



**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  
Approved Minutes  
February 5, 2024, at 6:30 pm  
in-person in Town Hall Large Conference Room**

The meeting called to order at 6:32 pm

**In attendance:** Chair Glori Norwitt, Secretary Geoffrey Morris, Commissioners Sean Dowd, Mark Riser, Jonathan Winn, Bob Knight, Jennifer Gioffre, Brittney Howell, Kay Gelfman

**Announcements**

Next meeting: March 4, 2024

Approval of **January Minutes**. Morris moves to approve the January 2024 minutes without changes, Norwitt 2nds. All vote in favor.

**Public Comment**

No comments.

**Recap of Recent Events/Info**

Commissioner Sean Dowd mentioned getting in touch with Ridgefield resident Andre Swanston who has purchased a minor league soccer team to be situated in Bridgeport.

Ridgefield Bicycle Club, at its annual meeting, announced that it is working with the Boy Scouts to build bike racks for the town.

Ridgefield Rotary Club asked a member of ECDC to address the club at a future meeting. Commissioner Knight enthusiastically volunteered to take on the role if it works with his schedule.

On December 6, 2023, the ECDC submitted its FY2025 Budget Request. The ECDC discussed its Budget Request to the BOS on Wednesday January 17. We will continue the discussion with the BOS on Monday February 26. The meeting begins at 7:00pm. All ECDC Commissioners will track their hours this month working on any ECDC matter.

First Selectman Rudy Marconi agreed to allow us one of the town's Ridgefield High School interns. They work after AP exams in mid May until approximately June 12-14.

Thrown Stone is on hiatus as it looks for a permanent home for its productions.

Chair Norwitt reached out to the First Selectman's office and to the Planning & Zoning department to try to assist with issues at TerraSole Restaurant.

On Thursday, February 8, from 11 am – noon, CT Main Street Center hosts an online webinar re Funding Main Street Management – 3 Models which are Business Improvement Districts, 501c3 nonprofits, and tax incremental financing (TIF) districts.

On Tuesday, March 5, the Cultural Alliance of Western CT is having Randy Cohen from "Americans for the Arts" as a guest speaker on **AEP6**.

On Wednesday, February 28, First Selectman Rudy Marconi will give his "State of the Town" address at Lounsbury House. The event is 7:30 am – 9:00 am. Tickets are \$35.

Resident Kirk Carr withdrew his lawsuit against Planning & Zoning that was filed in Danbury Superior Court this fall. But withdrawal was only filed by Kirk; the other two plaintiffs did not withdraw. But Court docket says "withdrawn action."

Norwitt met with Nadia and Aaron Blair, who purchased the Ridgefield Ice Cream shop on Route 7. They plan to open Flobee's with ice cream, and a limited menu including hamburgers.

Norwitt met with a person who is interested in learning more about the ECDC, and discussed opportunities in town.

Morris and Norwitt met (separately) with the Ridgefield Playhouse to discuss repairs needed in the building.

Morris and Norwitt spoke with US Senator Richard Blumenthal this morning when he was in town, with Rudy Marconi and others, to discuss again the USPS parking lot that is unused and broadband issues – helping the town get access to federal infrastructure funds clearly designated for broadband/fiber issues.

Commissioner Morris met with Joanna James on two separate issues. She is taking an active role in the Ridgefield INdependent Film Festival – looking to generate exposure and funds for the mid May festival, now in its eighth year and run by founder Joann Hudson, who walked away from the festival after the first year, only to rejoin it in 2022.

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

BluDot: Gioffre and Riser will be meeting with members of the ECDC from Smalltown, Texas, on their experience with working with a rewards program set up by BluDot. The goal is to set up a retailer rewards program for Ridgefield businesses for the 2024 holiday shopping season, beginning in October or November

### **Town Business Listings (Winn, Riser)**

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.

Since each business needs to file an annual report, it is forced to update or confirm its data, ensuring that whatever we could access would be up to date.

Winn shared how he was able to successfully download the desired info about all Business Listings that are in Ridgefield, from the State website. Discussion of how to use this information, but all agreed that more assistance (namely, time) was needed to properly use and process this information.

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

Met with the five State Cultural Districts this month over Zoom. This year the State Office of Tourism anticipates that an additional five cultural districts may be designated this year. Discussed how the State could promote cultural districts more, including on the CTVisit.com.

The Marketing group within the Cultural District workgroup has ideas to promote the CD. Discussion of ideas.

The Budget group within the Cultural District workgroup has ideas to raise funds to promote the Cultural District. Discussion of ideas including state grant money, possible ECDC funds,

other grants, and private contributions. Note that the Budget group, and the ECDC which oversees the Cultural District workgroup, could request the BOS to have the “Cultural District” be an accepted group under the “Friends of Ridgefield Community Programs Inc” so that donations could be made to the Cultural District as a 501(c)3.

Norwitt moves that the ECDC, with the Cultural District workgroup, request that the BOS accept the “Cultural District” as a group under the “Friends of Ridgefield” as discussed. Google Ads does a Google Ads Grant to nonprofits to get \$10,000/month in Google Ad words.

