



TOWN OF RIDGEFIELD PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION APPROVED/REVISED MEETING MINUTES

These minutes and motions (votes) are a general summary of the meeting. This is not a verbatim transcription.

Tuesday, July 2, 2024 Present:

IN PERSON

Robert Hendrick, Chair
Joseph Dowdell, Vice Chair
Elizabeth DiSalvo
Chris Molyneaux
Joseph Sorena

VIRTUAL

Mariah Okrongly
Sebastiano D'Acunto
Ben Nneji

Absent:

1. CALL TO ORDER

Robert Hendrick, Chair, called meeting to order at 7:01 PM in the Town Hall Annex, Meeting Room #2 and via Zoom and quorum was established.

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

1.2. Administrative Announcements & Correspondence

(Note: Correspondence *related to an application* will be uploaded to the relevant application file (see links on agenda items) and reviewed/acknowledged during the relevant public hearing. Correspondence unrelated to an application will be acknowledged as this point in the meeting, and uploaded to the Commission's webpage at <https://www.ridgefieldct.gov/planning-and-zoning-commission/pages/correspondence>).

Chair Hendrick reminded everyone that the Commission has an available seat due to the death of Commissioner Consentino. The Commission is openly looking to fill the open seat. There is one application that has been forwarded to all Commissioners. On July 16th there will hopefully be interview(s).

a) Updates from Land Use Office

Director of Planning and Zoning, Alice Dew, updated Commission on permits, projects and regulations including signs, enforcements, Blight and Affordable Housing. A list of enforcements and violations was requested by Commission.

1.3. Approval of agenda.

Chair Hendrick would like to add a section to Agenda for public comment regarding signage. *No objection*

1.4. Public Comments regarding signage.

Lori Mazzola, here for Ridgefield Residents of Smart Development, spoke regarding banners and signs around Ridgefield. A taskforce to combat the issue of signs was requested. Chair Hendrick commented that signage has been an ongoing issue and appreciates her comments. Debra Ann Franceschini spoke on sensory overload in regards to banners and signs. Discussion ensued on temporary signs and community sign boards. Andrea Beebe, 378 Main Street, spoke regarding signs, and possibly simplifying ordinances.

2. PUBLIC HEARINGS

2.1. (Contd.) **SP-24-17; 426 Main St:** Special Permit Application (Per 9.2 A and 5.1.D.6) for converting a commercial office to residential on second floor. *Owner: Reg-UB Properties, LLC; Appl: Charles Lichtenauer.*
<https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/96738>

Charles Lichtenauer spoke and gave overview of project. This property is located in the CBD zone. The first floor is currently occupied by Baja Cocina and A Table, both restaurants. Second floor is currently occupied by two offices. Third floor has one office space outfitted as apartment and one residence. The proposal is to change the use of Suite E and PH1 from office to residential. No need for modifications to parking arrangements. Per applicant, there is a strong demand for residential, not office use. Abutter notifications were sent, but there have not been any comments from neighbors. Parking authority did not have any issue with the change of use. Discussion on need for housing was had. Debra Franceschini spoke regarding adaptive reuse and rental pricing. Lori Mazzola spoke regarding adaptive reuse and would like to see one of these units affordable. At this time, the applicant has not planned to make any units “affordable”.
Public Hearing closed. *No objection.*

- 2.2. **(Contd.) A-24-1: Regulation Text Amendment** (per PZR 9.2.B) to allow for Area Median Income with a restriction “in perpetuity” in lieu of State Median Income with a restriction of 40 years. *Commission initiated.* <https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/96744>

Latest draft was shown on the screen. Quick summary, discussing idea of adding section to the regulations which would allow applicants with 8-30g projects to go from state median income to area median income and Ridgefield would get deed restriction in perpetuity instead of 40 years. These units would not count toward moratorium but will count toward affordable units. Discussion ensued on whether to close Public Hearing or not. Commissioner D’Acunto had concerns regarding closing Public Hearing for this Amendment and requested more time.

Public Hearing closed (*Maker: E. DiSalvo, second by J. Sorena*) motion passed 7-1-0 with S. D’Acunto opposed

- 2.3. **SP-24-18; 54 Harvey Rd:** Special Permit Application (Per RZR 9.2 A and 3.4.C.2.) to place a chicken coop in front yard. *Owner/Appl: Georgi Todorov.* <https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/96114>

Georgi Todorov spoke and gave background of project. Mr. Todorov did not understand the regulations so he is now coming for a special permit. Property is close to 2 ½ acres with most of property in front yard. Reasons as to why the front was a better location than the back included the septic system being in back yard and applicant doesn’t want animals near septic and proximity to neighbor’s dogs. AAC recommended approval since chicken coop is naturally screened from neighbors. Possible conditions were discussed including not allowing roosters and adding additional screening.

Paul Vier, neighbor at 69 Harvey Rd, spoke and had positive comments in regards to improvements of the house and property. He requested additional screening of vegetation to block his view of chicken coop. He is supportive of application with condition of additional screening. Public Hearing closed. *No objection.*

- 2.4. **AH-24-1; 103 Danbury Rd:** Affordable Housing Application per CGS §8-30g for conversion of former restaurant into eight (8) studio/efficiency apartments, three (3) will be “affordable” in B-2 Zone. *Owner: Copps Hill Common LLC; Appl: Robert Jewell.* <https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/97114>

Robert Jewell, attorney, gave overview of property. Affordable units will consist of not less than 30% units will be considered “affordable units” consisting of 15% of the units at 60% state median income and balance 80% state median income. This is a conversion of an existing building. This is the lower level of 3 story building and is located in B-1 zone. The current building is a mixed use with upper levels being residences and middle level being businesses. Lower level previously was a restaurant. Units will be studio efficiency/micro apartments, ranging from 212-307 sq. feet with an avg. of 270 sq ft. Articles regarding this trend in design was shown. Target market and parking were discussed. Commissioner Sorena asked if units would be ADA accessible.

