



**Ridgefield  
Economic &  
Community  
Development  
Commission**

**400 Main Street • Ridgefield, CT 06877 • 203.431.2700**

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](http://ridgefieldct.com)

**Economic & Community Development Commission  
unApproved Minutes  
October 2, 2023, at 6:30 pm  
in-person in Town Hall Large Conference Room**

The meeting called to order at 6:33 pm

**In attendance:** Chair Glori Norwitt, Secretary Geoffrey Morris, Commissioners Mark Riser, Jenn Gioffre, Sean Dowd, Kay Gelfman, Brittney Howell, and Bob Knight (by phone)

**Announcements**

Next meeting: November 6, 2023

Norwitt motioned and Morris 2nd that we approve the September 2023 Minutes. All in favor.

**General Discussion**

Public Comment - No comments

**Recap of Recent Events**

The ECDC's written Annual Report was submitted to Town Hall.

Commissioner Dowd noted that CT Innovations offers up to a \$25,000 CT income tax rebate for an Angel investment in the State, with some restrictions.

Fairfield County Community Foundation (FCCF) commissions a study every three years to better understand the opportunity gaps in Fairfield County. They completed their “Community Wellbeing Index 2023” and also a “Ridgefield 2023 Equity Profile” and “Danbury 2023 Equity Profile,” which was distributed to all the Commissioners.

The Prospector is holding a hybrid “Do Good Business” Conference on Thursday, October 12, from 9 am to 5:30 pm. Participants learn strategies for creating competitive and inclusive employment and universally-designed customer experiences, with opportunities to network with like-minded changemakers. In-person registration is \$100; virtual registration is \$50.

Norwitt is being awarded the “Good Scout Award” for the Greater Danbury Area from the CT Yankee Council of the Scouts in November.

### **Tiger Shark Tank (Dowd, Riser)**

The deadline is today for Ridgefield entrepreneurs and businesses to contact Commissioner Dowd in order to potentially present at Tiger-Shark Tank. Currently there are about a dozen submissions and we expect more as the week goes on.

The confirmed judges are Priceline founder Jay Walker, former GE CFO Jeff Bornstein, Ridgefield Running Co. owner Megan Searfoss, Google deal counsel Wyatt Lipman, and sports marketing president Christa Carone.

Dowd detailed a list of the current applicants and the six presenters will be chosen soon.

Knight suggested we bring high school interest, other business idea interest, and others to come together for an innovation Ridgefield day in the future, when ideas, businesses, and others come together, all kicked off with Tiger Shark Tank.

Discussion of marketing the event in the coming weeks. Gelfman and Riser have plans to wear shark outfits to various events to generate publicity and to make some videos of sharks doing various things around town, like swimming at Great Pond. There is also a plan for another press release with judge updates and then an announcement of the presenters.

Discussion of roles for the Commissioners in the coming weeks, and at the event.

### **Cultural District (Norwitt, Morris)**

ECDC hosted approximately 15 people from the other Cultural Districts in the State on September 19. A walking tour began at the Lounsbury House, went to the Aldrich, and then walked through downtown to the Prospector Theater to view the Cultural District application video walking tour. Afterward, the ECDC hosted a lunch and lead a discussion about plans and promotions of our Cultural District.

We nominated Dee Dee Colabella of RPAC Art Gallery for the “Business Supports the Arts” awards given by the Cultural Alliance of Western Connecticut. Dee Dee was chosen as the winner of the “Arts in the Community” Award for a funder of the arts in their local community, who encourages and finds innovative ways to leverage the arts to build and sustain a vibrant, healthy, and creative community that fosters economic development. For the event on Thursday Oct 12 at the Amber Room, Norwitt was asked to introduce Dee Dee when she receives the award.

### **Cultural District Sculpture (Morris, Gelfman)**

Still working through proposals and funding. Advisor Richard Klein has proposed a digitally carved computer-carved acorn. Gelfman talked to possible fund-raisers to help support the sculpture effort. More discussion moved until the November meeting.

### **Business Connections (Gioffre)**

Gioffre provided an overview of the Blu Dot rewards program, including a proposal for potentially implementing it this holiday season or next calendar year in Ridgefield. With more questions to be answered – such as implementation, marketing, and logistics – we are planning a special ECDC meeting October 19, 9 am, via Zoom.

### **Business Programs (Riser)**

Commissioner Riser revised and improved the “Guidelines to Open a Business” in Ridgefield, with input from the Planning & Zoning department. It will be finalized soon and put on the ECDC website, with links to local and state resources.

At the request of the First Selectman, and on behalf of the Town, the ECDC applied to the CEDAS Best Practices in Economic Development & Land Use Certification Program, with the assistance of the Town Planning & Zoning Department. CEDAS is the nonprofit CT Economic Development Association. As a result, CEDAS is recognizing the Town with a “Silver Certified Community” award. The ECDC is invited to the awards ceremony and networking event on Tuesday, October 17, at the Glastonbury Boathouse. Cost is \$65 per person to attend. Norwitt will attend.

Riser is working with the Library on business outreach programming. Library began a five-part series with SCORE entitled “Simple Steps for Starting Your Business,” in person on Tuesdays from 6-8:30 pm. ECDC distributed info on Tiger-Shark Tank at this event. Additionally, the attendees will be given a short feedback survey to gauge interest in future topics for business programming, and gather input for planning informal gatherings for remote workers.

### **Film Commission (Gelfman, Knight)**

The Film Commission was previously led (solely) by Allison Stockel. With her retirement, it is proposed to fall under the ECDC as the “Film Location Committee” with Daniel C. Levine from ACT of CT and Jared Shahid from the Ridgefield Playhouse, and led by Commissioners Knight and Gelfman. One commissioner will provide details – including photos – for the website page on the committee.

### **Broadband (Knight, Morris, Norwitt)**

Jake Muller, Town Director of Facilities and Purchasing, will post an RFP for Fiber Based Open Access Broadband Services for the Town, on Tuesday October 3. The RFP, a process led by ECDC, is asking firms for bids on creating a comprehensive engineering plan that can be followed for the implementation of a fiber broadband buildout. This is not building the network but merely creating a plan and estimate for building it.

### **Marketing (Howell, Gioffre, Morris)**

Morris moves that we hire Jennie Carr at the cost of \$2,000 to do six photoshoots between now and June 30, 2024, providing at least 10 photos from each shoot that ECDC will fully own and be able to use on social media, website, and any printed material. Gioffre 2nds, all in favor.

Brief discussion of marketing around “Small Business Saturday” on November 25.

### **Updates from Planning & Zoning (Gelfman)**

Tabled to November meeting.

### **Strategic Planning**

Morris proposed the following for the 2024 budget:

- that we allocate \$5,000 toward marketing Ridgefield, specifically the Cultural District activities from October through June 30, 2024.
- that we allocate \$2,500 to have Sarah Ford provide upkeep, upgrades, and photo refresh for ridgefieldct.com
- that we allocate \$2,000 to social media marketing between now and end 2023 calendar year
- that we consider funding for the BluDot reward program as mentioned in the public discussion and after a review by other commissioners

Discussion of ECDC’s database of Ridgefield businesses. Tax Assessor Al Garzi told Norwitt that the Tax Assessor's office annually (in late September) sends a form to every business in Ridgefield (about 1500 of them) regarding their business equipment. They do not collect email addresses. The ECDC could include info and/or a flyer in that annual mailing if desired. Norwitt contacted the CT Secretary of State office to ask if they would share information.

Morris moved to end meeting, Norwitt 2nd, all in favor. Meeting ended at 8:40pm.

