Town of Ridgefield
Public Hearing Minutes
UNAPPROVED
November 18, 2026 at 6:30pm
Town Hall – Large Conference Room, 400 Main Street, Ridgefield, CT

Please note – these minutes are not verbatim.

BOS Present: Sean Connelly, Maureen Kozlark, Barbara Manners (remotely), Rudy Marconi, Geoffrey Morris
BOS Absent:

Rudy Marconi called the meeting to order at 7:30PM.

Rudy Marconi shared that the purpose of this public hearing is for the town to consider joining the Connecticut Municipal Development Authority as a member municipality. There are currently 48 members.

CMDA Director, David Kooris, summarized that the CMDA works with municipalities to develop in downtowns and near public transportation. The state provided $115 million to provide funding support to approved CMDA member projects. They have no authority over towns or attempt to usurp local authority. They are a toolkit of technical assistance, financial resources (state bond) for infrastructure, and gap financing for private development, if needed, that can be mobilized by a municipality. The CMDA can only provide support for development in a very limited area; a half mile from a train station or in the downtown district. All local regulations must be adhered in CMDA projects.

1. **Public Comment**
   Nathan Sved Branchville Road – stated that he is against joining the CMDA although he appreciates the CMDA respect for local authority. The BOS asked for CMDA assistance to build a sewer plant. He doesn't support a Ridgefield sewer plant in the area where the BOS had considered. He believes the Georgetown sewer plant is a feasible option just one mile away. He also questioned the intention behind designating a Village District in Branchville. He isn't sure that the Ridgefield character and quality of life will be prioritized in any CMDA project.

   Mike Murray, 62 Cooper Hill Road – stated his disapproval for any sewage plant.

   Sam Caaff, 19 Old Branchville Road – stated that on West Side Highway, at about 175th Street, the strong odors from a sewage plant that those neighboring communities contend with, is severe.

They were told it wouldn't be like that, but they have no recourse now that the plant is built. He doesn't want his Ridgefield community to face a similar situation.

Rudy Marconi clarified that tonight's public hearing is to discuss CMDA. There is no project for a sewer plant at this time.

Sarah Sved, Branchville Road – shared that she is not sure she can trust what they are being told because at last month's BOS meeting, Rudy Marconi asked Mr. Kooris if CMDA could assist with building a sewer plant. Rudy Marconi interjected that he asked if CMDA could help with a sewer line not a plant. She continued that in one discussion the radius was a half mile, but tonight she heard mention of a one-mile distance. The information is vague, and it seems as though resident feedback is disregarded.

Mr. McAvoy, 150 High Ridge – read a written statement that CMDA Resolution Section 2 authorizes the first selectperson to enter into agreements with CMDA without returning to the BOS or the town. He said that approval authority should not be transferred. He also said that CMDA local control is misleading because once a development district is established, CMDA has the authority to override local zoning, waive public hearings, and issue tax exempt bonds without a vote. He asked how the transit-oriented area is defined because there are only five trains a day? Who, town or developer, initiated this CMDA application and why? Is there a specific site or project in mind for this?

Joan Corley, Old Branchville Road – asked how CMDA will help Ridgefield get funding for infrastructure upgrades.

Mr. Kooris responded that there is no sewer project in discussion nor was CMDA consulted by any developer. Mr. Marconi approached him at other CMDA presentations and asked him to come introduce the community to CMDA. CMDA cannot propose any projects. CMDA can only serve as a tool to help fund projects through the CMDA bond authorization. The CMDA board members also help find funding from other sources such as state grants. He further clarified that CMDA is statutorily restricted to the half-mile radius from a train station or downtown. He then clarified that the CMDA Resolution section 2 was described inaccurately earlier tonight. There is a specific sequence from becoming a CMDA member municipality to establishing a development district. Additionally, while the CMDA resolution requires that the first selectperson is the party entering into the agreement on behalf of the town, the mechanism by which the first selectperson is granted such authority by the town is governed by the town's charter. Mr. Kooris further clarified that the process to establish a development district first requires that CMDA review all the zoning in the half-mile radius from the train station and the downtown. Then they certify housing growth zones within that half-mile radius. They may find areas that, if rezoned by the local planning and zoning authority, would qualify as a housing growth zone. If such areas are found, they would recommend the town consider rezoning. But CMDA cannot force the rezoning. Once housing growth zones are certified, then a developer would have to seek all necessary entitlements from the town before CMDA will consider an application for any funding. Maureen Kozlark asked if CMDA will fund 8-30G applications, because it bypasses local zoning. Mr. Kooris responded that CMDA will not fund such applications unless the municipality requests CMDA to consider the application.

