

Planning and Zoning Commission
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, February 24, 2026
(Unrevised/Unapproved)

ATTENDANCE

Commission & Staff

NAME	TITLE/ROLE	PRESENT		NOTES
		Yes	No	
Robert Hendrick	Chair	X		
Mariah Okrongly	Vice Chair	X		via Zoom
Joe Dowdell	Commissioner	X		
Ben Nneji	Commissioner	X		via Zoom
Elizabeth DiSalvo	Commissioner	X		via Zoom
Chris Molyneaux	Commissioner		X	
Joe Sorena	Commissioner	X		
Sebastian D’Acunto	Commissioner	X		
Ben Nissim	Commissioner	X		via Zoom
Aarti Paranjape	Director, (Staff)	X		via Zoom

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Hendrick called meeting to order at 7:04 PM; Quorum established.

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

1.2. Administrative Announcements & Correspondence

- No new correspondence outside of applications.

1.3. Approval of agenda.

2. ENFORCEMENT (COMPLAINTS/VIOLATIONS)

2.1. 34 Bailey Avenue – Discussion under Executive Session

Mr. Hendrick addresses the executive session on the agenda. Council is not available for this meeting and Mr. Hendrick has suggested either push it to the next meeting or have a deep dive on the moratorium plus an executive session in a special meeting.

Mr. Sorena made a motion to schedule further down the agenda under new business. Move Executive Session. Motion seconded by Ms. DiSalvo. Motion passes.

3. PUBLIC HEARING

- 3.1. SP-26-1: 66 Grove Street, Unit 1:** Revision to a Special Permit (Per RZR 5.3.D.10) for a change in use from fitness facility to child day care facility on the upper level of existing building, including outdoor play area and second building/wall sign. Owner: Lisa Eng Props LLC, RWTR 66 Grove LLC, Kris Eng Props LLC, and Lydia Li Trust Props LLC ET AL; Applicant: Robert Jewell. <https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/104358>

Mr. Jewell was present to represent the application. The hearing was opened. Mr. Hendrick discusses the public hearing process. Mr. Nissim stated that he is having trouble hearing Commissioners that are in the room. They alter the audio and the sound is better. Ms. Paranjape read the legal notice into the record.

Mr. Jewell clarifies that he is representing the lessees of the property. He explains the purpose of the application and why it is a Special Permit along with the goal of the application. Ms. DiSalvo questions whether the stop sign is safer or not safer. Mr. Jewell clarifies why he believes it is safer. Mr. Sorena comments on the difficult traffic situation there. Mr. Jewell talks about prior use of the property.

As part of housekeeping, Mr. Jewell will withdraw the signage portion of the application because it has not been finalized yet. The applicant will come back with a subsequent application for signage. Mr. Hendrick asks for clarification on the planting plan. Mr. Jewell stated that there simply isn't room for plantings in addition to the outdoor play area. The plantings are simultaneously being discussed at the AAC meeting across the hallway. It is hopeful that there will be more information on this prior to the end of the public hearing. One of the co-owners of the property, Mr. Habib of Tribecca Community School in Manhattan, discusses current business in Manhattan and growing out of Manhattan into adjacent towns and states. Mr. Habib has chosen Ridgefield because he has family there. His business partner also grew up in Ridgefield.

