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**BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
SPECIAL MEETING  
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2011  
MEETING ROOM B, WILTON TOWN HALL**

**PRESENT:** First Selectman Bill Brennan, Selectman Richard Creeth, Selectman Hal Clark, Selectman Ted Hoffstatter **ABSENT:** Selectman Susan Bruschi

**ALSO PRESENT:** Robert Knight, Joy Strand, Richard Dubow, James Saxe

**WORK SESSION TO DISCUSS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Chairman Bill Brennan called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Mr. Brennan advised that the Board of Selectmen had contacted other towns with Economic Development Commissions to ask for information about their processes, how successful they have been, what they would do differently, etc. The towns contacted were Trumbull, Rocky Hill, Windsor, Berlin and Ridgefield.

Ridgefield Economic Development Commission members Robert Knight and Joy Strand were very generous to offer to attend this meeting to present what was done to create an EDC in Ridgefield and to discuss an initiative that involves the Branchville area, which would also benefit Redding and Wilton.

Mr. Knight gave a powerpoint presentation with the following points:

- The Ridgefield EDC does not have a paid town employee to assist them.
- The EDC also serves as the Community Development Agency, as per State Statute.
- The members have a broad range of backgrounds including real estate, marketing, legal, professional economic development, urban planning and finance.
- The EDC is, and should always be, a non-partisan group.
- It is good to have members who work in-town as well as elsewhere to help get both view points.

- They are working to build a strong relationship with the Planning & Zoning Commission, emphasizing that the P&Z is the regulatory authority and the EDC is a facilitator.

Phase 1 of the process, once the EDC members were appointed, was to issue an RFP for a consulting firm with a charge to put together the Economic Development Plan. During the Plan development, the EDC's role was to assist with providing resources for the consultants. Input was also provided by the P&Z Commission and the First Selectman, along with feedback from other boards and commissions.

Once the consultants completed their work, the EDC adopted 6 of the 13 initiatives that they felt were realistic for the character of the town. These were presented to the Board of Selectmen and the P&Z Commission.

Phase 2 – the Board of Selectmen asked the EDC to work on two of the six initiatives right away. One was the redevelopment of the Branchville section of the Route 7 Corridor; and the second was the development of a website and other social media resources.

In 2009, the Ridgefield POCD was updated. The Economic Development Plan was submitted to provide recommendations for the development portion of the POCD.

Important lessons learned by the Ridgefield EDC:

- Conduct outreach to all stakeholders and keep them involved. The EDC needs to “sell the future” of the town.
- Make sure anything that could have an appearance of a conflict of interest by an EDC member is stated for the record.
- Be committed to communication with the public.

The BOS needs to be supportive of the EDC and be unified in the desire to increase the tax base and look at everything with an open mind.

Re-inventing Branchville Program - The Ridgefield POCD indicates a need to identify a land use plan for Branchville. A study done by HVCEO (Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials) identified a need for “work force” and retirement housing. The Ridgefield side of this area is mostly commercial – the Redding side is residential. The vision for this area is to “promote greater economic development with the establishment of a cohesive suburban, transit-oriented village environment. It is felt that there is potential for steady revenue in this area with consistent commuter and local traffic and the potential for housing with the Gilbert and Bennett Wire Mill project, which was temporarily de-railed by the recent economic downturn. The Town of Wilton has a key intersection in this area and has indicated interest in being involved with this three town effort.

Ms. Strand and Mr. Knight were thanked for taking the time to come tonight and share their expertise and experiences with economic development in Ridgefield.

Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Jan Andras  
Recording Secretary (taken from video)