



**Ridgefield
Economic &
Community
Development
Commission**

400 Main Street • Ridgefield, CT 06877
203.546.2547

Arnold Light
Chair

John Collins
Robert DeFalco
John Devine
Alex Karsanidi
Paul Levine

Rudy Marconi,
First Selectman
Ridgefielddevelopment.com

Approved Meeting Minutes

Ridgefield Economic & Community Development Commission December 5, 2016, 6:30 pm Small Conference Room

Present: Arnold Light (Chair), Robert DeFalco, John Devine, Paul Levine, John Collins, Alex Karsanidi

Guest: Gus Ryer

Arnold Light called the meeting to order at 6:36 PM

Minutes Taken by Arnold Light

1. November Minutes were approved. (Motion: John Devine, Second: Paul Levine)
2. The meeting scheduled for 12/6 with P&Z was canceled because John Devine is unable to attend. To be rescheduled for sometime this month.
3. Mary Henwood has resigned from the RECDC for personal reasons.
4. Gus Ryer was interviewed as a possibility to fill the Mary's commission. Gus is a commercial Real Estate Broker with Ryer Associates and is familiar with the retail and commercial space

available in Ridgefield, plus he is knowledgeable of the P&Z regulations as well as the necessary permits a business must secure. He has also served on the RECDC Task Force that developed the new website and is well versed in technology and social media. It was the consensus of the commissioners present that Gus would be a good fit. He was advised to write a letter to inform Rudy Marconi of his desire to be a part of the RECDC.

5 At the last BOS meeting the ECDC recommended we hire a person for 20K to work part time from January to June FY 2016 to implement the Retail & Parking Implementation Plan. The BOS then requested more specific details of for such an appointment. Arnold Light prepared and shared his definition and specific duties that would be carried out by an RECDC Administrator. This document will be presented to the BOS for discussion on Wednesday, December 7th.

6 . There was a discussion of the OGSM for 2017 and the feeling was it should focus on town-wide digital marketing and to work with P&Z on first floor retail zoning evaluation. A formal document will be prepared and distributed for approval of all commissioners.

7. The 2017-18 FY budget is due to be presented to the town financial planners and Rudy Marconi by the end of this week. Arnold Light presented the budget to the commission. There was general agreement on the expanded budget. A draft copy while not the final document is enclosed.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40.

Draft of FY RECEDC Budget:

December 9, 2016

The Hon. Rudy Marconi
First Selectman
Town of Ridgefield
400 Main Street
Ridgefield, CT 06877

Dear Rudy:

For the fiscal year of 2017-18, the Ridgefield Economic & Community Development Commission (RECDC) respectfully requests an annual budget of \$51,850. A detailed scope of work associated with this request follows on the next page.

For the coming year, the RECDC has outlined an agenda intended to support and strengthen Ridgefield's business environment, as well as generate new tax revenue for the Town. Through its continued collaboration with the Town's many agencies, boards, commissions, departments, businesses and residents on several important economic development opportunities within Town, the RECDC's goal is to assist the Town in adapting to the changing market and workforce demands within our region and State.

The RECDC's planned scope of work for 2017-18 includes projects that SCRE has recommended and will be funded through the allocated budget presented herewith or funded by initiatives that would require added Town investment. Where possible, the Commission has minimized costs to the Town through utilization of existing resources and programs. Additionally, the Commission has worked hard to establish goals and objectives for each initiative that will maximize the Town's return on investment within a reasonable, and where possible, abbreviated time frame.

The RECDC looks forward to the opportunity to appear before the Board of Selectmen during this year's budget process, to present this important budget and answer any questions the Selectmen may have.

Sincerely,



Arnold Light
Chairman, RECDC

The EDC's work plan will include, but not be limited to, the following tasks:

RECDC 2017-18 WORK PLAN AND BUDGET

Task 1: RECDC Website Maintenance & Expansion

One of the most important initiatives for the RECDC in FY16-17 was to remake the website and put it on a user-friendly platform. The new site is very robust and mobile friendly. The objectives are to get more viewers to the site in order to properly market Ridgefield's available retail and commercial properties to potential businesses and investors and to showcase the Town's existing business community. To maintain and keep the site fresh and vibrant we submit the enclosed (SEE ATTACHMENT A)

(Anticipated cost: \$3,000)

Task 2: Search Engine Optimization (SEO) In order to properly market the new RECDC website SEO is vitally important. Organic Search traffic is perhaps the most essential factor that determines a web sites success or failure online. For that reason we are recommending this moderate budget to begin the formulation of competitive key words and the strategic execution of SEO in the hopes of gaining top website rankings and increased traffic to the new RECDC site.

(Anticipated cost \$1,000)

Task 3: CERC Membership Fees

In order to maintain its CERC membership and access to the CERC Site-finder database on the RECDC's website, the RECDC will need to pay for the yearly memberships associated with these programs.

(Anticipated cost: \$650)

Task 4: Production & reprinting of 4-Color REDC Business Incentive Brochure

In 2014 The RECDC designed a Business Incentive Program to attract commercial and retail businesses to Ridgefield. From 2014 to 2016 Six (6) businesses availed themselves of the program. The plan offers an abundance of amenities from various, cultural and recreational organizations in town. It was also hoped that the town would offer a rebate on Personal Property Taxes to further induce business to locate in Ridgefield. The RECDC will again appeal to the BOS for this small tax incentive. We anticipate several changes in the brochure in 2017 and to reprint so that there are enough copies to go to the various outlets for distribution. To produce, print and redistribute the brochure we anticipate the cost below.

(Anticipated cost: \$700)

Task 5: Supply & Administrative Support

Throughout the year, the RECDC will need office supplies and administrative support for its monthly public meetings, and occasionally for its stakeholder meetings and workshops.

