



APPROVED 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 May 11, 2026 at 7PM

Present: Jim Coyle Allan Welby Jack Kace
Matt Sharp Anthony Markert Erik Keller
Roberta Barbieri Pete Nichols

Absent: Jim Liptack
Jana Hogan
Tommy McCarthy

The meeting was convened at 7 PM by Chairman Keller.

1. Approval of Minutes

UPON motion duly made (Nichols), seconded (Barbieri) and carried it was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of April 27, 2026 be approved and filed in Town Hall. Mr. Welby abstained.

2. Maintenance expenditures

The RCC has obtained an estimate for fencing materials for McKeon Farm from Rings End. Upon closer inspection of the fence line, it appears that the existing opening in the stone wall on the Ridgebury side is on private property. Commissioners debated the pros and cons of moving the opening onto Town property. Mr. Nichols suggested that the most efficacious solution would be to stop the new fence line short of the wall, thus leaving an opening in that corner of the field. This would allow for easy movement of people and maintenance equipment, and would avoid the cost and disruption of rebuilding a section of the old stone wall. All commissioners were in agreement. The new fence will be built at the end of the month.

UPON motion duly made (Sharp), seconded (Nichols), and carried it was **RESOLVED** that \$3,600 be appropriated for fencing materials at McKeon Farm.

Mr. Sharp mentioned the rock wall at Wittman Preserve, which is currently covered in a thin layer of cement. He received an estimate for the removal of the cement, and reworking of the wall to restore it to its historic state. It would cost \$5,500 for labor and equipment, and an additional \$1,100 for disposal of the cement. Several commissioners plan to go evaluate the wall in person before making a commitment to the project.

3. GPS device

In its ongoing efforts to improve and streamline violation enforcement, the RCC administrator presented information on several handheld GPS devices currently on the market. These included handheld navigation devices, handheld surveying equipment, and cell phone apps. Commissioners were encouraged to continue to research other options.

4. Open-space letter to lawyers/real estate agents

The Chair and Vice-chair are considering whether it might be prudent to send letters to real estate agents and property lawyers in town, encouraging them to be mindful of potential open space violations as they prepare properties for sale. The primary purpose of such a letter would be to educate, and to forewarn these professionals that oversights can result in complications both pre- and post-sale. Mr. Kace thought that a letter to real estate agents would be a good idea, but was less convinced of the value in sending it to lawyers. Mr. Sharp noted that in the state of Connecticut, attorneys can act as title agents, so sending them letters might in fact be productive. He suggested asking a local attorney for their opinion on such a letter. Chairman Keller will do so.

5. Tick spray/signs

Mr. Nichols had previously shared via email an informational sign from the Town BLAST initiative, to be displayed at kiosks and trailheads on Town open space. However, several commissioners objected to BLAST's advice that residents spray their lawns. Ms. Hogan has created an alternative which is more in keeping with principles of ecology, and obtained an estimate for the printing of aluminum signs (\$1,010). Commissioners agreed that the cost of aluminum signs was too high, and that laminated paper signs would serve just as well.

6. Florida Refuge grant

As a preliminary for a CT DEEP grant application, service forester Dave Beers has created a practice plan for forestry management at Florida Refuge. Having now seen the practice plan and considered next steps, commissioners believe that the RCC may not have the resources necessary to complete the grant application or to undertake the work recommended in the plan. Commissioners will meet with Mr. Beers later this week for further discussion.

7. Ridgefield Ramble fencing

Chairman Keller received an email regarding the development of the Norwalk River Valley Trail (NRVT) in Ridgefield. A local resident has expressed concern that the trail will run too close to her property, and wants a fence installed there. However, the approved plan does already include stockade fencing along that property line. The NRVT will communicate this to the homeowner.

8. Executive session—land acquisition

At 8:01 PM, Mr. Sharp **MOTIONED** to enter into executive session in order to discuss potential land acquisition. Mr. Coyle seconded, and all **APPROVED**. The Commission returned to public session at 8:14 PM.

9. New Business

Mr. Nichols has made a sign for the Pound Street Preserve. He also shared that two tickets have been set aside for the Rotary Club dinner where he will be honored.

Mr. Sharp previously had funds approved for the purchase of an audio recording device for woodland monitoring. At the time of the approval, the devices were out of stock. They are available again, so he and Mr. McCarthy will go over the technical specs and make a purchase. Mr. Sharp recently cut the field at Stagecoach 2, and brush hogged the pollinator garden. He noted that the lower section of Lauzun field hasn't been cut, and barberry and multiflora rose are spreading there.

Mr. Kace wished to follow up on the discussion about the Taylors Pond dam at the RCC's last meeting. Commissioners had presented many questions to the representatives from Biohabitats and the NRW, and no response has yet been received. Mr. Kace would like to see a Scope of Work contract for the project. Mr. Coyle noted that a Scope of Work contract should be publicly available data. Chairman Keller

will follow up with the NRWA, and ensure that they are taking into consideration the feedback they received at the last meeting.

10. Meetings for Attendance

P&Z

May 12 – Markert
May 25 – Nichols

IWB

May 14 – Sharp
May 28 – Welby

11. Chairman's Remarks

Commissioners are encouraged to submit newsletter items to the Chair by Memorial Day for publication in the summer issue this June.

ADJOURNMENT UPON motion duly made (Coyle), and seconded (Barbieri), it was **RESOLVED** that the meeting adjourn at 8:31 PM.