



## Town of Ridgefield Planning and Zoning Commission

Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, May 20, 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		
Elizabeth DiSalvo	Commissioner	X		
Chris Molyneaux	Commissioner	X		
Joe Sorena	Commissioner		X	
Sebastian D'Acunto	Commissioner	X		
Ben Nissim	Commissioner	X		
Aarti Paranjape	ZEO(Staff)	X		

Others – Steve Foundoukis, Recording Secretary

### 1. CALL TO ORDER

- Chair Hendrick called meeting to order at 7:02 PM; Quorum established.

**Motion to add an item to discuss distribution/communication of agenda via alert notification. Maker: E. DiSalvo; Second by M. Okrongly. Unanimous Approval**

### 2. PUBLIC HEARING

- 2.1. (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>

**Peter Olson** on behalf of the applicant met with the Police Commissioner May 8, 2025. The Commissioner stated that there is no traffic reason to object to this project and recommended that a physical barrier be added to prevent a left turn from the property.

**Benjamin Doto** stated that the Police Commissioner expressed concern about pedestrian visibility to the right. While the building plan has not changed, he clarified that the stone wall and pole would be removed to address those concerns.

**Mr. D'Acunto** asked how tall the proposed building would be.

**Mr. Olson** stated that the height of the building at its midpoint is 40 feet.

**Abigail Adams** discussed revisions to the landscaping plans. She displayed a rendering to reflect what the plantings would look like in five years' time. The species of evergreens along Mountainview Avenue have been changed to allow more natural light into the units facing that street. Additional screening has been placed in front of the dumpster. There have been no changes to the back wall.

**Mr. D'Acunto** asked what has been done in terms of the understory.

**Ms. Adams** stated that those concerns have been addressed by putting in large caliper trees. The planting plan is very thoughtful and creative. In designing her plan, she tried to consider how she would feel if the proposed building were being built next to her home.

**Joe Balskus** prepared a memo to address some concerns to his traffic study. He feels the connections to Grove Street are accessible and that only about ten additional pedestrians will be generated during peak hours.

**Chair Hendrick** asked if consideration was given to a pedestrian centered crossing for the project site.

**Mr. Doto** responded that there will be pedestrian connectivity between sidewalks. The concrete apron will be flush with the neighbor's sidewalk grate.

**Mr. Balskus** feels that there will be no changes in traffic flow across the site during peak hours. Expanding the crash methodology data to a one-mile radius beyond the site yielded 16 crashes instead of 13 during the study period. This did not significantly change the traffic pattern data.

**Ms. Okrongly** asked how this site would compare relative to similar areas that have crashes.

**Mr. Balskus** answered that no analysis was done beyond this area and is usually not done unless there is an indication that this is a high crash area.

**Mr. Balskus** also stated that standard industry methodology is not to provide source data for small projects like this. He acknowledged that the area at the signalized intersection is a service level F in its present condition, however the proposed building will not increase the volume to capacity ratio. There will be no impact to the service level at this intersection from the proposed building.

**Alice Dew's** staff report, and the peer review submitted comments were highlighted by **Ms. Paranjape**.

**Jeremy DeCarli**, the Peer Reviewer for this project reported that all his questions and comments have been addressed by the applicant.

**Chair Hendrick** inquired whether there has been any response from the Fire Marshal regarding whether the secondary emergency access egress on Mountainview is a recommendation or a requirement.

There has been no new correspondence from the Fire Marshall.

**Mr. D'Acunto** asked whether it was necessary to formulate a question to the Fire Marshall so that his response could be put on the record.

### **Public Comments:**

**Barbara Baughman** (5 Mountainview Avenue) wanted more details on how far the wall and fence go down as it relates to her property. She also wanted to know who will make sure that everything complies afterwards.

**Chair Hendrick** stated that once the project is completed there is a long process afterwards during which a building inspector will inspect the property and issue a certificate of compliance to close out the building permit.

**Andrea Beebe** (33 Main Street) travels Danbury Road daily and feels that traffic begins earlier than the traffic engineer's report suggested. She asked if the speed of traffic impacted the crash data since it is moving at such a low speed. She is also concerned about the increase of traffic to secondary roads surrounding the building site and that they were not built to handle it.

