

Planning and Zoning Commission  
 Special Meeting Minutes  
 Tuesday, April 21, 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	
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 7:02 PM; Quorum established.*

**2. DISCUSSION**

**2.1. Temporary Moratorium Activities**

Mr. Hendrick opened discussion on regulation changes and that there is a number of items on the table and while this has been a long-standing item on the agenda, the PZC doesn’t always have time to reach this item and it is passed.

**2.1.1. MISC-26-1: General Regulation and Zones Review. c/o Chair**

Ms. Okrongly discussed sustainability regulations. She shared her screen to discuss and add a letter “k” to address the variation in Special Permits. She added that the applicant should look at the POCD and look at the goals and policies related to sustainability. It is then up to the PZC to decide how applicable their application is. Her goal was to meet sustainability where it is and how it can fit into the site. Mr. Hendrick appreciated the language. He has concerns about the nuts and bolts of how to enforce. He thinks maybe it could be split into two parts. He suggested shifting into 9.2 or 9.3 on materials that are required for a Special Permit instead of k. but also add a k to reference the criteria and that the PZC will consider the sustainability statement. Ms. Okrongly has found that when referencing the POCD, Special Permits take such a light touch, and she wants to call it out and make it a bigger discussion on building not just for today but for today and into the future. Ms. Okrongly talks about sustainability and conservation. Ms. Okrongly’s goal is to make sure each applicant actually addresses the POCD. Mr. Nissim and Ms. DiSalvo both suggested that maybe it would make sense to address this as more of

a checklist. Ms. Okrongly doesn't think a checklist will address the wide variation in applications. Mr. Hendrick thinks maybe you could do broad categories or a form instead of a checklist. He gave a few suggestions on how that might look. Ms. DiSalvo liked Mr. Hendrick's idea. Ms. DiSalvo also thinks this would be the right location to state that your submittal will be part of your application and you should address these things. Mr. Hendrick believes the form is a document on every Special Permit. Mr. Nissim agrees that it is part of the application packet. Mr. Hendrick believes that adding this makes it a serious topic. Mr. Hendricks mentions Chapter 4 of the POCD which is all about sustainability. But he also agrees with Ms. Okrongly that there are suggestions recommending sustainability throughout the document. Mr. Nissim thinks Ms. Okrongly's approach is the right way to go. Ms. Okrongly mentions that the POCD updates each 10 years and so she doesn't want to reference exact language in the event it changes. Ms. Okrongly had some technological issues and dropped off the meeting momentarily and came back. Ms. Okrongly goes back into her takeaway and drops off the meeting again due to technological difficulties. Mr. Hendrick suggests moving on to the next topic on the drafting table. He has one topic about notice requirements. Mr. Nissim wants to flag this for the next time that he needs to discuss sign regulations with Ms. Paranjape, but he missed the scheduled meeting and won't have information until the following meeting. Mr. Nneji discusses the under 1 acre density bonus. He suggests adding this as a new section to relate to the POCD and Connecticut General Statutes by providing a predictable density bonus for properties under 1 acre. He suggests the PZC should open the density bonus to all lands whether or not they have sewer. Ms. DiSalvo suggests different forms of housing such as shared housing, duplexes, and digging deeper on those. She thinks her subject will dovetail well with this. She also believes that once they have the two on paper they will overlap and possibly just have different regs for different size lots. Mr. Nneji believes the weakness is that it forces everything to be concentrated around the CBD area and around transit-oriented areas. So, he is glad that Ms. DiSalvo is working on something that might be expanded or complimented. Ms. DiSalvo researched some subjects brought up by Mr. Jewell related to duplexes and two-family homes on one single family lot in any area of town. Ms. DiSalvo thinks it must maintain character of the neighborhood independent of how many structures are on the lot. Mr. Nneji is drafting similar language including having the appearance of a single family basically even if more than one residence on a lot. Mr. Hendrick asks Mr. Nneji what the actual bonus is if there is an affordable component. Mr. Nneji states that the idea behind it is for anyone to have a density bonus of 100% if a two family. It would be 200% if you became a three family. To get that you would have to deed restrict for a period of no less than 40 years. So that households with 80% of area median income can qualify to rent. Within this language, if someone wants to buy and then sell the units then, goodbye. Mr. Hendrick asks why someone would do a deed restriction at 40 years when they could do 8-30g and bypass zoning regulations. Mr. Nneji says that Mr. Hendricks last comment is the challenge. Mr. Nneji doesn't know why it would ever make sense if they could do 8-30g. Ms. DiSalvo asks whether they could make this as of right to bypass all the 8-30g stuff. Mr. Hendrick doesn't like the term as of right. Ms. DiSalvo means that they don't have to go for a Special Permit, they could just go for a two or three family if they meet the requirements. Mr. Hendrick agrees with Ms. DiSalvo. Mr. Hendrick also throws out the idea of making it a little bit less than 8-30g to make it more appealing. Such as being at AMI instead of SMI since SMI is lower as a restrictive level so someone might offer deed restriction at AMI to get a little higher rent or sell higher than going SMI. At that point it might qualify for affordable by the PZC but not by the state. Mr. Nneji asks why someone would want to do this he had to run to the bathroom. Ms. DiSalvo suggests doing it as of right vs coming for a Special Permit. Mr. Hendrick suggests just making the hurdle less than the 8-30g hurdle. Mr. Nneji agrees with Ms. DiSalvo and Mr. Hendrick because he doesn't think his language is appealing. If they went this avenue, the applicant wouldn't get HUE points because what makes housing affordable in Ridgefield isn't what is affordable according to the state. Mr. Nneji also suggests having an affordability plan, so the design aligns with what they are proposing. He also discusses the requirement for parking and the design that maintains the

