

Planning and Zoning Commission
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, May 26, 2026
(Revised/Approved)

ATTENDANCE

Commission & Staff

NAME	TITLE/ROLE	PRESENT		NOTES
		Yes	No	
Robert Hendrick	Chair	X		
Mariah Okrongly	Vice Chair	X		
Joe Dowdell	Commissioner	X		
Ben Nneji	Commissioner	X		via Zoom
Elizabeth DiSalvo	Commissioner	X		
Chris Molyneaux	Commissioner	X		
Joe Sorena	Commissioner		X	
Sebastian D'Acunto	Commissioner	X		via Zoom
Ben Nissim	Commissioner	X		
Aarti Paranjape	Director, (Staff)	X		

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Hendrick called meeting to order at 7:03 PM; Quorum established.

1.1. Distribution of agenda & previous minutes. (Published on Commission's webpage prior to meeting.)

1.2. Administrative Announcements & Correspondence

Ms. Paranjape mentioned the fee scheduled effective date which was proposed for June 30. She worked with the IT department of the town, and they both have to be present for it to happen. June 30 will not work due to both Ms. Paranjape and IT time off around that date. Ms. Okrongly doesn't believe that is accurate and there should be some other way to make it work but if this is actually the case then she is fine with it. Mr. Hendrick agrees with Ms. Okrongly. Ms. Paranjape will extend the timeline to July 16 with an effective July 17.

Ms. Okrongly would like to remove Alice Dew from the Town website under correspondence for mailed letters because she no longer works for the Town. All correspondence should go to the Planning and Zoning Director.

Ms. DiSalvo has been asked by contractors what is wrong with the website because they feel it is very cartoony and childish. Ms. Okrongly states this is due to the software that is used and not the Town website.

1.3. Approval of agenda.

2. ENFORCEMENT (COMPLAINTS/VIOLATIONS)

No ongoing enforcement to discuss.

3. PUBLIC HEARING(S)

- 3.1. **(Contd) A-26-1: Text Amendment** application (per RZR 9.2.b) to amend Section 2.2 – revise definitions for “Bed and Breakfast” and add new for “Short-Term Rentals”; amend Section 3.2.C.12 – Bed and Breakfast to include “Short Term Rentals”. *Commission Initiated.* <https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/104870>

Mr. Hendrick gives a brief recap of the last discussion. Ms. DiSalvo has comments on this topic. She has changed the language and shared the adjustments to the screen. She added that short-term rentals must be owned by natural persons and not entities. Ms. Okrongly disagrees with limiting Trusts. Mr. Nissim asks what the rationale is behind it being natural persons. Ms. DiSalvo agrees to scratch Trusts. Discussion led to only owning one property per town that can be rented short-term. Ms. Okrongly asked how this would be regulated. Ms. DiSalvo suggested requiring a form. Mr. Nissim stated corporations just add a name when they have experienced this limitation. The PZC asked for clarification in general on the rationale of proposed language.

Mr. Hendrick stated that the devil is in the details and what this language will limit.

The discussion is turned over to the public.

Mr. Jewell states that he has poked around for other language and helpful hints out there. He reached out to the COG who has guidelines and recommendations. He feels the PZC is in uncharted territory and ahead of the game locally as far as other towns creating this regulation.

Ms. Okrongly references some language found on the COG website. Mr. Hendrick has heard this conversation buzzed about from friends he engaged with over Memorial Weekend. The town of Stowe, VT is currently doing what Ridgefield is thinking about. They are thinking about creating a residency requirement.

Ms. DiSalvo asks if there is a way to ask if a person behind an entity can only own one rental. Mr. Hendrick believes that contractually you could limit number of rentals but as far as regulation language, he isn't sure you could prohibit common ownership. Ms. Okrongly asks if you can just check a box on the paperwork stating that you only own one property to obtain the permit.

Mr. Jewell adds that there are no secrets because this information has to be filed somewhere. But he feels if you have a residency requirement of strict limit on number of days a non-renter can rent out their property it takes care of the problem. The long-term vs short-term rental would sort out itself.

Ms. Okrongly would rather give a resident of Ridgefield more flexibility and time and limit the time of a nonresident. She feels the Ridgefield resident is paying taxes which changes her per view on the subject. If you tell the nonresident you can only do a low number of weeks, it might weed out investment companies. Mr. Hendrick thinks a simple limit for both residents and non-residents, such as only renting 6 months out of the year, it limits itself. A passive investor would not be interested because they wouldn't want to leave it empty ever if they truly aren't there.