Mr. Virbickas, engineer, presents the design plans by sharing the As-Built survey. A slight change has occurred in the plans on ingress and egress. Mr. Sorena asks about signage for ingress and egress to prevent clogging and traffic jam. Up to 160 students and 140 employees will be at the school. Parking was discussed. Mr. D'Acunto asks for some clarification on proximity to housing units. Daycare use was described. Handicap parking was discussed. Fencing was discussed. Ms. DiSalvo asked how drop off and turn around will occur. Ms. Okrongly stated that this topic was brought up during site walk. Mr. Virbickas stated that staff parking will occur on Old Quarry and Grove Street side of the parking area. All pickup and drop off will occur along the sidewalks on the south and west faces of the building. Ms. DiSalvo asked how they would turn around. Ms. Okrongly asks for a drawing or finger trace of how that flow will go. Mr. Jewell states that parents will be expected to park and get out of their car to walk the student in. Ms. Okrongly states that most daycares have a system for the concentrated period of time for pickup. Ms. Okrongly has safety concerns and children concerns. Mr. Jewell gave numbers for the expectations of number of children dropped off at certain periods of time. Ms. Okrongly asks where these numbers came from. Mr. Habib took a poll of parents via Instagram. Mr. Sorena asks for more specifics on parents bringing the children into the facility vs parents dropping them off and allowing them to run into the building. Mr. Jewell states that the drop off times will also be staggered. Ms. DiSalvo asks about zoning for the number of people. Mr. Jewell will clarify with the architect. Mr. D'Acunto asks for clarification on access to the play area from the building. Ms. DiSalvo asks to use something different than vinyl fencing because it is not consistent with the character of the building. Mr. Sorena asks about change to permeability and drainage from existing conditions, and the engineer clarifies there will be no change. Ms. Okrongly asks about accessibility of the playground. Ms. DiSalvo asks for clarification on age ranges of students. Mr. Sorena asks if the license for the facility covers this age range. Mr. Hendrick asks for clarification on whether all 160 students will be in the building at once. Mr. Sorena asks about issues with occupancy levels. Ms. Okrongly asks if there is a photo of the fence that is planned. Ms. DiSalvo suggests doing a 30-inch high concrete wall with a fence on top or something more appropriate for the design of the building. Ms. Dursa is the project architect who stepped in to present her relevant portion of the application. She references existing photos of the site and building façade. Ms. DiSalvo had suggestions on changing the fence to something that looks nicer than standard white vinyl fencing. Ms. Dursa shows the floor plan. Mr. Hendrick clarifies the new window in the updated plans. Mr. Hendrick asks the applicant if she would be willing to consider something other than white vinyl fencing. The applicant states that that is fine but composite is easier than real natural wood. The AAC has approved matte finish and 5 foot in height. Mr. D'Acunto asks if the playground is elevated. Mr. Jewell has added updated plans to the online application in real time. The traffic engineer John Canning on behalf of the applicant discusses the traffic and parking. He looked at the code requirements for surrounding towns. He also looked at the general state requirements. There are currently 61 spaces on the upper lot and the applicant is proposing parking facing in, walking into the facility, pickup up the child, and walking them out to the parking lot to back out of the spot and exit. The staff is parking on the other side of the building. Staff generally arrive

before the students and leave after the students. Arrivals and departures are staggered. It is a change of use for the facility. Trip generation was discussed. Ms. Okrongly asks about concerns of something happening on the Schlumberger property and whether that will impact current studies. He responds that the focus is on this application, but at that time, the applicant will have to redo the studies. Mr. Hendrick asks about entry points. The traffic engineer clarifies that daycare traffic will come in Old Quarry Road. All other people will enter from Grove Street.

Mr. Jewell gives summary comments based on the presentation. Ms. Okrongly asks whether there will be signage in the parking lots directing staff only vs family parking. Mr. Hendrick asks about parent sign-in at drop-off and whether it would be acceptable as a condition of approval. Mr. Hendrick asks about the concrete fence suggested by Ms. DiSalvo. Mr. Jewell revisits the sign for parking conversation.

Ms. Paranjape reads the staff report into the record.

Mr. Hendrick then opened the floor to public comment.

Joseph Heyman, 7 Ketchum Road – He asks the site distance from the entrance to the main entrance on Old Quarry Road.

Andrea Beebe, 78 Main Street – She has concerns about traffic but the concept sounds great. She asks if they have talked to the bus company who use this road and backup past this driveway on Grove Street. She believes there will be major traffic issues multiple times each day.

