to develop an Investor Brochure and to create a “brand”. The group has also committed to SandorMax to develop a website and create content for the remainder of 2018 with the balance of available funds needed to contractually maintain the site for the balance of 2018. The website is expected to be developed and launched by June 2018. The group’s objective is to raise additional funds to cover expenses incurred in 2019.

John noted that the site is one of many in Ridgefield with the others having a long history and very high rankings on organic search. He recommended that the group invest in paid search as the new site will not build traffic with organic search. He also recommended that the site be built on the WordPress platform so that it is consistent with the content on Destination Ridgefield and Ridegefielddevelopment.com.

Paul recommended that the group consider that Aldrich as a unique asset that has the ability to draw visitors.

Wayne requested that the ECDC schedule a meeting of key organizations to allow him to share and present his program. Arnold advised him to request time on the agendas of the organizations to share his program. John recommended that he request time with the Arts Council Executive Roundtable that meets quarterly and offered to contact the Chair, Mark Meacham.

2. Charter Revision

John and Arnold presented to the Charter Commission. The Commission is responsible for changing the name from the Economic Development Commission to the Economic and Community Development Commission and will recommend the change. We were advised that we operated under an ordinance and other changes requested are to be addressed with the BOS.

3. First Floor Retail Status (FFR)

John cited a possible early success of the new program. The former 50 Coins restaurant space may have a new tenant. John found a restaurant group that had previously considered the property over a year ago. The new owners of the building Urstadt Biddle (UBP) agreed to match the town funding and the potential tenants were contacted. With the combination of new ownership and the tax credit program they sent a representative to take a second look at the property and are in negotiations with UBP.

The Commission discussed the upcoming meeting with the BOS to secure \$24K in funding for FY18/19. Karen noted that the 50 Coins example was proof that the program can facilitate filling vacant spaces. Gus noted that it should be emphasized that it was the tax credits that served as the catalyst for the visit.

4. Ridgefield Jazz Weekend – 9/13-9/16

Geoff noted that it is being considered a Jazz Weekend as a Festival infers a multi-day event with a robust schedule. The current plans are to start the event with a CHIRP Concert on Thursday evening in Ballard Park. The Playhouse has a concert scheduled on Saturday evening. Other venues that are planning events are the Library and the Aldrich. It was suggested that the Lounsberry house be included and John mentioned the possibility of a Sunday Jazz Brunch.

John noted that he is working with Geoff to plan activities in the Village. Geoff mentioned the option of the Ridgefield High School Jazz Band performing on the steps of Town Hall and a second Jazz band that

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is lead by a RHS music teacher. John has met with all of the restaurants in the Village to provide the dates and to ask them to start planning special jazz related music.

The commission also discussed the opportunity to create and market an on-line page of offers that can be redeemed. Gus recommend a page that allows digital tracking of offers. Geoff noted that ACT is using a similar program. Stephanie is developing a similar program for the schools and will research.

5. RIFF -10/18-21/18

Geoff noted that the organization under the leadership of Town Vibe has formed an non-profit 501-c3 called Town Vibe Fund to enable it to solicit donations. They are planning a \$100K budget for the event though a series of fundraisers, donations, Founder's Passes and ticket sales. Arnold and John commended Geoff on the first fundraiser the "Oscar's Party" that was held the evening before at the Aldrich.

6. Ridgefielddevelopment.com Update

Bob provided his monthly report with the site data. The site continues to build traffic that surges when events are promoted. The visits peaked during the holiday season and showed a significant decline in January and February. Page rankings continue to be excellent with all key words driving page 1 placement and rankings primarily between 1-4.

In 2017 the top drivers of site visits were:

- Calendar
- Home page
- Holiday Stroll
- Halloween
- Battle of Ridgefield

Bob also noted that site traffic increased when the placements by Stephanie on the FB page increased. He continued to stress the need for submissions of content that is needed to refresh the site.

Arnold thanked and recognized Bob for his two years of outstanding service to the Commission. He cited Bob's development and management of a new ECDC website that has become an integral component of a revitalized ECDC. He also commended him for personally updating the Senior Gold Book.

7. Protocol For Promoting New Businesses

Gus presented a draft submission for review that was the formation of an ECDC protocol for social media and web. The commission briefly discussed the topic but was forced to adjourn in order to attend the joint BOS and BOE budget meeting. (A copy of the submission is enclosed.)

A motion was made by Karen to adjourn at 6:58 p.m. and seconded by Gus. Unanimous approval.

Ridgefield ECDC

Draft Protocol for Material on the RECDC Social Media Pages and/or Website

03/05/18

Items that can be posted to the RECDC site:

- Grand opening announcements/businesses moving to town

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- Educational events/seminars (especially those with a business focus) from local organizations and businesses
- Community events
- Arts/culture events, except those limited to a single organization in town
- Accolades and awards with a business/art/culture focus given to local businesses/individuals
- Articles written about Ridgefield in newspapers, magazines, online publications, etc.
- Posts meant to engage the community with the RECDC, including polls (i.e rank the top reasons to own a business in Ridgefield; what kind of business would you like to fill X storefront; etc.)
- Posts that promote the accomplishments of the RECDC
- Posts that encourage civic engagement

Items that should not be posted to the ECDC sites:

- Advertisements and sale announcements
- Going-out-of-business announcements
- Posts meant to promote a single individual/business, without a clear community focus (i.e open houses)
- Posts that promote one political party over another

Additional Thoughts:

- *Content should be derived, at least in part, from residents and businesses*
- *We can set up a schedule of posts*
 - *For example: business profiles throughout town. Brief interview form, post to our webpage. Can link to social media.*