



**Ridgefield  
Economic &  
Community  
Development  
Commission**

**400 Main Street • Ridgefield, CT 06877 • 203.431-2700**

Bob Knight – Chair  
Kay Gelfman – Vice Chair  
James Classey - Secretary  
Corrin Arasa  
Nadia Blair  
Jennifer Gioffre  
Pamme Jones  
Peter Kearney  
David Perlmutter

Rudy Marconi, First Selectperson  
[ridgefieldct.gov](http://ridgefieldct.gov)

**Meeting Minutes**

**Aug 3rd 2026, at 6:30pm in Town Hall Small Conference Room**

**Call to Order:**

The meeting was called to order at 6:37 PM.

In attendance: Commissioners Corrin Arasa, Nadia Blair, James Classey (Secretary), Kay Gelfman (Vice Chair), Jenn Gioffre, Peter Kearney, Bob Knight (Chair), and David Perlmutter. Commissioner Pamme Jones and consultant Jessica Medoff called into the meeting by telephone. Guest Neil Chollick joined the meeting as well.

Announcements: Next meeting is Sept 14<sup>th</sup>, 2026 and will be held in the large conference room in Town Hall at 6:30pm.

**Public Comment:**

No Public Comment

**Approval of Minutes:**

**Motion:** Gioffre moved to approve the July Regular Meeting Minutes and the July Special Meeting Minutes.

**Second:** Perlmutter

**Vote:** Unanimously approved.

**Commercial Real Estate Report & Tracking:**

Commissioner Perlmutter reported that ARC has completed the purchase of its building and has

executed a lease agreement. He noted that he plans to connect with ARC regarding their request to find potential storage opportunities at 241 Danbury Rd.

The Commission reviewed the Town's commercial vacancy rate, which currently stands at approximately 20%. This vacancy rate seemed like a high data point, as previous month was 8%. It was noted that the 650 Danbury Road may have swung the numbers higher. The ECDC will monitor the trend in the coming months and take appropriate action once a clearer baseline is established.

The Commission discussed whether future reporting should categorize vacancy rates by property type, including office, retail, industrial, and other commercial asset classes.

Additional discussion focused on tracking Commissioner volunteer hours as part of ECDC performance metrics.

#### **Community & Cultural District:**

Commissioner Arasa provided an update on Cultural District initiatives: Four finalists have been selected for the Traffic Box Art Program. Selected artists will receive a \$250 stipend, after which permit applications will be submitted for approval. Once approved by the First Selectperson, the permits will be forwarded to the Connecticut Department of Transportation for final authorization. Arasa also presented initial performance metrics following the launch of the Cultural District Instagram account in May: 57.6k views, 3.7k interactions, 1,057 followers, and engagement rate 17%. Engagement is incredibly strong with average account between 3-5%. Arasa also reported on the upcoming August 27 planning session with Beth Flowers the Executive Director of Air Collaborative (consultant provided free to Ridgefield by State of Connecticut), to begin development of the Cultural District's five-year strategic plan and to explore future funding opportunities while defining what it means to be a Cultural District community. The object is to continue developing the Cultural District as a radiating economic hub for the town.

Commissioner Gelfman mentioned a meeting has been scheduled for Tuesday Aug 4<sup>th</sup>, with Liz Shapiro the Director of Arts, Preservation, and Museums from CT EC&D and Beth Flowers the Executive Director of Air Collaborative, to explore ways the Cultural District can further support the economic outputs of Ridgefield non-for profits.

Commissioner Jones reported that she will assume responsibility for advancing the Cultural District mural project.

#### **Gateway District / Route 7 Business Traffic Safety:**

Chairman Knight reported that the State is evaluating the Route 7 corridor in Ridgefield and Danbury for potential safety upgrades. The Commission is acutely concerned about Route 7 traffic flow and safety from the intersection of Haviland Road north to the Danbury line.

