



Ridgefield
Economic &
Community
Development
Commission

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Glori Norwitt - Chair
Geoffrey Morris – Secretary

Rudy Marconi, First Selectperson

ridgefieldct.gov

Sean Dowd
Kay Gelfman
Jennifer Gioffre
Brittney Howell
Bob Knight
Jonathan Winn

**Economic & Community Development Commission
unApproved Minutes
November 4, 2024, at 6:30 pm**

The meeting was called to order at 6:31 pm in the small conference room in Town Hall.

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

Guests: Gus Ryer of Ryer Associates and Mark Riser, recently retired ECDC commissioner.

Announcements

Next meeting: December 2, 2024

Approval of October Minutes. Gioffre motioned that we approve without changes and Norwitt seconded, all in favor.

Public Comment

Commissioner Morris asked if anyone knows how long the office desk, tilted on its side, will remain up against the wall in the small conference room. No one knew.

Guests: Guy Ryer of Ryer Associates, also a former ECDC commissioner from approximately 2016-2019, offered advice on capturing data on commercial real estate and businesses in Ridgefield. He suggested that if ECDC were to create a list of all properties and businesses, the first step is collecting data from the tax assessor and manually create it. Building owners, he says, are required to provide to the town a list of all tenants. Ryer said that during his ECDC tenure, he attempted this project but it was too large and difficult a project, and keeping such a list is very difficult to update regularly. He suggested a gap analysis on all the existing properties. Also he suggested getting a Crexi membership.

Mark Riser attended to provide updates on Tiger Shark Tank.

Gelfman moves to allocate \$5,000 to hire a contractor to create a list of existing light-industrial zoned space and industrial light businesses. Dowd 2nd. All in favor.

Recap of Recent Events/Info

On October 10, Commissioner Winn attended the Cultural Alliance “Business Supports the Arts Awards” Breakfast at the Amber Room where Ridgefielders Gary and Susie Singer received the Arts in the Community Award. He suggests that others make an effort to attend the event in the future as it tells how powerful the arts community is to economic development. He says that a recent study found that each person who buys a ticket to a cultural event in Ridgefield contributes an *additional* \$37 – by shopping in stores or visiting dining establishments.

On October 23, the BOS renewed Commissioner Bob Knight to the ECDC for two-year term. Commissioner Mark Riser is not requesting renewal. Thus, the ECDC has one vacancy. The Town announced the opening beginning October 30.

On October 30, First Selectperson Rudy Marconi appointed Commissioner Gioffre to represent Ridgefield with the Western CT Tourism District.

Chair Norwitt spoke with the Town Clerk of Newington about the process of applying to designate an area as a Cultural District.

Tiger Shark Tank (Dowd)

Before a crowd of 250 people, Ridgefield-based entrepreneurs and business owners pitched their ideas to a panel of corporate leaders and notable entrepreneurs on Monday October 28 at the Ridgefield Playhouse.

Sinead Harrington and Tripta Volamoore detailed their [home design solutions](#) to meet the physical, sensory and/or cognitive needs of all, while also supporting their independence in daily routines without compromising the décor of a home. Second prize was awarded to [Challenge Hound](#), with a \$1,500 Chamber gift card. Justin Shreve demonstrated his fitness app which promotes healthier lifestyles by providing the best platform to create and manage group challenges and virtual races. Third prize was awarded to Turnaround “Lemons to Lemonade,” with a \$500 Chamber gift card. Alisa Trachtenberg played her wellness board game, which works to turn negative feelings into positive ones.

Scott Binger and Dylan Nyborg also presented [Evolytix](#), an AI-driven data analytics for all skill levels. Ryan Fletcher and Gavin McCaul presented [Vibrant](#), a home management and HVAC solution created by a group of engineers and designers dedicated to producing innovative, efficient, and luxurious home automation solutions that improve user health.

The local Judges this year were Jay Walker (CEO of [ApiJect Systems](#) and founder of [Priceline](#)), Suni Harford (former President of [UBS Asset Management](#)), Chris Bishop (CEO of [North American Motor Car](#) and [American Metal Whiskey](#)), and Adam Norwitt (CEO of [Amphenol Corporation](#)). ECDC Commissioner Sean Dowd spearheaded the event.

In the lobby, entrepreneurs, business owners, and attendees chatted with representatives from CT organizations that seek to assist businesses in all industries and stages of development by providing no-cost advisory services: the [Women’s Business Development Council](#), [SCORE](#), and the [CT Small Business Development Center](#). The event was sponsored by [Badger Bevs](#), which provided high-end cocktail mixers at the Playhouse bar. Mission Hub also sponsored, with Peter Shanley engaging attendees to discuss enabling local civic leaders with technology.

The ECDC thanks [The Ridgefield Playhouse](#) and staff for partnering with the ECDC and hosting the event. Additionally, the ECDC thanks Jeff Ertl for creating the animated ad campaign, the [Ridgefield Chamber of Commerce](#), and First Selectman Rudy Marconi.

Gelfman suggested that we host quarterly business networking events at various locations around town for remote workers – those who work for companies that are based elsewhere but the work takes place from home. Each event would cost about \$750. No vote taken yet.

Discussion of Tiger-Shark tank event and possible changes for next year.

Morris motions that we allocate up to \$1,000 for administrative and marketing expenses for Tiger Shark Tank III, Knight 2nd, all in favor.

Marketing (Gioffre, Morris, Howell)

Last month we voted \$1,500 to subscribe to an email management program like Hubspot or Mailchimp and Commissioner Howell researched both and recommended that ECDC subscribe

to Mailchimp. If so we will gather email addresses from Downtown Ridgefield/Chamber of Commerce, town lists, and those who have signed up for events.

Promotion with the business “Local Social Media” on the Instagram account “Ridgefield.ct” is \$350 per month for one post or one story per week. It has 9,300 followers. If an additional town was added, it would be \$100 additional per month. This business also runs “Ridgefield Eats” and “Ridgefield Gives Back” on Facebook.

Business Working Groups

Discussion of potentially creating a Healthcare Working Group among Ridgefield healthcare employers (and adjacent fields) to meet and identify common issues, with the goal of helping facilitate local economic growth in the sector. Nuvance has announced its intention to join Northwell (formerly North Shore LIJ), which would be a notable merger. Commissioner Knight will lead quarterly meetings.

Update on Planning & Zoning (Gelfman)

There was discussion about the two properties on 599 Branchville Road and 653 Branchville Road and various options on what can happen with it. In addition there was discussion about the zoning change on East Ridge/Prospect and the potential new development there. Gelfman will draft an opinion.

Annual Budget Request

Chair Norwitt asked each commissioner to submit both uses of the 2025 funds and requests for 2026 budget, which ECDC needs to submit to the Board of Selectpersons in early December.

Gioffre moves and Knight 2nd, all in favor, meeting adjourns 8:44 pm