

Planning and Zoning Commission
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, June 23, 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		
Elizabeth DiSalvo	Commissioner	X		via Zoom
Chris Molyneaux	Commissioner	X		
Joe Sorena	Commissioner	X		
Sebastian D'Acunto	Commissioner		X	
Ben Nissim	Commissioner	X		
Aarti Paranjape	Director, (Staff)	X		

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Hendrick called meeting to order at 7:01 PM; Quorum established.

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

1.2. Administrative Announcements & Correspondence

- Mr. Hendrick wanted to make sure the PZC was aware that presentation from RACE at the last meeting covered two separate topics. They suggested amending the regulations to ensure native and noninvasive plants are used in projects. They also suggested advancing Dark Sky and Lights Out. Mr. Hendrick suggested if anyone is interested, the experts will be putting on a presentation at the library at 7PM on June 25 and it is open for all to attend.
- Ms. Paranjape received one piece of correspondence about 63 Prospect Street.

1.3. Approval of agenda.

No comments on changes.

2. ENFORCEMENT (COMPLAINTS/VIOLATIONS)

No ongoing enforcement to discuss.

3. PUBLIC HEARING(S)

- 3.1. **(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 gave a quick recap of this discussion and the history of discussion over the past few meetings. The PZC has received feedback and done some edits. Mr. Sorena had additions for the conversation and had a formula he found from elsewhere that could be used. Mr. Sorena agreed with the Board language but has not read the submissions Mr. Jewell gave to the Board. Mr. Hendrick went through the existing language on the table and gave a general overview of the changes that have occurred throughout the hearing process. He spent time on the chart that was included for steep pile, moderate pile, and flatter piles. The general idea from Mr. Jewell was that the revised proposal was based on the concept that the language should be revised for small lots. Mr. Jewell suggested a small lot size. Discussion ensued by the PZC, particularly Mr. Sorena and Mr. Hendrick, over calculations and what made sense for cubic yards and lot size. Ms. Paranjape suggests that a new construction might be a special circumstance. Mr. Hendrick suggests a ceiling for applications. Ms. Okrongly asked if Mr. Sorena could have edits to the draft language within the month by the July 28 meeting.

The Public Hearing remains open until additional draft language has been finalized.

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>

Mr. Hendrick shared the document to go through the background/reasons/findings for Short-Term Rentals. He then opened the floor for discussion by the PZC Members. Mr. Nissim asked about the language “permitted with special permit” and lodging nights vs lodging stays. Ms. DiSalvo does not remember the language proposed. Mr. Hendrick reiterates that the language says up to 180 lodging nights or 6 lodging stays per year. Ms. DiSalvo thinks that is too restrictive and that there should be no limit to the stays. She thinks 180 nights per year is too stringent but could get onboard with that. Mr. Hendrick suggests an alternate proposal for language from Ms. DiSalvo. Ms. DiSalvo suggests just removing the limit of stays. Mr. Dowdell suggests adding a number that is high if we think it won’t happen. Mr. Sorena thinks if you don’t restrict it could turn into a boarding house. Mr. Hendrick suggests that the statement in background and reasons is that they do not want to encourage high turnover. Ms. DiSalvo discusses a typical Airbnb. Ms. Okrongly states that odds are that it won’t happen but why not just add a number to create a ceiling. Ms. DiSalvo suggests a limit of 26 weeks so it could be rented once each week. Mr. Hendrick did the math to explain what the suggested language change would mean in overall calendar days per year. Ms. Okrongly stated that she is okay expanding beyond six but isn’t sure if she feels like 26 is too much. If it was her neighbor, she might have concerns. Ms. DiSalvo suggests that if the goal is to allow Airbnb’s then that is what they are drafting language to do. Mr. Hendrick states that regulations are different in each town. Mr. Sorena is against 26. He thinks it is too high. Ms. Okrongly reminds the PZC that this is a Special Permit so this is the limit that each application could reach. But a special condition on the permit is that you could allow a certain number of stays. Mr. Sorena asks if we want to allow an Airbnb market or if we want to regulate an Airbnb market. Ms. DiSalvo believes we are trying to allow it. Mr. Hendrick agrees with Ms. DiSalvo that we want to allow it but also that it should be regulated. Ms. Okrongly feels that the PZC is generally okay with 26 because it is still PZC regulated with a Special Permit.

