



Town of Ridgefield Planning and Zoning Commission

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES Tuesday, April 01, 2025 (Unrevised/Unapproved)

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		Via Zoom
Elizabeth DiSalvo	Commissioner	X		Via Zoom
Chris Molyneaux	Commissioner		X	Excused
Joe Sorena	Commissioner	X		
Sebastian D'Acunto	Commissioner	X		
Ben Nissim	Commissioner	X		
Alice Dew	Director (Staff)	X		

Others – **Steve Foundoukis** (Recording Secretary). Individuals who actively participated are identified in minutes below.

1. CALL TO ORDER

- *Mr. Hendrick called meeting to order at 7:01 PM at Town Hall Annex, Meeting Room #2, and via Zoom; Quorum established.*

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

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>).

Mr. **Hendrick** acknowledged receipt of correspondence from Mr. **Autuori** concerning air pollution.

Mr. D'Acunto made MOTION to move item 2.3 to the top of the agenda. Seconded by Ms. Okrongly. APPROVED unanimously.

3. Approval of agenda.

2. PUBLIC HEARING

1. **(Contd.) AH-24-4: 43 Danbury Road:** Affordable Housing Application per CGS §8-30g for 20 units apartment building, replacing the existing structures. *Owner: Ljatif Ramadani; Appl: Peter Olson.* <https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/99636>

Applicant has requested discussion to be continued to next meeting.

The public hearing remains open, and Mr. **Hendrick** invited members of the public to make comments.

Christopher Rees (4 Mountain View Ave) on behalf of the Mountain View, Hillsdale, and Island Hill Neighbors Association wanted to correct the record regarding a traffic study submitted at the last meeting. There was an extra year included in the study. The traffic study has been amended to include the period January 1, 2022, through December 21, 2024, and has been resubmitted.

Mr. **Rees** requested that PZC make the traffic study available to the state of Connecticut in the form of a referral. He also discussed the possibility of reconfiguring driveways if the building next to the Red Rooster is torn down so that all traffic will be redirected through a signal intersection.

Mr. **Hendrick** reminded Mr. **Rees** to secure permission from the applicant before doing any future studies.

Mr. **Nneji** asked Mr. **Rees** if he had had any discussions with the applicant regarding the findings of the association's traffic study. Mr. **Rees** replied that he has had no direct contact with the applicant.

According to Mr. **Rees**, the community has suggested that by eliminating the first floor, the applicant would reduce the building's size while keeping it financially viable as the largest 8-30g structure in Ridgefield.

Kevin McSpadden (154 High Ridge Road), whose wife Sharon owns the Pilates studio next to the proposed building site, was next to speak. He does not understand how the lot next to his wife's business will accommodate vehicles since there will be a loss of parking spaces with the applicant's proposal.

Mr. **Hendrick** asked Mr. **McSpadden** to frame his comments into whether he supports the application. Mr. **McSpadden** stated that he is concerned about how the flow of traffic will affect his wife's business. He is opposed to the application as it exists.

Attorney **Peter Olson** spoke on behalf of the applicant. He requested the public hearing be kept open until the next meeting on May 6, 2025. In response to the curb management plan proposed by the community, Mr. **Olson** stated that it would be a great idea, but the applicant has no legal right to effectuate it, and the commission cannot force the applicant to adopt it. The applicant

will also happily consider driveway consolidation if the opportunity arises. The only consideration for the PZC per Mr. **Olson** is that the proposal submitted by applicant is safe, and he and the applicant believe it is.

Mr. **Hendrick** stated that the proposals made seem like a reasonable modification to address safety concerns.

Mr. **Olson** stated that he and the applicant were open to discussions but might not obtain the rights.

Mr. **Sorena** asked Mr. **Olson** if the applicant's traffic study had been submitted to the state of Connecticut.

Mr. **Olson** stated that this is usually done after approval is granted.

Mr. **Hendrick** asked if the applicant and Mr. **Olson** would be open to a special meeting to continue the public hearing before the next scheduled meeting, and Mr. **Olson** stated that he and the applicant would, provided the meeting were held on a Tuesday and not the week of April 14th through April 18th because of school closings.