Mr. Jewell responds as a bus driver back in the 1980s and he does not believe the buses will be a big issue during preschool drop off. The traffic engineer states that the study showed it is busy, but he does not believe it would be a problem. Mr. Hendrick asks about the site line. The Traffic engineer confirms his data. The traffic engineer also states that there is reasonably good site distance from both directions.

Sue McIntee, 8 Harrison Court – She was a member of the Gym and does not remember a bad traffic situation taking exercise classes at various different time slots.

Ray Harvand, 66 Grove Street Apartment B14 – He believes this is a much needed facility in Ridgefield.

Joseph Ternullo, 66 Grove Street Apartment 18 – He is in the complex where the fence will be. He has four concerns. Traffic seems like it will be addressed. The second has to do with delivery and service vehicles. He asks that this topic, with input from the neighbors, be included in the special permit. He believes this will be a successful business. His wife is a retired Kindergarten teacher. He discusses the playground and their proximity to the dumpsters. He doesn't want to see dumpsters across from his property. He also believes there are two doors and he wonders if that is where deliveries are made. He has concerns of the noise of the deliveries plus the private driveway that he doesn't want people to drive on. He also has comments on the fence. He believes the fence will be 30 feet from his property. He asks if current landscaping will be removed – and if there is any, was that added as part of the July 14, 2006 revised Special Permit that allowed the building of Tree Tops. And if so, and it needs to be removed, can it be replaced. He is specifically discussing the plantings 30 feet from his property. He also mentions if the arborvitaes can be put into the expanse in front of the fence. He is in support of the application.

Mr. Jewell brings up a map on the screen showing Grove Street and the dumpster. He states that there is a significant drop in grade between the proposed dumpster and future play area on edge of upper parking area. Mr. Jewell also uploaded a picture to show where the plantings will go. Mr. Ternullo has concerns about the 5 foot fence and asks if there could be some plantings in front of the fencing to make it more green. Mr. Jewell states that he will plant arborvitaes if Mr. Turnello gives him permission to plant on his property.

Lisa Turnello, 66 Grove Street – She has concerns about traffic during busy ingress and egress. She believes that traffic could back up on the roadway. She feels the logistics of cars coming and going will be problematic.

Lauren Cowan – She has two young kids, 5, and 7, and both of them have been in Barlow Mountain Preschool program and its great but not all children qualify to be part of it. She believes there is a huge need for preschools. Her daughter also goes to dance school in the building and other parents ask about where her kids go. She went to the building when she was a gym and there were never concerns with traffic.

Dan Mann, 66 Grove Street – He has been working on getting this space leased for a few years. He is excited about Tribecca School. He wanted to address a Commission question about speed humps in a residential area. There are two speed humps existing which slows down traffic. There are 93 total spaces at the entire facility, 60 in the top and an additional 12 in the lower lot for overflow. He feels the lower parking spots accommodate more space if the school grows beyond what is proposed. He is happy to answer any operational questions.

The traffic engineer readdressed parking and the timing of a parent to complete drop off and exit the parking lot. Mr. Hendrick asks about the planting in response to concerns along the fence. He said he would but there isn't a lot of space. He would need permission from unit owners to plant there. Mr. Sorena asks if there is a possibility of planting along Old Quarry Road. Mr. Jewell thinks that might be possible. Mr. Hendrick asks for clarification on deliveries at the front door of the daycare. Mr. Jewell does not have concerns with that being a condition if suggested by the PZC. Mr. Jewell makes final comments on the positive aspects of this business coming into Ridgefield and it will be nice to have a tenant here after all these years of the building being vacant.

Hearing no further interest in public comment. No additional applicant comments. No additional staff comments. Mr. Jewell reminds he needs to upload the final prints but he uploaded a final photo.

Hearing no objection, the public hearing is closed at 9:00PM.