Ms. DiSalvo makes a motion to change the language in the proposed draft language to increase 3 to 6 stays for a Zoning Permit and 6 stays to 26 stays allowed under a Special Permit per calendar year. A Zoning Permit would remain the same as previously proposed. Seconded by Mr. Nneji. Motion passes unanimously.

With the above motion, the PZC continued discussing the language on the table. The PZC brainstorms activities in which the middle zone will occur and not be that disruptive such as graduation, weddings, family reunions, etc. Mr. Hendrick also reminded the PZC that the bed and breakfast used to not have a limit on the number of bedrooms but it had been changed to include 1 to 5 bedrooms in a home, a multi-family building, or an accessory building. The key thing about a bed and breakfast is that the owner must be on site or nearby. A short-term rental does not require the owner to be on site. Mr. Nissim asks how this impacts existing Airbnb's. The PZC does not believe there are any that don't comply with this language. Ms. DiSalvo asks if five was the correct number for bedrooms. Mr. Dowdell suggests making it much higher for room count, and then each Special Permit could state the defined number of rooms within the public hearing. Mr. Hendrick suggests that the definitions from a zoning standpoint are not strong to define an inn vs a bed and breakfast. Discussion ensued by the PZC surrounding the number of bedrooms and definitions. Mr. Hendrick suggests altering the language to remove one to five bedrooms and replacing it with multiple rooms with no defined number. Ms. DiSalvo thinks the PZC should define an AirBnb by number of rooms and that an Inn is something larger than whatever the limit for AirBnb is. Ms. Paranjape states that an inn is not allowed in a residential zone. Ms. DiSalvo suggests six at least. Mr. Nneji suggests eight. Mr. Hendrick states ten or less.

Motion made by Mr. Dowdell to define the Airbnb by having maximum of eight bedrooms and a higher count is an inn. Seconded by Mr. Nneji. Motion passes unanimously.

Mr. Hendrick asks if the PZC wants to vote or read through and digest the language more until the next meeting. Mr. Nissim asks if Ms. Paranjape is comfortable with the proposed fees. Mr. Hendrick goes through the proposed fees for discussion. Ms. Paranjape asks about legal notice. Mr. Nissim asks when this would be effective if it passes today. Ms. Paranjape states that it could be effective July 17. Mr. Hendrick suggests August 3. Ms. Okrongly suggests if there is any stress on August 1 then switch it to September 1. The PZC has given Ms. Paranjape discretion based on what makes sense from a paperwork perspective.

Mr. Hendrick had circulated a draft of definitions to tighten language on definitions. That is going to be for future discussion on an entirely separate proposed regulation. It is not applicable to this.

Motion made by Mr. Dowdell to adopt the regulation including edits as discussed this meeting for short-term rentals and for bedroom limits. Seconded by Ms. DiSalvo. Motion passes unanimously. Effective date will be August 1 or as suggested by staff.

- 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. **(Contd.) VDC-26-4: 451 Main St: Village District Application** (per RZR 8.3; 5.1.b; 7.2.E.1; 7.2.G) to replace existing sign with illuminated sign "Mariner Tavern" with day/night vinyl with 4000k. *Owner: Ridgefield Equities; Appl: Matt Haskell.* <https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/105960>

Mr. Haskell was present to represent the application. Ms. Paranjape shared the information on the screen while Mr. Haskell gave an overview of the sign being proposed. For "The Mariner Tavern". The AAC had a recommendation to create a sign that conformed more with other signs in the plaza. Ms. Okrongly asked why they did not conform to the sign standards. Mr. Haskell stated that the owner approved the design as proposed. Mr. Hendrick clarifies that the property owner consents to the sign. Mr. Hendrick clarifies Ms. Okrongly's question which is, why does the applicant think he does not need to conform as advised by the AAC. Mr. Hendrick asks why Mr. Haskell believes the sign proposed is better than a conformed plan. Mr. Haskell