The Commission reviewed correspondence received from several Route 7 businesses and residents expressing concerns about hazardous conditions (speed, left turns, traffic calming) affecting local businesses. Letters and comments were received from Kaz Outdoors, Ridgefield Plumbing, Flobee's, Wooster Hollow Diner, Ridgefield Veterinary Center, and Ridgefield Dance. Several businesses indicated they have experienced a decline in customers due to ongoing traffic safety concerns.

The Commission discussed creating a community survey using SurveyMonkey to better understand traffic patterns and business impacts along the Route 35 corridor from Haviland Road to the Danbury town line. Chairman Knight will prepare a draft survey for Commission review at the next meeting.

### **Entrepreneurship & Innovation:**

#### **Tiger Shark Tank**

Consultant Medoff reported that Fairfield County Bank has agreed to serve as the Title Sponsor and will provide a representative as one of the event judges. Five applications have already been received to date, and two additional sponsors have committed to supporting the event. The Commission also discussed incorporating a Ridgefield Connect networking event immediately preceding Tiger Shark Tank.

#### **Ridgefield Connect**

Consultant Medoff reported that promotional flyers have been completed and distributed through social media channels. The upcoming event on Tuesday September 15<sup>th</sup> will be hosted at Prospector Popcorn. Future networking opportunities discussed included hosting a winter event at the Lounsbury House focused on home-based businesses, organizing a business and arts & culture networking mixer, and sponsoring a commercial real estate broker networking event.

### **Marketing & Administration:**

Commissioner Gioffre reported that the Western Connecticut Tourism District is organizing a regional Halloween Trail initiative. Several Ridgefield organizations have been contacted regarding participation, including Keeler Tavern, The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, the Ridgefield Historical Society, and the Ridgefield Fathers Club.

The Commission also discussed developing a "Ridgefield for a Day" itinerary featuring local destinations while exploring opportunities to engage social media influencers.

Discussion also included improvements to ECDC email marketing through standardized formatting and organization into categories such as business events, SCORE programming, commercial real estate news, Cultural District updates, and business spotlights.

### **Budget Review:**

The Commission reviewed the proposed Fiscal Year 2026-2027 budget.

**Motion:** Perlmutter moved to approve the proposed FY 2026-2027 budget.

**Second:** Classey

**Vote:** Unanimously approved.

**Recap of Recent Events & New Business:**

Chair Knight mentioned several newly available grant and other opportunities for arts organizations that were passed along to Cultural District leadership.

Commissioner Blair mentioned Novel Movement, a new business concept combining a bookstore, yoga, and fitness uses moving onto Grove Street.

Consultant Medoff reported that work is underway on a New Business Checklist to improve the onboarding process for new businesses. The Commission also discussed distributing a survey to better understand how ECDC can assist the local business community.

The Commission noted that Tequila Escape plans to close by the end of the summer to focus on their Stamford location. A new restaurant (sports bar) has leased the current Tequila Escape space.

Due to a regular cadence of confidential commercial real estate transactions and discussions happening in Ridgefield, Chairman Knight asked that Executive Sessions be included on the agenda in all future ECDC meetings. He and the Commission confirmed that ECDC will only use Executive Sessions as allowed by law.

**Ridgebury Farm Update:**

Representatives from Ridgebury Farm discussed challenges facing local nonprofit organizations, noting increased competition for charitable donations and volunteer resources. They expressed interest in expanding the Farm's programming through additional for-profit events but explained that current licensing and regulatory requirements have limited those opportunities. Commissioner Jones suggested they reach out to other non-profit organizations in town to understand how they have navigated this in the past and successfully implemented similar operating models. Chair Knight offered to escalate to Board of Selectpersons if needed, after Ridgebury Farm spoke with other nonprofits.

**Wilton ECDC Introduction:**

No Update.

**Executive Session:**

**Motion:** Gelfman moved to enter Executive Session to discuss 650 Danbury Rd and invited Consultant Medoff to join the session as well.

**Second:** Gioffre

**Vote:** Unanimously approved.

The Commission entered Executive Session at 8:38pm.

The Commission exited Executive Session at 9:09pm.

**Motion:** Gelfman moved to adjourn the meeting.

**Second:** Classey

**Vote:** Unanimously approved.

Meeting adjourned at 9:09pm.