



UNAPPROVED 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 July 6, 2026 at 7PM

Present: Roberta Barbieri Allan Welby Jack Kace
 Pete Nichols Anthony Markert Erik Keller
 Tommy McCarthy

Absent: Jim Coyle Jim Liptack
 Matt Sharp Jana Hogan

The meeting was convened at 7 PM by Chairman Keller.

1. Approval of Minutes

UPON motion duly made (Barbieri), seconded (Markert) and carried it was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of June 8, 2026 be approved and filed in Town Hall.

2. Rodenticide ban update

The office administrator for the Conservation Commission gave an update on the efforts to research current rodenticide usage on Town property. Since many Town departments are responsible for managing their own pest control, and have largely seemed reluctant to share details with Conservation, commissioners discussed potential strategies and next steps. Chairman Keller will put together a standardized survey to be sent to Town departments. He also suggested creating an educational page on the RCC's website, for which Mr. McCarthy will source content.

3. Library talks

Chairman Keller laid out the schedule for RCC talks to be given at Ridgefield Library this coming fall, and requested that commissioners send him descriptions of their programs within the next month. He will present on eco-friendly landscaping on September 10th. Mr. Welby will present on birds on October 8th. Mr. Nichols will give a talk about McKeon Farm on November 12th, and Chairman Keller and Dr. Markert will discuss the results of the forestry management study of Pine Mountain, Hemlock Hills, and Lake Windwing on December 3rd.

4. Birding update, McKeon Farm

Commissioner Welby presented a slideshow update on bird populations at McKeon Farm. Bird boxes were installed in 2020, and since then McKeon has seen 152 fledgling bluebirds and over 300 fledgling tree swallows. Mr. Welby started installing gourd-shaped housing for purple martins in 2021, and McKeon has proved to be an ideal breeding ground for the species, with populations growing year over year. This year, 67 of the 72 gourds were occupied, containing a total of 341 eggs and hatchlings. Since 2021, the McKeon colony has fledged 898 purple martins, of which approximately one-third have been banded for tracking.

5. RCC volunteer/donor gifts

Chairman Keller made some suggestions for RCC-branded gifts for volunteers and donors. Commissioners were in favor of hats with the RCC logo; the administrator will look into possible producers. Commissioners were also in favor of t-shirts, which will require a more substantial design. Mr. McCarthy suggested a design contest. Chairman Keller encouraged commissioners to keep brainstorming gift ideas.

6. Budget status

Commissioners discussed the status of the discretionary and Open Space funds. Department budget spending came in right on target for the 2025/2026 fiscal year.

7. Executive session—land acquisition

UPON motion duly made (Barbieri), seconded (Kace) and carried it was **RESOLVED** to enter into executive session at 8:02 PM to discuss potential property acquisition. The Commission returned to public session at 8:10.

8. New business

The forestry grant being considered for Florida Refuge has been published, with a submission deadline of August 31st. Dr. Markert has several concerns about pursuing this grant, chief among them being the length of the commitment. Maintenance is not included in the grant; if chemical spraying is not permitted, it would take at least 5 to 10 years of substantial physical labor to remove invasive plants. Construction of deer fencing at Florida Refuge would also require creation of a road. Dr. Markert feels the project is beyond the scope of the summer employees, at least as far as the department is structured at present. Ms. Barbieri was in favor of pursuing the project to its next steps, and offered to source labor estimates from professional contractors. Dr. Markert agreed to continue coordinating the application process, and the Commission will reassess at its next meeting.

9. Meetings for Attendance

P&Z	IWB
July 14– Markert July 28 – Liptack	July 9 – Barbieri July 23 – Nichols

10. Chairman’s Remarks

Chairman Keller spoke with Whitney of Henny Penny Farm. She gave her consent for the RCC to remove the materials left behind at McKeon. She wants to give commissioners a tour of her new property in New York this coming fall.

There was a request from a resident who lives next to the parking lot at Wittman Preserve. She is having a baby shower on August 22nd, and requested permission for her guests to use the parking lot. She also requested that a narrow pathway be mowed from the lot to her backyard, which she estimated would be 15’ in length. Commissioners approved her request.

The homeowners at 12 Mulberry have contacted the Town to inform them of beaver damage to trees in the Open Space that borders their property. The Tree Warden has done an assessment, and will cut them down.

UConn Extension will be hosting a workshop on invasive plant management on July 30th. Should any commissioners wish to attend, the RCC will cover the program costs.

Chairman Keller reminded commissioners that Mr. Coyle has requested they look at the RCC website and suggest changes and/or additional updates.

Letters have been sent out to local real estate agents and lawyers, informing them that the RCC is monitoring property transfers for any potential open space violations. So far, there has been no feedback.

Chairman Keller received the next printing of the Walk Book from Amazon. Unfortunately, the quality of this run was substantially worse than that of past printings. The books are functional, but the paper and ink are clearly of an inferior grade. He is pushing Amazon to redo them.

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