Mike Murray, 62 Cooper Hill Road – asked how a sewer line or package plant could play into CMDA funding. Mr. Kooris responded that it's conceivable that CMDA might be able to support the town if asked for sewer line or package plant support, but it would have to have met all the town requirements before CMDA would provide funding support. Mr. Kooris added that joining CMDA is a no cost and no commitment first step that merely allows the town to ask CMDA if the town has any housing growth zones.

Mike Autuori, Florida Road – first confirmed that he could ask questions and still have his written letter added to the record. Then he asked if CMDA would support the BOS wants a 300–500-unit development within the half-mile radius. Mr. Kooris said yes if the project had all the necessary approvals from the town. Then Mr. Autuori asked if CMDA would provide support if the town wanted to put in the sewer or package plant as needed infrastructure? Mr. Kooris said yes if the project has all the necessary approvals from the town. Next, Mr. Autuori asked if CMDA will fund open space acquisition. Mr. Kooris said no.
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Andrea Beebe, 378 Main Street – asked if CMDA is funded by the state or private equity. Mr. Kooris explained that CMDA is a quasi-public authority, which means it is created by the state via state statute, funded by the state, but governed by a board of state representatives and private citizens appointed by the state but don't work for the state. The state provided $115 million for projects. Then she asked for the party affiliations of the board. Mr. Kooris explained that it is a bi-partisan appointed board.

Mr. Kooris added that the CMDA would never have the funding to build a sewage plant.

Mr. Carr – asked for an understanding of the bond funding and repayment structure. Mr. Kooris explained that if a developer borrows funding, the developer pays the bond. If the project is infrastructure, then the municipality repays the loan but in the one example thus far, the loan is interest only with forgivable principal when certain benchmarks are achieved.

Theresa Ancona, Park Lane – asked if residents get to vote whether to approve joining CMDA because she is concerned that joining could embolden others to make decisions that could hurt the town. Rudy Marconi explained that the deciding body for this decision is the Board of Selectpersons, and they are holding this public hearing because they want to hear community feedback on this subject.

Ms. Belinda Ward, – asked what the board sees as a benefit to the town. Rudy Marconi replied that he saw this as an opportunity to address potential septic systems failures in Branchville. The concern arose from the Planning and Zoning discussions related to possible development not just in the half-mile radius but perhaps further. If approved, then that development would involve multiple septic systems that will undoubtedly fail at some point in the future. Having the infrastructure for a sewer or package plant would allow the town to address those failures with an environmentally and fiscally responsible plan.

Nathan Sved, Branchville Road – asked for clarification from Mr. Kooris about how the CEO is defined and if a town representative would be the person reaching out to CMDA for a project. Mr. Kooris explained that if the BOS passed the resolution to join CMDA, the authorization for the first selectperson to enter into an agreement to approve a development district could also

be a decision requiring BOS approval. He also clarified that the developer who has all necessary entitlements from the town would be the applicant to approach CMDA.

Tiffany Carlson, 217 West Lane – confirmed that CMDA is governed by state statute and future state legislatures could change the CMDA powers. Mr. Kooris added that at that point any member could leave the CMDA. Ms. Carlson asked if the resolution and memorandum of understanding could be modified to address the concerns discussed. Mr. Kooris said the municipalities are free to modify the templates provided, and CMDA would confirm that the modified documents remain in alignment with the statutory obligations of CMDA.

Corey Coleman, Branchville Road – asked if the town were to join CMDA, would the BOS use it as a tool to build a sewer plant? Rudy Marconi explained that if Planning and Zoning approves rezone of Branchville to increase the population density, then the BOS would use CMDA as a tool in the event that a septic system is proposed that we know will fail. Then Mr. Coleman asked if there will be another step in the process, such as a public hearing, that gives the community a voice in the rezoning decision. Rudy Marconi explained that the community is already welcomed to engage at Planning and Zoning hearings on any projects that are submitted. Planning and Zoning is comprised of elected officials who make decisions as a separate governing body independent of the BOS. No, the BOS does not collude with Planning and Zoning. Geoffrey Morris added that any developer can propose any project and ask Planning and Zoning to rezone any area for the purpose of that project. Joining CMDA would provide a funding source for projects that are desirable to the town.