Mary Flynn-Maguire (via Zoom) asked why the moratorium doesn't apply to this case.

Mr. **Hendrick** answered that all applications continue to be processed and heard until a decision on the moratorium is made by the commission.

Mr. **Nneji** asked Mr. **Olson** why state data was not considered in preparing the applicant's traffic study.

Mr. **Olson** answered that the applicant will provide an appropriate response to the community's traffic study at the next meeting.

Public hearing continued to the next meeting.

2. **A-25-1:** Text Amendment change (Per RZR 9.2.B.) to amend Section 3.2.B.1; 3.3.B.2.b and 3.2.B.2.d for following language (1) Permit 2-Family Dwellings as a permitted use in all residential zones; (2) Amend the Accessory Dwelling Unit ("ADU") Regulation to permit ADUs accessory to both 1 and 2-family dwellings; and (3) To permit ADUs on properties that are not owner-occupied provided the ADU is deed restricted at 80% AMI in perpetuity. *Applicant: Robert Jewell.* <https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/100229>

Mr. **Hendrick** reported that the commission has received four letters in opposition to this application.

Robert Jewell, the applicant and proponent stated that the application is about taking the accessory dwelling unit (ADU) and expanding it. Over the twenty-year period since ADU, there have only been 170 applications in Ridgefield. However, the ADU is not permanent approval and is approved on a year-to-year basis. It cannot be financed or sold. The state has declared a housing crisis but has not offered any substantive solutions. The state's solutions are cookie cutter solutions and that includes 8-30g.

Mr. **Jewell's** proposal allows people to team up and put their resources together. Two people can live in the same structure in separate units without changing the property. This will help Ridgefielders stay in the town they have spent their lives in.

Mr. **Hendrick** stated that the annual recertification in ADU regulations does not exist. There are also no restrictions on sales if it is owner occupied.

Mr. **D'Acunto** asked Mr. **Jewell** if this proposal would allow builders to purchase three homes and turn them into nine different units.

Mr. **Jewell** stated that language would be put into the regulations to prevent that.

Mr. **Hendrick** stated that the fact that so few ADU units have been created in the years since the regulations went into effect would suggest that there is no demand for them. Is there really a demand other than a few of Mr. **Jewell's** clients?

Mr. **Jewell** would prefer to concentrate more on the people who were measurably helped by the changes in regulations.

Mr. **Hendrick** stated that Ridgefield has interesting and compelling examples of multi-generational living and our regulations of what defines a family are liberal.

Mr. **Jewell** stated that the key to a single housekeeping unit is that there is a separating wall so that not everyone is living under the same roof.

Ms. **Okrongly** stated that it would be better to do something simpler instead of embarking on this complicated proposal.

Ms. **DiSalvo** proposed that ADUs be left out of this completely and the regulations just be simplified.

Mr. **Jewell** stated that the proposal could be redrafted to make it less open-ended and more restrictive.

Public Comments:

Adam Safir (547 Main Street), who has been a resident since 2006, stated that this proposal would solve less problems for the people and drive more speculative interest in the town.

Lori Mazzola (24 Quincy Close) asked whether it is common for an applicant to have a dialogue with individuals in writing as Mr. **Jewell** sent her personal correspondence which she objected to.

Mr. **Hendrick** stated that it's not common that this is done in writing, but the commission will ultimately decide who is credible and whose findings are correct. Everyone should maintain their cool while this process plays out.

Dave Goldenberg (Sethlow Mountain Road) applauded Mr. **Jewell** for bringing up this proposal and feels that the bigger issue is how to address the multi-family issue in Ridgefield.

Kirk Carr (62 Prospect Ridge) feels that Mr. Jewell should have advised all single-family homeowners of this proposal in writing since it is so sweeping.

Mr. **Hendrick** stated that the commission does not require applicants to notify everyone in town in writing because that would be cost-prohibitive. Notice is required in a newspaper advertisement and this cannot be changed ad hoc.