**Christopher Rees** (4 Mountainview Avenue) asked if the period of public comment could be extended to allow the community to review the applicant's latest proposals. The community has contacted a dozen traffic engineers, but none would agree to testify on their behalf. He was glad to hear that the applicant's traffic engineer acknowledged the intersection near the site is a service level F. He pointed out that at least one nearby state (New Jersey) has prohibited building near an overcapacity road. He requested that the applicant review the letter of March 11, 2025, and thanked the PZC for listening to the community and taking their concerns into consideration.

**Debra Franceschini** (Spireview Avenue) wanted to reiterate that applications for affordable housing would be at 60% of SMI for the one-bedroom units and 80% of SMI for the two-bedroom units.

**Renee Whitworth** (17 Mountainview Avenue) stated that there are five projects that have not yet started, and this doesn't account for any that may be coming. We should defer to the Police and Fire Departments regarding the issues of health and safety.

**Mr. Olson** stated that the PZC and the public should not try to parse the regulations and code. The proposed building plan has tried to keep all its traffic out of Mountainview. If the PZC wants to make the secondary egress on Mountainview a condition of the application, it should be requested by the Fire Marshall. He also addressed Ms. Baughman's concerns regarding the fence.

**Mr. Balskus** stated that lower speeds reduce crashes and the approach to the proposed building site is a service level F during peak hours. However, this is a low impact project which is the reason why no traffic engineer is willing to testify on behalf of the community. The proposed building will not impact queuing, delays, or the level of service.

**Mr. Doto** added that revisions to the snow removal plan will not add any additional drainage to Mountainview Avenue. The emergency access driveway will not impact drainage. The sidewalk grate will match the existing pavement.

**Ms. Okrongly** asked if all the public's concerns regarding snow removal have been addressed.

**Mr. Doto** believes that all concerns have been addressed. No vehicles will be left on site. If there is a massive snow event, it will be removed off the property.

**Mr. Olson** noted that any bonds placed on the application would be reviewed.

**Ms. Baughman** asked for clarification on what she can expect to see when looking out into her back yard. The continuation of the fence would provide more privacy and would be a good idea.

**Ms. Adams** stated that the landscape design calls for the removal of everything up to the wetlands regulated line. The intent is to have an evergreen buffer.

**Chair Hendrick** asked if the applicant would be amenable to continuing the public hearing.

**Mr. Olson** answered that he would prefer not to.

**Ms. Wentworth** is still waiting for a response from the applicant on whether this will be a pet friendly building. She also feels that being forced to only make a right turn from Mountainview Avenue all day every day is absurd.

**Mr. Rees** feels that the existing drainage issues on Mountainview Avenue will be exacerbated by this building.

**Mr. Olson** stated that no decision on whether the building will be pet friendly has been made. Service animals, however, will be allowed.

**Mr. Doto** stated that no changes such as adding a catch basin will be made. The pavement grain will be matched, and the drainage situation will not be made worse.

**Chair Hendrick** asked the commissioners how they felt about continuing the public hearing to the next scheduled meeting and asked for a motion to close the public hearing. Once the public hearing is closed, the commission has 65 days to decide whether to approve the application, deny it, or approve it with conditions.

**Motion to close the Public Hearing. Maker: E. DiSalvo; Second by J. Dowdell. Motion carries 4-3-1, Mr. Nneji, Mr. Molyneaux and Ms. Okrongly against. Mr. D'Acunto abstained.**

- 2.2. **(Contd.) 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>

**Robert Jewell** has amended some of his proposed regulations. This application is permissive and not mandatory. It is not a push for development but rather designed to create housing for people who need it. The provision to allow accessory dwelling units (ADU) for two family units has been removed. The ADU must be owner-occupied unless it is an affordable housing unit.

The intent is to keep the regulations flexible while making the owner-occupied provision less restrictive. There is no compelling reason to make ADUs owner-occupied. This regulation doesn't make any properties more attractive to speculators.