Nick Surbone, 53 Main Street – asked Mr. Kooris several financial questions which Mr. Kooris responded as follows; $21 million of the $115 million is committed, and another $8 million is in process. There is no maximum or minimum for an application. The state funding is requested annually through a proposed budget and has been $30 million per year.

Vincent Giordano, 28 Fairview Ave – asked if the language in Section 2, third line beginning with the word ‘AND’ were stricken, would CMDA accept it? Mr. Kooris believes CMDA legal counsel would find it acceptable.

Dennis Grimaldi, not a resident but owner of property along the railroad tracks – supports joining CMDA and understands the need for affordable housing. Responsible management of affordable housing, for example 20 houses, 80 units, is better than a developer putting in 300-500 units through 830G.

Dr. Autuori warned the community that there seems to be a lot of fear of what the BOS will do, but this is a democracy and the community has a vote. Then he read aloud a letter he submitted to the BOS, Planning and Zoning, and Wetlands. He opposes joining CMDA and asks local elected officials to reposition themselves in opposition to any state mandates that require a change to Ridgefield voters’ priorities.

Kirk Carr, 62 Prospect Ridge – expressed appreciation for the BOS holding this public hearing, which is not mandated by town charter, to gather feedback. He noted that the majority present are not in favor of joining, but if the BOS proceeds, please return to the BOS for any discussions or decisions to give the first selectperson more negotiating power.

Nadia Blair, Main Street – asked what other projects can be funded by CMDA. Mr. Kooris explained that state programs for the most part have a specific objective; clean brown fields, clean water, build trails, support jobs, etc. But CMDA is the only program this is location focused. They work with the member towns to identify areas for development that accommodate all the various objectives such as public transportation, water quality and water resilience, land use, and environmental protections. CMDA can provide a town with five types of support: technical assistance to assess a project on the merits of the town's various objectives; transit-oriented development; housing; building demolition; development or redevelopment.

Debra Franceschini stated that while she sees the benefit in cities with empty buildings, Ridgefield doesn't have such development opportunities.

Rodrigo Noriega, 336 Old Branchville Road – stated that he opposes joining with so many questions regarding zoning, schools, roads, and environment. Rudy Marconi responded that only Planning and Zoning will address land use and Branchville density questions.

Trish Covis, Old Branchville Road – appreciated Mr. Kooris attending this public hearing to address public concerns. She said the community knows what the TOD says, the design plan, and the Planning and Zoning intentions. As a member of the Branchville neighborhood, she feels that resident feedback is disregarded. She sees the value of this tool once the community comes to an agreement with the town as to future land use and density issues.

Rudy Marconi read aloud written statements submitted as follows;
Elizabeth Mower – encouraged the community to support joining CMDA. She read the state statutes governing CMDA and studied the transport development areas. She believes this is the mechanism by which Ridgefield can control low-cost and smaller housing development. Connecticut legislature has enacted laws supporting housing that can bypass municipal control and could go against Ridgefield's prioritization of land use, density, and traffic.

Gina Carry – supports joining CMDA with the previously noted modification to Resolution Section 2.

Tiffany Carlson – asked that five protective tenets be added to the resolution: an absolute no preemption clause, CMDA holds no power; membership cancelation without penalty; strict infrastructure limits; project by project approval; and mandatory public hearings or referendums.

Debra Franceschini – provided list or written pros: funding, technical help, opt-in, local control, and low entry cost; and cons: local control concerns, statutory wording, limited funds, narrow focus, and unproven no-risk claim.

Joanne Murray – vote no.
Debra Franceschini asked if Planning and Zoning has a vote in joining CMDA. Rudy Marconi explained that Planning and Zoning has no involvement with CMDA except to provide approval of any projects before they can be presented to CMDA. No Planning and Zoning approval disqualifies an applicant.

Mr. Carr asked Mr. Kooris if different town agencies such as P&Z or Affordable Housing could review this and give their feedback to the BOS? Mr. Kooris explained that in some cases CMDA was brought to the town's legislative board via another board or commission, but the education and discussion about what CMDA can offer is triggered by the legislative body approving to join as a member municipality.

Rudy Marconi polled the audience and counted 10 supporters and 18 opponents. The Public Hearing was closed at 9:17pm.