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 October 19, 2026 at 7PM

Present:	Pete Nichols	Allan Welby	Tommy McCarthy
	Roberta Barbieri	Anthony Markert	Matt Sharp
	Jim Coyle	Erik Keller	Jim Liptack
Absent:	Jack Kace	Jana Hogan	
In attendance:	Dr. Tracey Miller		

The meeting was convened at 7:00 PM by Chairman Keller.

1. Approval of Minutes

UPON motion duly made (Sharp), seconded (Nichols) and carried it was RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of October 5, 2026 be approved and filed in Town Hall. Commissioners McCarthy, Barbieri, and Liptack abstained.

2. Amphibian road crossing research

Dr. Tracey Miller, a professor at the University of Kentucky and former Ridgefield IWS board member, gave a presentation on her research on culverts. Southwestern Connecticut is one of the most productive regions in the Northeast for herpetofauna, but these animals suffer high mortality rates as a result of road traffic. Pipe culverts contribute to these high rates, as the animals tend to travel around them and go directly into the road. Open-bottomed culverts can significantly reduce vehicle mortality rates, but replacing pipes with open-bottomed culverts can be costly. In Ridgefield, there are 110 intersections between roads and streams. Dr. Miller and her colleagues used soil mapping to identify hot spots where an open-bottomed culvert might provide the greatest benefit to the largest number of turtle and salamander species. Dr. Miller noted that there are currently several grant opportunities for the creation of wildlife crossings. She will provide the Commission with a map of Ridgefield's existing pipe culverts.

3. Executive session—Violation enforcements/Taylors Pond

At 7:24 PM, Commissioner Sharp MOTIONED to enter into executive session for the purposes of discussing enforcement action and potential litigation. This was SECONDED by Commissioner Nichols. The Commission returned to public session at 7:51 PM.

4. 2027 Annual Meeting

The 2027 Annual Meeting will be held at A.C.T. of Ridgefield on Wednesday, March 24, 2027. Commissioner Hogan has invited Dr. Nick Dorian as a speaker. He will give a talk about bees. Commissioners discussed possible recipients of the Edith Meffley award, and will make a final selection in December.

5. 2027 Capital requests

Chairman Keller reminded commissioners that capital budget requests for 2027 must be submitted to the Town by December 1st. Suggestions and estimates should therefore be brought to the RCC's meetings in November.

6. McKeon electrification

Mr. Keller has received a quote to install electricity in the structures at McKeon Farm. The total cost would be approximately $8,000. This includes $4,800 to dig a trench from the pole to the shed, put in conduit and wiring, and install four 20-amp circuits and an overhead light. An additional $3,000 would bring power out to the barn, providing two 20-amp circuits and strip lights. R.A.C.E. has offered funding for a portion of the project. Mr. Keller plans to introduce this as a capital budget request; commissioners are all in support.

7. Forestry reports

Commissioner Markert shared an update on the RCC's efforts to have all of its forests evaluated. Since 2023, forestry reports have been done for 46% of the acreage owned by the RCC. The report on Hemlock Hills/Lake Windwing/Pine Mountain is currently in progress; its completion will bring the total to 81%. The remaining 19% of acreage consists of smaller, boggier plots of land.

Dr. Markert and forester Dave Beers visited two properties at the end of September. At the Taylors Pond property, they found the forest to be in good shape, with few invasives. At the Limestone Preserve, there is a newly-created trail that comes out of (and goes back into) Seth Low Pierrepont State Park. Both the forest and the water are in good condition with healthy native flora. Dr. Markert noted that the RCC might consider adding Limestone to future editions of the Walk Book.

8. RHS student trail walk

Mr. Nichols was contacted by Kevin Clarke, a science teacher at Ridgefield High School. He's looking for help in creating an educational trail walk for RHS students. There is an entrance on RHS property to the open space below Tiger Hollow, and he would like to create a trail that connects back up towards Scotts Ridge Middle School. Mr. Clarke would also like to create educational material to go with the trail, including signs. Commissioner Welby noted that the land in question is very wet, and boardwalks would be needed. Dr. Markert referred Mr. Nichols to a 2023 forestry study done that included the land in question. Mr. Sharp suggested it could be a good Scout project if the terrain is dry enough.

9. New business

The RCC received an email last month from a resident who requested that the trail from Blacksmith Ridge to Woodcock Lane be cleared of downed trees. Mr. Sharp and Mr. Liptack have cleared the trees, and the local residents will maintain the trail.

Mr. Nichols replaced some broken split-rail fencing at McKeon Farm. He spoke with a resident on Lauzun Lane who has an abundance of gravel; the resident has offered to give some to the RCC in order to fill in a rut that has been causing difficulty for the mower.

Mr. Welby reminded commissioners that deer hunting season has begun at several RCC properties. He also informed them that although the Town has recently removed beaver dams at Turtle Pond four times, the beavers have now blocked up a drainpipe that runs under Old Sib Road, creating substantial flooding.

10. Meetings for Attendance

P&Z	IWB

October 27—Barbieri	October 22—Markert
November 10—Nichols	November 12—Sharp

11. Chairman's Remarks

Leaf samples from the apple trees at McKeon Farm have been mailed to a laboratory, where their DNA will be sequenced and analyzed. Results are expected to take three to four months.

The spotted lanternfly egg-removal workday took place on Sunday, the 18th. Ultimately there were not many egg masses left at the Ledges property, so the organizers held it at McKeon Farm instead. About eight volunteers attended. He will invite the organizers to come discuss the results with the Commission.

The deadline to register for the CACIWC annual convention is fast approaching; several commissioners are interested in attending.

The RCC's Annual Appeal will be starting within the month. In addition to the Walk Books and NRIs offered to donors in years past, they will also have the option to receive a T-shirt or hat.

ADJOURNMENT UPON motion duly made (Sharp), and seconded (Nichols), it was RESOLVED that the meeting adjourn at 8:28 PM.