Ms. **Okrongly** asked if we can have text alerts for PZC meetings.

Mr. **Hendrick** replied that the commission must remain independent and cannot arbitrarily mobilize people for one hearing.

Susan Margolis (51 Cottatoa Drive) asked the commission to consider that something like a change in zoning should require language that invites more commentary and discussion from residents.

Keryn Cerbone (55 Main Street) pointed out that circulation for the Ridgefield Press is down significantly to the point that the paper may go out of business. Can the PZC notify residents of a change in zoning using an email blast?

Chris Paulson (North Street) is hopeful that through public outreach and events we can get back to the participation amongst residents that existed before the Covid pandemic.

Mike La Barre (43 Hobby) supports the idea of using the town text blast for PZC communications.

Public hearing continued to the next meeting.

3. **SP-25-2: 529 Ethan Allen Hwy:** Revision to Special Permit (Per RZR 9.2A and 3.2.D.7) to open a day care with two preschool classrooms -one for two year old; second for three-four year old and outdoor play area. *Owner: 529 Ethan Allen Hwy LLC; Applicant: Isaac Hirt-Manheimer.* <https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/100237>

Ms. **Okrongly** stated that her daughter attends dance classes at the Enchanted Garden. There were no concerns by the commissioners.

Judy Hirt-Manheimer read a brief opening statement. Attorney **Robert Jewell**, on behalf of the applicant, stated that the state will not consider an application until it has been approved by the PZC. The Health Department has signed off on the septic system for use.

Ms. **Okrongly** recommended a one-way loop sign, possibly sandwich board (something permanent) to make dropping off children easier on parents.

Mr. Hendrick closed the public hearing at 7:14 p.m.

Mr. Sorena made MOTION TO APPROVE with a contingency to post a one-way loop sign. Seconded by Mr. Nneji. APPROVED unanimously.

3. **OLD/CONTINUED BUSINESS**

1. **(Contd.) A-24-3:** Text Amendment change (Per RZR 9.2.B) to add a Temporary and Limited Development Moratorium. *Commission initiated.* <https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/99421>

Mr. **Hendrick** drafted a revised version of the proposed moratorium removing zoning permits for multi-family dwellings since those are not allowed in Ridgefield except for group homes. Additionally, any item granted approval on a special permit in the past can move forward during the moratorium. The Planning Director may refer any ambiguous application to PZC for clarification or a decision.

Mr. **Hendrick** proposed having attorney Thomas Beecher review the revised version of the moratorium and for the commissioners to have an executive session with Mr. Beecher during a special meeting. It is important that the commission communicate to all sides that some time is needed to update our regulations.

Mr. **Nneji** asked if the commission should include 8-30g in the document and whether the public would be disappointed if 8-30g is not included.

Mr. **Hendrick** replied that it should not be all 8-30g focused. Residents want the PZC to be proactive about updating its regulations to provide better clarity to developers about what is or is not acceptable.

Ms. Dew will schedule an executive session between the Commission and attorney Thomas Beecher as soon as possible, but not next week or the week of April 14th to 18th.

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Public hearing closed.

4. **NEW BUSINESS**

1. **VDC-25-1: 470 Main Street:** Village District Application (Per RZR 8.3 and 5.1.B) for screening fence for HVAC condenser. *Applicant: Jason Orleman; Owner: REG-UB Properties LLC. (For receipt and discussion)*

<https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/100579>

Mr. Sorena made MOTION TO RECEIVE application and schedule a discussion for the next meeting. Seconded by Ms. Okrongly. APPROVED unanimously.

2. **Approval of Minutes**

4.2.1: [Meeting Minutes](#): March 18, 2025

Ms. Okrongly made MOTION TO APPROVE meeting minutes for March 18, 2025. Seconded by Mr. Dowdell. APPROVED unanimously.

5. **Adjourn**

Meeting ADJOURNED at 10:10 PM

**Submitted by Steve Foundoukis
Recording Secretary**