Mr. D'Acunto thinks it would be difficult for owners of LLCs to identify who they are. He thinks the limitation is the better way because you would have difficulty with the disclosure information. Ms. DiSalvo agrees with limiting it to six months for everyone and using that as a starting point and give space for Ms. Paranjape to report back on how things are going.

Ms. DiSalvo will word smith based on this conversation and provide one more edited draft and bring this back to the table.

Mr. Dowdell suggested there were other topics such as signage and parking that might need to be revisited. Ms. DiSalvo will look into that.

Ms. Okrongly asks if there is a period of time requirement and potential 14 days then you can just do it. But anything beyond that you enter this permit territory. Mr. Hendrick agrees that language should be added for any permit necessary below a certain number of days such as 14 or so. Once you reach 14 a permit is required up to 6 months. PZC discussion continued on whether all approvals are through the Special Permit process or if any amount of time is administrative. Ms. Okrongly doesn't see a problem with someone going out of town and wanting to rent their space for a few weeks or months.

Mr. Jewell suggests sending a notification or required notification for each time it is rented so there is a way to regulate. Mr. Hendrick and Ms. Okrongly think there should be a bit of an administrative hurdle to overcome such as a \$25 fee to receive a Zoning Permit. That makes it more than a registration. Ms. Paranjape stated that one town has a contact if a complaint comes. Ms. Okrongly would like to see this as just a form. Ms. Paranjape reads some of the language for requirements that were submitted by Mr. Jewell. Mr. Hendrick states with no objection, the next draft would have a provision that would allow for a super short-term rental by Zoning Permit only. This should be kept very simple. The next level up is Special Permit.

Mr. Hendrick thinks the language should be drafted and the specifics can be changed. Mr. Dowdell recaps the conversation. Mr. Hendrick will draft the final language for the next meeting.

Hearing no additional conversation at this time, the Public hearing will be continued to the next meeting.

- 3.2. **(Contd.) A-26-3: Text Amendment** application (per RZR 9.2.B) to amend Section 7.5: Excavation Filling and Grading. *Commission Initiated.* <https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/104873>

Mr. Hendrick recapped the conversation up to this point. Alternate 1 is that a calculation is required for lot size and associated excavation filling and grading quantity. Alternative 2 is that they could leave the regulation as is and add exceptions for some zones such as smaller lot size zones such as RA and below in lot size.

Mr. Hendrick wants to know what the PZC is leaning toward.

Mr. Jewell had added some language where the smaller lots just have an exception at the bottom. He distributed this language to the PZC.

Mr. Hendrick also said that the lot sizes proposed were not the best. He thinks 10,000 square feet is a small lot. Ms. DiSalvo states there are a lot of 0.5 acre sites.

There is no additional public comment.

Mr. Hendrick will take on the drafting of the new language. This will be continued to the next meeting.

4. OLD/CONTINUED BUSINESS

- 4.1. **IF PUBLIC HEARING IS CLOSED: A-26-1: Text Amendment** application (per RZR 9.2.b) to amend Section 2.2 – revise definitions for “Bed and Breakfast” and add new for “Short-Term Rentals”; amend Section 3.2.C.12 – Bed and Breakfast to include “Short Term Rentals”. *Commission Initiated.* <https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/104870>

Public Hearing was not closed.

- 4.2. **IF PUBLIC HEARING IS CLOSED: A-26-3: Text Amendment** application (per RZR 9.2.B) to amend Section 7.5: Excavation Filling and Grading. *Commission Initiated.* <https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/104873>

Public Hearing was not closed.

- 4.3. **VDC-26-3: 407 Main Street;** Village District Application (per RZR 8.3; 5.1.B and 7.2.E.1) for exterior walls sign “Sommlike” with sign illumination and building lights located in CBD zone. *Owner: Carnall Insurance LLC; Applicant: Robert Mordente.* <https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/105173>

Mr. Mordente was present to discuss the application or answer questions. The VDC has provided comments.

Ms. Paranjape showed the sign and illumination. Mr. Mordente is just the sign guy. The application includes the sign and three light fixtures/wall sconces. Ms. Paranjape explained the history of applying for the application in front of them. Ms. Okrongly asked to see the AAC comments. The AAC comments stated that the fixture on either side of the door shall not have uplighting and the lamp shall be 3000K or lower. Ms. DiSalvo stated that three fixtures were up.

Motion made by Ms. Okrongly to approve VDC application with a note that the PZC is not approving the sconce light. The applicant should come back to discuss the sconce lights. Seconded by Mr. Molyneaux. Motion carries unanimously.

