



UNAPPROVED MINUTES

MINUTES

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

Meeting April 13, 2026 at 7PM

Present: Jim Coyle Jana Hogan Jack Kace Erik Keller
 Jim Liptack Anthony Markert Tommy McCarthy Pete Nichols
 Matt Sharp Allan Welby

Absent: Roberta Barbieri

The meeting was convened at 7 PM by Chairman Keller.

1. Approval of Minutes

UPON motion duly made (Nichols), seconded (Coyle) and carried it was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of March 23, 2026 be approved and filed in Town Hall. Ms. Hogan abstained.

2. Pound Street update

Chairman Keller met with the Highway Department. The Town has plans to repave Pound Street, and to install a catch basin. However, in order to create the parking area proposed by the RCC, the Highway Department would require both a survey and an engineering plan. The combined cost of these requirements would be approximately \$8,000. The parking area is within 100 feet of wetlands, and thus requires applying through the Inland Wetlands Board (IWB) for permission. The parking area would likely require landscaping, the cost of which is estimated between \$2,500 and \$3,000, bringing the total cost of the project to almost \$11,000. Any trails or bridges through this open space would also require review and approval of the IWB. The Chairman asked the Commission to consider if this is a project worth taking on. Even to develop trails without a parking area, a bog bridge/boardwalk will be required to traverse the headwaters of the Titicus River. The Commissioners agreed that further development should be paused for the time being, considering the expense and the potential complications. Chairman Keller confirmed that proper Open Space signage will be put up, and he will reach out to local residents about removing invasive plants from the property.

3. Florida Refuge grant

Dr. Markert and Ms. Barbieri met with service forester Dave Beers for a sitewalk at Florida Refuge. Mr. Beers will create a practice plan, which will provide an inventory of tree species there, and a general plan for how the forest should be managed. The primary concern will be regeneration, rather than control of invasive species. The application for the grant itself will open in June. Dr. Markert also filed a request for Mr. Beers to look at Town properties on Pound Street and Limestone, and at Taylors Pond.

Stefano Zandri responded to the RCC's inquiry about hunting at Florida Refuge. Hunting at that property is restricted by deed. He will inform the Commission if there are other properties he would like to see opened for hunting.

4. McKeon, Wittman maintenance

The field at Wittman has been mowed by a contractor; a section that was not cut (previously too wet) will be examined to be mowed. Mr. Sharp is meeting with a contractor to get an estimate for doing work on the rock wall at Wittman Preserve.

Mr. Sharp and Mr. Liptack met a contractor at McKeon Farm, who will provide an estimate for haying the field in mid-July. He will also provide an estimate for cutting the lower field. Another contractor will give an estimate on repairing rock walls and replacing a fence.

Mr. Sharp and Chairman Keller received an estimate for \$800 to work on a 4000 sq. ft. area near the pollinator garden, plus an additional \$400 for seeds to establish a native wildflower meadow. Ms. Hogan noted that The Hickories farm on Lounsbury Rd. is growing native seeds locally, and suggests sourcing materials from them. Since the weather is already warming, which not ideal for native seed-sowing, Ms. Hogan suggested cover-cropping the field, and sowing the wildflower seeds in the fall.

UPON motion duly made (Sharp), and seconded (Nichols), commissioners unanimously **RESOLVED** to allocate \$1500 towards the wildflower meadow at McKeon Farm.

5. Lewisboro helipad

Commissioner Welby attended the March 25 meeting of the Lewisboro Zoning Board of Appeals, which convened to discuss potential plans to install a helipad on private property. Though the homeowner was not in attendance, his lawyer and his pilot were, and they gave information. Many members of the public were there to voice opposition, and the homeowner has since withdrawn his application. Mr. Welby noted that the Town of Ridgefield currently has no policies in place regarding helicopters/small aircraft.

6. Social media update

Ms. Hogan encouraged commissioners to send her pictures and videos to share on social media. She would like the RCC to be posting content twice per week. Mr. McCarthy will create an Instagram account for the Commission.