believes the plan is outdated and the sign suggestions are too small. Mr. Haskell believes this is an opportunity to modernize the plaza. This is the only sign on the fascia except the CVS sign. Mr. Haskell believes more visible signage as proposed attracts more traffic to the restaurant. Mr. Hendrick asks about the actual sign itself and lighting. Historically, the PZC is cautious of lighting. Mr. Hendrick asks Mr. Haskell to address the need for lighting for the sign. Mr. Hendrick asks why the existing lighting regulations are not appropriate. Mr. Haskell states that the aesthetic is sharper for the proposed sign. He also believes the architectural issue with the goose neck lighting is the size of the fascia. He does not believe there is enough space and the letters would have to be decreased in size significantly and they would be very difficult to read defeating the purpose of attempting to draw people in. Ms. Okrongly is not opposed to the signage being on the fascia. She doesn't believe the sign should be so different from the rest of the green signs in the plaza. Mr. Nissim asks if this is the first of all the businesses that would come back to ask for this change. Mr. Sorena states that we are trying to promote business to all the businesses in towns and if the owner believes that this will promote business he is supporting. Ms. DiSalvo has mixed feelings. She likes the idea of the matching, but she does agree that they are the only place open there at night and they should be allowed some lighting on the sign. She feels that this sign proposal is out of character for Ridgefield. Ms. Okrongly states that if they took what is currently there and put it on the fascia, that is better than what is currently proposed. Ms. Okrongly states that the existing signs are all above the sidewalk by the window. Ms. DiSalvo is not opposed to seeing visible signage but believes this one is big and lit. Mr. Dowdell asks what technical details don't meet regulations. Mr. Hendrick says that overall the signage meets the regulations aside from the lighting. Ms. DiSalvo believes this should be postponed until a future meeting and receive additional feedback from VDC/AAC. Ms. Okrongly also states that the other signs in the plaza are just text and this also has a logo making it very different. She believes this sign is not in harmony with the plaza. Mr. Hendrick states that the PZC is able to regulate based on health and safety which in this case is distraction. Mr. DiSalvo states that it is not in harmony with the town. Ms. Okrongly states that the AAC finds the sign is not conforming and they recommend a design more compatible which should be taken into consideration. Ms. Okrongly asks if you could have lights on the side if the font was a little smaller. Ms. DiSalvo suggests minimizing slightly you could then fit a light. Ms. Okrongly is happy to advertise for a small business but asks if it could be a sign with light on top and more in harmony. Ms. DiSalvo likes Ms. Okrongly's suggestion. Ms. DiSalvo suggests that the proposed sign feels strip mall looks. Mr. Hendrick states that the PZC could send this back to the VDC for another round with a note including the PZC thoughts for the VDC to take into consideration. Ms. Okrongly would rather Mr. Hendrick asks Mr. Haskell if he prefers not taking a vote and sending Mr. Haskell back to the VDC to tweak the design. He hears the PZC points being made. On June 9 the VDC suggested shrinking the sign to 12 inches. The VDC were in favor of internally illuminated but the property owner would have to come back and update their unified sign plan to allow the sign to conform. Mr. Haskell would push back on the overhead lighting due to the space. He mentions the 4000k. Mr. Hendrick does not want to deny the application and start all over if he would agree to continue after getting feedback from the AAC/VDC. Mr. Haskell is willing to continue if he is given a list of points that address. The property owner is pretty insistent to approve the sign as designed. Mr. Haskell supports coming back with modifications. Mr. Hendrick suggests modifying the plans and going back to the VDC/AAC for comment. If it is not possible then Zoning staff could work out the details.

Ms. DiSalvo modification suggestions:

- Make letters smaller
- Light from below or above.
- Not allow the sign to light up themselves.

Failure of this motion does not equal denial. Failure to approve will require the applicant to go back and revise the plans. Motion made by Mr. Nneji to approve the application notwithstanding the AAC/VDC advise. Seconded by Mr. Sorena. Vote 3-4-0. Motion fails.

The discussion will continue at the next meeting. Mr. Hendrick would like to send comments to the VDC based on this discussion.