appearance of a single-family dwelling. He asks if the PZC wants him to look at the concept of making it the whole town. Ms. DiSalvo suggests keeping it open for now and not make a decision until Ms. DiSalvo presents the stuff she has been working on. He will keep it open to analyze how many more parcels under one acre would be added and the next time he shares the update he will share that information to decide whether they want to broaden it or keep it how it is. Mr. Hendrick suggests Mr. Nneji just asks Ms. Paranjape for that count. Ms. DiSalvo asks if it is one acre zoning or if it is actually on a lot that is just an acre. Ms. Paranjape also suggests looking at lot coverages per zone or lot size and looking into those impacts. Ms. Okrongly surfaced momentarily. Ms. Okrongly goes back to her takeaways from sustainability. She is going to marry two versions, put together a checklist, and a statement that this is part of the application. She will put that together and send it out for the PZC to review and discuss at the next meeting. Ms. Okrongly will send to Mr. Hendrick and Ms. Paranjape. Mr. Dowdell asks if a statement should be submitted with a requirement based on certifications required for whatever the statement is. Ms. Okrongly suggests that it must be verified by someone certified in each topic discussed. Mr. Dowdell just suggests that language needs to be clear. Ms. Okrongly wants to make this very achievable but so many contractors' default to the status quo instead of asking any questions. Ms. Okrongly also has a tree legislation which she sent around. She has been working and revising this because she felt it was originally too conservative. She has since worked with the tree forester from Hartford. She loosened it up and solidified it. She liked the language for Hartford and Westchester County. Other language stated that 13-inch caliper or over requires a review no matter what or where. She spoke with a tree expert who was a wealth of knowledge and used her suggestions to create the language she is proposing. She thinks using tree canopy as a gauge if rural because taking down multiple trees has a larger impact than individual trees. She also suggests the possibility of taking down a tree and depositing in an in lieu of tree fund. Mr. Dowdell suggests that some trees within a distance from the residence might be considered to be exempt. Ms. Okrongly did not have that language, but Ms. DiSalvo suggested adding that if it was a safety issue it could be an exemption. Mr. Dowdell just had to cut down a few trees for safety. Ms. DiSalvo just asks how this will be announced to the public because no one will know that this is a rule or regulation. Ms. Paranjape suggests a press release. Mr. Hendrick believes this regulation will likely have significant public input. Ms. Okrongly and Mr. Nissim were having technology issues at this point. Ms. Okrongly at this time asks who wants to give more critical feedback. Mr. Dowdell suggests \$1000 per inch of tree removed is very stiff. Ms. DiSalvo says that might be too significant. Mr. Hendrick suggests creating a formula that starts at \$500 and maybe increases by increment for significant trees. Mr. Dowdell also talks about in lieu of fee so you can pay to not replant them. Ms. DiSalvo adds that that fee should go to the tree fund. Ms. DiSalvo suggests only talking about trees over a certain caliper. Ms. Okrongly states that in Hartford they have legacy trees that are really big, beautiful trees that have stricter rules but she felt that it might be too aggressive for Ridgefield but she's open to investigating more. Ms. DiSalvo likes that idea if it is over 36 inches or so. Mr. Dowdell needs to think that over, but he thinks they might be too strict or aggressive. Ms. Okrongly also suggests inviting the tree forester from Hartford to come to a meeting to talk about the process. Mr. Hendrick thinks that might be a great idea to bring in an expert on this niche policy to do a workshop. Ms. Okrongly suggests presenting feedback by the end of the week. She will also simultaneously reach out to the tree warden to see if they would come talk about Hartford tree legislation and thoughts and feedback since they have enacted it. Mr. Hendrick says it would be great. Mr. Hendrick asks if anyone else has any other topics to discuss. Mr. Nneji has accessory structure in front yard language. He has sent around language. Ms. Paranjape has the uploaded version three. Mr. Nneji decides to just talk about it. It is Section 3.4 under accessory structures. Some are permitted by Special Permit and those are the ones that come to the PZC. They include facilities such as tennis courts but must be within the minimal front yard setback. Sheds and detached garages and any other standalone accessory buildings all have to come to the PZC for a Special Permit. Mr. Nneji wants to consider sustainable accessory structures

