

Planning and Zoning Commission
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, July 14, 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		
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 7:00 PM; Quorum established.

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

1.2. Administrative Announcements & Correspondence

- None

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 shared his screen to discuss language. Mr. Sorena had made edits to the language based on previous discussion. He created a table that Mr. Hendrick went through. Ms. Okrongly asked if the table would be in the regulation. Ms. Paranjape clarified some of the current regulations and how these changes could impact current regulations.

Public Hearing continued.

- 3.2. **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.* <https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/106290>

This is a new public hearing topic. Ms. Paranjape read the legal notice into the record. Ms. Okrongly took the lead on this language and discussed the background of this text amendment. The POCD is part of the Special Permit process and suggests highlighting these points, so they are considered while the applicant is pulling together the application packet.

Mr. Hendrick opened the floor for public comment.

Alex Bellina, 26 Marcardon Avenue, Ridgefield. He is an architect in town. He has concerns that the PZC could take the lead on sustainability and interpreting what that means in an application. His comment relates to pedestrian and bike access and how that is discussed in the POCD. There was discussion about a shuttle to eliminate so much traffic. He doesn't believe that there is comparable value for R value. He is trying to understand the science of building and smart building a community and how that ties into the PZC push for this. He feels that Special Permits are use based and therefore it shouldn't necessarily be regulated in this manner. He has concerns about the requirement for sidewalk and how that has negatively impacted him in the past. He asks that if this becomes part of the Zoning Regulations, while he wants to push sustainability, he thinks some of the current zoning regulations would need to be amended, including no ground based solar.

Discussion occurred back and forth between the PZC and Mr. Bellina during his comment period earlier. Ms. DiSalvo and Ms. Okrongly feel that this regulation as proposed is a tool to think about and enforce the POCD so it is the best and most put together application packet when it comes in front of the PZC. They agree that this checklist can be answered NA, based on the application.

Ms. Paranjape mentions the City of Stamford has recently passed sustainability regulations. They have it organized as a "Sustainability Score Card" which she shares on the screen. There is a table and form. Ms. Okrongly asks which applications would trigger this. Ms. Paranjape reads the language off the form. She recommends reading this in more detail. Ms. Okrongly and Ms. DiSalvo like the idea of this score card and giving a letter grade based on the application based on the criteria on the score card.

Mr. Hendrick summarizes that Ms. Okrongly and Ms. DiSalvo want to show that what this checklist is for is clearly explaining to the public what the PZC is looking for in an application and it helps clarify what the PZC already asks for and looks at. Ms. DiSalvo states that it will help an applicant understand that we are not challenging the applicant, but that these are the expectations. Ms. Okrongly stated that so much is on the PZC members to ask the questions about whether the points of the POCD have been acknowledged. But now it is in a checklist form and these questions should be transparent about what the PZC is going to ask for.

No further comment from the PZC or Public.

Motion made by Mr. Molyneaux to close the Public Hearing. Seconded by Ms. DiSalvo. Motion passes unanimously.

4. OLD/CONTINUED BUSINESS

- 4.1. **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.

- 4.2. **IF PUBLIC HEARING IS CLOSED: 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.*

<https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/106290>

The Public Hearing is closed. Ms. DiSalvo wants to go back to the POCD to see if there are any additional categories that should or could be included. Noting that Ms. Okrongly hit 80% of the topic discussed on sustainability in the POCD so she would like to see if they could hit 100%. Ms. Okrongly states that the PZC needs to think about more than today but into the future on how the Ridgefield community can sustain its population in a similar manner into the future.

Ms. DiSalvo suggests labeling the list something other than “sustainable”. Mr. Hendrick suggests that they are adding a special permit criteria separate from the POCD that is specific to sustainability. He reminds the PZC that a minor adjustment can be made to a permit after the PZC discussion, but he isn’t sure they should expand the scope beyond what it is currently, which is a sustainability regulation.

Ms. DiSalvo states that she thinks she would like to take a minute this week to look at the whole POCD from a different person perspective and see if there is anything else that can be included. Ms. Okrongly is in support. Ms. Okrongly asks if changes can be made with the Public Hearing closed. Mr. Hendrick states that they need to be careful about making small tweaks to the published document. Changing the scope of the regulation is too large of a change. It would be new information. Ms. Okrongly states the options and what could happen as next steps. The PZC would like to possibly come back and amend the checklist after they review the POCD for additional subjects.

Motion made by Mr. Molyneaux to approve the draft as presented. Seconded by Ms. DiSalvo. Motion passes unanimously.

4.3. Temporary Moratorium Activities

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

Mr. Hendrick mentions the expansion of the business district. Feedback suggests a discussion with the VDC to understand how this would impact his perspective.

4.3.2. MISC-25-3: Branchville Strategic Review

Discussion was held at a Special Meeting and the PZC will arrange for Francisco to come back. Ms. Okrongly mentions that the PZC talked about how they need to make stronger statements on housing as of right. Mr. Hendrick clarifies that a new section of the regulations must be written for a Summary Review. Ms. Okrongly asks if they should be putting a list together for items that are part of a summary review. Mr. Hendricks states that this list is in existence and a requirement by the state. Ms. Okrongly suggests making a comment such as the buildings must have a front porch. Mr. Hendrick explains the law and how it is a lot more like a checklist of requirements given by the state. Ms. Okrongly asks if they should be working on the language. Ms. Paranjape reads the language from the Public Act to the PZC. Ms. Okrongly asks where the consultant will pull the draft language. Mr. Hendrick states that they will be pulling language from other towns. Ms. Okrongly states she would like to stress test the language.