(Anticipated cost: \$500)

Task 6: Town Marketing Expansion The Town has never had a marketing program. In order to promote and market the town in accordance with the SCRE recommendations and the new Town and RECDC websites the RECDC is willing to take on this important task. Through digital resources and the Town's new online presence the RECDC will employ a paid test marketing program to see what is the most effective means of reaching and attracting zip codes that are in proximity to Ridgefield and represent new economic potential for spending in Town.

(Anticipated cost: \$5,000)

Task 7: RECDC Educational Forums For Businesses

The RECDC during the 2017-2018 time period will conduct Forums for small businesses on how to stay competitive. There are some general rules of thumb that can help retailers and small businesses to focus on efficiency and maintain relevancy to the consumer groups in their markets. The RECDC Forums will focus on online marketing and social media ideas for improving the bottom line.

(Anticipated cost: \$1,000)

Task 8: RECDC/Parking Director Consultant (Part Time)

For the past year the RECDC has recommended the creation of such a position and the SCRE final report has independently confirmed this recommendation. The RECDC suggests to begin with a part time consulting position. We recommend part time for two reason, first and foremost budget and second but equally as important is the expenditure must prove to be cost effective in that the money spent is returned as a result of the position. The SCRE report (SEE ATTACHEMENT B) details the scope of the work.

(Anticipated cost: \$40,000)

Table 1: Estimated Budget for RECDC Work Plan Tasks

TASK	DESCRIPTION OF WORK	ESTIMATED COST
1	RECDC Website Maintenance & Expansion	\$3,000
2	Search Engine Optimization	\$1,000
3	CERC Membership	\$650
4	Production & Reprinting of EDC Incentive Brochure	\$700
5	Supply & Administrative	\$500
6	Town Marketing Expansion	\$5,000
7	RECDC Educational Forums For Business	\$1,000
8	RECDC/Parking Director (Part Time)	\$40,000
	Total 2017-18 RECDC Budget Request:	\$51,850

ATTACHMENT A



Website Maintenance Proposal

Prepared for: Ridgefield Economic Development Commission

Date: October 18, 2016

Scope of Work: Art Schobey will provide the following services related to the WordPress website installed on the domain ridgefielddevelopment.com and hosted by Hostgator.

Weekly Website Checks

- Confirm regular backups have been created and saved
- Update Content Management System (WordPress Core) as needed
- Update Divi Theme as needed
- Update WordPress plugins as needed and check for conflicts
- Delete all unused plugin files
- Clean and optimize WordPress database files
- Perform & review malware security scans and report any issues to client
- Check for 404 errors and resolve these by fixing links or redirecting
- Monitor site status in Google Search Console & Google Analytics

Monthly Website Checks

- Check website loading speed and report problems to client if needed
- Check and remove spam comments and form submissions

Quarterly Website Checks

- Test the website to ensure that it looks and displays properly on the most popular browsers and mobile devices
- Check the uptime logs. If uptime is less than 99.9% then consult with web host. Consider alternative web host if they cannot provide a solution

Cost: \$190.00/month (effective 11-1-16 through 10-31-17)

Additional services such as SEO or custom WordPress design are available at the rate of \$80/hr.

ATTACHMENT B

SCRE Advisors Phase 2 Recommendation

6. Create the Position of Economic Development/Parking Director for Ridgefield

The role of any report is to provide recommendations for consideration and to discuss how those recommendations are to be implemented. The above recommendations are extensive. Even the decision to prioritize the list and implement a number of them will require further research, effort, time, coordination of resources and buy-in.

Ridgefield has reconstituted its Economic Development Commission (EDC) and Parking Authority (PA) with excellent, dedicated members. Their input throughout the project has been extremely useful and reflective of their commitment to thoughtful change. All are volunteers who have busy other lives. While their oversight and support is essential, there is a great deal of “ground work” that is required for the above recommendations. They will need someone to “take ownership”, provide constant attention and management of the people and process, and the imprimatur of a town official who reports directly to the First Selectman. That is why we are strongly recommending creating a position (full or part time) whose job description would incorporate economic development, project management and grant writing.

- Economic development – these activities could include outreach to targeted retail and commercial prospects, assistance for those coming into Ridgefield with the planning, zoning and other required approvals, updating the Town’s economic development website areas, liaising with the EDC , PA and potential BID.
- Project management – implementation of many of the parking recommendations will require analysis, guiding the recommendations through the approval process and follow up.
- Grant writing – Our research showed that a number of downtown infrastructure projects from sidewalk paving to street lighting, signage and furniture were paid for in part through receipt of state and/or federal grants. Ridgefield has been the recipient of several in the past. Identifying grant opportunities and submitting the appropriate application is a process that requires time and a specific skill set.

As can be seen below the range of salaries for the position of Economic Development Director is wide. Some of the positions are part time and others have a very broad portfolio.

Salaries for Economic Development Directors Selected Fairfield County Municipalities			
Municipality	Mayor/First Selectman	Economic Development Director	Comments
Danbury	\$115,937	\$68,002	
Fairfield	\$131,428	\$125,419	
Guilford	\$102,000	\$32,011	Economic Development Coordinator
New Haven	\$131,000	\$120,000	Multiple functions within Economic Development office
New Milford	\$89,871	\$70,000	
Old Saybrook	\$72,843	\$33,341	Economic Development is part time
Seymour	\$85,327	\$44,011	Part time position; department also provides for \$20,000 on other professional services
Stamford	\$166,832	\$140,393	Supervises intergovernmental relations
Stratford	\$110,000	\$108,000	
Trumbull	\$112,423	\$107,625	