Steve Zemo spoke. The parking grade is equal to the front door grade so no need for ramping. The final interior design is not finalized but the entrance to unit is same level to parking. First floor residence in business zone is not permitted but, due to 8-30g application it is allowed. Discussion on need of housing in Ridgefield was had. A concern over the small size of the apartments was raised.

WPCA will work with applicant for additional sewer allocation. AAC recommendations and possible special conditions were discussed. Debra Franceschini asked questions regarding removal of murphy beds and state median income versus area median income. Public Hearing closed. *No objection*

3. OLD/CONTINUED BUSINESS

- 3.1. **If Public Hearing is Closed: SP-24-17; 426 Main St:** Special Permit Application (Per 9.2 A and 5.1.D.6) for converting a commercial office to residential on second floor. *Owner: Reg-UB Properties, LLC; Appl: Charles Lichtenauer.* <https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/96738>

Motion to approve with conditions as drafted by staff. (*Maker: J. Dowdell, second by C. Molyneaux*) Motion passed 7-0-1 with S. D'Acunto abstaining

- 3.2. **If Public Hearing is Closed: A-24-1: Regulation Text Amendment** (per PZR 9.2.B) to allow for Area Median Income with a restriction "in perpetuity" in lieu of State Median Income with a restriction of 40 years. *Commission initiated.* <https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/96744>

Motion to approve (*Maker: E. DiSalvo, second by J. Sorena*) Motion passed 7-0-1 with S. D'Acunto abstaining

- 3.3. **If Public Hearing is Closed: SP-24-18; 54 Harvey Rd:** Special Permit Application (Per RZR 9.2 A and 3.4.C.2.) to place a chicken coop in front yard. *Owner/App: Georgi Todorov.* <https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/96114>

Motion to approve with conditions as drafted by staff with the following amendments: striking out no rooster condition, and native evergreen screening should be more than applicant has provided. Applicant will work with staff for suggestions on additional screening. (*Maker: J. Sorena, second by C. Molyneaux*) *Unanimous Approval*

- 3.4. **If Public Hearing is Closed: AH-24-1; 103 Danbury Rd:** Affordable Housing Application per CGS §8-30g for conversion of former restaurant into eight (8) studio/efficiency apartments, three (3) will be "affordable" in B-2 Zone. *Owner: Copps Hill Common LLC; Appl: Robert Jewell.* <https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/97114>

Motion to approve with conditions drafted by staff (*Maker: J. Sorena, second by E. DiSalvo*) Motion passed 7-1-0 with S. D'Acunto opposed

- 3.5. **MISC-24-7: Branchville Strategic Review.** In the fall of 2023, the Commission indicated an interest in reviewing and re-visiting the 2017 Branchville "TOD" study and recommendations, given recent progress on infrastructure improvements. After hearing from three experts over three previous meetings (from December through early February [Note: Commissioner DiSalvo is recused on this matter.]

No update

4. NEW BUSINESS

- 4.1. **RZ-24-1: 58 Prospect Ridge: Text change** for existing MSDD floating zone (Per RZR 9.2.C and 4.5.A.1) to add areas of East Ridge and Prospect Ridge. *Owner: Thomas Montanari; Appl: Robert Jewell. For receipt and scheduling a Public Hearing. (Staff suggests Public Hearing on September 3).*

Motion to receive and schedule Public Hearing on September 3rd. (*Maker: E. DiSalvo, second by C. Moyneaux*) *Unanimous Approval*

- 4.2. **SP-24-21: 58 Prospect Ridge: Special Permit Application** (per RZR 9.2.A and 4.5.A) for construction of four new dwellings and associated site work at 62 East Ridge and 58 Prospect Ridge. *Owner: Thomas Montanari; Appl: Robert Jewell. For receipt and schedule sitewalk and Public Hearing. (Staff suggests sitewalk on July 21 and Public Hearing on September 3).*

Motion to receive and schedule sitewalk on July 21 and Public Hearing on September 3. (*Maker: B. Nneji, second by E. DiSalvo*) *Unanimous Approval*

Commission would like to request referrals from Historic Society, Historic District Commission, and traffic study by an independent consultant.

- 4.3. **SP-24-22: 680 Danbury Rd: Special Permit Application** (per 9.2.A; 5.3.C and 7.2.E) for construction of accessory building, installation of second sign and new outdoor seating area. *Owner: ANB Enterprises LLC; Applicant: Robert Jewell. For receipt and schedule sitewalk and Public Hearing. (Staff suggests sitewalk on July 21 and Public Hearing on September 3)*

Motion to receive, schedule sitewalk on July 21 and Public Hearing on September 3rd. (*Maker: B. Nneji, second by E. DiSalvo*) *Unanimous Approval*

4.4. **Approval of Minutes**

- 4.4.1. [Meeting Minutes](#) –June 18, 2024

Motion to approve (Maker E. DiSalvo, second by C. Molyneaux) Motion passes with M. Okrongly, J. Sorena and S. D'Acunto abstaining.

There was discussion regarding time and days of sitewalks. Time will be allotted on next agenda to discuss time and day of sitewalks.

5. **ADJOURN**

Mr. Hendrick adjourned meeting at 9:43 PM

Submitted by Misty Dorsch,
Recording Secretary

FOOTNOTES:

RZR = Town of Ridgefield Zoning Regulations

CGS = Connecticut General Statutes