

Planning and Zoning Commission  
Meeting held via Zoom  
Special Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, January 6, 2026  
(Unrevised/Unapproved)

ATTENDANCE

Commission & Staff

| NAME               | TITLE/ROLE        | PRESENT |    | NOTES    |
|--------------------|-------------------|---------|----|----------|
|                    |                   | Yes     | No |          |
| Robert Hendrick    | Chair             | X       |    | via Zoom |
| Mariah Okrongly    | Vice Chair        | X       |    | via Zoom |
| Joe Dowdell        | Commissioner      | X       |    | via Zoom |
| Ben Nneji          | Commissioner      | X       |    | via Zoom |
| Elizabeth DiSalvo  | Commissioner      | X       |    | via Zoom |
| Chris Molyneaux    | Commissioner      | X       |    | via Zoom |
| Joe Sorena         | Commissioner      |         | X  |          |
| Sebastian D’Acunto | Commissioner      | X       |    | via Zoom |
| 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.*

**2. DISCUSSION**

**2.1. Temporary Moratorium Activities**

**2.1.1. General Regulation and Zones Review. c/o Chair**

Discussion began on the overview of the “working session” this evening. Drafted regulations on the table include traffic impact analysis, village district expansions, and excavation/grading/filling. Mr. Hendrick opened the floor if anyone had any additional regulations that have been drafted. Mr. Nissim stated that he will revisit updates to the fee schedule, signage, and steep slopes but does not have language prepared. Mr. Hendrick believes that the steep slope updates can mirror the method for excavation/grading/fill where there is a limit or trigger. Ms. DiSalvo discussed the comprehensive list of regulations to work on and the status of those. Ms. Okrongly asked for this status document to include a link to Google Doc for language. Discussion ensued on how that would work with FOIA. Mr. D’Acunto and Mr. Molyneaux and Mr. Nneji cannot remember which regulations have been assigned to them. Mr. Hendrick shared his screen to show the working copy of the Google Doc showing who is assigned to research which regulation update and their ranking of priority. Ms. DiSalvo could not find the document but was directed accordingly. Ms. Okrongly wants to make sure every Commissioner is working on something. Mr. D’Acunto clarified how the spreadsheet is organized. The spreadsheet was organized by A and B priority for each Commissioner to make sure they have something to work on. Mr. Molyneaux would like the outdoor recreation facility regulation. Additional conversation ensued on the process of this reading and discussing the draft regulations as they evolve. Mr. Hendrick suggested that a draft can be circulated but it should be discussed at the next meeting and not continued discussion via email back and forth between the Commission. Mr. Hendrick briefly discussed the Village District regulation. Mr. Hendrick worked on the traffic impact studies. Mr. Hendrick added a status column and discussion ensued to fill that in. Some topics had multiple Commissioners assigned, and discussion ensued on who should be the primary Commissioner. Ms. Okrongly takes 7. Mr. Dowdell takes 8. Ms. DiSalvo takes the lead on co-

housing. Mr. D'Acunto will work on this in his downtime next week during a legal conference in Florida. Ms. Okrongly has a draft for sustainability, tree replacement ratio, and solar. She has a draft but numbers should be revisited. Drafted in the status column means is ready for public hearing. In progress means it needs some revisit but is in progress and a Commissioner has been invested. Mr. D'Acunto has asked that their drafts are prepared and submitted to Mr. Hendrick and Ms. Paranjape, so the Commissioners have all the most up to date information. Mr. Hendrick will get the links on the miscellaneous file for all Commissioners and the public – the Commissioners want to make sure they are legally allowed to do. Ms. Okrongly will send the special permit criteria language for Row 7 out to the Commission. Mr. Hendrick is updating it to Special Permit Criteria. Mr. Dowdell is in progress on Line 15. Mr. Hendrick wants to keep active open space to work on – he thinks it will take a lot of thought and finesse. He will work on this next. Mr. Hendrick states that the parking and open space parking lot standards should be one sentence and it is basically that the open space parking should not comply with the other town parking lot standards. Mr. D'Acunto asks about number 3 and Mr. Hendrick states that FHI will be working on that due to overlay zones and Route 7. Mr. D'Acunto thinks we should revisit the Norwalk regulations. Mr. D'Acunto asks again which one he was a place holder for. Mr. Hendrick assigned increased minimum and setbacks or reduce max lot coverage in R zones to preserve open space and mitigate over building to Mr. D'Acunto. Mr. Hendrick suggests someone take over his responsibilities on the density bonus for affordable units for age restricted zones like AR-HD Zones. Mr. Nneji is willing to take this on. Mr. Hendrick discusses multi-family housing in all or more zones – he suggests the Commission just reads Mr. Jewell's proposal from last year to move forward in the public hearing. Mr. Nissim would like to continue working on this one and Mr. D'Acunto would like to work on it with him and they will share with Ms. DiSalvo as it moves forward. Mr. Hendrick and Ms. DiSalvo both believe that a very robust conversation should be held on this topic because it is controversial and worthy of discussion to state whether the Commission would like to move forward with Mr. Jewell's suggestion or not. Mr. Hendrick suggests looking at the definition of family in the Planning and Zoning regulations. Retaining walls and steep slopes are in progress by Mr. Nissim. Mr. Hendrick believes that strengthening gas station canopy regulations isn't necessary as it is already enforceable in the regulations. Mr. Hendrick discusses family day care and group day care regulations. Ms. Okrongly has written the language and will plead her case as to why it should be adopted. Ms. Okrongly gives an overview of her position on this. Mr. D'Acunto is against this regulation. Mr. Hendrick discusses how Ridgefield regulations are not compliant with the states expectations on the day care regulations. Discussion ensued on the roots of this regulation at a state level and how it doesn't necessarily align with how the Commission views Ridgefield. Mr. Hendrick moved onto permeable area. Ms. Okrongly was assigned to that one but she passed it along to Mr. Molyneaux. A brief discussion was held by the Commissioners on solar. In closing on this discussion, Mr. Hendrick states that he will work with Ms. Paranjape to make sure the latest drafts of what everyone has submitted will be put on the shared folder.