7. Audubon award

Ms. Barbieri has won a leadership award from the Audubon Connecticut society. Chairman Keller proposed purchasing two tickets to the fundraiser at which she will be honored.

UPON motion duly made (Sharp), and seconded (Markert), commissioners unanimously **RESOLVED** to allocate \$500 towards tickets.

8. Limestone land donation

A homeowner on Limestone Road wants to donate 1 acre of land adjacent to Taylors Pond. Chairman Keller informed the homeowner that they would be responsible for the cost of the surveys, and they have agreed. At first glance, it appears to be a pretty clean contribution, with no anticipated P&Z issues. All commissioners were in favor of moving forward with the donation.

9. New Business

Mr. Nichols has received a report that a group has been hanging tick/Lyme disease signage at kiosks and on trees on Town open space. As it is likely the Town-run BLAST organization, this is not a problem. He also informed the Commission that there will be another chestnut tree planting at McKeon Farm this year on May 31st. Ms. Hogan noted that several of the open space info kiosks need updating.

Mr. Sharp informed the Commission that three of the seasonal employees from last year will be returning, and one opening will need to be filled. The job posting is up.

Ms. Hogan will meet with Parks and Rec later this week to discuss Summer Trekking. She is putting together a calendar of hikes for the summer, and would like to do at least 1 per month. The Ridgefield Library's theme for summer reading will be "Seeds of Change."

The Ridgefield Thrift Shop has awarded the RCC a grant for \$4,700, to be used for bird feeding and habitat construction. Mr. Coyle and Chairman Keller will attend an upcoming awards dinner.

Dr. Markert reported on a recent article in Massachusetts Wildlife about snapping turtles, an ancient and still common species. The article noted that beaver deceiver devices can kill snapping turtles, as young turtles can become trapped in them.

10. Meetings for Attendance

P&Z

April 14 – Welby
April 28 – Kace

IWB

April 23 – Liptack
May 14 – Sharp

11. Chairman's Remarks

The RCC will be receiving \$25,000 in recompense for the tree cutting violation on Old Sib. Those funds should be arriving imminently. A Notice of Potential Violation has been issued to a resident at 24 Whitlock, regarding a shed and lawn encroaching on Town open space. The Enforcement Officer has spoken with the homeowner, who has been very cooperative.

P&Z is reviewing an application from Ridgefield Academy to build an extension. The property touches RCC property, but only at a corner, and is therefore not of concern.

The Chairman has received several complaints from a resident of Lakeside Drive, concerning knotweed that is spreading from Town property. He has informed the First Selectperson. This will likely become an increasing issue that the Town will have to confront at some point. The RCC has already undertaken the removal of bamboo, as mandated by State statute. Chairman Keller has also received reports of erosion around a bridge on Chipmunk Lane, and will do a sitewalk there with the Enforcement Officer on Thursday.

The Town is installing a sewer line through to Quail Ridge. A resident is concerned about old trees being cut down, and has suggested moving the line. Chairman Keller and Vice-chairman Coyle have written letters in support of walking trails being installed over the proposed sewer line.

Chairman Keller has met with the DEEP, the First Selectperson, and the Chair of IWB to discuss the dam removal study at Taylors Pond. Since the DEEP has not yet received a formal application, discussion was restricted. Considering that repairs to the dam was originally intended to be executed many years ago, and that the neighboring houses have been sold as lakefront properties in the meantime, any changes to the lake will be a very contentious issue. The Chairman noted the ambiguous wording on the property deed: "to be kept in its natural state in perpetuity." He has not yet heard an adequate response to the concerns of homeowners, whose property values may well decline if the pond no longer exists. Engineers involved with the project will be in attendance at the Commission's next meeting. Their discussion will be restricted to specific details about the dam removal study.

ADJOURNMENT UPON motion duly made (Sharp), and carried (Nichols), it was **RESOLVED** that the meeting adjourn at 8:39 PM.