- 4.4. **SP-26-5: 66 Grove Street, Unit 1:** Revision to Special Permit (per RZR 9.2.A and 5.3) to revise the previously presented and approved fence style at “Tribeca Community School Ridgefield”. *Owner: Lisa Eng Prop: LLC Lydia Li Trust Props LLC Et Al; Applicant: Robert Jewell.* <https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/105657>

Mr. Jewell presented this application. He explained the history of the application. The application was shared on the screen to show what they are asking for.

Ms. Okrongly asks if safety/fire needs to look at this since there is change in entry and exit. Mr. Hendrick stated there was neighbor sensitivity to proximity to property line. Ms. Okrongly is asking what an entrance and exit is for. Mr. Jewell called the owner to ask what the purpose of the gate in the back is. The owner was on the phone and could not be heard but his response was mimic’d by Mr. Jewell. The gate is a latched gate that is used as an emergency exit only and there would be an adult with the children in the event of an emergency. The parents would not be entering or exiting that gate. Ms. Okrongly agrees with that but thinks there should be signage stating no exit and no entrance. The applicant does not have to go back to AAC for the informational sign.

Mr. Nissim asks about the 4 inches between fence posts. Ms. DiSalvo says that is building code.

Motion made by Ms. Okrongly with one Special Condition that the fence should have an emergency entrance and exit sign on the interior and exterior of the gate. Seconded by Mr. Molyneaux. Motion carries unanimously.

- 4.5. **SP-26-6: 137 Ethan Allen Hwy:** Revision to a Special Permit (per RZR 9.2.A and 5.2.D.5) for change of use from retail to manufacturing, production of food item-Popcorn for “Prospector popcorn LLC” in B-2 Zone. *Owner: BHD Ridgefield Realty LLC; Applicant: Robert Jewell.* <https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/105648>

Mr. Jewell is present to discuss the application. He gives the history of the application. He is asking for approval that the manufacture and production of food on site. Ms. Okrongly commends the language and application. She felt it was very clear what they were asking for. Mr. Hendrick thinks food manufacturing is similar to pharmaceuticals and similar to the production next door of beer which is similar to food.

Mr. Nissim asks if an approval by the Commission is applicable to any food processing moving forward if it is approved in this instance. Mr. Hendrick says that yes, in the B-2 zone, any food manufacturing is the same. Mr. Jewell thinks it is based on the product and process involved. Alternatively, Mr. Jewell was going to apply for an

amendment to the zoning regulations to include the manufacture of food, because it can make sense in this zone. He asks the PZC to consider this as part of their regulation amendments.

Motion made by Mr. D'Acunto to approve the application with finding that the specific food manufacturing use is in the same general character as the uses listed in D.5. Seconded by Mr. Nneji. Motion carries unanimously.

4.6. Temporary Moratorium Activities

4.6.1. MISC-26-1: General Regulation and Zones review. c/o Chair

Ms. Okrongly would like to screenshare and show her sustainability requirement. She also has left several voicemails to talk to the Hartford tree expert.

She shares information about sustainability and the POCD. Discussion was to make it meatier and add it to the Special Permit process. She isn't sure if the statement is needed but there are different criteria they can say yes or no. Ms. Okrongly states it is important that the applicant thinks about the POCD and sustainability at the start of the project and not later. This addresses a lot of points in the POCD. Mr. Hendrick recaps the two parts of the proposal: one is to add an actual item under the Special permit criteria and then two to add a checklist in Section 10.2.e to the checklists that go along with applications. Ms. Okrongly thinks these are questions she and often Ms. DiSalvo always ask applicants. It is a way to make sure these questions are addressed without having to ask the same questions every time. Mr. Dowdell asks if there are explanations when they answer Yes. Ms. Okrongly states Yes or No both require explanation. There is an option for NA and an explanation why. Ms. Nissim asks if all questions are pulled directly from the POCD. Ms. Okrongly says they all span different sections of the POCD. Ms. Okrongly states that the POCD doesn't say the exact language used in the checklist but they are all the same concepts. Ms. Okrongly is disappointed that applicants often do not review or reference the POCD which is the guide for the PZC. She hopes this forces the applicants to think about the applications in the context of what is best for the Town. Ms. DiSalvo recommends references sections for each Yes/No question. Ms. Okrongly states they are sustainability that is weaved throughout the whole document and not just a specific section. Mr. Dowdell suggests that this document would make Public Hearings go more smoothly because these questions are always asked. Mr. Nissim thinks this makes sense and is significant policy. He thinks that this is a significant policy making decision. Ms. Okrongly stated that this document is helping give more strength and better information so that when the PZC makes decisions it is in line with what the town wants and needs. Ms. DiSalvo thinks big applications can use fire/safety/health for denial but whenever something discussed in the POCD comes up it has less substance. Why can't the POCD be a strong policy or reason for denial. Ms. Okrongly believes the POCD requirement is in line with the POCD. She feels this document actually makes them consider it. Mr. Hendrick discusses 8-30g applications.