- 3.2. **SP-26-2: 195 Danbury Road:** Revision to Special Permit (per 9.2.A and 3.2.C.1) for development of pickleball courts and related parking area. Owner/Applicant: Town of Ridgefield.

<https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/104333>

The hearing was opened. It is a revision to a Special Permit. Ms. Paranjape reads the legal notice into the record. Representatives from the Town of Ridgefield present the application and discuss the pre-application meetings that lead to the application design as presented. Mr. Sullivan, the engineer, walked through the application design plans. He shared his screen to show aerial imagery and context for the proposed pickleball courts. He also shows the topographical plan. He showed a color site plan of the pickleball courts. He also pulled up additional renderings. Ms. Throckmorton then presented the landscaping plan. Mr. Sullivan clarified two points on EV charging and parking spaces adjacent to Danbury Road. Mr. Duebel presented the results of a sound study and that there were no concerns of it conflicting with the Ridgefield noise ordinance. He also felt that the results were very conservative.

Mr. Sorena asks about the fencing and the fence has sound attenuation blocking but you cannot see through it. It is often a forest green or black. The applicant revisited parking and traffic flow. Play time is generally morning to mid-morning and petered out by noon. There is no lighting proposed. Mr. Sorena suggests that there could be concerns from neighbors about early and late play creating noise. Mr. Hendrick asks if the Town was amenable to limiting hours of play if neighbors were concerned. Mr. Hendrick believes the view of neighbors is that evening play gets rowdy. The applicant has stated that if there were issues or concerns about noise, they would revisit it.

Ms. Paranjape read the staff report into the record.

Mr. Nissim asked if the sound barrier was going to be around the entire court and in all directions or only some. The applicant confirmed that it would be on two sides. Ms. Paranjape agrees that those two sides that the applicant has suggested are sufficient. Ms. Okrongly asked if there was a picture of the fence. The applicant said he could find a picture and add it to the file. Ms. Okrongly found a photo online and didn't think it was so bad but that a picture should be added to the file now.

Mr. Hendrick opened the floor to public comment.

Mrs. Andrea Leone, 297 Florida Hill Road – She thinks pickleball courts in Ridgefield will keep people in town to spend their money here. There are a lot of people who play pickleball courts. She feels that this is a win-win situation for the town.

Sue McIntee, 8 Harrison Court – She teaches pickleball and thinks it is such a growing sport in town. She thinks there are over 1,000 people playing. This is a great opportunity for the town.

William Ostrand, 4 Brookside Road – He supports this project. There are a lot of people in town seeking more pickleball courts. At 9AM there are often 40 or 50 people trying to play where there are only 16 spots. He feels it is a great addition to Parks and Rec and also Founders Hall. It increases membership and increases foot traffic in the town and adds to Ridgefield character. He currently has to pass through Old Quarry and Grove Street. He will no longer be driving that way based on the new addition of preschool.

Lexi Forrest, 4 Outpost Lane (via Zoom) – She thinks that beautifying the space from the dirt pile it is a fabulous idea. She also has concerns as a resident across the street. She is concerned about the sound and the wildlife along the water. She is also concerned about the traffic pattern. She understands that the DOT recommends making the entrance directly across but she also believes that going in and out the traffic is already pretty bad and there is no crosswalk. The town has yet to finish the trail from the entrance down to Copps Hill for a sidewalk. So, it does make this an issue for all parties involved in regards to accessibility. In response to the popularity of pickleball, there might be issues with all parking spaces being utilized and a higher traffic pattern due to the popularity of the sport is something that needs to be really looked at. She would like to see more consideration for the traffic pattern since this is not connected to the rec center driveway.

Frank Lanzetta, 67 Marshall Road – He discussed the benefits of pickleball for health and socialization. It is generationally mingling. He also feels that the pickleball players give back to the community. They raise money for the community.

