



**Ridgefield
Economic &
Community
Development
Commission**

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Arnold Light
Chairman

Rudy Marconi,
First Selectman

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ridgefielddevelopment.com

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

**Approved RECDC Meeting Minutes
Special Meeting
May 14, 2018 at 6:30pm
Small Town Hall Conference Room**

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

Guests: Catherine Savoca, Jim Siewert

Meeting was called to order at 6:37 pm

ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. Next meeting June 11, 2018, 6:30 pm, lower level conference room, Town Hall

2. Approval of April minutes

Motion: Karen Sulzinsky. Second: John Devine. Unanimous approval.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

WordPress support: John Devine, Geoffrey Morris, and Arnold Light reported that ECDC had hired Michelle Hagerty on a part-time basis to provide updates and cleanup on ridgefielddevelopment.com. Karen Sulzinsky will manage and update the calendar on the website. Changes for Michelle should go through John Devine.

Arnold Light reported that Ellen Burns from Books on the Common is moving forward with her plan to place a kiosk in the back of her Main Street store that will provide visitor and tourism information. She is

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creating a map with important points relevant to visitors. The University of New Haven's tourist department produces a brochure for towns to help promote tourism. We are being considered. Ellen has been informed.

There was a discussion about what to do with the remaining money in the budget before fiscal year ends.

First Floor Rebate. The money available to landlords to encourage signing leases for first-floor retail has not been used. John Devine reports that there is an interested party who wants to take over the old 50 Coins space and use it for a restaurant. It was agreed that we should encourage landlords to make use of this incentive.

The ordinance changes the ECDC had internally approved to allow for ECDC to collect funds from private sources to be used for marketing, promotion, and other matters will go before the May 23 Board of Selectmen ordinance meeting.

InRidgefield: Geoffrey Morris reported that InRidgefield is moving ahead and will hold an open house on May 18, 4:30 pm, at the Ridgefield Conservatory of Dance to inform the public of the plans. The fund currently has about \$52,000 in committed money. \$42,000 has been committed for a short video, and investor brochure, and the development of the website. 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. The website is expected to be developed and launched by July 2018 and be unveiled at Summerfest on July 21. The group's objective is to raise additional funds to cover expenses incurred in 2109.

Jazz, Funk & Blues Weekend

Geoffrey Morris reported that all the bands have been booked for September 13-16 Jazz, Funk & Blue Weekend, which the ECDC is overseeing but not operating. The Ridgefield Playhouse, Ridgefield Library, Lounsbury House, CHIRP, and Aldrich Museum have secured bands and dates and marketing materials are being created. ECDC will begin marketing efforts in early June—include creating banners for September Main Street placement and social-media and other marketing.

Website Update

It was discussed that Karen Sulzinsky would take over management of the calendar of events on the ECDC website and that John Devine would handle communications with new part-time hire Michelle Hagerty and that John would continue to handle Facebook and other marketing.

Gus Ryer says that we need to change the way we market commercial-real-estate listings. So many listings are missing or out of date and that do things the way we are doing them would be time consuming. There was a discussion about getting the various commercial-real-estate firms to provide the updates for us, but Gus did not think that they would devote the resources to do that.

Gus Ryer recommended the following

Recommendations for RECDC Open for Business Section

- 'Business in Ridgefield' and 'Open for Business' should link to a combined page. As it is, the site is too scattered, and linking within the site would be beneficial for visitors. At the very least, 'Open for Business' should be listed in the dropdown menu for Business in Ridgefield. Ideally, there should be a button progressing to the next linear page

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- Rename 'Investment Opportunities' to 'Current Municipal Projects' or something similar. Also include the Main Street plan, and any other large-scale work that's planned, underway, and/or affects the town's economy
- 'Properties and Space' should either be removed or linked to another source, such as CERC. If the RECDC decides to manage it, either data will be inaccurate or out of date, or it will take as much time to keep updated as the rest of the site combined. Alternatively, we could develop an email that asks about current space, send it to brokers/landlords, and then update on a weekly basis or (preferably) outsource the input. The property pages themselves also need to be reworked for readability
- The 'How Do I' section is beneficial, but the RECDC needs to remember to update it, perhaps on a quarterly basis. Also, worth considering is adding another 'Contact Us' button on these pages – if a visitor has further questions, the RECDC would then be able to help with further guidance.
- The various pages should be edited for copy, and formatting, but these changes would be minor

It was concluded we search for a WordPress plug-in that would make managing the listings more efficient.

It was reported that Geoffrey Morris would represent ECDC on the Energy Task Force

Guest Catherine Savoca reported that there is a shortage of guest rooms in town but that a boutique hotel is a challenging business proposition since rooms are needed only on rare occasions. When asked if the AirBnB approach could work, she reported that town Planning & Zoning only permits AirBnB rentals of properties that are permitted as Bed & Breakfasts. She suggested that we put together suggestions for how there could be modified restrictions for private homeowners who want to open their house for AirBnB rentals.

John Devine reported that he had discussed with Mark Meachem at the Ridgefield Arts Council that non-profits should not be permitted to have utilize the lamp-post banner poles more than two times per 12-month period.

A motion was made by Geoffrey Morris to adjourn at 8:51 p.m. and seconded by Gus. Unanimous approval.