



## APPROVED MINUTES

### MINUTES

Ridgefield Conservation Commission  
Town Hall Annex, First Floor Conference Room  
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#### Meeting March 9, 2026 at 7PM

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

In attendance: Tom McManus (Chair, Tree Committee), Susan Baker (Chair, IWB), Eric Hansen

The meeting was convened at 7 PM by Chairman Keller, who proposed the addition of three items to the agenda (1a, 1b, 1c). **UPON** motion duly made (Coyle), and seconded (Nichols), the additions were unanimously **APPROVED** by the commissioners.

#### 1. Approval of Minutes

**UPON** motion duly made (Coyle), seconded (Nichols) and carried it was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of February 9, 2026 be approved and filed in Town Hall. Ms. Barbieri abstained.

#### 1a. Taylors Pond

Chairman Keller informed the Commission that the NRWA has received a Federal grant to study removal of the dam at Taylors Pond. Removing the dam would require the Commission to agree to the dredging of a channel in the pond. Since the removal of the dam falls under the jurisdiction of DEEP, and some concerns have arisen with local and Town residents, this project seems likely to become a complex and potentially contentious undertaking. The NRWA will attend the Commission meeting on April 13, and will bring some engineers to present more information on the project. In a separate matter, it appears that a local resident has been having Taylors Pond treated with herbicides for many years. The Commission will be sending out a Notice of Probable Violation (NOPV) to the resident. It has also communicated with the vendor that has been applying the herbicides to the pond.

#### 1b. Forestry Management Study at Hemlock Hills/Pine Mountain (Eric Hansen)

Mr. Hansen addressed the Commission to discuss an upcoming forestry management study at the Hemlock Hills, Pine Mountain, and Lake Windwing properties. This will entail mapping the properties in GIS, establishing "inventory points" from which information would be collected (tree species, size, height, canopy, health, regeneration, plus herbaceous/shrub/invasive species), and then creating a forest management plan. Mr. Hansen shared details of his company's process, solicited feedback from the Commission, and estimated that the study will be started mid-spring.

#### 1c. Potential Grant

Mr. Markert received a survey from DEEP concerning a potential grant for forest management. The grant entails having a service forester come evaluate a property and produce a "practice plan." Mr. Markert proposed filling out the survey with reference to the Florida Refuge property. If accepted, the project

costs would be paid in full by the State, and all of the work done by contractors. All commissioners agreed that Mr. Markert should proceed with filling out the survey.

## 2. Old Sib Violation Settlement

Chairman Keller informed the Commission that a settlement has been reached regarding the cutting down of four chestnut trees on the Old Sib property. The resident will pay the fine of \$25,000, and the location of the hiking trail will be adjusted.

## 3. Social Media

Mr. McCarthy has created a spreadsheet to facilitate social media posting by all members of the Commission. Ms. Hogan offered to assist if any commissioner needs help or isn't comfortable posting.

## 4. Vernal Pool Project

Commissioners discussed an earlier meeting with Tim Bishop, who is the Vice-chairman of the Inland Wetlands Board (IWB), who has mapped vernal pools in Fairfield. The town recognizes about 80 pools logged by a previous commissioner, and would like to identify more vernal pools on private property. These will need to be mapped on GIS. This will be a multi-year project. Mr. McCarthy suggested identifying locations for amphibian road crossings; these hotspots could be useful for education and public engagement.

## 5. Wittman Fields Maintenance

Mr. Sharp has obtained an estimate for \$1,000 to cut the field, which has not been done for two years. The best time to do so is late March/early April.

**UPON** motion duly made (Nichols), and seconded (Coyle), commissioners unanimously **RESOLVED** to spend \$1,000 for the cutting of Wittman Field.

## 6. McKeon Spring Maintenance

Mr. Sharp shared with the Commission a list of spring maintenance tasks at McKeon Farm. These include replacing fencing on the southern side of the Katz property, using capital funds that were approved in 2024. There is a corner post in the barn that needs to be replaced or straightened, and will require an estimate. In addition, a number of stone walls need to be clearing of invasive plants and some fields require mowing and haying. Mr. Sharp will be meeting with two contractors to obtain estimates.

## 7. New Business

Mr. Markert gave an update on the Deer Management Implementation Committee. Its hunters noted a very high density of deer this season. If the Commission desires a greater harvest of deer, the Committee recommends that the Commission open up more areas for hunting next year. This activity would be spread out across town so as to avoid doing major damage to any particular herd. Chairman Keller suggested that the subject be tabled and taken up again at a later date.

Ms. Hogan verified with the Commission that they would be resuming Summer Trekking with Parks and Rec.

## 8. Meetings for Attendance

**P&Z**  
March 10 - Sharp  
March 24 - Welby

**IWB**  
March 12 - Barbieri  
March 26 - Coyle

## 9. Chairman's Remarks

Chairman Keller received a call from a resident of Lakewood Drive. The Town property there has knotweed that is beginning to encroach on the resident's land. Given how much knotweed exists in the general area, the Chairman will communicate with the First Selectperson to see if there is a Town policy already in place.

The Chairman met with the Board of Selectpersons last week, and approval has been granted to create a parking area for the open space at Pound Street. Residents have been invited to the Commission's March 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting to offer input.

The Spring newsletter is complete and will go out at the end of the following week. The truck should be checked for maintenance. Chairman Keller shared a note from outgoing commissioner Jean Linville, and introduced the new office Administrator.

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**ADJOURNMENT UPON** motion duly made (Sharp), and carried (Nichols), it was **RESOLVED** that the meeting adjourn at 9:00 pm.