Joseph Hayman, 7 Ketchum Road – He was on the PZC 20 years ago and did a study on the population center of Ridgefield and from a planning point of view this makes a lot of sense. He drives this road every day and by owning two condos at Fox Hill he feels this will impact him in a positive way. He is in support of this development.

Bev Kalil – She teaches pickleball to the community. She feels that the pickleball community has developed into a strong community. They have been approached by the police department to host their community pickleball events. These events are all pickleball based. They do outreach. She feels that this pickleball community deserves this. She wants to do to help this application and the pickleball community. She appreciates everything the town has done to make this happen.

Resident – He is a pickleball player that has shared use facilities for current courts that put a strain on other programs such as tennis and basketball. He would also like to see this take some traffic away from the high school area.

Allan Rosenthal, 20 Ascot Way – He is a resident and business owner in town. He thinks it is a fortunate sport for seniors to be able to do this. It is a great community with state-of-the-art facilities. As a physician he believes this will increase the health of pickleball players for health and high quality courts.

Remie Smith, Fox Hill Condos- He is against this application in general but thinks there were a few good points in support of the application this evening. His main concern is about sound. He feels the study and sound wall is for residential but he wants the nature trail nearby to be taken into consideration. He has concerns with the visuals of the sound barrier. He also has concerns about the sound frequencies. He has concerns about traffic and the entrance to the lot being used as an unofficial passing lane as a turning lane into Fox Hill. He has

concerns overall that it doesn't seem like the land is going to be developed yet remain unused for a large portion of the day. He thinks it would be lovely to have a dedicated area for pickleball but to possibly utilize other spaces that are already developed.

Robin Black, 48 High Valley Road (via Zoom) – She thanked the parks and rec team. She is a pickleball player and this game has given the community an opportunity to build relationships across generations. She referenced the sound study showing no negative impact. She discusses the abundance of traffic on Danbury Road. She also states that the pickleball courts are only used a portion of the years. She recommends that others with concerns about sound come out to Yanity to view existing conditions elsewhere. She doesn't think that there is a reason to reasonably deny this application. She would like everyone to explore the facts presented and approve the application.

William Ostrand, 4 Brookside Road – He states that 20,000 to 40,000 cars go by this place each day. He doesn't believe the introduction of up to 90 cars is a significant amount of cars given the amount of traffic already there.

Andrea Beebe, 78 Main Street – She says thank you for this application. She referenced previous attempts that failed to create a place for pickleball to be played in town. She is very passionate and thankful.

Jan Goldfluss, 235 Old Branchville Road – He is on the AAC but also a pickleball player. He feels this is a sport but also a lifestyle choice for residents in town. It is the kind of offering that makes a town great. He knows that this court addition will dilute the use elsewhere so more people have an opportunity to play. He believes that in addition to the sound engineer, the landscaping, and the sound attenuation, there isn't actually a significant amount of sound that comes off the courts during play.

David Shofi, 95 Standish Drive –(Parks and Recreation Commission member) He proposes that any concern related into sound will be minimal based on any other sound in the area.

Hearing no further comment, the public hearing closed at 10:09PM.

4. OLD/CONTINUED BUSINESS

- 4.1. **IF PUBLIC HEARING IS CLOSED: SP-26-1: 66 Grove Street, Unit 1:** Revision to a Special Permit (Per RZR 5.3.D.10) for a change in use from fitness facility to child day care facility on the upper level of existing building, including outdoor play area and second building/wall sign. Owner: Lisa Eng Props LLC, RWTR 66 Grove LLC, Kris Eng Props LLC, and Lydia Li Trust Props LLC ET AL; Applicant: Robert Jewell.

<https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/104358>

Public hearing is closed. Deliberation discussion starts for PZC. Mr. Dowdell asks to bring up proposed conditions.

