

## House Republican Press Release

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### **Representative Frey: State Approves Ridgefield's New Grant Proposal**



State Representative John H. Frey, R-Ridgefield, today said that after working with the Connecticut Office of Policy and Management (OPM), he was pleased to announce that Ridgefield's request for a change in scope for \$500,000 Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) grant for recreation improvements at town facilities at 90 East Ridge Road was approved.

The funds were originally for a project awarded in 2002 for the Bennett Farm corporate development but the project was stalled due to the need for an Environmental Impact Evaluation. The funds will now be used for various improvements including but not limited to, the expansion of the Graham Dickinson Skate Park and parking improvements.

The change in scope of the plan from economic development to recreation improvements will now move the project from the purview of Department of Economic Development to the Department of Environmental Protection.

"We are a victim of our own success," said Representative Frey. "In addition to the municipal and private offices housed at the Richard Venus Municipal Building, it has become a recreation and entertainment hotspot. If you have a popular movie or concert going on at the Ridgefield Playhouse, combined with a baseball or softball game, and maybe some kids using the skateboard park or shooting some hoops in the basketball court, you have a parking and traffic nightmare," Frey added.

Representative Frey said "these dollars, as with other state grants, are highly competitive.... and in this instance, we had to successfully make our case twice. I want to thank Secretary Genuario for his willingness to redirect these funds to another worthwhile capital project."

The Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) funds economic development, community conservation and quality of life projects for localities that are ineligible to receive Urban Action bonds. This program is administered by the Office of Policy and Management.

STEAP funds are issued by the State Bond Commission and can only be used for capital projects. Programmatic expenditures or recurring budget expenditures are not eligible for STEAP or any other state bond program. However, some projects while generally capital in nature should not be funded with State bond money for various public policy reasons. Examples of these are 1) salt and sand sheds; 2) town office buildings and improvements; and 3) communications systems, such as police radios.

Projects eligible for STEAP funds include:

- 1) economic development projects such as (a) constructing or rehabilitating commercial, industrial, or mixed-use structures and (b) constructing, reconstructing, or repairing roads access ways, and other site improvements;
- 2) [Urban] transit;
- 3) Recreation and solid waste disposal projects;
- 4) social service-related projects, including day care centers, elderly centers, domestic violence and emergency homeless shelters, multi purpose human resource centers, and food distribution facilities;
- 5) Housing projects;
- 6) Pilot historic preservation and redevelopment programs that leverage private funds; and
- 7) Other kinds of [urban] development projects involving economic and community development, transportation, environmental protection, public safety, children and families and social service programs.

Localities may receive up to \$500,000 per year if (1) their population is under 30,000, (2) they are not designated as a [distressed municipality](#) or a [public investment community](#), and (3) the [State Plan of Conservation Development](#) does not show them as having an urban center.

Last fall, the Town of Ridgefield received a \$250,000 grant for pedestrian and landscape improvements to Danbury Road, between Route 116 and Copps Hill Road. Work should begin on that project this spring.