Ms. DiSalvo mentions moratorium for data centers. Mr. Hendrick states that currently nowhere in the zoning regulations allow for a data center. Therefore, it is prohibited because it is not permitted. Ms. Okrongly suggests that it could be better or strongly to explicitly state that. Ms. Paranjape suggests clarifying is a good idea because an applicant might try to use a data center as another use stated in the regulations. Mr. Hendrick clarifies that the only person who could interpret something that way would be the PZ Office staff.

Mr. Hendrick suggests not entirely prohibiting them. If it was in a place where it would not have impact, it might actually benefit the town. Ms. Okrongly mentions that some towns are not allowing connections. General

consensus is that someone presents language and the PZC discusses. Ms. DiSalvo suggests that power, water, and noise seem to be the largest concerns.

Ms. Okrongly mentions the notice to abutters. Mr. Hendrick states that it is below for receipt and scheduling a public hearing.

Ms. Paranjape suggests discussing a new topic. People are bringing in applications for temporary pop-up swimming pools. Section 3.4.A states that a minor accessory structure of a certain size can be permitted without a permit if below 24 inches. This subject arose when the building inspector found a popup pool on an individual pool over 36 inches and it needed a permit. There is no language differentiating between a temporary two-month pool than a permanent pool. The homeowner complained to the First Selectman. Ms. Paranjape says that pop-up hot tubs and spas are popping up.

Mr. Dowdell says he would lean toward approving it. Ms. Okrongly is concerned about having no cover on the swimming pools. Ms. DiSalvo asks if tree houses are applicable. Discussion continued about fences and pool covers and temporary versus permanent.

Mr. Hendrick thinks this is an interesting subject but that there are other things on the A list. Ms. Paranjape encourages the PZC to consider language for this prior to next summer.

5. NEW BUSINESS

- 5.1. **VDC-26-5: 18 Bailey Ave: Village District Application** (per RZR 8.3; 5.1.B; 7.2.E.1; 7.2.G. and 7.8) to paint exterior, replace existing exterior light fixtures, new awning and replace existing cabinet sign with smaller backlit sign “Jill Rae Designs” in CBD zone. *Owner: Donnelly LLC; Appl: Jillian Rae. For receipt and discussion.* <https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/106198>

Ms. Paranjape mentions that this was received last meeting, and she was supposed to come, but is not present. There is a positive referral from the VDC and therefore Mr. Hendrick stated that the PZC could act on it. The applicant uploaded a front stoop plan, and it was approved by the VDC after the comments came out. Ms. DiSalvo has questions about the lighting. This sign was compared to lighting behind the recent Mariner sign that the PZC had concerns with.

Ms. Paranjape discusses comments in the staff report. Mr. Hendrick suggests tabling it if there are concerns and waiting for the applicant to come in. Or they can vote to approve.

Motion made by Mr. Molyneaux to approve the application as presented with conditions in the staff report. Seconded by Ms. DiSalvo. Motion carries unanimously.

- 5.2. **VDC-26-6: 7 Bailey Ave: Village District Application** (per RZR 8.3; 5.1.B; 7.2.E.1) to paint exterior, new awning and window lettering “Lilia” in CBD zone. *Owner: Urstadt Biddle Properties Inc; Appl: Teresa Meyer. For receipt and schedule discussion. (Staff suggests discussion on July 28th)* <https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/106378>

Motion made by Ms. DiSalvo to receive and schedule for discussion July 28, 2026. Seconded by Mr. Molyneaux. Motion carries unanimously.

- 5.3. **SP-26-7: 0 Ethan Allen Hwy: Special Permit Application** (per RZR 9.2.A and 5.3.D.13) to create a golf driving range, parking area and related improvements in B-2 Zone. *Owner: EAP Property; Applicant: Robert Jewell. For receipt and schedule Public Hearing. (Staff suggests sitewalk on July 26 or September 20 and Public Hearing on September 8 or 22nd)* <https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/106587>

Ms. Okrongly may have to recuse herself because her husband is an avid golfer.

Motion made by Ms. DiSalvo to receive and schedule for site walk on July 26, 2026 with public hearing on September 8, 2026. Seconded by Mr. Molyneaux. Motion carries unanimously.

- 5.4. **A-26-6: Text Amendment Application** (per RZR p.2.B) to amend Section 9.3.L: Notice of Hearing (Mailing to Nearby Owners). *Commission Initiated. To receive and schedule Public Hearing.*
<https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/106579>

Motion made by Mr. Dowdell to receive and schedule for public hearing on July 28, 2026. Seconded by Mr. Molyneaux. Motion carries unanimously.

- 5.5. Meeting Minutes - Regular Meeting, June 23, 2026
Special Meeting, June 30, 2026

Motion made by Mr. Dowdell to approve the meeting minutes for June 23 and June 30 as amended, if amended. Seconded by Mr. Molyneaux. Motion passes unanimously.

6. ADJOURN

Hearing no further business or public discussion, meeting adjourned at 8:45 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