



**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 Selectperson

ridgefieldct.gov

Economic & Community Development Commission
Approved Minutes
June 3, 2024, at 6:30 pm
Town Hall Large Conference Room

The meeting called to order at 6:34 pm

In attendance: Secretary Geoffrey Morris, Commissioners Mark Riser, Jenn Gioffre, Kay Gelfman, Sean Dowd

Guests

Bob Cascella, Grove Street Advisors

Announcements

Next meeting: July 1, 2024

Approval of **May Minutes**. Dowd moves to approve the May 2024 minutes without changes, Gelfamn 2nds. All vote in favor.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Recap of Recent Events/Info

Gelfman and Norwitt attended the Town's Freedom of Information Workshop on May 20. All Commissioners received information about it.

Commissioner Morris was appointed by the Board of Selectpersons to co-chair with Ridgefield Arts Council member and Ridgefield Theater Barn head Pamme Jones to lead the Committee: Ridgefield Celebrates America at 250. The committee will organize events that will commemorate the signing of the Declaration of Independence starting on July 4, 2025, and culminating on July 4, 2026. The two co-chairs will assemble a committee of 11 residents.

AGENDA

Database / Inventory (Dowd)

Guest Bob Cascella explained about commercial real estate inventory and tracking in Ridgefield. Suggested that LoopNet is a great paid online service that provides leasing and sale information that can be used to see what is for sale and for lease in town as a way to keep up with and maintain our inventory list, once established. It costs about \$400/month for a subscription to LoopNet, which is less than the \$600/month for CoStar, a similar service that is more vibrant in the cities but not as good in this area. Commissioner Morris suggested that this was too much to subscribe to for now, that we should first establish the inventory of everything in a manageable database. The commission agree after a discussion.

Gelfman motions, Riser seconds that ECDC allocate \$5,000 to hire a database manager to create an inventory of all commercial real estate space. All in favor.

RHS Interns (Dowd)

Dowd is overseeing some RHS interns who are working on several projects. Interns are working on revising the downtown Ridgefield map. Updated Cultural District window clings are being distributed to local businesses by the RHS interns, overseen by Commissioner Dowd. The interns handed out and collected addresses of businesses who took Cultural District window decal. Interns counted all and inventoried parking spaces in the downtown area. Interns will soon create mailing labels from list of new residents who they will send a welcome letter.

Business Programs (Riser)

On May 28, the Library hosted Commissioner Riser speaking on "Starting a Small Business." The event guided attendees through the business startup process in Ridgefield in CT, and included Rob Hendricks, chair of the Town's Planning & Zoning department. The discussion that followed raised the ideas of doing these regularly to create a rhythm.

Business Connections (Gioffre)

The Secretary of State's office recently shared info on how to access information on businesses in Ridgefield. An online search of their records show 2,861 active businesses in town. The listings include business name, principal, agent, address, date formed, business type (eg LLC), place of business formation, and date that their annual report is due. It does not include an email address, number of employees, category/type of business, and/or owner demographics.

Gioffre presented details of hiring BluDot to offer a rewards program for the holiday shopping season, likely beginning in October 2024. The commission would hire BluDot for \$400 month, do the marketing, and fund the reward rebates, for a total cost of about \$7,900. Keys are getting store buy-ins, who will promote the ideas to shoppers, and to promote to shoppers so that they know to take advantage of it. Gioffre will provide detailed proposal in July.

Cultural District (Morris)

Gelfman had organized people to march together in the Town's Memorial Day parade for the Cultural District with a banner, and sashes for CD Award winners. Parade was rained out.

The Board of Selectpersons voted to approve the "Cultural District of Ridgefield" as part of the Friends of Ridgefield, a 501c3. Once the Friends of Ridgefield Board gives the final approval, the Cultural District will be able to fundraise as a 501c3.

The Cultural District group met on May 21 and discussed plans by the Marketing team who are contacting influencers to post about the Town in the coming weeks.

Motion by Morris to allocate \$10,000 for marketing the Cultural District and the Town of Ridgefield by hiring several influencers to visit and post about the Town in the coming weeks and months. Seconded by Gelfman. All in favor.

@brunchwithbabs | 3.4 million followers because of her large number of followers, her content, and her knowledge of the area (2) @tasteconnecticut | 396k followers which has a good number of followers, is bold, and pushes followers to go to the places posted about. (3) ctfoodbae with 66k followers. Visits to take place in June 2024 with sharing in June, July. Brunch with Babs might come back for a no-cost book signing in September.

The next Cultural District meeting is scheduled on July 9.

Ellen Burns is working on an updated Ridgefield visitor map. We provided Burns with a file of the map to update it.

Cultural District Sculpture (Morris, Gelfman)

Alice Dew said that the Cultural District Sculpture would need to be approved through a Village District Commission permit. First the request would go to the Architectural Advisory Committee (acting as VDC), for architectural input to P&Z, and then the application would go to Planning and Zoning. No public hearing is required. The P&Z Commission could ask for one, but it is not required. Still waiting to get approval from the CVS/Prime Burger landlord to place the sculpture there.

Tiger Shark Tank

Tiger Shark Tank will be held on Monday, October 28, at the Ridgefield Playhouse. The deadline for applicants to submit their proposals to the ECDC will be Tuesday, October 1, 2024. Business ideas. Dowd has many ideas for businesses to present and a list of potential judges.

Gelfman and Riser will continue to make and share videos of sharks in the community to promote the event.

Gioffre will share press release nearer the end of summer.

Marketing (Gioffre, Morris, Howell)

Sue Gordon, of Gordon Fine Arts, is organizing the "Ridgefield Arts Festival" in Ballard Park on June 29-30. She handles everything from selecting the artists to applications, security, set up, etc. This festival will bring a lot of traffic to Ridgefield.

Update on Planning & Zoning (Gelfman)

The space that help the restaurant Bartolo, which just closed, in the Copps Hill area, will if approved become eight studio apartments.

Gelfman also discussed writing an option to share with the Commission to eventually share with P&Z, suggesting that we need more hotel space. Morris suggested that we propose that P&Z allow home-sharing rental such as AirBnB. Dowd suggested that many residents might not like that. Morris suggested that P&Z should at least explore allowing something that would create more places for people to get places to stay while in town for big events.

Any additional discussion of KC&E Adventures

In May, Collin Daulong from KC&E Adventures presented an app which will provide Town visitors with self-guided tours of cultural sites and outdoor recreation opportunities throughout Ridgefield. <https://kceadventures.com/>. There was further discussion about the value a visitor an travel app would provide for the town while also trying to understand how it could be maintained to be fresh and constantly relevant.

Dowd motions to end the meeting, Gioffre 2nd. All in favor. Meeting ends at 9:07 pm.