



UNAPPROVED MINUTES

MINUTES

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

Meeting September 23, 2026 at 7PM

Present: Pete Nichols Allan Welby
 Jack Kace Anthony Markert
 Jim Coyle Erik Keller

Absent: Roberta Barbieri Jim Liptack
 Jana Hogan Tommy McCarthy
 Matt Sharp

The meeting was convened at 7:03 PM by Chairman Keller.

1. Approval of Minutes

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

Commissioner Markert **MOTIONED** to add item 7a. "New business" to the agenda. Commissioner Nichols **SECONDED**, and all **APPROVED**.

2. Clear cutting review

Commissioner Kace made note of a recent instance in Town when a commercial property was clear cut before building permit applications had been submitted to Planning & Zoning. He would like to see the RCC work in tandem with P&Z to create regulations or guidance about tree-cutting before such time as permits have been approved. Commissioner Markert believes that such a regulation would not be legally viable, as it would violate owners' rights. He stated that trees are considered assets, protected by law, and a property owner has the right to do with them as he or she sees fit, including to destroy them. Dr. Kace will continue to do research into how other municipalities have handled this issue.

3. Open space drone policy

Chairman Keller has been investigating whether the Town has any policies already in place regarding the use of drones; at present, there are none. He asked Commissioners whether the RCC should consider creating a policy restricting their use on open space in order to protect wildlife from potential harassment. Commissioner Welby noted that few towns in Connecticut have drone-related ordinances in place, though several have policies, and that these policies do not apply to commercial drone operators, who are licensed through the FAA. Mr. Welby will continue to look into the drone policies of other towns, as well as the restrictions already instituted by the FAA.

4. McKeon Farm wall clearing

Chairman Keller obtained a contractor estimate to clear the stone walls at McKeon Farm. The total cost to flame weed four long sections would be \$2,000. Dr. Markert asserted that flame weeding is an effective means of control.

UPON motion duly made (Welby), seconded (Markert) and carried it was **RESOLVED** to allocate \$2,000 for the flame weeding of the stone walls at McKeon Farm.

5. Forestry walk reports

Dr. Markert gave an update on the reports prepared by forester Dave Beers for several RCC properties. Last month, they visited the George Washington Highway property. Though the property was farmland a century ago, it is now predominantly wetlands. It features all the species typical of Connecticut wetlands—both natives and invasives. There is not much work that can be done there due to the terrain. They also noted a potential intrusion onto the property, which Dr. Markert will further investigate.

They also visited Shadow Lake and the new Pound Street Preserve. At Shadow Lake, Mr. Beers noted the presence of red cedar which is uncommon in this area. Those trees are being overtopped by vines and crowded out by other trees, and he recommends thinning the canopy around them. He also recommended vine removal at Pound Street.

Dr. Markert also discussed his recent visit to the Mianus River Gorge Preserve in Bedford, NY. Commissioner Hogan arranged for this visit, and Commissioners Hogan, Barbieri, and Markert attended. The preserve consists of 950 acres and employs at least four people full-time and many more seasonally. It is closed to the public during the winter months, which allows for extensive deer hunting. The preserve also uses deer exclusion fencing in many areas. Every section of the preserve has a management plan and the preserve engages in an integrated approach to invasive plant management. Their land manager shared suggestions for the RCC's management of Florida Refuge.

6. Executive session—Violation enforcement/Taylors Pond

At 7:41 PM, Mr. Nichols **MOTIONED** to enter into executive session for the purposes of discussing enforcement action and potential litigation. This was **SECONDED** by Dr. Kace. The Commission returned to public session at 8:28.

7. Meetings for Attendance

P&Z
October 13—Kace
October 27—TBD

IWB
September 24—Hogan
October 8—Liptack

7a. New business

Mr. Welby reminded the Commission that the newly-rerouted trail out of Old Sib has to be reblazed.

Mr. Nichols informed the Commission that multiple reports have been received of an unidentified and unauthorized individual spray-painting trail blazes at Pine Mountain. These markings are numerous and unsightly, and visitors have complained. Commissioner Liptack has begun covering them up, and more work remains to be done.

Dr. Markert shared that the CT Association of Conservation and Inland Wetlands Commissions is hosting its annual meeting in November, and he would like to attend.

8. Chairman's Remarks

Chairman Keller encouraged commissioners to brainstorm ideas for talks at the Ridgefield Library for next Spring. Since no commissioners expressed interest in giving a presentation over Zoom, there will be no talks in January and February, with in-person events returning in March.

ACT of Ridgefield has offered two potential dates to host the RCC's annual meeting next March. He suggested that March 24 would be preferable, and all commissioners agreed.

Progress is being made on the potential rodenticide ban. He is waiting for feedback from the Highway Department prior to drafting a potential policy for Town-wide review.

Mr. Keller and the Conservation Enforcement Agent met with The Pond and Lake Connection, the company that is doing bamboo remediation on Town land. They have informed the RCC that it will need to cut a path into the bamboo so it can be fully treated. They will send the RCC a plan.

Mr. Keller has scheduled a meeting with the First Selectperson to discuss the future of the RCC's seasonal summer employees. With the retirement of the RCC's two most skilled workers, a different approach will be needed to manage its properties next year.

He visited Whitney Freeman at the new Henny Penny Farm in Lagrangeville, NY. The farm looks great, and the animals are thriving.

He is submitting a request to the Town to increase the hours of the RCC's office administrator. He is suggesting an extra four hours per week in order to facilitate additional tasks, including some fieldwork. Commissioners agreed.

On September 16, the Town accepted the donation of a parcel of land at 84 Mamasco Road. There is a blighted house on the property, which the Town will remove. The land itself is largely wetlands, featuring dense growth of both native and invasive plants. Commissioners discussed some ideas for how it might be utilized as open space.

ADJOURNMENT UPON motion duly made (Nichols), and seconded (Markert), it was **RESOLVED** that the meeting adjourn at 8:43 PM.