



**Ridgefield  
Economic &  
Community  
Development  
Commission**

**400 Main Street • Ridgefield, CT 06877 • 203-431-2700**

Glori Norwitt - Chair  
Geoffrey Morris – Secretary  
Sean Dowd  
Kay Gelfman  
Jennifer Gioffre  
Brittney Howell  
Bob Knight  
Mark Riser  
Jonathan Winn

Rudy Marconi, First Selectman  
[ridgefieldct.com](http://ridgefieldct.com)

**Economic & Community Development Commission  
Approved Minutes  
December 4, 2023, at 6:30 pm  
in-person in Town Hall Large Conference Room**

The meeting called to order at 6:34 pm

**In attendance:** Chair Glori Norwitt, Secretary Geoffrey Morris, Commissioners Sean Dowd, Mark Riser, Jonathan Winn, Kay Gelfman, Jennifer Gioffre

Meeting began at 6:33 pm

**Announcements**

Next meeting: January 8, 2024

Approval of **November Minutes**. Morris moves to approve the November minutes without changes, Norwitt 2nds. All in favor.

Approval of **2024 ECDC meeting schedule**: January 8, February 5, March 4, April 1, May 13, June 3, July 1, August 5, September 9, October 7, November 4, December 2; all meetings at 6:30 pm in lower-level conference room of Town Hall. Morris motions to approve the 2024 ECDC meeting schedule, Gelfman 2nds. All in favor.

**Public Comment**

No comments.

## **Recap of Recent Events**

Following up his presentation at ECDC-led Tiger-Shark Tank on October 24 in front of 300 people at the Ridgefield Playhouse, Jeff McChesney of Target Arm wants to assist the Town with creating a new robotics center of excellence in Western CT. Commissioner Dowd, who oversaw TST, will follow up.

Norwitt motions to add to the agenda the RHS business teachers and broadband discussion, Morris 2nds. All in favor.

## **RHS Business Teachers**

Four members from the Ridgefield High School Business Department joined the meeting: Bob Keyes, Jesse Peterkin, Patricia Andrews, Kelly Predham. Fostering connections with the business community, solving problems that businesses face. The RHS business symposium has been going on for seven years and it grows every year: last year there were 200 students attending. Did a project with the Ridgefield Thrift Shop to help build volunteers at the youth level. Thrift Shop fashion show at the symposium. Breakout sessions and workshops take place with business leaders who share experiences, update LinkedIn profiles, and more. They have done website redesigns, and more.

## **Business Connections (Gioffre)**

Reconnecting with a group in Texas who has used Blu Dot business connection group in the hopes of giving ECDC information for hosting a rewards program for Ridgefield businesses for holiday 2024. Possibly enlisting the help of RHS students in the process.

## **Business Programs (Riser)**

To assist people to navigate a Business Formation, Commissioner Riser updated the “Guide to Opening a Business in Ridgefield.” Now, the Library is planning to host a program to discuss the “Guide to Opening a Business in Ridgefield.”

## **Cultural District (Norwitt, Morris)**

Norwitt was contacted by a researcher at Wayne State University who is studying arts and cultural districts throughout the US, and working with a team of other researchers from Boise State University, Cleveland State University, University of Arizona, and University of Wisconsin. Per request, Norwitt completed the Arts and Cultural Districts Survey 2023 from the NEA Place Arts and Cultural Systems (PACS) Lab. PACS is using the survey results to serve arts and cultural district organizations and neighbors by creating a typology and national public database of arts and cultural characteristics, using the database to analyze patterns of diversity equity and inclusion, identifying good practices for district types, geographies and capacities, and developing and sharing a flexible arts and cultural district toolkit for communities with a range of resources and needs.

The Cultural District workgroup met in November. The Data Collection group is drafting a Data Collection survey/questionnaire. The Budget group will meet soon.

The CD marketing group established a plan that awaits a budget: Roll out a spring campaign for March or April 2024 that includes posters on MTA trains along the New Haven line, supported by targeted email marketing by the CT Hearst Media Group, along with social media. The CD marketing group also proposes getting an outside group to help the CD establish an Instagram presence, which currently does not exist. The group also plans to create banners, to be designed by commissioner Jonathan Winn, promoting CD within town. The slogan: *Big City Arts... Small Town Soul.*

### **Cultural District Award (Morris, Gelfman)**

Commissioner Morris wrote and released to the public through *HamletHub*, Facebook, *The Ridgefield Press*, and the Ridgefield Arts Council an invitation to nominate people for the 2024 Cultural District Award. Deadline for submissions is December 17, and the commission will vote at its January 8, 2024, meeting. The award ceremony will take place in May 2024 at the Ridgefield Art Council's Behind the Scenes ceremony.

### **Cultural District Sculpture (Morris, Gelfman)**

Commissioners Gelfman and Norwitt will finalize the contract to be executed with artist Christopher Curnan for the sculpture and get approval from the town attorney. Meanwhile Norwitt, Gelfman, and Morris are seeking additional funds in addition to ECDC's contribution to the creation of the sculpture. Morris is trying to get location approval from the landlord on Main Street where we hope to place the sculpture. Note: ECDC can request donations, which would be made out to "Town of Ridgefield," and are tax-deductible.

### **Marketing (Howell, Gioffre, Morris)**

The Small Business Administration kicked off National Small Business Week and "Shop Small" with a press conference at Deborah Ann's Sweet Shoppe on November 21. It included a walking tour of Queen B Coffee, George Amatuzzi Optometrist, Planet Pizza, Ridgefield Running Co., The Toy Chest, Tablao, Botanika Café, and Books on the Common.

The SBA provided an application to nominate any business that we believe is deserving of recognition. The SBA is holding weekly webinars on "how to" nominate a business. Deadline is December 7!

### **Budget Request for FY2024**

Total spend so far this FY: \$3,862.53. Commissioners discussed and finalized details for spending for the remainder of the 2024 fiscal year ending June 30. Details include: \$7,500 for Tiger Shark Tank, \$6,000 for marketing and promotions, \$7,500 for support of the Cultural District, \$1,000 for the Cultural District Award ceremony in May 2024, \$1,000 for the Take Action Assessment, part of the CT Main Street Center efforts.

In addition, the commissioners assembled additional funding requests for its 2025 fiscal-year budget, which requests support in the form of a consultant to help execute many tasks that the volunteer commissioners cannot take on.

Commissioner Morris plans to apply for two grants, from Lewis Fund and from the Ridgefield Thrift Shop.

Commissioner Winn motioned and Gelfman 2nd that we submit the proposed budget request to the Board of Selectpersons. All in favor.

**Broadband Initiative (Morris)**

Morris updated the commission on the submission of proposals that resulted from the RFP the town sent out seeking bids to create an engineering study. The study would become the blueprint for the full buildout of a fiber network throughout town that Ridgefield would own and likely outsource operations. The seven bids received for the engineering study ranged from \$242,000 to \$2.7 million.

Morris motions, Dowd 2nds to adjourn the meeting. All in favor.

The meeting ended at 9:03 pm