



**Ridgefield
Economic &
Community
Development
Commission**

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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

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

The meeting called to order at 6:34 pm

In attendance: Chair Glori Norwitt, Secretary Geoffrey Morris, Commissioners Sean Dowd, Jonathan Winn, Kay Gelfman.

Meeting began at 6:34 pm

Public discussion

Morris motions, Winn 2nd to approve the October 2 minutes without changes. All in favor.
Morris motions, Gelfman 2nd to approve October 19 minutes of the Special Meeting, without changes. All in favor.

Recap of Recent Events/Info

With assistance from the Planning & Zoning Department and Commissioners Winn, Gelfman, and Norwitt, Commissioner Riser updated the ECDC webpage for “Guide to Open a Business in Ridgefield.” It now has numerous links to State and local resources and could be suggested for any business looking to open in Town.

Morris and Norwitt attended the Cultural Alliance of Western CT “Business Supports the Arts” Awards with Town members to support Dee Dee Colabella of RPAC Art Gallery who received the “Arts in the Community” Award.

Norwitt met with Diana Spence, Executive Director of the Ridgefield Chamber of Commerce.

Norwitt and Marconi attended CEDAS event to receive the “Silver Certified Community” Award for “Best Practices in Economic Development & Land Use Certification.”

SBA Kickoff for Small Business Saturday is being organized by the State’s SBA. A press conference will be held at Deborah Ann’s Sweet Shoppe at 11am. A walking tour will follow, stopping at some downtown businesses such as Ridgefield Running Company, the Toy Chest, and more. All Commissioners are invited to attend.

The state is hosting a Broadband Community Forum for the public at the Danbury Library, 11am – 1pm, on November 13.

Possible men’s clothing store in Huttons. New owners asks, *How to project sales?*

Tiger Shark Tank (Dowd)

Judges were thrilled with the quality of the presentations and the entire evening. For the future, possibly five high school teams could present at a separate daytime event, in the spring, more educational than actual business ideas. Competition with another high school. Commissioner Dowd to speak with the head of business at WestConn.

Next year we hope to have the same quality of Ridgefield businesses — perhaps even existing businesses that need the extra boost. Modify it to give more judge time to give feedback. Alternatively, we could reach out and make it regional, given more toward capital raising.

The following press release was sent to the Ridgefield Press, Hamlet Hub, and the Patch with a photo of the winner:

Before a crowd of 300, Ridgefield-based entrepreneurs and business owners pitched their ideas to a panel of corporate leaders and notable entrepreneurs on Tuesday, October 24 at the Ridgefield Playhouse, organized by the Ridgefield Economic & Community Development Commission (ECDC).

First prize was awarded to Pop Art! Kids, with a \$3,000 Ridgefield Chamber of Commerce gift card. Rosie Snow Voulgaris detailed her sensory art and learning studio for children ages birth through five years old, and her business plan to expand. Her website can be found at popart.kids

Second prize was awarded to Target Arm, with a \$1,500 Chamber gift card. Jeff McChesney and his team discussed their autonomous drone launch and recovery from moving vehicles through

video. They also launched and recovered a drone on the stage of the Playhouse! Their website is at targetarm.com

Third prize was awarded to Domotics, with a \$500 Chamber gift card. Jason LaVardera, Mike Sturges, and Josh LaVardera exhibited their virtual property listing using a breakthrough technology. See more at domoticstech.com

Jeff Macaluso also presented High Octane TV, a channel with car and motorcycle content geared toward the true enthusiast. Learn more at highoctanefree.tv

Additionally, Deborah Rundlett and Ron Herman presented a vision for Meetinghouse, located at 602-605 Ridgebury Road. The Meetinghouse offers commons for the arts, farm & food, and wellness. See more at meetinghouse.life

The local Judges this year were Jay Walker (founder of Priceline), Jeff Bornstein (former Vice Chairman of General Electric), Megan Searfoss (owner of Ridgefield Running Co.), Christa Carone (President of Infillion Media), Chris Bishop (CEO of North American Motor Car and American Metal Whiskey), and Wyatt Lipman (Corporate Counsel for Strategic Deals & Partnerships at Google).

The ECDC would like to thank The Ridgefield Playhouse and staff, Jeff Ertl for creating the animated ad campaign, John Katz for his assistance with the ads, the Ridgefield Chamber of Commerce, and First Selectman Rudy Marconi.

To thank the Playhouse staff for all their assistance with the event, the ECDC paid for their lunch on November 2. Further, the winners were given their prizes, electronically.

Cultural District (Norwitt, Morris)

Commissioner Morris will put out a request for nominations for the 2024 Cultural District Award honoree. We will set a deadline of February 1, so that the ECDC can possibly vote at the February 2024 meeting on who we will honor at the May 2024 Arts Council Behind the Scenes event.

Cultural District Sculpture (Morris, Gelfman)

Morris and Gelfman met with the sculptor and longtime Ridgefield resident Chris Curnan. They asked for a slight revision to his sculpture proposal for \$10,000. It would be about five feet tall, with an 18-inch base. Securing location in the downtown area still under consideration. Morris motions, Gelfman 2nd that we accept the proposal from Curnan and contract with him to create sculpture at the cost of \$10,000. All in favor.

Film Commission (Knight, Gelfman)

Moved to the next meeting.

Marketing (Howell, Morris)

The Town (electronic) Newsletter will now be weekly, going out on Friday afternoons, with a brief recap of the week prior and what's coming up in the following week. A monthly Town Newsletter will still also continue, with more detail. The number of people receiving/reading the newsletter is building, and it is a great resource.

Strategic Planning

Discussion of draft Budget Request for FY2024.

Dowd motions to adjourn the meeting, Winn 2nd, all in favor. Meeting ends at 8:03 pm.