- 4.4. **REF-26-2:** 66 Prospect Street, 8-24 Referral application for the construction of rain garden approximately 110' x 30' with depression of 18 inches in the lawn next to skate park to address impervious surface coverage at 66 Prospect Street aka 90 East Ridge Road Parcel ID E15-0203. *Owner: Town of Ridgefield; Applicant: Jake Muller DPS/Joseph Canas.* <https://ridgefield.ct.portal.opengov.com/records/106136>

Mr. Hendrick discussed the general overview of this application. Mr. Muller is present to discuss the referral on behalf of the Town. Mr. Canas is present to discuss the application. Mr. Muller gave introductory remarks relating the referral to updating drainage for the MS4. Mr. Canas discusses the engineering aspect and shares the plans on the screen. Mr. Sorena asks about the contours and how they do not appear to be favorable. Mr. Sorena also asks about the health and public safety. He is concerned about pooling water and mosquitoes. Mr. Sorena would like to see long and cross sections. Mr. Hendrick asks to see pipes vs berms to understand flow. Ms. Okrongly asks about parking overflow. Cars are currently parked in this grass when there is overflow necessary at the Ridgefield Playhouse. Mr. Muller states that approximately 10 to 15 parking spots would be lost.

Motion made by Ms. Okrongly for a positive referral report. Seconded by Mr. Nissim. Motion passes unanimously.

4.5. Temporary Moratorium Activities

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

Mr. Hendrick stated that there is new business for the receipt of the sustainability standards below. Conversation will be reserved for future meeting discussion.

Mr. Hendrick discusses adjustments to the notice to abutters. He did a recap of the proposal which includes a modification to who gets notified for the permit process for a public hearing. He suggests modifying based on zone.

Discussion ensued and it was well received by the PZC. Some edits will be made based on the conversation and the language will be redistributed.

Ms. Okrongly made a motion to initiate a new regulation amendment application for receipt on July 14 and schedule the public hearing. Seconded by Mr. Nneji. Motion passes unanimously.

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

Mr. Hendrick asked if the PZC had an opportunity to read the memo by Francisco. The merger occurred approximately a year ago but it took time for the branding to go through. Mr. Sorena suggested allowing this discussion to continue into the future so everyone has time to read and digest. This will take time to discuss.

Mr. Hendrick mentions Public Act 25-1 and the updates to the regulations that may be required. This, among other things, requires the PZC to change to create what will essentially be a review procedure similar to Special Permits but without public hearing. It will also include changing regulations to mention middle housing. Discussion continued by the PZC on whether any additional Towns had adopted regulations related to this. Wilton has started discussions and made progress.

Mr. Hendrick suggests a Special Meeting to discuss Branchville and also include Public Act 25-1 which was supposed to occur in June. Mr. Hendrick suggests a Special Meeting in the middle of a site walk on a Sunday in the coming weeks. Mr. Sorena does not like the idea of doing it on a Sunday. Ms. Okrongly suggests a remote meeting on an off Tuesday. Ms. DiSalvo liked the Sunday morning but is also open to Zoom and a Special Meeting.

Motion made by Ms. DiSalvo to schedule a Special Meeting for Tuesday, June 30 at 6:30PM in both person and Zoom option. Seconded by Mr. Molyneaux. Motion carries unanimously.

5. NEW BUSINESS

- 5.1. **A-26-5:** Text Amendment Application (per RZR 9.2.b) TO AMEND Section 2.2 – Definitions, Add Section 7.18 – Sustainability Standards, Section 9.2.A.5.k – Sustainable design and site development, Section 10.2.E.27 – Special Permit Checklist. Commission Initiated. To receive and schedule Public Hearing on July 14th.
<https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/106290>

Motion made by Mr. Sorena to receive and schedule for public hearing on July 14, 2026. Seconded by Mr. Nissim. Motion carries unanimously.

- 5.2. Regular Meeting Minutes – July 9, 2026

Motion made by Mr. Okrongly to approve as amended, if amended. Seconded by Mr. Molyneaux. Motion passes unanimously.

6. ADJOURN

Hearing no further business or public discussion, meeting adjourned at 9:38 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