**Ms. DiSalvo** asked Mr. Jewell to postpone his application until after the moratorium deliberations. The commission needs more information to make an informed decision.

**Mr. Jewell** would consider withdrawing his application if the commission agreed to waive the application fee if this proposal is resubmitted.

**Chair Hendrick** agreed with Ms. DiSalvo. It would be difficult to process the applicant's ideas in the context of whatever changes the commission seeks to make in the next six months.

**Applicant agreed to withdraw the application.**

### 3. OLD/CONTINUED BUSINESS

- 3.1. **If Public Hearing is closed: 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>

**Public Hearing closed.**

#### **Discussion amongst the commissioners:**

**Mr. Dowdell** believes that after substantial discussion on health and safety, the new development will not impact what is already there.

**Mr. Nneji** is concerned about the forced right hand turn and is frustrated with the traffic study submitted by the applicant, which poses a significant problem. He does not know what the solution is, however.

**Chair Hendrick** stated that one solution would be to make an exit from the building on Mountainview Avenue.

**Ms. Okrongly** finds it disappointing that the applicant didn't try talking to the neighbors first.

**Ms. DiSalvo** pointed out that people live in much worse conditions and doesn't see a significant health or safety issue that will stop this project.

**Mr. Molyneaux** will be voting no on the project based on health and safety concerns.

**Chair Hendrick** offered that he was underwhelmed by the applicant's amended traffic report.

**Mr. Nissim** believes the commission might fail to meet its burden of proof for denial.

**Chair Hendrick** asked the commissioners to focus on specific questions regarding the health and risks associated with the project as they continue their deliberations.

**Mr. D'Acunto** wanted clarification on whatever conditions are put on the applicant with regards to the Fire Marshall's recommendations.

- 3.2. **If Public Hearing is closed: 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>

**Applicant withdrew application.**

- 3.3. **VDC-25-2: 401 Main Street: Village District Application** (Per RZR 8.3 and 7.2.E.1) for a wall sign “Hub Insurance Services” in the CBD zone. Owner: Fairfield County Bank; Appl: Robert Mordente. *For discussion.* <https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/101096>

**Applicant was not present. Continued to next meeting.**

#### **4. NEW BUSINESS**

- 4.1 **VDC-25-3: 452 Main Street: Village District Application** (Per RZR 8.3 and 7.2.E) for building, window and rear sign “Giftz, Gemz & Jewelz” in CBD zone. *Owner: Willett Properties; Appl: Amy Russell. For receipt and possible discussion.* <https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/101096>

**Amy Russell** will occupy the space formerly known as *Touch of Sedona*. She described for the PZC the proposed signage for her business.

**Motion to approve application with recommendation from Architectural Advisory and standard conditions. Maker: B.Nneji; Second by S. D’Acunto. Unanimous Approval**

- 4.2 **Discussion on communication/ notification regarding Planning & Zoning meetings.**

**Ms. DiSalvo** asked if the PZC can be on the town-wide blast for all board meetings and related affairs. **Ms. Paranjape** will investigate the matter and report back to the commission.

- 4.3 **Approval of Minutes**

4.2.1: Meeting Minutes: [May 6, 2025](#)

**Ms. DiSalvo** wanted to make the following correction and amendment to the minutes of May 6, 2025: *Commissioner DiSalvo noted concerns in regards to the process of assessing town zoning ‘as a whole’ during the moratorium and expressed interest in getting consultants (specifically a hired planner) to assist with the commission’s work during the moratorium. Her concern being that the consultants hired to implement the Branchville study would only address Branchville and would not meet the commission individually on an ongoing and as needed basis needed to address the town as a whole.*

**Motion to approve amended minutes as stated by Ms. DiSalvo. Maker: E. DiSalvo; Second by M. Okrongly. Unanimous Approval**

#### **5 Adjourn - Meeting adjourned at 10:43 PM**

**Submitted by Steve Foundoukis**  
**Recording Secretary**

#### **FOOTNOTES:**

PZC =Town of Ridgefield Planning and Zoning Commission

RZR = Town of Ridgefield Zoning Regulations

CGS = Connecticut General Statutes