because it supports the 2020 POCD because it is renewable energy. If these are allowed to include solar integration buildings to be permitted as of right. Ms. DiSalvo thinks that a few years ago this was worked on with the energy commission. She likes solar but doesn't feel comfortable with that. If the PZC does do that she would like to revisit everything from a few years ago and bring in the energy commission. Mr. Nneji asks about strong opposition against it. Ms. DiSalvo agrees that there was strong opposition and the energy commission came up with rules that the town still follows. Mr. Hendrick agrees that Ms. DiSalvo is bringing up a good point and there was a lot of concern about ground mounted solar on smaller lots and agrees that in general if the PZC undertakes it they should put it into a much wider review to include the energy commission. Mr. Nneji agrees that it is one of those things that is a huge opportunity for Ridgefield to provide leadership on it and that if they were to establish these regulations other towns might follow. Mr. Nneji would like to provide leadership on this. Mr. Hendrick thinks the PZC could do it but must follow the proper channels. Mr. Nneji is going to take their advice and reach out to the energy task force. Ms. DiSalvo suggests just revisiting what the regulations say now about it. The neighbor's opposition was about property value and views. There was an example in Ridgebury which caused strong neighborhood opposition. One property owner put in a very large array of solar panels and the neighbors then could only see solar panels instead of the trees they used to see. Mr. Nneji agrees that he will reach out but isn't sure we are ready for it. Ms. DiSalvo has been working on the duplex subject she mentioned earlier. She is also looking at microhouses. There is no rule against tiny homes. They might be an accessory dwelling if it is a structure in addition to another home. Ridgefield has no regulations for a tiny home on a lot with no other structure. Mr. Hendrick goes to the notice regulation language he has been working on. This is new and not uploaded. This was not on the original spreadsheet but came up a few meetings ago but it was forgotten during the brainstorm. The PZC has discussed the need for this in the past and agreed that this was a good idea. The idea is to amend the regulations based on feedback that based on current regulations that require a Special hearing the abutters notice needs to go to property owners within 100 feet of the property. In a lot of areas 100 feet might only notice three or so people and other interested parties would appreciate notice. Mr. Hendricks was focusing on making it more formula based. He proposes a formulated grid based on zones and types of construction. He also clarifies language based on condo owners of units on a larger property. Ms. DiSalvo agrees with it. If there is no additional comment, Mr. Hendrick wants to sit down with Ms. Paranjape to use a few random examples to see how this applies and if it is functional. Ms. Okrongly asks where a significant number of properties might overlap. Mr. Nneji suggests adding language that was removed "of the subject property". Mr. Nneji wanted to second what Ms. Okrongly said about testing this out with Ms. Paranjape on some selective sample properties where it might become complicated. Hearing no additional regulations ready for discussion, Mr. Hendrick brings up his list to see what topics have been backlogged. Topics include trees, village district expansion, density bonus, accessory structures in front yard, signage, retaining wall and steep slopes, project monitoring peer review compliance, open space parking, outdoor recreation facilities, family and group daycare, broad use mixed zone overlay, mandating solar designs, mandating EV spaces, multiunit family conversion, permeable area, and owner occupancy requirements on ADU. There are other items on the list that were deemed lower level and not immediate concerns in this top level. This item will remain on the agenda for future discussion.

#### 2.1.2. MISC 25-3: Branchville Strategic Review

This item was not discussed.

### 3. ADJOURN

Hearing no further business or discussion, meeting adjourned at 8:35 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

Note: The Zoom recording for this meeting can be accessed at the following link:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/play/LeKOMO2E-XeGoOuSn7do8MUToUlzMHymgF02FRaafUzopO273Ed-VqYgHHx8eh85D\\_YiF4UDDLIEw3g7.XLIK\\_-eRr0riQ1Mg](https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/play/LeKOMO2E-XeGoOuSn7do8MUToUlzMHymgF02FRaafUzopO273Ed-VqYgHHx8eh85D_YiF4UDDLIEw3g7.XLIK_-eRr0riQ1Mg)