

# **TOWN OF RIDGEFIELD**

## **Planning and Zoning Commission**

### **APPROVED/REVISED MINUTES SUBCOMMITTEE ON BUSINESS ZONES**

These minutes are a general summary of the meeting and are not verbatim transcription.

August 18, 2021

Present: Joe Fossi  
Ben Nneji  
Robert Hendrick

Also Present: Karen Martin, Town Planner

#### **I. Call to order**

At 10:24 AM, Ms. Martin called the meeting to order.

#### **II: Nomination of Chair**

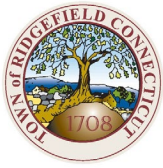
The group discussed that the Chair of the newly-formed subcommittee needed to be a member of the Planning & Zoning Commission.

Mr. Fossi nominated Mr. Hendrick to serve as Chair. Mr. Nneji seconded the motion. Motion passed 3-0 to name Mr. Hendrick as Chair.

#### **III. Discussion**

The group discussed logistical matters of the sub-committee. Ms. Martin recapped that the idea for this newly-formed group is to meet jointly with ECDC members. Ms. Martin said she will reach out to Geoffrey Morris to work on setting up future joint meetings of this subcommittee and a similarly-appointed ECDC subcommittee.

The subcommittee would also like to invite outside guests from the public and the business community in order to include more stakeholders. The group discussed some comments that had previously been received from local business owners such as Wayne Addressi, Jessica Wilmot and Ellen Burns. Ms. Martin also noted comments received from the Parking Authority, who would like to be invited to participate in discussions regarding any parking changes.



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Mr. Fossi noted that it is hard to include everyone in these discussions and that public hearings in front of the full Planning & Zoning Commission should be the main venue for receiving general public comments on any proposed zoning amendments.

Mr. Nneji commented that he believes Ridgefield residents wants to be heard in these discussions and that inclusion is important for transparency.

Mr. Hendrick raised the question of how to best reach out to special guests to invite them to these meetings and volunteered to work to send out email invitations to stakeholders prior to the next meeting.

The members agreed to continue meeting on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of every month at 10 am. Ms. Martin will file a meeting calendar with the Town Clerk later this week.

#### 1. Potential Zoning Amendments

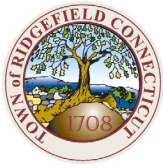
The group discussed the two zoning amendments that had been discussed and proposed by the previous iteration of the subcommittee to determine if they were concepts this new group would be interested in pursuing further.

The members expressed interest in continuing to move forward with both proposals – the CBD overlay zone permitting first floor residential and the elimination of the B3 zone to become B2 zoning.

Mr. Hendrick asked for a recap of the parking issues that had been discussed as part of the CBD overlay zone proposal. Mr. Fossi and Ms. Martin recapped the discussion points of the previous subcommittee on this topic which related to parking requirements in the CBD and parking waivers allowed by zoning. Mr. Fossi explained that the previous group decided to require off-street parking for any potential residential development on the first floor in order to avoid conflicts with municipal parking.

Mr. Hendrick asked to look more into the comparison of uses in the B3 and B2 zones. He also asked about the history of the B3 zoning and the reasons for its original establishment and questioned if there were any environmental factors involved relating to proximity to the Great Swamp. The group agreed it would be worthwhile to look further into the history of the B3 zone prior to proposing its elimination/absorption into the B2 zone but agreed that the B2 zone offers more zoning flexibility for property owners. Ms. Martin offered to look into past historical meeting minutes or find firsthand information from John Katz or other sources.

Ms. Martin outlined a few of the hurdles the previous subcommittee had come across in pursuing these zoning changes. They included the signage requirement to post 10 square foot signs on each rezoned property, the lack of GIS mapping technology and the



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extensive deed research required. The members agreed that removing this signage requirement may be a worthwhile change to propose in the future due to the financial cost burden but it did not want to send a message that the sign requirement was being removed to lessen transparency for the sole purpose of passing these amendments. It was

agreed to let the full PZC consider this change in the future, if warranted, for fiscal reasons.

#### 2. Other subcommittee goals and ideas

Ms. Martin mentioned that the previous subcommittee had begun to touch upon concepts for Route 7 improvements. The group decided to focus solely on the two zoning proposals at hand at this time and consider further options in the future.

As a recap, the members agreed to reach out to ECDC to set up a first joint meeting with their subcommittee members. The preference for that meeting would be on Zoom and Mr. Hendrick will invite outside guests via email. The PZC subcommittee of 3 members will continue to meet on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month.

#### IV. Adjourn

Mr. Hendrick motioned to adjourn the meeting at 11:21 am. Mr. Fossi seconded the motion. Motion passed 3-0.