



## UNAPPROVED MINUTES

### MINUTES

Ridgefield Conservation Commission  
Town Hall Annex, First Floor Conference Room  
66 Prospect Street Ridgefield, CT 06877  
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#### Meeting June 8, 2026 at 7PM

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

Absent:              None

In attendance: Holly Kocet and Lisa Shirk (Newtown Conservation Commission), Laura Keisel (Save Arlington Wildlife), Nicole Rivard (Friends of Animals), Ben Oko (R.A.C.E.), residents

The meeting was convened at 7 PM by Chairman Keller.

#### 1. Approval of Minutes

**UPON** motion duly made (Markert), seconded (Kace) and carried it was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of May 11, 2026 be approved and filed in Town Hall. Mr. Liptack abstained.

#### 2. Rodenticide ban

Representatives from the Newtown Conservation Commission introduced themselves. A video on the dangers of second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides (SGARs) was shown. Newtown commissioners shared information on the biological effects of rodenticide poisoning, and the harm caused to both wild predatory animals and domestic pets. They also detailed some political victories won in the anti-rodenticide movement in recent years. Lisa Shirk (NCC) noted that SGARs were never designed to be a preventative tool, but were intended to decrease rodent populations in cases of extreme infestation. The State legislature passed a law last year restricting the sale of SGARs to licensed pest control companies, but this law does not change how or when the licensed applicators can use them. Pest control companies are not required to prove that an infestation exists before use.

Nicole Rivard (FoA) informed the Commission about a year-long pilot project nearing completion in Fairfield, where the Town replaced rodenticide poison at the local dump with a contraceptive chemical. Results are still being finalized, but it appears that populations have not increased in the year without poison usage.

Commissioners asked questions on the effectiveness of the rodent contraceptive products, and the enforcement of Newtown's recent anti-rodenticide Town policy. Though all commissioners were in favor of undertaking a similar project in Ridgefield, Mr. Welby expressed the desire to pursue the creation of a Town Ordinance. A former Ridgefield resident, Bruce Willett, shared a story of noticing SGAR rodenticides harming the local chipmunk population at his late mother's property, as well as witnessing the pest control company disposing of the poison in an improper and reckless fashion.

Commissioners were unanimous in support of taking up an anti-rodenticide initiative in Ridgefield. Ms. Barbieri noted that R.A.C.E. would likely want to be involved. Dr. Kace requested that the NCC representatives share educational information to be published in local media. Mr. McCarthy, Dr. Kace, and Ms. Hogan all offered their assistance on the project, which will be led by Chairman Keller.

### **3. Maintenance expenditures**

Mr. Sharp obtained an estimate for clearing and repairing a wall at Wittman Preserve. Repairing the wall, removing the concrete, and disposing of it would total \$3,000. Dr. Markert is in favor of fixing up the wall, but was concerned that removing big pieces of concrete might damage the wall's structural integrity. Mr. Nichols responded that he believes the concrete has already degraded past the point of being structurally significant. Mr. Sharp will reach out to a professional stone mason for more insight.

Mr. Sharp also received an estimate for haying at McKeon Farm. The cost to hay four fields (Lauzun, Ridgebury I and II, and Stagecoach II) would be \$3,000. This cost could be offset by the value of the hay itself, though the exact value cannot be determined until the haying is done. Mr. Welby asked that the haying be postponed until at least August 1<sup>st</sup> in order to protect bobolinks living in the field. The Commission agreed that the field will not be hayed until they advise the contractor to do so.

**UPON** motion duly made (Barbieri), seconded (Sharp), and carried it was **RESOLVED** that \$3,000 be appropriated for haying at McKeon Farm.

In last year's Capital Budget, the Town approved \$6,610 for the RCC to purchase a Husqvarna MZ54 mower. This model has since been discontinued. Mr. Coyle **MOVED** to appropriate an additional \$2,690 towards the purchase of a RedMax 60" mower, and \$800 for 2 string trimmers. Mr. Sharp **SECONDED** the motion, and all commissioners **APPROVED**.

### **4. Tree removal on open space**

The Tree Warden had notified the RCC office about potential downed trees in the open space abutting 19 Oak Knoll. Mr. Nichols visited the property to make an assessment. There were 2 trees that had fallen from the open space into the resident's yard. Commissioners agreed that the Tree Warden should remove them.

### **5. McKeon lower meadow**

A resident on Old Stagecoach has complained about the appearance of chestnut trees that were recently planted at McKeon Farm. He has offered to pay the cost of doing a border planting to conceal them. Commissioners unanimously declined the offer.

### **6. Lauzun Lane clippings**

A neighbor has complained about grass clippings being left on Lauzun Lane after the RCC mows the adjacent fields. The resident sent photos showing a large quantity of grass left in the road. Chairman Keller suggested purchasing an electric leaf blower to address the issue. Mr. Coyle **MADE MOTION** to appropriate \$425 for a leaf blower. Ms. Barbieri **SECONDED** the motion, and all commissioners were **IN FAVOR**.

### **7. New Business**

Mr. Sharp requested additional volunteers to accompany him for safety when he periodically clears downed trees. Several commissioners offered to assist on an as-needed basis.

Ms. Barbieri shared that the June 7<sup>th</sup> workday at Aldrich Park was productive and well-attended. She requested funds for the purchase of additional Extractigator tools. **UPON** motion duly made (Hogan), seconded (Coyle) and carried it was **RESOLVED** to allocate \$600 for Extractigator Baby Gator tools.

Ms. Hogan gave an update on Summer Trekking, and noted that the Ridgefield Library has put together a summer reading list for kids that pairs books with hiking trails. The summer reading program is having its kickoff on June 22<sup>nd</sup>, and Ms. Hogan will be at the event representing both the RCC and the Pollinator Pathway.

Dr. Markert was contacted by Stefano Zandri, chair of the deer hunt implementation committee. In response to the RCC's request, he will add two more areas. The additional properties will have to go through the proper channels for Town approval. The DEEP Grant application that commissioners had considered for Florida Refuge should be published by the 22<sup>nd</sup>, and Dr. Markert will give commissioners an update at that time.

Mr. Coyle made note of the photos Mr. Welby had recently shared, which showed extensive dumping at the Eureka property. Since it is private property, the Town is unable to take any action.

## 8. Meetings for Attendance

<b>P&amp;Z</b>	<b>IWB</b>
June 9– Barbieri	June 11 – Kace
June 23 – Coyle	June 25 – Hogan

## 9. Chairman's Remarks

Chairman Keller gave an update on McKeon Farm. The new fence is being installed, and should be done by the end of the week. The wildflower gardens there were recently cut. He noted that invasives are creeping into the wildflower gardens, especially mugwort.

He will give a talk on eco-friendly landscaping at the Ridgefield Library in September. He asked that Mr. Welby give a talk on birds in October, Mr. Nichols to present on McKeon in November, and Dr. Markert to assist him in a presentation on forestry management in December. He requested that commissioners start considering topics for Library talks next year.

The newsletter is finished. Commissioners will receive a draft, and have a week to make edits. He asked commissioners to brainstorm ideas for small gifts (like t-shirts or mugs) for donors and volunteers. He noted that he will be away for the RCC's next scheduled meeting, June 22<sup>nd</sup>.

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**ADJOURNMENT UPON** motion duly made (Sharp), and seconded (Nichols), it was **RESOLVED** that the meeting adjourn at 8:48 PM.