Ms. DiSalvo asked about the Abbott Avenue question and if it was an 8-30g application. Ms. Paranjape said they have not submitted an application. Ms. DiSalvo asked if there was a world where this document could be in front of them prior to having to fill out the application. Mr. Hendrick stated that the applicant should be meeting with staff prior to coming in front of the Board. Ms. Okrongly states that if you have feedback and the Commission feels good about it, it should be the message the PZC sends. Mr. Hendrick states that if the language is cleaned up it could be finalized at the next meeting.

Mr. Nneji states that he likes the idea very much and that this will be very beneficial to driving more sustainability projects in Town. He is going to send Ms. Okrongly feedback on ideas on how maybe we could give incentives to allow people to willingly and gladly want to go in this direction. He says that based on laws, the PZC cannot exceed building codes. Ms. Okrongly thinks what he is saying is a good idea, but fast tracking some permits is a good idea. Ms. DiSalvo states that the incentive is to do this checklist so they can get their project approved regardless of building permit.

Mr. Hendrick thinks Mr. Nneji is getting to a level of specificity that is not being suggested here.

Mr. Nissim asks if there is a value to leading the language into the sustainability landscape. He also thinks it is important to discuss this checklist.

Mr. Hendrick would like Ms. Oksongly to tie everything to public health and safety and update the language for the Public Hearing.

Mr. Hendrick shared his screen and showed the Capital Region of Connecticut, and which Towns had good sustainability standards in their regulations. This document was from 2013. He will circulate to the PZC and be sure Ms. Paranjape adds this to the file.

Mr. Nneji asks if there is time to discuss the under one acre density bonus language rewrite. He shared his screen for discussion because he has not had a chance to circulate the updated language. Mr. Nneji wanted to pull out the benefits of what this regulation does to reduce the barriers to homeowners and adding affordable units. Overall, he presented it as a bonus to benefit the applicant. There is a checklist included as a way to navigate the process.

Ms. DiSalvo is concerned about some of the allowances and thoughts on how to adapt those specifics. She also thinks they need to be less specific on what it should look like. She thinks it should in general look like a single-family home but the language should be less specific. Mr. Nissim asks Ms. DiSalvo for clarification on her comments. Ms. DiSalvo says she is not comfortable with the language because someone could easily go from apartment back to single family home. Ms. DiSalvo also thinks the language needs to be less specific about where housing components should be because it is getting into opinion vs regulation. Ms. Paranjape also states that it is not specified if units are attached or detached. Current regulation language specifies that, and the regulations need to be consistent. Mr. Nneji asks for some clarification on that. Ms. Paranjape references specifics on excavation, grading, and filling. Mr. Hendrick thinks fundamentally he needs to know if the PZC in general supports the concept of fast tracking and removing virtually all burden on projects that would allow for the development of dwelling units on land as long as it has water and sewer. He feels it is a massive policy shift from what is currently in existence.

Ms. Oksongly thinks it would take many meetings to get this language correctly. This could be a slippery slope if not done properly. Mr. Hendrick suggests giving feedback offline and also let the PZC let Mr. Nneji know if they are not supportive of the regulation. Overall, it doesn't sound like the PZC is supportive of this concept.

Ms. DiSalvo has the language for trees to discuss but will need more time. Mr. Hendrick also has language for items he has been working on but will discuss at the next meeting.

4.6.2. **MISC-25-3:** Branchville Strategic Review

This was not discussed.

5. **NEW BUSINESS**

5.1. Regular Meeting Minutes – May 12, 2026

Motion made by Mr. Molyneaux to approve minutes as amended, if amended. Seconded by Mr. Nissim. Motion passes and it is unanimous.

6. **ADJOURN**

Hearing no further business or public discussion, meeting adjourned at 9:21 PM.

Submitted by Beth Peyser,
Recording Secretary (via video recording)

FOOTNOTES:

PZC =Town of Ridgefield Planning and Zoning Commission

RZR = Town of Ridgefield Zoning Regulations

CGS = Connecticut General Statutes