



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 Selectperson

ridgefieldct.com

Economic & Community Development Commission
Approved Minutes
April 1, 2024, at 6:30 pm
in-person in Town Hall Small Conference Room

The meeting called to order at 6:38 pm

In attendance: Chair Glori Norwitt, Vice Chair Mark Riser, Secretary Geoffrey Morris, Commissioners Jonathan Winn, Jenn Gioffre, Bob Knight, Kay Gelfman; guests Sean Dowd and Brittney Howell

Announcements

Next meeting: May 13, 2024

Approval of **March Minutes**. Norwitt moves to approve the March 2024 minutes without changes, Gioffre 2nds. All vote in favor.

Public Comment

Kirk Carr suggests we get replacement commissioners who will show up at meetings and be helpful to the commission.

Recap of Recent Events/Info

Glori Norwitt and Brittney Howell attended the Women's Forum organized by the Chamber of Commerce on March 22 at Salem Golf Club, where Ridgefield Running Co owner Megan Searfoss was honored as Woman of the Year.

Commissioner Morris will be talking at the Ridgefield Library on May 8 about starting a business and the role of small business in a community with Ridgefield Running Co. owner Megan Searfoss. The event is titled "The Rewarding (and Painful) Path to Opening a Business." More details available from [Ridgefield Library](#).

Governor Ned Lamont appointed Chair Norwitt to the Board of the CT Arts Foundation.

The Democratic Town Committee awarded the Alice Paul Award to Glori Norwitt and Amanda Cordano at Keeler Tavern Museum in March.

Winn noted that Thrown Stone's 2022 *068 Magazine* Playwriting Fellow, Phanésia Pharel recently received The Kennedy Center's Lorraine Hansberry Playwriting Award for her play, *Waterfall*, which she conceived, developed, and workshopped with Thrown Stone. This is the biggest award in the country given to African-American playwrights. Norwitt has requested that the First Selectperson create a proclamation to celebrate Ms. Pharel's award. The Commissioners note that the first CT Cultural District has now nurtured a new work that has received national recognition.

The Town's IT Director Andrew Neblett has informed the Commission that we must use Town email addresses. For those Commissioners that have not yet go into Town Hall for setup, the dates are April 15 through April 19, Monday/Wednesday/Friday, 8:30am to 4:30pm and Tuesday/Thursday, 8:30am to 6:30pm.

Morris met with Ridgefield Historical Society chair Tracy Seem about replacing the Museum in the Street posts that were installed in 2008 during the town's 300th anniversary celebration.

Sean Dowd reported that Rosie Snow Voulgaris of Pop Art Kids, winner of ECDC 2023 Tiger Shark Tank is a finalist to be on the ABC TV show *Shark Tank*.

Commissioner Gelfman suggested that ECDC spearhead the effort to have the Cultural District be a participant in the Memorial Day Parade. Morris suggested she contact the parade organizers soon to get an application in.

The group discussed the closing of Craig's Jewelry Store after 74 years on Main Street. All wished the family well and discussed the role of family businesses, small businesses, etc, in town. The commission also discussed the closing on Tony's Deli and it's soon-to-be replacement Corner Cafe, at the corner of Route 116 and Main Street.

AGENDA

KC&E Adventures

KC&E Adventures is unable to attend tonight, and will be rescheduled to next month.

Business Connections (Gioffre)

Commissioner Gioffre talked with a Texas group who used BluDot service to set up a rewards program to encourage shoppers to patronize local stores during the holidays. It was a big success. ECDC plans to do this program for three months during the 2024 holiday season. Costs for the service are estimated to be \$350 per month, plus whatever ECDC will use to give cash-back rewards. More details in May.

Business Programs (Riser)

On May 28, Ridgefield Library will host a “Starting a Small Business” presentation. The event will walk attendees through the business startup process in Ridgefield in CT, and will include Commissioner Mark Riser and a member of the Town’s Planning & Zoning department.

Cultural District (Norwitt, Morris)

The State has slightly modified the Cultural District logo, to contain the new look for *Connecticut*.

Morris and Norwitt met in a videoconference with all of the state’s cultural districts on March 11. Rachel Lenda, the State’s new Tourism Director, discussed CTVisit.com which had 9.3 million online visitors last year. Norwitt asked her to create a separate “Cultural Districts” link/section in the “do” and “plan” sections of the website. Cyndi Tolosa of CT Humanities discussed the upcoming “CT 250th” celebrations.

Morris and Dan O’Brien requested that the BOS add the Town’s Cultural District as a group under “Friends of Ridgefield” to hopefully assist in fundraising. They were told that the Cultural District needs to elect a Chair, ViceChair, and Treasurer in order to be considered. Morris and Norwitt will make this an agenda item at the next meeting of the Cultural District subcommittee on April 16. Going forward the subcommittee will need to post an agenda and meeting minutes. Having access to Friends of Ridgefield will allow the Cultural District to receive and allocate funds.

Cultural District Sculpture (Morris, Gelfman)

Gelfman and Norwitt have created a draft Agreement between the Town of Ridgefield, the ECDC and the Artist Chris Curnan for a Sculpture. Morris in discussion with CVS landlord about placing the sculpture near Prime Burger. Installation details were sent to the landlord and we await confirmation.

Cultural District Award (Morris, Gelfman)

The Cultural District Award will be presented at the RAC’s “Behind the Scenes” Awards evening on Thursday, May 9. Jenn Gioffre will draft a press release based on a Q&A with honoree Barbara Manners. Morris, Gelfman, or Norwitt will do the introduction at the event.

Tiger Shark Tank (Dowd)

The deadline for applicants to submit their proposals to the ECDC will be Tuesday, October 1, 2024. Ridgefield Playhouse will again be the ECDC partner on the event and have agreed on a date of Tuesday, October 22. **Commissioner Riser moves to allocate \$5,000 for Ridgefield Chamber of Commerce e-gift cards to award to the 2024 winners. Winn 2nd. All in favor.**

Marketing (Gioffre, Morris, Howell)

Norwitt noted that we need to update the downtown business map then add to the Ridgefield Arts Council brochure. Morris will be in touch with designer Marge Heminway of Maida Design.

The ECDC has created a new LinkedIn page and is encouraging all to follow it so that we can grow following.

The commission discussed hiring an Influencer who can visit Ridgefield and partake in various activities: restaurants, shows, museums, walks, overnight stay, etc., and promote to followers. More details come.

Update on Planning & Zoning (Gelfman)

Tabled until next month.

Interns & Support for ECDC

Discussion of many projects to determine appropriate role for intern/consultant/clerk. ECDC can hire a clerk with our budget per the Charter. Working group to find a consultant to hire who can create an inventory of commercial and retail space so that we can track usage, vacancies, etc. In addition, the commission feels it is important to be more vigilant about tracking vacancies as well as the comings and goings of businesses in town. Norwitt will speak to CT Main Street Center for guidance.

Re-Nomination of Commissioners

First Selectperson Rudy Marconi informed Chair Norwitt that the Commission seats for Dowd and Howell are vacant because each did not achieve attendance levels. On April 10, Dowd and Howell will be interviewed again for reappointment by the BOS. Marconi noted that the ECDC does not need to provide public notice for these vacancies.

Knight motioned to nominate Sean Dowd as a commissioner to the ECDC. Seconded by Gelfman. All in favor.

Commissioner Gelfman motioned to nominate Brittney Howell as a commissioner to the ECDC. Seconded by Knight. All in favor.

Morris motions to end the meeting, Gioffre 2nd. All in favor. Meeting ends at 8:29pm.