



UNAPPROVED MINUTES

MINUTES

Ridgefield Conservation Commission
Town Hall Annex, First Floor Conference Room
66 Prospect Street Ridgefield, CT 06877
(203) 431-2713 • conservation@ridgefieldct.gov

Meeting April 27, 2026 at 7PM

Present: Jim Coyle Jana Hogan Jack Kace
 Matt Sharp Anthony Markert Tommy McCarthy
 Roberta Barbieri Pete Nichols Erik Keller

Absent: Jim Liptack
 Allan Welby

In attendance: Josh Wilson (Biohabitats), Louise Washer (Norwalk River Watershed Association), Susan Baker (Inland Wetlands Board), residents of Taylors Pond

The meeting was convened at 7 PM by Chairman Keller.

1. Approval of Minutes

UPON motion duly made (Coyle), seconded (Nichols) and carried it was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of April 13, 2026 be approved and filed in Town Hall. Ms. Barbieri abstained.

2. Taylors Pond dam removal study

Chairman Keller gave some background information on the history of the site and its development. He noted that the developer who subdivided the property in the 1980s, Taylors Pond Corp., was responsible for making repairs or replacing the dam at that time; as such, action on the dam is long overdue. The dam has been evaluated by the CT DEEP, and stands assessed as needing repairs or removal. As of 2018, the RCC owns Taylors Pond and some of the land around it, and the dam itself is owned by the Taylors Pond Corp.

Louise Washer of the NRWA introduced herself. She shared examples of dam removals further south on the Norwalk River, and current removal projects. Ms. Washer noted that Taylors Pond represents an opportunity to remove a dam at the headwaters of the Norwalk River. She also noted that Connecticut has over 4,000 dams, the majority of which are of a comparable age, and many towns are thus facing similar questions of maintenance and removal. The NRWA has received a federal grant to start this project in conjunction with Taylors Pond Corp.

Josh Wilson of Biohabitats introduced himself and gave a presentation on the Taylors Pond project. He discussed the damaging effects of dams on local ecosystems, and the benefits of removing them. He detailed some case studies of dams that Biohabitats has removed in recent years. He discussed the current conditions of Taylors Pond, the scope of the project up to the present, and reported on the quality of the sediment that was tested. He sketched out the potential next steps of the project. He outlined two potential scenarios for dam removal at Taylors Pond. The first scenario would involve the creation of a pilot channel into which Ridgefield Brook and an unnamed tributary would flow. This would require cooperation from Town authorities—at a minimum, the Town would be a co-applicant on permitting and

funding requests. The second scenario would be the installation of stone steps on land owned by Taylors Pond Corp., allowing for fish movement. This would not require construction on Town land.

A resident asked about the composition of the vegetation that will emerge from the sediment left behind by the dam, with respect to invasive or noxious species. Chairman Keller asked how long Biohabitats plans to remain involved with ecological maintenance after the completion of construction/landscaping stages of the project. Mr. Wilson replied that the site would be assessed for invasives for the “first couple of years.” Taylors Pond Corp. would be responsible for maintenance costs going forward, and monitored by both the RCC and IWB.

Dr. Markert expressed that he would like to see written reports at each stage of the process. Ms. Washer replied that it is the NRWA, not Biohabitats, that is responsible for public communications about the project. Commissioners asked questions concerning the logistics of the project, and what the expected impact on wetlands would be. A resident asked about potential property damage during construction, and loss of property value if the pond is emptied. Mr. Coyle requested that Biohabitats perform a quantification of the economic costs to homeowners. Chairman Keller noted that there is still an active website advertising lakeside property on Taylors Pond. A resident inquired about the cost of repairing the dam rather than removing it; Mr. Wilson replied that he believed repair would be at least twice as costly as removal.

3. FY 25-26 budget: status and additional expenses

Mr. Coyle asked commissioners what expenses they anticipate before the end of the fiscal year. The Commission has already received estimates for several projects. These include \$4,900 for wall clearing at McKeon Farm, \$3,500 for labor and stone dust to build a fence on Stagecoach Pasture 1, and \$350 to replace crabapple trees in the orchard. The Town will fund \$6,600 from the capital budget for a ride-on mower. Mr. Nichols will get quotes for this from local suppliers.

Chairman Keller and Mr. Sharp have been interviewing candidates for summer workers. There were many applicants this year. They have decided on two individuals, and HR will be reaching out with employment offers.

Ms. Barbieri requested funding for another printing of “Remove and Replace” informational brochures. She also requested three additional Extractigator tools for invasive removal.

Dr. Markert **MADE MOTION** to allocate \$4,900 for the wall work at McKeon Farm, \$3,500 for fencing labor and stone dust at Stagecoach 1, \$350 for apple trees, and \$800 for invasives brochures and Extractigators. This was **SECONDED** by Mr. Sharp, and **APPROVED** by all commissioners.

4. Limestone land donation

The resident on Limestone who offered to donate 1 acre of land has been deterred by the costs associated. The surveying would cost between \$1,500 and \$3,000, plus legal fees. She has asked if the Commission will pay these costs, which would total about \$5,000. Considering that the land is not able to be developed for trails, and there is already a conservation easement on another part of the property, the Commission declined the offer of donation.

5. Rotary Club Citizen of the Year

Congratulations were offered to Mr. Nichols, who has been named Rotary Club Citizen of the Year.

Mr. Sharp **MADE MOTION** to allocate \$260 for two tickets to attend the fundraiser where Mr. Nichols will be honored. Ms. Barbieri **SECONDED** the motion, and all **APPROVED**.

6. Open space violations

A resident residing on Whitlock Lane who received a Notice of Potential Violation (NOPV) is very eager to cooperate with the RCC towards a resolution. He needs one point of his property surveyed to establish an exact property boundary, and then will contact the RCC regarding how to proceed with removal and remediation efforts.

7. New Business

Mr. Sharp announced that the Hemlock Hills campsite is open for business, and the first campers have been scheduled.

Ms. Barbieri informed the Commission of her work with Ridgefield Action Committee for the Environment (RACE), which is putting forward several requests to the Town. The Town has already adopted a native-plants-only policy on Town property. RACE is now asking Planning and Zoning to make a similar mandate for commercial developments as well. On May 6th, RACE will go in front of the Board of Selectpersons to inform them of this request. Mr. Coyle noted that P&Z has approached the Commission to help them draft policy on steep slopes.

Mr. Nichols will send commissioners copies of informative Lyme disease signs to be posted at Town open spaces. He reminded commissioners that another 20 American Chestnuts will be planted at McKeon Farm on May 31st.

8. Meetings for Attendance

P&Z	IWB
April 28 – Kace May 12 – Markert	May 14 – Sharp May 28 – Welby

9. Chairman's Remarks

The RCC has received a \$1,000 grant from the NRWA to plant wildflowers at McKeon Farm.

The Commission's consensus is that the Pound Street property will be officially called the Pound Street Preserve. A sign will be made.

Selectperson Maureen Kozlark reached out the Commission regarding the Ligi's Way/Goodwill walking trails. These trails will be disrupted by the Town's planned sewer line expansion. Chairman Keller will meet with the Town to discuss trail modifications once construction plans have been finalized.

Mr. Liptack and Mr. Sharp will do a presentation on the Walk Book at Ridgefield Library on May 7th.

Chairman Keller noted that Newtown recently passed an ordinance banning rodenticides, led by the efforts of the Conservation Commission there.

ADJOURNMENT UPON motion duly made (Barbieri), and carried (Coyle), it was **RESOLVED** that the meeting adjourn at 8:56 PM.