The Commission moves along to the Branchville Zoning Study with Mr. Gomes of FHI studio. Mr. Gomes has a presentation for discussion on zooming options and recommendations and wants to discuss Public Act 25-1 was signed by the governor and has implications on the work in Branchville. He believes timing is good in where the process is and it could create new opportunities. Mr. Gomes will discuss the Branchville area for new potential zoning district boundaries and review recommended zoning districts and options. He gave an overview of what PA 25-1 is. Mr. Hendrick jumps in to ask about special conditions and adverse impacts and how that relates to parking and an approval. Ms. DiSalvo engages with questions and discussions. Mr. Gomes gives a general overview on his read on this and what this public act is missing in its overview. Mr. Hendrick believes that instead of judgement in a Public Hearing, it will have to be a detailed checklist in a Summary Review Hearing. Mr. Gomes agrees that this is likely the best approach but can be called a site plan approval or summary review. Mr. Nissim asks if this over rides the wetlands regulations. Mr. Gomes says that it will not. Mr. Gomes returns to his presentation to discuss the important terms introduced by this legislation including conservation and traffic management district, qualifying transit-oriented community, qualifying rapid transit community, transit-oriented district, housing growth zone, housing growth program, and housing growth plan. In summary, Mr. Gomes prepared an organizational chart on what changes are automatic and what changes would require a change to the zoning regulations including the adoption of a Conservation and Traffic Management District or the adoption of a transit-oriented district in addition to a Conservation and Traffic Management District. Mr. Gomes discussed the timeline for establishing a transit oriented district and it is immediately. The deadline for developing this guideline is January 1, 2027. The deadline for the Housing Growth Program is July 1, 2028. The act required a Housing Growth Plan and affordable housing goal for each town. Mr. Hendrick told Mr. Nissim that the state is working on model regulations and the PZC will have to

decide, as a Commission, whether they would like to adopt them. In response to Mr. DiSalvo's inquiry, Mr. Gomes states that this directly replaces the affordable housing requirement but does not touch just affordable housing. Mr. Nissim asks what happens if you don't comply to this. Mr. Gomes responds that you are less qualified and possibly disqualified for funding sources, predominantly related to housing, if you are not compliant. Mr. Gomes specifically relates this to Branchville and the constraints to development in addition to water and sewer is the topography. Branchville is bound by steep slopes and town boundaries. Mr. Gomes discusses parcels to consider for rezoning while factoring in existing land use, access to Branchville Road and Route 7 and existing zoning designations. Mr. Gomes referred to the 2017 TOD Plan and believes that it is a little too narrow. Instead he recommends the creation of three new zones. Ms. DiSalvo asks if we can combine with neighboring towns to create a larger TOD zone and inquires about density. Mr. Gomes states that the limiting factor is parking. Discussion ensues on this topic. Mr. Gomes states that no guidelines have been established so it is up the PZC to discuss and put parameters on what is reasonable in this area. Mr. D'Acunto suggests that the Metro North station and Danbury Line are not totally functional so we might not want to discuss the TOD but we should consider this a village mixed use area not contingent upon the TOD and train schedule. Mr. Gomes confirms that TOD is just a handle for this. Mr. Nneji's question about how this regulation refers to public sewer and water. Mr. Gomes states that it creates funding sources for research but it does not require it to be available. So, it is based on feasibility and cost and ability of the developer to get systems permitted. Mr. Gomes states that he is ready for the Commission to chew on these ideas and start drafting some language and regulations. In closing, Mr. Gomes has two major ideas. The creation of a new residential zone along Branchville roads and merging these business districts into one zone. Mr. Gomes thinks the one no brainer here is that this should be a new Village District that applies to this area. Mr. Hendrick summarizes that the PZC does agree that the Village District is the first step to take. He gave Mr. Gomes the green light to move forward on creating the Village District. He believes a concern is that the Commissioners do not believe that the AAC is adequately sourced to handle the applications and type of detailed review that this would create. He is asking if a new VDC could be created outside of the existing AAC. Mr. Gomes also recommends minimum open space requirements, linking parcels with a functional sidewalk network, and public space standards for frontage within the zoning and design guidelines. Some discussion ensued on the river and its limiting factors. Mr. Hendrick is trying to understand by going around the room to hear whether each Commissioner supports Mr. Gomes and his presentation or whether they do not support. (In support: Mr. Dowdell, Mr. Nneji, Ms. DiSalvo, Ms. Okrongly, Mr. Molyneaux, Mr. D'Acunto, Mr. Nissim. Not in support: no one) Ms. Paranjape had no additional staff comments. Mr. Nneji had a few additional questions that were discussed with Mr. Gomes and he clarified a few points that were discussed. Mr. Gomes signed off for the evening at this point.

At this time Mr. Hendrick opened the floor to additional topics. Mr. Nissim asked if we needed to extend the moratorium again. Mr. Hendrick stated that this will be on the agenda on January 13.

### **3. ADJOURN**

*Hearing no further business or discussion, meeting adjourned at 9:58 PM.*

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