



TOWN OF RIDGEFIELD

Planning and Zoning Commission

UNAPPROVED/UNREVISED MINUTES SUBCOMMITTEE ON BUSINESS ZONES

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

September 15, 2021

Present: Joe Fossi
Ben Nneji
Robert Hendrick

Also Present: Karen Martin, Town Planner
Geoffrey Morris, ECDC Chair

i. Call to order

At 10:04 AM, Mr. Hendrick called the meeting to order.

ii. Discussion

i. Next steps on proposed zoning amendments

First, Mr. Hendrick clarified that Mr. Morris was attending the meeting as an invited guest representing ECDC.

The group then discussed the proposed amendment to Section 5.7 – the downtown overlay district. Ms. Martin had provided the proposed text of the amendment for review. Mr. Fossi suggested that the next step could be a soft presentation of the proposal to the Planning & Zoning Commission.

Next, the second proposed amendment – changing the B3 zone to the B2 zone – was discussed. Mr. Hendrick stated that he is still interested in gaining more information on the original history of the B3 zone before proceeding. The group agreed that Mr. Hendrick will speak to John Katz about any firsthand knowledge. Ms. Martin will look for any history in the Land Use office.

Mr. Nneji asked if this change will benefit the business owners of these properties. The group discussed the potential benefits of switching to the B2 zone including greater use of the properties. It was agreed that property owners should be contacted and asked for input as well as abutting property owners to ensure everyone feels positively about the proposed change.



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Mr. Morris asked about the history of the Commission's overturned zone change from about ten years ago. Mr. Fossi offered a recap of the Route 7 zone change which was ultimately appealed and overturned by a judge due to a technicality. The group discussed the similarities and differences of the current proposals but ultimately felt that this proposal is different in concept.

Mr. Morris also asked if one of the amendments should be pursued first. The group agreed to begin with the downtown overlay proposal, as there is some additional work to be done on the B3 proposal.

ii. Invited guests, public input

Mr. Hendrick discussed strategies for including outside input on the proposed downtown overlay amendment. He shared a list of potential invited guests that he had drafted which included future invitees such as Susan Buzaid, Ellen Burns, Jessica Wilmot, Wayne Adessi and Raphael Gallo.

The group discussed the potential list and provided some additional names that Mr. Hendrick could contact. An additional resident who lives in or near the proposed overlay area should be contacted, if possible. It was decided that Mr. Hendrick will email these invitees prior to the next meeting so that public input can be collected in October.

Mr. Nneji asked about any potentially perceived negatives of the proposal. The group discussed the pros and potential cons of the overlay but ultimately felt that there are many benefits. The largest negative perception is currently the parking situation, which will hopefully be alleviated when the Parking Authority is invited to participate in discussions. The Route 35 state improvements were also mentioned and the group felt these traffic changes downtown will also add to an overall sense of less congestion and easier flow.

The subcommittee members also agreed that at the October meeting, Mr. Hendrick will start off by giving a brief presentation/overview of the proposals in order to lay out the facts and clear up any confusion. This should help direct and focus the public discussion.

iii. New Business

Mr. Hendrick raised the topic of a mission statement for the subcommittee. He was looking for a concise, one-sentence overview of the purpose of the subcommittee. He referenced the original meeting minutes of the formation of the first subcommittee in December 2020. Mr. Morris also offered up some wording that ECDC had used to describe the goal of the subcommittee. The group discussed precise language, including



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whether to mention COVID 19 impacts, but decided rather to reference the economic impacts created by the pandemic. Mr. Hendrick stated he will work to wordsmith a mission statement based on the input.

iv. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Fossi made a motion to approve the minutes of the August 18th, 2021 meeting. Mr. Nnegi seconded the motion.

Motion approved 3-0.

v. Adjourn

Mr. Hendrick adjourned the meeting at 10:45 am.