Suggested Conditions based on Public Hearing

- *Signage of some sort to distinguish between staff parking and drop off or visitor parking.*
- *Require parents sign in or otherwise physically bring the child into the building to assure that it does not evolve into a drop off situation.*
- *Fencing must be matte finish per AAC, but the PZC would prefer to see a more architecturally sensitive designed fence for staff review.*
- *Landscaping if permission from the abutting property to place modest landscape screening outside the fence on the neighboring property.*
- *No change in application to refuse or garbage procedures or location.*
- *Deliveries to the business would only be at the front care of the day care.*
- *Additional landscape plantings should be considered along the fencing to enhance aesthetics without blocking site lines and compromising safety. All changes should be discussed with staff.*

Suggested Additional Conditions based on Staff Report

- *The applicant will work with staff to provide adequate directional signage to separate traffic from daycare and residential.*

Mr. Hendrick will review the draft prepared by staff and if he has any concerns he will bring it back to the Commission for discussion.

Mr. Sorena made a motion to approve the application as presented with suggested conditions discussed and listed above. Seconded by Mr. Dowdell. Motion passes unanimously.

- 4.2. IF PUBLIC HEARING IS CLOSED: **SP-26-2: 195 Danbury Road:** Revision to Special Permit (per 9.2.A and 3.2.C.1) for development of pickleball courts and related parking area. Owner/Applicant: Town of Ridgefield.
<https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/104333>

Ms. Okrongly would like to table the discussion until next meeting because she has been traveling and it is getting late. Mr. Dowdell is comfortable voting with no special conditions. Ms. DiSalvo is comfortable voting. Mr. Nneji has been traveling and is jet lagged.

Mr. D'Acunto made a motion to approve with Special conditions as stated in staff report and Standard Conditions. Seconded by Mr. Nneji. Motion passes and it's unanimous.

- 4.3. REF-26-1: 195 Danbury Road: 8-24 Referral for proposed pickle ball court, located at 195 Danbury Road, land is part of lot number E13-0175. Owner/Applicant: Town of Ridgefield.
<https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/104467>

This was not discussed.

4.4. **Temporary Moratorium Activities**

The Commission will have a Special Meeting to discuss topics on 4.4 and 5. A poll will be distributed to the PZC to determine a date.

4.4.1. **General Regulation and Zone Reviews c/o Chair**

This item was not discussed.

4.4.2. **MISC-25-3: Branchville Strategic Review**

This item was not discussed.

5. **EXECUTIVE SESSION** Re: 34 Bailey Avenue

The Commission will have a Special Meeting to discuss topics on 4.4 and 5. A poll will be distributed to the PZC to determine a date.

6. **NEW BUSINESS**

- 6.1. **FP-26-1: 0 West Branchville Road:** Flood Plain Application (per RZR 6.1 and RZR 11) for replacement of Bridge No 05510, Portland Ave over Norwalk River; under the State project No 117-163 located at Portland Ave, State of Connecticut and 0 West Branchville Road (Parcel ID I17-0077), Town of Ridgefield. Owner: State of Connecticut and town of Ridgefield. Applicant: Jeffrey Fontaine. *(For receipt and schedule sitewalk and discussion. Staff suggests sitewalk on March 8 and discussion on March 10).*
<https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/104581>

Motion made by Mr. D'Acunto to receive and schedule a site walk for March 8 and discuss on March 10. Seconded by Mr. Nissim. Motion passes unanimously.

6.2. Meeting Minutes

6.2.1. Regular Meeting Minutes – February 10, 2026

Mr. Nissim made a motion to approve the minutes with suggested changes if amended. Mrs. Okrongly seconded. No opposition and the motion carries.

7. ADJOURN

Hearing no further business or discussion, meeting adjourned at 10:37 PM.

Notes

Lis pendens: Addressi vs Planning & Zoning Commission Re 389 Main Street.

Submitted by Beth Peyser,
Recording Secretary (via video recording)

FOOTNOTES:

PZC =Town of Ridgefield Planning and Zoning Commission

RZR = Town of Ridgefield Zoning Regulations

CGS = Connecticut General Statutes