



**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

**Economic & Community Development Commission
Approved Minutes
March 4, 2024, at 6:30 pm
in-person in Town Hall Large Conference Room**

The meeting called to order at 6:38 pm

In attendance: Secretary Geoffrey Morris, Commissioners Sean Dowd, Mark Riser, Jonathan Winn, Bob Knight, Brittney Howell, and Kay Gelfman

Announcements

Next meeting: April 1, 2024

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

Announcements

Next meeting: April 1, 2024

Public Comment

Resident Kirk Carr raised several issues with the ordinance that defines the duties of the Economic & Community Development Commission. Suggests that a commissioner who does not attend $\frac{2}{3}$ of meeting should immediately vacate position, per ordinance.

Recap of Recent Events/Info

On February 26, the ECDC presented its Budget Request to the BOS. Awaiting feedback from BOS. Dowd says one thing he learned is that interns can work from Town Hall.

ECDC Commissioners attended the First Selectperson's "State of the Town" address on February 28. Riser opened a discussion about Frontier offering fiber to residents. Morris says he signed up for Frontier service and is happy: better speed and lower price. Many on the town Facebook page have been discussing the same thing. The broadband committee, on which Morris, Knight, and Norwitt serve, has been meeting with Frontier and will meet with reps again about ensuring that it can spread high-speed internet to 100% of the town.

On Tuesday March 5, the Cultural Alliance of Western CT is having Randy Cohen from "Americans for the Arts" as a guest speaker. Riser plans to attend.

Election of Vice Chair and Secretary

Per an email from Andrew Neblett, the Town IT Director, each Commission now needs to have a Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary. ECDC held a vote to enact a vice chair. Gelfman moved and Dowd 2nd that we nominate commissioner Mark Riser as Vice Chair. Five votes in favor, Riser abstained. Riser elected as vice chair.

Business Connections (Gioffre)

Gioffre and Riser met with members of the ECDC from a small town in Texas to learn about their experience working with a rewards program set up by BluDot. Discussion of setting up a retailer rewards program for Ridgefield business for the 2024 holiday shopping season beginning in October or November. Commissioner Howell says she has talked with the Chamber who is in favor and who works with In Ridgefield, Downtown Ridgefield, and others.

Town Business Listings (Winn, Riser)

Winn had shared how he successfully downloaded detailed info on all Business Listing that are in Ridgefield from the Secretary of State's website. Discussion of how we could process this huge amount of information, and use it. Look at the categories and see what's missing. The group discussed that this might be an opportunity to hire a consultant to help sort the data and present the data in a way that is appealing to someone considering opening a business in Ridgefield. A nicely presented data platform will show all that the town has to offer and all that is missing and thus an opportunity.

Cultural District (Morris)

The \$13,443.50 that the Town received recently, and informed the ECDC that it was our funds, was actually from the DECD for the Town's Historic District Commission. So the ECDC will not receive those funds.

The Cultural District workgroup met on February 27, and Lisa Scails of the Cultural Alliance of Western CT joined. The Data Collection group previewed their draft questionnaire for CD businesses and organizations. The Budget group discussed their first steps. The Budget group is on the BOS Agenda for March 6 to request that the “Cultural District” is a group under the “Friends of Ridgefield” which would hopefully assist in fundraising.

Dowd mentioned the MTA has a service that could help with transportation around an event, which Morris says he will raise once the group begins making plans for an MTA ad campaign. Morris also reported that the library has become the keeper of data for the organization and will be surveying cultural groups about audience size, ticket sales, revenue growth etc, plus exploring the same data from for-profit groups within the Cultural District.

Cultural District Sculpture (Morris, Gelfman)

Discussion of the ECDC paying the full price for the Sculpture upfront, and then seeking donations to cover some of the costs. Donations can be made out to “Town of Ridgefield” and are tax-deductible. Then Gelfman and Norwitt could work with the Town attorney to finalize a contract with artist Curnan for the Sculpture.

In order to get the sculptor to help us talk with the landlord about the sculpture location and details about installation, ECDC decided to allocate \$5,000 to pay half the cost of the sculpture.

Morris motions and Winn 2nd to allocate \$5,000 from the ECDC budget to cover the cost of the Sculpture which will be created by artist Chris Curnan. All in favor.

Cultural District Award (Morris, Gelfman)

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

VOTE on purchasing (physical) Award for awardee Barbara Manners, and costs related to food and/or drink at the event. Morris moved, Gelfman 2nds, that we allocate \$500 to pay for food, drink, and an award for the May 9 ceremony.

Tiger Shark Tank (Dowd, Riser)

Some discussion about getting data from the Ridgefield Playhouse from the 2023 Tiger Shark Tank event, including list of attendees and email addresses. Dowd also says he will begin discussions about a date for the 2024 event.

Marketing (Gioffre, Morris, Howell)

As she had in the summer and fall of 2023, Sarah Ford is providing assistance with fixes and additions to the ECDC at www.ridgefieldct.com. One change she made was to add a section to

the www.ridgefieldct.com website that is “Life is Better in CT” under the page “The Region.” It includes a link to www.campusct.com which is a State gateway to meaningful career opportunities and all the fun, excitement and adventure that our state has to offer. That website also has an “explore companies” page.

Sarah’s rate is \$30 per hour. Morris motions and Winn 2nds to spend up to \$500 from the ECDC budget to pay any invoice from Sarah Ford for this work. All in favor.

The ECDC has created a new LinkedIn page: Commissioner Riser discussed it and suggested everyone follow it and suggested that we spread the word to grow the presence of it.

Update on Planning & Zoning (Gelfman)

Moved until April meeting.

Interns & Support for ECDC

Discussion of potential assistance from an RHS intern (or more) for one month from mid May to mid June. Discussion of potential assistance from a WestConn student at some point. All commissioners said they would bring ideas for who can manage the interns and what they can do. Winn said he would see if interns might be able to help with business database. Riser suggested we get interns to help update database by calling businesses and getting phone numbers, email address, and contact information.

Morris moved to adjourn, Knight 2nds, all in favor, meeting ends 8:01 pm.