**Vote: Norwitt moves that the ECDC request that the BOS include the “Cultural District” as a group under the “Friends of Ridgefield” so that donations could be made under a 501c3 account for the Cultural District. Winn 2nds, all vote in favor.**

Morris recently applied for a State grant, and received \$13,443.50 into the ECDC Budget. Morris moves to earmark these funds to the Cultural District workgroup, for marketing.

Discussion of Cultural District banners on the Town lampposts. With the slogan “Big City Arts...Small Town Soul”, Winn has designed banners. **Morris moves to allocate up to \$500 from the ECDC budget in order to print eight banners for the lampposts. Gioffre 2nd, all vote in favor.**

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

Morris is in communication with the landlord of the property where Prime Burger and CVS are, in an effort to get permission to have the sculpture installed there. Lisa Quattrocchi of Benenson Real Estate is reviewing the proposal to have artist Chris Curnan’s stone and corten-steel sculpture be situated as a way to honor all Cultural District honorees.

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

The CD Award will be presented at the RAC’s “Behind the Scenes” Awards evening on Thursday, May 9.

#### **“All Are Welcome” Campaign (Norwitt)**

Norwitt has been working with Alisa Trachtenberg of Ridgefield CT Pride on a potential “All Are Welcome” campaign throughout town in order to support and build a positive business climate that benefits everyone. Participating businesses, organizations, and institutions would (1) sign a Statement of Support (2) complete inclusivity training, (3) change signage on existing single user bathrooms to gender neutral signage, and (4) put an “All Are Welcome” rainbow decal on their door and a graphic on their website. There are three optional elements as well (1) complete an institutional self-evaluation (2) create an action plan based on the institutional self-evaluation (3) do a climate survey. A supportive group of business leaders is meeting soon to discuss these concepts.

Discussion of campaign. **Norwitt moves** that the ECDC support the Ridgefield CT Pride on the “All Are Welcome” campaign in order to build and support a positive business climate that benefits everyone; the ECDC encourages an inclusive community and wants businesses to have the freedom to operate in a matter they see fit and support inclusivity. In addition, ECDC aims to help the group in order to build and support a positive business climate that benefits everyone. **Knight 2nd, all vote in favor.**

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

For Town Hall’s business listing on Google, Commissioner Winn connected with Gillian Sheerin, the Administrative Office Manager at Town Hall.

Commissioner Riser has created a new LinkedIn page: all encouraged to visit it, follow it, and share it with friends.

Gioffre connected with Western Ct Tourism and promoted The Taste of Ridgefield which was on February 4, and will promote Ridgefield Restaurant Week which is February 5-11.

Gioffre’s report on Western CT Tourism District:

Met with Christine Smith from Giaccone and Smith Storytellers

- Agency that represents the Western CT District for four years
- Co-owner grew up in Ridgefield
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Key Discussion Points — CTvisits.com

- Opportunity for Ridgefield Business to utilize this website more
- We need to register and can also post here for activities (I would like to use the ECDC email)
- To tag them on IG use: @visit\_westernct – we should do this for all social posts and also encourage other Ridgefield Businesses/groups to do the same
- Western CT Social Media
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/visitwesternCT>
- Instagram: [https://www.instagram.com/visit\\_westernct/](https://www.instagram.com/visit_westernct/)
- YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCBiHkLvEzCSvrA9o46iEkEw>
- To tag them on IG use: @visit\_westernct
- They work two weeks out on content
- They do events but can also highlight businesses as part of the National Days (i.e., February 9 is National Pizza Day)
- They are looking to hire an influencer to go out and discover places and write about them.
- We will stay in touch as we agree that Ridgefield is perfect for something like this.

We can submit to CTvisits.com and then send Christine the information. Or we can just send to Christine for the Social channels.

## Next Steps

- Register ECDC on CTvisits.com
- Develop a marketing calendar for Ridgefield events. Reach out to businesses and organizations around town.
- Identify National Days and identify key businesses to highlight such as:
- National Ice Cream Day – July 21 – Deborah Ann’s Sweet Shoppe
- National Coffee Day – Sept 29 – Tazza, Queen B, etc
- National Bagel Day – Jan 15
- National Book Lovers Day – August 9 – Books on the Common
- National Knitting day – June 8
- Announce new business that come to Ridgefield

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

Commissioner Morris updated the commission on the working group’s review of the RFP proposals. It’s likely to cost around \$30 million for the town to install a fiber internet network that it can control by bringing in an ISP and sharing revenue from subscribers to the internet that goes thru it. The group is also in negotiations with Frontier, which has plans to install fiber broadband thru-out town. The company looks to partner with the town so that it can achieve 100% coverage. The working group next meets with Frontier in March.

## **Update on Planning & Zoning** (Gelfman)

Discussed the Branchville Transit Oriented Development Plan, created in February 2017. Gelfman will draft a statement of support that we will discuss and potentially vote on in the March meeting.

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

Commissioner Gelfman will provide a name and more detail at the next meeting.

Dowd motions to adjourn, Morris 2nd. All vote in favor.

Meeting ended at 8:47 pm