



TOWN OF RIDGEFIELD

Planning and Zoning Commission

APPROVED/REVISED
MINUTES
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
Zoom Webinar Meeting

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

April 27, 2021 Present: Susan Consentino
Joseph Dowdell
Joseph Fossi
Robert Hendrick (Joined at: 7:02 p.m.)
John Katz
Rebecca Mucchetti, Chair
Ben Nneji
Charles Robbins, Vice Chair

Absent: George Hanlon

Also Present: Karen Martin, Town Planner
Eileen White, Recording Secretary

I. Call to Order

Chair Mucchetti called the Meeting to Order at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom Webinar. She gave an overview of the Agenda and the aspects of Zoom Webinar procedures.

Ms. Martin announced that the application for **872 Ethan Allen Highway**, that had been scheduled for this evening, had been withdrawn due to inadequate preparation within the statutory time requirement. The Applicant will re-apply, when they are ready and have been before the Inland Wetlands Board.

II: Discussions/Actions:

- 1. VDC-21-3:** Village District Application per Section 8.3 and Sec.5.1.B. of the Town of Ridgefield Zoning Regulations for constructing an awning for a property located at **424 R Main Street** (850 Pizza) in the CBD zone. *Owner: Urstadt Biddle Properties Inc. Applicant: Larry Debany.*

Chair Mucchetti stated that the Commission had minutes from the Village District Consultant who approved the Application as presented.



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Mr. Katz motioned, Mr. Robbins seconded, to approve as presented to the VDC. Motion carried 8-0. Effective Date: April 30, 2021.

2. **VDC -21-4:** Village District Application per Section 8.3 and Sec.5.1.B. of the Town of Ridgefield Zoning Regulations for exterior renovations for a property located at **418 Main Street** in the CBD Zone. *Owner: Urstadt Biddle Properties Inc. Applicant: Diana Juarez.*

Mr. Robbins motioned, Mr. Fossi seconded, to approve as presented. Motion carried 8-0. Effective Date: April 30, 2021.

3. Discussion on Business Zones. % Staff

Ms. Martin, Chair of the Subcommittee on Business Zones, gave an overview of the Subcommittee that was initiated to review the functionality of the business zones. She stated that the Members of the Subcommittee included Mr. Robbins and Mr. Fossi of the Planning and Zoning Commission, two members of the ECDC, two business owners and two property owners.

Ms. Martin said that Subcommittee had two proposals to recommend as solutions to the current economic problems:

- 1) the B3 zone would be incorporated into the B2 zone because the B3 zone is extraneous and does not serve a lot of functions in and of itself; and
- 2) creating an overlay zone in the Central Business District where there is an opportunity to put residential units on the first level or basement level. The overlay zone would be the lower (north) part of Bailey Avenue, the west side of Grove Street, the eastern portion of Prospect Street north of Bailey Avenue, and portions of Governor Street. Main Street and Catoonah Street would not be affected.

Ms. Martin continued that the proposals were intended to create a more walkable zone for business and residential use.

Commissioner Robbins stated that an affordable component was incorporated and that any property with 5 or more units would be required to include 20% affordable at the 80% AMI rate.

Commissioner Fossi said that he did not think there would be any downside to the proposed changes to the Regulations.



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Chair Mucchetti asked that Ms. Martin screen share the map and Ms. Martin did so and the map showed that no property on Main Street would be affected. Ms. Mucchetti also asked the Commissioners if they had reviewed the proposed language.

Commissioner Hendrick asked if there is a demand for residential use in the Central Business District. Commissioner Robbins answered that they were assuming a demand based on current economic conditions.

Commissioner Hendrick asked if there had been a discussion in the Subcommittee about a possible consequence of higher rents. Commissioner Fossi said that retail was discussed and the Subcommittee sought to give people options.

Ms. Martin stated that the zones could always be converted back. The Commission looked at the proposed language. Commissioner Fossi said that the Subcommittee was unanimous on the proposed language.

Commissioner Consentino asked for clarification about the affordable housing language and it was explained as effecting development projects with five or more residential units. Ms. Consentino also asked who exactly was on the Subcommittee.

Ms. Martin read the list of the Subcommittee Members which included ECDC members Geoffrey Morris, Bob Knight; property owners Steve Zemo, Wing Biddle, Stephen Rapaglia; business owners Susan Buzaid, Cameron Cole Carcelan; and commercial realtor Bob Cascella.

Ms. Consentino stated that the Subcommittee Members were all builders. Commissioner Fossi stated that they were not all builders. Chair Mucchetti stated that the Commission agreed to ask people to participate on the Subcommittee and that there should be members of the ECDC, property owners, business owners, and commercial real estate. There has been no lack of transparency as to the make-up of those on the Subcommittee.

Commissioner Nneji said that what needed to be found was the pain of the business owner and their needs.

Commissioner Hendrick asked if the Minutes were shared from the Subcommittee Meeting. Ms. Martin said she would check with the Office Administrator about the Minutes and that all Subcommittee Members will be at the Public Hearing.

Chair Mucchetti said that the Minutes of the Subcommittee would be posted on the Planning and Zoning Webpage. She suggested that the Subcommittee recommendations be on the May 11, 2021 agenda in order to provide time for further review and questions.



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Mr. Katz motioned, Mr. Robbins seconded, to schedule a Public Hearing of May 25, 2021. Motion carried 8-0.

4. Legislative update. c/o Chair

Chair Mucchetti gave an overview of the recent activity in the Legislature on zoning reform bills. House Bill 6611 is now getting more attention. SB 1024 has been passed out of committee with significant modifications and affordable housing is no longer included as part of the bill. Ms. Mucchetti furthered that Senator Haskell has said that the HB 6611 is not likely to make it through the Legislature, but there may be a study group created.

The Chair stated that Bill 6611 has not been discussed by the Planning and Zoning Commission and that some Towns are submitting Resolutions. She asked if the Commissioners wanted to submit more testimony.

The consensus was that the Chair would draft testimony on HB 6611 and forward to the Commission before submitting.

III: New Submissions
None.

IV: Correspondence:

- CFPZA Spring 2021 Newsletter

V: Approval of Minutes:

- PZC Meeting-April 13, 2021

Mr. Katz motioned, Mr. Robbins seconded, to approve as amended. Motion carried 7-0-1. Mr. Dowdell abstained.

VI: Adjourn

Hearing no further discussion, the Chair adjourned the meeting at: 8:14 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Eileen White